

CABINET

13 APRIL 2021

Index

Revised Housing Assistance Policy	2
Review of Committee Meetings	3
Garrick Theatre	5

REVISED HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

1. Decision:

The Cabinet:

- 1.1 Approved the revised Housing Assistance Policy at Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report.
- 1.2 Delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing and Health in consultation with the Head of Service to make minor amendments to the policy from time to time, and also make changes to the discretionary assistance set out in Appendix A of the policy within approved budgets.

2. Statement of Reasons:

The Housing Assistance Policy sets out the types of financial assistance the council offers to help residents who are disabled or vulnerable to remain in their own homes. Following a review of the policy and consideration of various options by the Community Housing and Health Overview and Scrutiny committee, this report seeks approval of a revised policy at Appendix 1. As well as setting out the mandatory grants we provide for disabled adaptations, the revised policy now includes the availability of wider discretionary assistance with an increased amount of Disabled Facilities Top-up Grant and the introduction of a new Discretionary Contributions Grant, which will be funded from our ring fenced DFG budget underspends. In the revised policy, all discretionary assistance is included in an Appendix which will allow greater flexibility to amend schemes and introduce new assistance as the need arises. We are therefore seeking approval of a recommendation to give delegated authority to the Cabinet Member to make minor amendments and introduce other discretionary assistance that may be needed in the future.

3. Any Alternative Options:

To do nothing and make no changes to the current Housing Assistance Policy:

- This is not recommended as the review of the policy has indicated certain issues which need to be addressed.
- To retain the current policy for administering HRA and EE grants may mean a continued underspend of these budgets.

To not introduce the discretionary assistance options:

- By increasing the top up grant and introducing discretionary contributions assistance, more grants will be carried out thus increasing the annual spend and enabling more residents to live safely in their own homes.

To explore other options not identified.

REVIEW OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1. Decision:

1.1 The Cabinet recommended that Council approve the following updates to the committee structure:

- That Parish Forum is removed as a constituted committee and become informal meetings to aid information flow and training.
- The District Board is removed as a constituted committee. Any statutory function carried out by this meeting is delegated to officers and relevant plans and decisions notified to Cabinet members and committees where appropriate.
- That the structure for Overview & Scrutiny with the four existing committees be changed to a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- That the proposed Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider items earlier in the decision making process to aid policy development and review whether stated outcomes from decisions, strategies and policies have been achieved via effective use of member task groups.
- That mandatory training is developed for all the scrutiny committee members and additional mandatory training for chair, vice chair and task group chair roles. Gender neutral terms will be used for all Committees from this point.
- Full Council will appoint the Chair. The Vice-Chair will be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and all task group Chairs are appointed by the Chair of O&S.
- That an Independent Review Panel (IRP) is commissioned to assess the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) payable to any roles affected by this review. Any findings are kept within existing budgets.
- That an evaluation of the effectiveness of the new committee structure be undertaken after the next District Council Local Elections in 2023.
- That the relevant sections of the Constitution be updated to reflect the new committee structure with clear but adaptable processes to support effective decision making.

2. Statement of Reasons:

The Committee system in local government is at the heart of the decision making process and allows all elected Members to consider, deliberate and, where appropriate decide the best for the area and people they represent.

Reviewing this system periodically is essential to ensuring it continues to work effectively and gives the greatest return on investment for Member and Officer resources.

With the exception of Planning Committee, there has not been a review of the Committee System at Lichfield District Council since 2014 when the Overview & Scrutiny Committees were reconfigured. There have been numerous changes in strategic priorities since then with the latest Strategic Plan approved in 2020.

The Strategic (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee created a Member Task Group to undertake the review and investigate options to ensure an effective Committee System.

The Task Group compiled a number of recommendations for Strategic (Overview & Scrutiny) to consider and these were agreed unanimously to be put to Cabinet for approval and recommendation to Full Council.

3. Any Alternative Options:

Members can choose not to change the number or format of committees, frequency of meetings or their effectiveness and the status quo would remain. Current O&S work programmes and Committees are not aligned to the strategic plan and currently operate in silos which can only be managed via regular coordination meetings. This limits officer capacity to support legal and governance functions and creates additional budget pressures. It will also continue to limit capacity of senior officers reporting to formal committee structures and meeting date availability generally.

GARRICK THEATRE

1. Decision:

The Cabinet:

Approved that the relationship with the Lichfield Garrick Theatre Ltd revert to a Strategic Partnership Agreement.

Approved funding of the Strategic Partnership Agreement to the values outlined in paragraph 3.13 of the Cabinet report.

Approved the Strategic Partnership Agreement detail a smaller number of more measureable outcomes, to better assess the contribution to LDC's Strategic Objectives.

Delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Parks & Waste, in conjunction with the Head of Operational Services to enter into a Strategic Partnership Agreement with the Garrick Theatre Limited on the basis of the principles outlined in the Cabinet report.

2. Statement of Reasons:

The Council's agreement with the Lichfield Garrick Theatre Ltd (the Garrick Trust) for the management of the Lichfield Garrick Theatre expired on 31 March 2021. The Garrick Trust's lease on the premises runs to 31 January 2029.

In 2019 the previous Strategic Partnership Agreement was replaced with a Concessionary Services Agreement (CSA) to allow the Garrick Trust to recover VAT and therefore improve their financial position. The CSA is limited to 2 years to remain beneath the procurement threshold.

This report outlines the options to replace the CSA.

3. Any Alternative Options:

The lease with ancillary services is considered a "novel" approach. This option was explored as a potential opportunity to fund a compliant means of continuing taxable supply to the Trust so they may continue to benefit from VAT reclaim.

However legal and tax advice has indicated it will be extremely difficult to draft a lease that achieves procurement compliance in a format that can be considered taxable supply.

Advice is that the **Concessionary Services Agreement** could now be extended by a further year. The impact of Covid on the theatre industry means the Trust effectively lost a year of operation and benefit from the CSA.

However the CSA would only be compliant for a maximum of 12 months and would therefore not provide the long-term solution sought.

If LDC were to **terminate the lease and retender for a theatre operator** would allow a longer-term CSA to be entered into to secure VAT recovery. The formal market testing would avoid any procurement risk.

LDC cannot determine the lease prematurely, therefore this option would be contingent on the Trust voluntarily surrendering the lease. Moreover, given the damage to the theatre industry from

Covid restrictions, attempting to procure a theatre provider now could lead to a failure to appoint an operator or appointing an operator on worse terms than the current.

LDC could **cease to fund the operation of the theatre** at the end of the current CSA. A cliff-edge ceasing of support would be extremely difficult for the Trust to manage, especially given the very challenging state of the theatre industry. This would present a very significant risk to the ongoing operation of the theatre and a substantial PR risk to LDC.

(Councillor A Yeates declared an interest in this item and was not present during the discussion thereof).

