COUNCIL – 6 JANUARY 2020

STATEMENT BY CLLR JANET JEFFERSON
CABINET MEMBER FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

HOUSING

Selective Licensing

On 26 November Scarborough Magistrates fined a landlord of properties on North Marine Road £35,000 and awarded costs to the Council of £1980 for failing to keep to a range of Selective Licensing conditions. These included failing to maintain the fire detection system, failing to undertake repairs and allowing waste to accumulate in the garden of the property.

This case was important, because whilst we have successfully prosecuted landlords in the past under the Housing Act and have also prosecuted landlords for failing to license their properties, this was the first successful prosecution for failing to meet Selective Licence conditions. The level of fine imposed by the Court shows how important it is for landlords to protect their tenants and look after properties.

The majority of landlords within the Selective Licensing areas comply with the requirements placed on them and generally undertake the work requested to improve the standard of their properties. However where landlords do not work with us to do this we shall not hesitate in taking formal legal proceedings against them.

Selective Licensing has to date enabled the Council to undertake over 1000 inspections to rented homes throughout the Castle, North Bay and Central Wards. This work is resulting in demonstrable improvements to the housing conditions in these areas. Members shall be aware that proposals are now being considered to extend Selective Licensing into the Ramshill and Weaponness Wards and I look forward to receiving a further report from officers when the consultation on these proposals is concluded.

Older Persons Housing

The development of a new Extra Care Scheme for older people at Filey Fields is now underway. This scheme shall provide 70 much needed homes in total all of which are affordable including 35 rented and 35 shared ownership flats. This scheme is being developed by Housing 21, a specialist housing association. In addition the Extra Care Scheme at the old Rugby Club site and Scalby Road is nearing completion and due for handover in February. That scheme developed by Home Group shall provide a further 63 units of accommodation, all of which are affordable and rented. Members may also be aware that the Beyond Housing Scheme at the old Braeburn House site in Eastfield has also just completed. This scheme provides a further 29 rented homes for older people.
Together these three developments shall provide over 160 new homes for older people. The Council has been integral in working with the housing associations to bring these developments forward, including supporting the investment case to Homes England and in the case of Braeburn House, negotiating the original deal to release the site with NYCC.

**Domestic Violence Refuge**

I am also able to provide an update on progress regarding the development of a much need refuge for victims of domestic violence in the Borough. I am happy to report that officers are working jointly with North Yorkshire County Council on this proposal. A process is underway to select a development partner and the outcomes of this shall be reported back to Cabinet in April. I am aware of the importance given to this project from Members of the Council and the development of this refuge is very much a priority.

**Air Source Heat Pumps**

Through the Council’s Home Improvement Agency, we have been working in partnership with Ryedale District Council to secure £1.2M from the Government’s Warm Homes Fund, to install over 100 air source heat pumps across the two district Council areas. Members shall be aware that the burning of fossil fuels to heat homes is one of the main contributors to carbon emissions. Air source heat pumps provide a technical solution to this in that they absorb heat from the outside air. This heat can then be used to heat radiators, underfloor heating systems, or warm air convectors and hot water in your home. The provision of these new heating systems is being targeted within the most deprived wards of the Borough, and when combined with other improvements to retro-fit homes, including improved insulation, shall make a significant difference. I look forward to seeing how this scheme progresses over the coming months and hope this is the first of many such initiatives going forward to improve energy efficiency within the housing stock. If Members would like any further information on this scheme please contact the Home Improvement Agency.

**HARBOURS**

**Whitby Piers Coast protection scheme**

The final ‘snagging’ works connected with the Whitby Piers Coast Protection Scheme are almost fully completed. The large area of Endeavour Wharf utilised as Balfour Beatty’s compound has now been demobilised and is available for parking purposes. Both the West and East piers are now fully accessible to the general public.

**Whitby East Pier Bridge**

The footbridge, which weighs 9 tonnes and is 27 metres long, is now temporarily situated on Endeavour Wharf adjacent to the harbour side.
bridge was delivered by a low loader and offloaded by crane. It will remain until plans for installing it are finalised and weather and sea conditions for the complex operation are favourable. Once installed between the end of the East Pier and the pier extension, some identified works will be required on the extension. This essential work will allow for refurbishment of handrails and timbers where necessary, prior to opening the footbridge to the public. It has been funded by the Marine Management Organisation’s (MMO) European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF), Scarborough Borough Council and Whitby Town Council.

Scarborough Harbour East Pier ‘Boom’ Bridge

Repairs have now been completed to the support structures of the bridge between the Lighthouse and East Pier at Scarborough Harbour. The supports had reached the end of their serviceable life causing a short closure of the bridge whilst replacements could be manufactured and installed. The bridge is now available for pedestrians to utilise and will remain in position until the spring.

FINANCE

Council officers have been collating the budget proposals for 2020/21 and beyond and the draft proposals will be presented to Cabinet in January. A series of budget seminars have been scheduled for Members to go through the proposals in detail and Members are encouraged to attend.

Following Cabinet agreement in July (19/138) officers are currently in the process of replacing the Council’s IT cash receipting system with a new Cloud-based product. The system is used to take card payments from customers as well as by officers to pay in cash and cheques and allocate payments to services. The new system will, for a lower annual fee, be more user-friendly for both customers and staff, provide additional functionality and ensure that the Council can comply with stringent regulations in respect of the taking of card payments. The system is currently being tested and the rollout of training has commenced. If all of this is successful then a phased go-live will commence mid-December and be fully complete by the end of January.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Two new electric vehicles have joined the Council’s fleet. These vehicles will be used by our public conveniences team to clean the network. The vehicles are an important first step in diversifying the fleet and we will be monitoring their impact over the coming months with a view to rolling the technology out further to reduce our fossil fuel usage.

Our Environmental Services team recently submitted a proposal to the University of Hull’s Plastics Innovation Fund to look at alternatives to the single use blue plastic sacks we give residents who haven’t got room for a
blue bin. This application has been successful and we have already started work on the project and look forward to gathering the views of Councillors, residents and our collection crews on various options.

Despite some of the wettest November weather I can remember our Environmental Services team have held a number of community tree planting days with local residents in Eastfield. In total over 2000 trees were planted and should act as a lasting improvement to the area and the local environment. The team will be holding different events throughout the Borough over the coming year and would encourage all to get involved.