

Cabinet – Tuesday 2 November 2021

Agenda Item 8 (References from Other Bodies)

Notes:

1. Only the Chair of the referring body / motion owner may speak on a referral from Council, a Committee, or Scrutiny Committee (Cabinet Procedure Rule 2.3 (d) & (e)).
2. Referrals from Council on 15 September 2021 (Tackling Violent Crime) and 20 October 2021, will be received at the meeting of Cabinet on 14 December 2021.

Referring Body
Community & Housing Scrutiny Committee (8 September 2021) (Councillor Ferrans)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Temporary Accommodation Update ii. New Non-Regeneration Council House Building Programme – Pre-Planning Processes

Community & Housing Scrutiny Committee (8 September 2021)

Temporary Accommodation Update

That the Cabinet be requested to consider lobbying the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, together with the MPs for Milton Keynes, by whatever means possible, in order to raise the Council's concerns about the lifting of the current ban on Section 21 evictions as it does not consider this the right time to lift this ban which is likely to lead to an increase in homelessness.

Response from Councillor Darlington (Cabinet Member for Adults, Housing and Healthy Communities):

As the responsible Cabinet member, I will of course write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, together with the MPs for Milton Keynes, in order to raise the Council's concerns about the lifting of the current ban on Section 21 evictions.

New Non-Regeneration Council House Building Programme – Pre-Planning Processes

- i) That the Committee endorses the recommendations set out in the officers' report and recommends to Cabinet that these be adopted as standard operating procedures:
 - a) That officers gain a more detailed understanding of the site in question by undertaking a detailed site constraints survey in order to highlight all underground utilities etc that may affect the viability of a site's development. A capacity study that reflects the Council's current planning policy should also be completed.

- b) That following these steps, work must be completed on an early site financial viability appraisal before any engagement is undertaken. This will not only help ensure that only deliverable sites are progressed in a timely manner but will help keep stakeholders informed and to manage expectations as it is important that these are not raised to levels that are not deliverable.
 - c) That the Housing Delivery Team undertakes an outline financial appraisal of the site, making use of the Proval system. This financial appraisal will make use of recently agreed global financial parameters, which have been pre-agreed with the Finance Department.
 - d) That the Housing Delivery Team engages with internal stakeholders across the Council to gather an understanding of the requirements and restrictions that may impact on any potential new scheme.
 - e) That once the new steps above have been completed and the initial financial appraisal demonstrates that the site might support development (at an approved value for money level), officers engage with their relevant Cabinet Member, followed by local ward and town or parish councillors to discuss the principle of council housebuilding on any specific site.
 - f) That development briefs for new council house sites are produced for all sites, regardless of size and potential number of houses.
 - g) That the layouts proposed in development briefs be scrutinised carefully before publication for consultation to ensure that they do indeed meet planning policy in order to avoid creating unnecessary concern among residents.
- ii) That individual Cabinet Members respond effectively where clashes between portfolios are identified in relation to new proposals for housing sites.
 - iii) That the Cabinet gives a commitment that these smaller development sites will be distributed across the borough and not be limited to long-standing council estates in order to promote the integration of mixed tenure communities in Milton Keynes.
 - iv) That the Cabinet writes to the Government requesting that the current rules on prudential borrowing and the risk regime for council housebuilding be reviewed to provide a more favourable financial environment to enable local authorities to meet their obligations to provide sufficient social housing for those in need in their areas and writes to the Milton Keynes MPs to request their support.

Response from Councillor Darlington (Cabinet Member for Adults, Housing and Healthy Communities):

Working closely with finance colleagues, the housing delivery team have put in place a range of gateways required to bring forward new non-regeneration council house building schemes. These gateways begin from the very inception of a new scheme through to its completion.

We will work with teams throughout the council to ensure we engage from a scheme's outset to ensure that new schemes are delivered with active engagement from

relevant departments and with local ward, parish and town councillors helping ensure local knowledge and relevant feedback is understood.

Due to the overarching need for more council and affordable homes throughout Milton Keynes we will look to take opportunities throughout the borough as they arise.

With regard to (iv) Local authorities have flexibility to set their own reasonable prudential indicators for the HRA so a change in national requirements would not result in a more favourable financial environment. We do believe however, that given the extent of the national housing crisis, a more favourable borrowing rate specific to house building and the HRA, would enable greater investment in building new homes and the Cabinet will write to the Government requesting this is considered. There are many other factors driven by national policy that have a greater impact on the ability to invest in new housing, including right to buy, grant levels and process and rent setting policy, which we will continue to highlight and challenge.