

MINUTES

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

22 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present:

Members:

Councillors: Mahmood (Chairman)
Banks
Mrs Bassadone
Link
Silwal
Timmis
W Wyatt-Lowe

Councillors: Councillor Griffiths (Portfolio Holder for Housing) and Councillor Harden (Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services)

Officers: Julie Still Group Manager, Housing Development
Andy Vincent Group Manager (Tenants & Leaseholders)
Kayley Johnston Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

44 MINUTES

The minutes of the Housing and Community OSC meeting on 8 June 2016 were agreed by Members

45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Cllr, Imarni, Cllr Conway, Cllr Hearn, and Co-Opted TLC Members Cook, Howard and Horn.

Cllr Fethney and Adeleke were absent.

46 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There was no declaration of interest.

47 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

48 **CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN**

None

49 **BUDGET MONITORING Q1 2016/17**

Unfortunately no officer was present to present the report.

Cllr Silwal emailed a question to Richard Baker.

There was a repairs and maintenance cost 305k spent over budgets, My question was:- Is there any limitations of expenditure ? How much we can spend within a financial year or we have to spend as per requirements

R Bakers response was that the budget acts as the formal limit on expenditure. Situations will obviously arise which will cause expenditure to be under or over budget and key variances are reported to Senior Management and Members throughout the year. Action plans are put into place where possible to bring spend back to the budgeted level, and virements/supplementary estimates are requested as appropriate on the advice of the Section 151 Officer in line with the Financial Regulations.

Action: None

Outcome: Follow up

50 **HOUSING REPORT**

Vincent kindly presented this report on behalf of E Brooks.

A Vincent summarised the report giving a brief overview on key points 1-8 outlined in the report.

A Vincent was happy to take questions on the report.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to page 17 there is nothing on trends or how other authorities are doing, it would be nice if we could compare data.

A Vincent explained a bench marking exercise which they were doing, this currently shows satisfaction. He is happy to bring the report to the committee when it's available hopefully before Christmas.

W Wyatt-Lowe also referred to page 24 the risk register and asked if anything had come up in the business plan?

A Vincent explained that the meeting had been postponed to early October; feedback will be given at the next overview and scrutiny meeting.

Cllr Timmis asked why the new affordable homes had no data given.

A Vincent said he will feedback this information to the committee, he believes the information wasn't available at the time of the report deadline.

Cllr Timmis stated that we are below target with 90% repairs done, and asked if there was a backlog.

Cllr Griffith said that when the budget was previously done for this year the backlog wasn't taken into consideration and the budget wasn't increased. However the budget for next year is currently being done and this is taken into consideration so the budget has been increased to resolve under achievement.

Cllr Mahmood added to that saying with repairs maintenance we have failed.

Cllr Griffith stated that Osborne's had some issues around staffing, a valued member of the team had left and that they found it hard to replace that person. It then takes a while to build it back up to the standard which they previously had. It is being turned around and they are improving again and plans are now in place to stop similar future problems.

We have granted Osborne's a further one year's contract because the KPI's have gone up.

Cllr Mahmood referred to item 4 page 16, refugees - We have taken on two families so far and I see that the first family were involved with lots of charities etc. but I haven't heard anything about the second family, its gone quiet.

A Vincent stated that both families only came yesterday and they have both been given the same support from organisations and charities.

Cllr Bassadone asked if they were in Council houses in the same ward.

A Vincent confirmed that they were in Council houses but they were both in different wards.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to sheltered and supported housing on the risk register, what is done by County supporting old people?

A Vincent said that he thinks that the two terminologies are getting mixed up; none of those schemes are run by County they just cover the care side.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe referred to the lettings agency and asked how it will be tied in?

Cllr Griffith said it's going to come to overview and Scrutiny and is due to go to Cabinet in November. She added that it's not a lettings service it's a finding house service, we want to encourage landlords to come to us.

Cllr Timmis added to that saying if London Council house someone over here for a set period of time then they became homeless, is it our duty to re house them.

A Vincent confirmed that that was correct however DBC don't have a massive issue with this as other Councils tend to locate people to cheaper areas so the issue here is very small.

Cllr Griffith added that it is legal what they are doing and to prevent it from happening here we need to get our landlords on our list.

Cllr Mahmood asked if we take Landlords on for a minimum term.

Cllr Griffith said it's normally 6 months but the lettings policy explains all this.

Cllr Mahmood said that the new format for the housing services plan is very smart. He asked that why on page 39 the new build Wood house is marketed by Jarvis.

Cllr Griffith confirmed that they are the builders so they market it with us.

Cllr Mahmood asked what local challenge was.

A Vincent confirmed that its work within the homeless, a pier organisation does a challenge and looks where we are and makes recommendations, we then do the same for them which cuts costs.

Cllr Mahmood also asked why the complaints for the staff survey report had gone up.

A Vincent said it's not necessarily that complaints have gone up we have just made the process easier for people to complain.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to page 55, every figure deteriorating can they see the last report to see why they have gone down.

A Vincent said that if it's only a small change then it could be down to sampling, the only concerns are if it's a big drop, this survey came out when Osborne's were having issues so we suspect that in some areas the figures will have gone back up.

Action: To feedback 'new affordable homes' data.

Outcome: Report was noted.

51 RESIDENT SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1

J Still presented the report confirming that there wasn't much new added since the last update. She clarified figures and gave an update on verge hardening, she also gave an update on the additional safeguarding figures and where we sat in the County.

J Still was happy to take questions on the report.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe asked J Still if she was happy with how safeguarding works.

J Still confirmed that she is a lot happier than she was, it's more structured. They meet quarterly, this way they get more information and work done, the process is a lot better and it's now a quick turnaround.

Cllr Mahmood said that he has seen all crime has gone up, he asked if that was because we now report more.

J Still confirmed that we still sit in the middle regarding crime figures. Hemel Hempstead is safe and compared to 5 years ago crime figures are still down even though they have gone up in the last year.

Cllr Mahmood referred to Love Your Neighbourhood, we didn't have one in this quarter.

J Still said that was due to the Queen's birthday taking priority. Next year's event is planned for Warners end and Chaulden.

Cllr Mahmood asked how you decide which ward gets priority and how you decide.

N Harden stated that there is a project called Mosaic to find out what wards have the greatest need and what we need to focus on.

Cllr Mahmood referred to 'Let's Dance' in the Old Town Hall, we need an article in the digest to promote it.

J Still confirmed how successful this project was and yes we do need to shout about it and it is due to go in the digest.

N Harden confirmed that 'Let's Dance' is a get set go project and it's the most successful expanding project we have had, however we still need a trainer to run the events and to put more on, this is something they are looking at due to the expanding project.

Cllr Mahmood referred to verge hardening, it's very costly in some areas, and asked if finance is considered.

J Still said that in some cases there is a need for verge hardening and they understand it's costly in some areas.

Cllr Link referred to the report, if there isn't a cost there for verge hardening is that because it hasn't been priced up yet?

J Still said that in regards to Cramford Place she is not sure if it can take place as she believes there is a minimum requirement.

Cllr Mahmood asked if it was possible to get a Youth Connexions report.

Cllr Banks asked why Grovehill Youth Connexions meet on the field.

J Still confirm that is was because there was an issue with equipment being damaged so we stopped renting to them as they were paying very little rent as it was, this is not the first time they have been moved on due to this issue.

Cllr Mahmood added that this should be highlighted to County.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe added that there was a meeting this week that spoke about this. HCC have highlighted issues on this it would be useful if we could make them aware of what we know, could all information be sent to Richard Roberts please.

Cllr Harden said it would be useful if someone could attend an OSC meeting so we can have questions answered.

Cllr Mahmood confirmed that he will write his concerns to HCC.

Action: J Still to email Members with details on verge hardening for Cramford place.
J Still to note Youth Connexion concerns and Cllr Mahmood to write to County.

Outcome: Report was noted.

52 **DE-POOLING**

A Vincent gave a brief overview on the report asking the committee Members to consider whether and how the flexibility that de-pooling allows should be used to impact on the overall charges tenants receive, and to forward this to Cabinet for their consideration.

He also added that the 1% decrease will also apply to sheltered housing.

A Vincent was happy to take comments on the report.

The committee Members had a brief discussion on what the charges cover and what the monies will actually be spent on.

It was agreed by Members that the cost will remain the same and each year if costs go up then we need to increase our cost.

Action: None

Outcome: Report was noted.

53 **PAY TO STAY**

A Vincent gave a verbal update on Pay to Stay; he confirmed that we are still waiting on guidance from the Government so Pay to Stay won't happen in the next financial Year.

There were no questions asked

Action: None

Outcome: Noted

54 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Agreed

55 **WORK PROGRAMME OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2016-2017**

A Vincent to Speak to Natasha Brathwaite to find out when the Lettings Policy is coming to overview and scrutiny.

The Meeting ended at 9.09 pm