

WELLBEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Wellbeing Policy Development Panel of Broadland District Council, held on Wednesday 6 October 2021 at 6pm at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: S Prutton (Chairman), A Crotch, J Neesam, C Ryman-Tubb and N Shaw

Other Members present: Councillor F Whymark (ex officio)

Officers in Attendance: The Assistant Director of Individuals and Families (M Pursehouse), the Housing Standards Senior Manager (K Philcox), the Housing and Health Manager (L Simmonds) and the Democratic Services Officer (L Arthurton)

43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE NO 8

No declarations of interest were made.

44 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Foulger, N Harpley, M Murrell and L Starling.

45 MINUTES

The minutes of the Wellbeing Panel meeting held on 12 May 2021 were confirmed as a correct record. *The Chairman noted that the 22 June 2021 meeting was inquorate and was held informally.*

Members considered the report of the Housing Standards Senior Manager which provided background and procedures to implement the new regulations alongside recovering costs. The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of the Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020, introduced an offence for protected sites to operate unless the Council was satisfied that the occupier or the appointed site manager was a 'Fit and Proper Person' to manage the site.

The New regulations provided the opportunity for local authorities to recover costs of the new procedure using a fee structure detailed in the MHCLG document 'Mobile Homes: a guide for local authorities on setting fees for fit and proper'.

Members noted that applications had already been received and would be approved once Cabinet had agreed the new policy. Once the applications were approved, a public register would be produced as part of the new policy requirements. The Housing Standards Senior Manager stated that there were currently four sites within the Broadland District Council area, reiterating that the policy did not cover holiday and private family areas. He added that there was also the potential to charge an annual fee through the new regulations. Officers confirmed that this was not currently being considered as it had already been incorporated under the existing 2013 Mobile Home Act.

Officers then answered questions from members. With regard to a rejected application, it was noted that there were other options for the site owner to consider, including nominating a site manager to make an application. Officers further explained that, if an application was rejected or approved with conditions, the applicant would have 28 days to provide representation. The application would then escalate to the Assistant Director for review. If the recommendation was upheld, the applicant could then go through a formal appeal.

In response to a further question regarding the outcome if the nominated applicant was rejected, officers confirmed that the site owner would then have 28 days to either make an application in respect of an alternative person or notify the authority of their intention to do so. If they notify the authority, they must then make an application within three months of the date of the final decision notice. If they continue to operate the site and do not make an application within these periods it will then become an offence. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing asked officers to add this timeframe in section 2.7 of the report for clarity. Officers added that the nominated person did not need to be the owner and could be a site manager.

A question was raised that if the nominated person changed during the five years, would the site have to pay again. Members noted that a fee would be charged to cover administration costs. Further reassurances were given by officers that the Council would try and work with the sites as much as they could.

A member of the Panel sought clarification about the distinctions of the different site categories focusing on the Private Family Residential plots. Officers confirmed that these sites typically held one to four mobile homes and were exclusive to family members and not included in the regulations.

A brief discussion followed, during which a question was raised about mixed holiday and mobile home parks. Officers confirmed that, due to licencing and planning agreements, mixed sites should not be in operation.

The Chairman thanked officers for their report, and it was then unanimously,

RESOLVED

To recommend to Cabinet

- A. The inclusion of the enforcement of new regulations as part of the Housing Standards responsibility.
- B. The approval of the fee structure detailed in the revised Mobile Homes Fees Policy
- C. To delegate authority to the Senior Housing Standards Manager to approve Fit and Proper Person applications.

47 INDEPENDENT LIVING ASSISTANCE POLICY

The Panel considered the report of the Housing and Health Manager which set out proposals on how the Integrated Housing Adaptations Team could assist vulnerable residents of all ages throughout the Broadland District. The new approach would create new ways of helping people and use funding efficiently.

Officers explained that the collaboration of Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council had allowed the opportunity to review practices from both organisations and create a new best practice.

Members noted that all grants were underpinned by statutory regulations governed by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act of 1996. These included providing grant aid to elderly, disabled and vulnerable residents for adaptations to their homes.

Officers gave further background details explaining that the 1996 Act, the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) had been introduced to enable Councils to provide a wide variety of discretionary assistance to residents. The RRO was used to create simplified assistance schemes to avoid the complex DFG process, reducing the demand for valuable Occupational Therapist resources.

When presenting the report, the Housing and Health Manager summarised the proposed actions of the report:

- The implication of the 'Independent Living Assistance Policy' which included the existing Independent Living Assistance Policy with refinements and the introduction of the new assistance packages detailed in appendix one and two of the report.
- The removal of the £1500 cap on the Care and Repair Service fee which would result in an uncapped 15 percent fee for all Care and Repair Service involvement regardless of property tenure.
- Keeping the existing land charges procedures in place. If a grant exceeded £5,000, a local land charge would be placed on the property but limited to a maximum of £10,000. If the property was sold or disposed of in 10 years of the completion of the adaptations, this fee would become due for payment. This Land Charge procedure was proposed to be introduced for the Gaining Independence Grant also.

The Chairman thanked officers for the detailed report and asked members of the Panel for comments. A member noted that the intended outcome of the report was to reduce waiting time and questioned if this was an increasing problem. Officers explained that the pandemic had had an effect alongside increasing demands of build contractors. The Council had begun to advertise for additional contractors to help with demand.

A question was raised regarding the charges set out in the report and whether other Councils were setting similar fees. Officers confirmed that other authorities were charging similar.

Regarding the accumulation of the money from the proposed Land Charges policy, it was confirmed that the money would go back into the grant budgets. The Assistant Director for Individuals and Families added that monthly reviews would help control and allocate money effectively from the budget.

Members noted that officers had consulted with Norfolk County Council on the new approach and officers were pleased to inform members that Norfolk County Council confirmed the new proposed policy was a Best Practice model.

Members stressed the need for grants to be accessible and officers confirmed that residents could access the forms through webforms, GPs, the County Council and by calling the Help Hub. The new system would also help people who previously would have been on the edge of grant funding with cases assessed individually.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing thanked officers for their work and looked forward to seeing the positive impact it would have on Broadland residents.

The recommendations laid out in the report were then proposed and seconded and it was,

RESOLVED

To recommend to Cabinet

1. The proposed 'Independent Living Assistance Policy';
2. The revised Care and Repair fees procedure;
- and
3. The revised Land Charges procedure.

48 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director for Individuals and Families took members through the work programme highlighting key areas. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing added that he was happy to see "Future Adult Care Integration" had been added to the work programme for review.

(The meeting concluded at 7:04pm)

Chairman