

## MINUTES

### HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

6 SEPTEMBER 2017

**Present:**

**Members:**

**Councillors:** Gbola Adeleke  
Armytage  
Banks  
Mrs Bassadone  
Conway  
England  
Fethney  
Imarni (Vice-Chairman)  
Mahmood (Chairman)  
Silwal  
W Wyatt-Lowe

**Officers:**

Caroline Souto	Financial Planning & Analysis Team Leader
Julie Still	Group Manager – Resident Services
Elliott Brooks	Assistant Director – Housing
Jodi cooper	Housing Policy and Quality Management Officer
Oli Jackson	Team Leader - Supported Housing
Kayley Johnston	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

**115**            **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Housing and Community OSC meeting on 5 July 2017 were agreed by members present and signed by the Chairman.

**116**            **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received from Councillor Hearn and Emily Rae Maxwell (Officer).

**117**            **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There was no declaration of interest.

**118**                    **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

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

None

**120**                    **Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT - BUDGET**

C Souto presented the report as a replacement for R Baker. The purpose of this report is to present the Council's forecast outturn for 2017/18 as at 30 June 2017

*C Souto was happy to take questions.*

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to page 7 paragraph 4.6 Contribution towards Expenditure - £90k over-achievement of income, how do we have restricted covenants. Are we charging home owners access rights so they pay us a fee.

E Brooks said that this related to certain properties, in places like Aldbury, where there are certain restrictions over land owned by the Housing Revenue Account, and we can charge for lifting of these restrictions.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe referred to 4.7 Supervision and Management and queried the pressure of £374k relating to Osborne pension liability and could an explanation be provided. E Brooks explained that this is due to a change in pension legislation that now means that bonus payments are pensionable whereas they were not pensionable previously. He also stated that the pension contribution is still an estimate.

Cllr Adeleke referred to page 7, 4.7 he asked this question at F&R last night which will be transferred to H&C OSC. Are the underspends in Housing Cleaning and Supporting People affecting the performance of the teams?

E Brooks stated that these are areas where we have vacancies or a high turnover of staff. In terms of the service being affected, staff tend to buddy up which is found to help, however this is constantly being looked at.

E Brooks added to that stating cleaning was paid at overtime and the service isn't affected.

Cllr England referred to page 8, 4.10 General Fund Major Variances, could line 120 accelerated spend on the Verge Hardening programme be explained.

J Still said that the budget can be spent earlier than originally planned to deliver new parking spaces more quickly than originally anticipated, so the money was moved forward from the budget for next financial year into this financial year.

Cllr Mahmood asked about slippages and if they were a good or bad thing.

E Brooks said it depends what it is, some are good and some aren't. In the case of the new build programme, a new manager has come in and is taking a little time to evaluate the current schemes and ensure that we are undertaking all the necessary checks.

Action: None

Outcome: The report was noted.

## **121                    Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT - HOUSING**

E Brooks presented the report, highlighting the red PI's on the third page in the homelessness, it's not due to the team not performing its due to the number of people coming through the doors.

N Brathwaite also added that they did have vacancies in this team which also added to that. They are competing against other councils and have had challenges with the salaries which have now been re graded.

E Brooks also stated that he was also aware of stage 1 complaints; it's a new system with teething problems. Page 4, TL 41: using my account facilities we are behind but it's a yearly target and there has been a 200 people increase in using it.

N Brathwaite said that the legislation is due to change in April 2018, we are expected to receive new code of guidance in October and staff will be trained then.

Cllr England referred to page 19, the red indicators are lower than last year.

E Brooks said he wasn't sure how accurate it was because of the changeover in the two systems. He accepts it's red and knows why just can't clarify the exact figure. An accurate record should reflect on the next quarter.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe asked how other Councils were with numbers of homelessness.

N Brathwaite stated that Dacorum, Watford and St Albans are the worst areas. We need to work with them and be robust so there is no play off. This is constantly managed.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe asked about Buckinghamshire.

N Brathwaite said currently we have no data on that we may have to work closely with other areas.

E Brooks stated that it will affect other departments in the Council, such as CSU, Benefits, Legal and Julie Still's Team; he is due to meet CMT to discuss to ensure other areas are aware of the impact. There has been a proposal for a short term role to monitor this, an update will be provided to the committee.

Cllr Adeleke said that last year we concentrated on prevention, are we now changing that?

N Brathwaite said no it's not being changed.

Cllr Adeleke asked if we were getting any help from central government.

N Brathwaite stated that we had already received some funding in April. They are expecting some money for 'new burdens funding' but not sure on figures, it is hoped the announcement will be early 2018.

Cllr Imarni wanted to commend the team, stating they should be proud.

Action: see above

Outcome: Report was noted.

## **122                    Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT - RESIDENT SERVICES**

J still presented the report highlighting the following, page 28 we are in the same position for ASB. The cycle hub open was very successful and in the last quarter there has been lots of safeguarding training.

*J Still was happy to take questions from Members.*

Cllr Bassadone referred to 5.2, there was an article in the Gazette on this, do you have any comments.

J Still said that the gazette was talking about a 2014 policy, which is out for consultation. There is support and that's not the nature of the public space order. We do take legal action; there is currently one court case in progress due to breach.

Councillor Griffith arrived at 20:10

N Brathwaite said that not all articles are correct and we are trying to stop this behaviour, there is a lot of work around aggressive begging.

Cllr Imarni referred to page 34, the service response to ASB is Amber, she asked if it was due to staff shortage.

J still believes so, the court progress is long so this could also reflect it. They are short staffed and staffing should be looked at, she is happy to raise this.

Cllr W Wyatt-lowie said the report is on staff training, what percentages of staff have had training and what on.

J Still said it depends on staffs job roles, the target for safeguarding we aim to get 100% but domestic abuse isn't essential. Every member of staff have to read the safeguarding policy when they join.

WRAP everyone has to be trained, we are doing train the trainer courses on this as there is pressure to get everyone trained. 90% of people have been trained at level 1. 50/60% have been trained for safeguarding adults and a refresher is due every 3 years. There has been 600 people trained on WRAP in the last 2 years, this also includes front line staff such as Osbornes and Sun Realm.

Cllr England referred to PSPO's – rough sleepers aren't all what they seem, is a fixed penalty a punishment.

J Still said unfortunately we don't have street resources to monitor this. Officers are currently being training and accredited with Police powers.

Action: None.

Outcome: Report was noted.

## **123                    DENS**

J Still presented the report stating that we are performing well with no issues. The report is to seek member's views and input on the proposed safeguarding children and adults at risk policy and procedures.

*N Brathwaite was happy to take questions.*

Cllr Mahmood referred to page 43 payment of money to DBC, are we 100% it's the right thing to do.

N Brathwaite said that licencing has changed and is managed effectively by an arrears member of staff.

Cllr Mahmood asked if there were more plans for places like the DENS or is DENS sufficient.

N Brathwaite said the hostel manager is a member of DBC so it's managed effectively and the communication is good, it will be reviewed again in 6-12 months to determine whether we should re-tender for the management or consider other options, it has a strong performance and is successful, we need to consider how we manage the asset in future. We are due to start work with Homelessness Link in December this year to focus on Housing First, a project to assist single homeless people, but there are no plans to have a new hostel.

Action: None

Outcome: Report Noted

## **124                    SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

N Brathwaite presented the report, highlighting that the second year is well underway. The aim of the contract is to improve outcomes for single homeless clients, reduce the cycle of repeat homelessness and eradicate street homelessness by working in partnership with DENS.

*J still was happy to take questions.*

O Jackson added to that staying they have a good handle on it and they are training staff on capacity champions.

J still also added that they had raised the profile of human trafficking.

Cllr Bassadone referred to page 70 1.1, highlighting that she was concerned about the last bit, is that politically correct.

J still said that they do have these issues at the adventure playground, it is challenging. We have had advice on it, she will add a sentence around transgender.

Cllr Mahmood asked if we were supporting white ribbon week.

J Still said yes, there is a programme of events downstairs in the Forum.

Action: None

Outcome: Report Noted.

## **125                    UPDATE ON TENANTS INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

N Brathwaite presented the report on behalf of E Rae-Maxwell who gave her apologies.

The purpose of this report is to provide the committee with an update on the housing services progress against the commitments set out in the Tenant Involvement strategy 2016 - 2020.

N Brathwaite was happy to take questions.

Cllr Bassadone referred to 2.8 the recruitment date for Cllr Imarni was wrong.

N Brathwaite to amend this.

Cllr Fethney wanted to congratulate the team on the case studies, they were excellent. He suggested that it may be worth asking people to register with details at the bottom of the leaflet.

Cllr Griffith added to that saying that a lot of hard work had gone into this and would be grateful if Councillors could show their support by coming to the events.

Action: 2.8 - amend Cllr Imarni's start date

Outcome: Report Noted.

## **126                    ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

N Brathwaite introduced the report on behalf of J Cooper introduced the report, the purpose of this report is to consult with the committee and offer the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Policy.

*J Cooper/N Brathwaite was happy to take questions on the report.*

Cllr Imarni referred to 1.41. Are 5 points enough to get people to attend the training.

N Brathwaite said it depends what property they are applying for. A 2 bed can go for 100 points and a 3 bed can go for 20 points. 5 points is sufficient.

Cllr Imarni asked if the training is making a difference.

N Brathwaite said training has changed; it covers key areas and is very effective.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to page 140 sections 5, could you please clarify as this is a little confusing, if a married couple split are we not discriminating against the person who was there.

N Brathwaite said this is very challenging for the team. They do their best to avoid allocating two 2 bedroom properties, we need to ensure its being managed effectively and do take court papers into consideration and ensure that management of housing stock is balanced with demand/legal requirements.

Cllr Imarni asked what happens when a separated couple have shared custody.

N Brathwaite said again there are challenges here, they do support them and again it's a challenge for best use of property. If a person has an extra bedroom they would pay bedroom tax and if they earned a lot then they could privately rent so again each case is looked at and supported.

Cllr Silwal asked if we are notifying people of the removal of register.

J Cooper said yes they do communicate with them and they can amend their application if anything has changed and if applicants don't meet the criteria they will be notified and removed.

Cllr England referred to page 140 could we update the correct term. The policy needs to recognise that a divorce is hard on kids; shared parenting is on the increase and puts pressure on housing.

N Brathwaite noted this.

Cllr Griffith said that when you play with the policy some will win and some will lose, as much as we would like to solve every problem its impossible and we have limited stock.

Action: None

Outcome: Report Noted.

## **127                    WORK PROGRAMME**

Agreed

The Meeting ended at 9.18 pm