

Ashford Borough Council

Decisions taken by the Cabinet on 10 October 2019

Minute No	Topic	Decision
179	Housing - Current Delivery, Finance and Onward Strategy	<p>The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which, amongst other elements, included the Council's new Affordable Housing Delivery Plan 2019-2023 for endorsement. This set out how the right homes would be delivered in the right places and the strategic context in which the delivery programme sat, enabling work with Registered Providers and acquisitions (land and on-street purchases). He wanted to thank the Officers involved for producing such a detailed document. It was admittedly ambitious, but it would put Ashford at the forefront of delivering affordable social housing in Kent. The document was also holistic in the way it looked to deliver affordable housing in the Borough along the lines of the Council's wider corporate agenda – carbon neutrality by 2030, space standards, decent homes for all and attempting to remove the stigma regarding social housing. The document was also flexible in that it would allow for a change of direction if and when needed, in response to changing circumstances in future years.</p> <p>The report was opened up to Members and the following responses were given to questions/comments: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The commitment to carbon neutrality was something that was being closely examined by Housing and its contractors/partners in terms of embracing new heating methods and technologies. It was important to constantly challenge themselves to deliver the facilities to meet the targets that had been set. In terms of existing stock they were working with Engie to examine their expertise in energy provision and potential retro-fitting. This had of course not yet been costed, but a provision had been included within the business plan and this would be kept under review going forward.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief Executive and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT agreed to examine possibilities for the Council to be more flexible with the dates it took direct debit payments, particularly for those claiming Universal Credit. • The plan had been closely analysed in financial terms and had been found to be sound. The level of debt for the current proposed programme could be repaid within 20-23 years and was affordable and manageable within the life of the current business plan. Clearly though it would have to be kept under review on a year on year basis. • There was some risk to the Council if there was a significant and sustained increase in Right to Buys due to legislative changes, but this was not anticipated and the business plan did have flexibility to deal with changing circumstances. • In terms of disabled adaptations, the business plan did maintain the budget for these in the Council stock, including the support for the In-House Occupational Therapist post who worked on adaptations and Disabled Facilities Grants. In addition, the significant amount of work undertaken within the HRA to meet the needs of disabled people would continue. <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the progress in delivering the affordable housing programme in the HRA be noted. (ii) the impact of the Housing Department on the corporate agenda, as detailed in paragraph 4 of the report be noted. (iii) the priorities set out in paragraphs 5 & 6 of the report be agreed.
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