



## **People and Communities Policy Committee**

**Minutes of a remote meeting of the People and Communities Policy Committee of South Norfolk Council held on Thursday 9 July 2020 at 10.00 am.**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors: D Bills (Chairman), S Blundell, V Clifford-Jackson, T Holden, F Ellis and J Hornby.

**Apologies:** Councillors: J Wilby and N Legg

**Cabinet Member in Attendance:** Councillor: Y Bendle

**Officers in Attendance:** The Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Assistant Director of Individuals and Families (M Pursehouse), the Housing and Benefits Manager (R Dunsire), the Housing and Health Manager (L Simmonds) and the Communities Senior Manager (K Gallagher)

### **11 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the People and Communities Policy Committee held on 14 October 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **12 ALIGNMENT OF MANDATORY LICENSABLE HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION FEES ACROSS THE TWO COUNCILS**

The Housing and Health Manager provided a summary of the report which sought to provide members with an overview and understanding of the legislative context for mandatory Licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and requested that the Committee consider a proposed single fee, across Broadland and South Norfolk Councils.

Members referred to the calculation of fees, noting that they needed to be based on actual costs and be non-profit making. Officers explained that they were confident that the proposed fees were reasonable, and justifiable if challenged.

Members were pleased to note that the two processes across both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils had been combined and streamlined, and that the new One Team approach was enabling closer controls, whilst still delivering a fair and consistent service.

The Housing and Health Manager stressed the importance of proactive work to identify unlicensed properties and advised that the Council would look to make the most of enforcement options in that instance. Members noted that landlords could face penalties of up to £30,000, and that income from this could be retained within the Housing Standards service.

Officers responded to a number of queries on points of detail. With regard to the Council's proactive approach, the Housing and Health Manager agreed that there was a need to liaise with landlords, tenants and communities, to ensure that they were all aware of the need for HMO licences. In response to a question, she advised that there were several ways which unlicensed properties could be identified, ranging from resident referrals, searches on property sites such as Rightmove/Rent a Room, to safeguarding concerns raised by the police.

Members suggested a more targeted proactive approach might be helpful, in areas closer to Norwich and the hospital. It was also suggested that contact should be made with the universities and colleges in Norwich to seek information on student lets and queried whether advertising in local parish magazines would raise awareness. Officers agreed to investigate these suggestions further.

The portfolio holder, Cllr Y Bendle, commended the report to members, and stressed the need to recognise the important need for HMOs, which often housed vulnerable residents, and were for some young people, the only way in which they could afford to move out of the parental home.

Members indicated their support for the report proposals and the Chairman thanked officers for an informative and comprehensive report.

It was

**RESOLVED:** To Recommend that Cabinet approves the new one team Council fees for mandatory licensable HMOs set at:

- (a) £825 for a new five-year licence;
- (b) £133 for variations on an existing five-year licence
- (c) £514 for renewal of a five-year licence.

(The meeting concluded at 10:45 am)

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Chairman