



CABINET

MEETING : Wednesday, 7th November 2018

PRESENT : Cllrs. James (Chair), Watkins, Cook, H. Norman and Organ

Others in Attendance

Cllrs Pullen and Coole

Managing Director

Corporate Director

Corporate Director

Head of Place

Head of Policy and Resources

Housing Officer

Solicitor

Democratic Services and Elections Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllr. Noakes

50. MINUTES

In relation to Minute 43 (Public Question Time) the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods drew Members' attention to the assurance given that the written answers produced subsequent to the meeting in this instance would be made publicly available. The Managing Director advised Members that minutes were intended to be a record of the meeting itself rather than subsequent matters. It was agreed that the written answers produced after the meeting be included on this occasion only as an assurance had been given.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following:

Minute 48 Armed Forces Community Covenant Update

that the words 'service personal' be replaced by 'service personnel'

Minute 43 Public Question Time

addition which was not available at the time of publication:

Written response of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods concerning City Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-19:

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07.11.18

I am informed that this strategy will be reviewed and updated next year in advance of 2020. Given the importance and sensitivities around the subject we will be consulting widely on a revised strategy to ensure that as many views as possible feed into it.

One of the specific points you raised was around the Council's role in the provision of a Sanctuary Scheme. The Council does provide a sanctuary scheme which as you may be aware enables us to create a safe room within somebody's home to protect them from the risk of domestic violence. The Council receive referrals for such support from the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GdAss) and where these works are required these are carried out by The Safe Partnership who are contracted County wide as a safe room and sanctuary provider.

In addition to a Sanctuary Scheme the Council also funds the provision of 'target hardening' measures such as window & door locks, alarms and fireproof letter box etc. Again the Council works closely with GdAss on a referral basis.

Both these schemes play a critical role in supporting those households who are at risk of domestic violence by providing them with the confidence to remain in their own home. In the financial year to date the Council has supported 43 individuals/households the majority of which have benefitted from target hardening measures.

Ultimately however where the risk of domestic violence is immediate then as a Council we will absolutely support a household to find a temporary place of safety to live whilst we work with partner agencies on longer term support and accommodation options.

In respect of empty homes, at the end of 2017 2.96 % of Gloucester's total housing stock was classed as long term empty (empty for more than 6 months). This compares reasonably to the national statistic of 2.6 %. Bringing empty properties back into use through statutory powers is extremely resource intensive and takes in the region of 18 – 36 months to conclude (where there is no legal appeal etc). The Council is absolutely committed to tackling those long term empty properties that are causing damage to neighbouring properties, attracting ASB or causing a visual blight on a community. In addition the Council currently charge 100% council tax on those properties that have been empty for more than 6 months (some exemptions apply i.e. property on the market for sale or owner hospitalised etc) in order to encourage owners to bring them back into use or indeed sell the property on.

Finally you have previously enquired as to the average stay in temporary accommodation for those households who we have a statutory duty to support. In 2017/2018 we provided temporary accommodation to 408 households of which 23 households were placed outside of County. The average stay in temporary accommodation during 2017 was 12 weeks.

Nationally the trend we are seeing (particularly in urban council's such as ours) is an increase in the number of people presenting to us as homeless. Exacerbating this situation is an increase in the number of applicants who are presenting with complex needs. This has had the impact of us needing to place more people in to temporary accommodation over the last couple of years.

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The other challenge that Gloucester faces (again as with many urban areas) is the availability of affordable housing both to buy and to rent and this means that being able to assist people to 'move on' to a more permanent place of residence is a challenge. Several months ago we set out our strategy in a Cabinet Report 'Planned Improvements to Manage Demand for Temporary Accommodation' as to how we intend to tackle the growing the reliance on temporary accommodation which may be of interest to you.

Time of commencement: 6.00 pm

Time of conclusion: 6.25 pm

Chair

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