

MINUTES

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

5 SEPTEMBER 2018

Present:

Members:

Councillors: Adeleke
Mrs Bassadone
Conway
England
Imarni (Vice-Chairman)
Mahmood (Chairman)
W Wyatt-Lowe

Officers: Ricky Lang Mechanical and Electrical Team Leader
Nigel Howcutt Assistant Director (Finance & Resources)
Fiona Williamson Assistant Director (Housing)
Linda Roberts Assistant Director (Performance, People & Innovation)
Kayley Johnston Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

220 MINUTES

The minutes of the Housing and Community OSC meeting on 04th July 2018 were agreed by Members and signed by the Chair.

221 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Cllr Hearn and Pringle.

222 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There was no declaration of interest.

223 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

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

None

225 **Q1 BUDGET REPORT**

N Howcutt presented the report in Fiona Jumps absence. He also introduced himself as this was his first time at a housing committee meeting. He highlighted the pressures in the budget and was happy to take questions from members.

Cllr Bassadone asked if anyone has raised any issues in regards to paying too much in water charges.

N Howcutt said no he wasn't aware of any issues.

Cllr Adeleke arrived at 19:37

Cllr Griffiths added to that saying tenants that claim benefits can now apply for a discount straight to the water boards.

Cllr Imarni highlighted that as the Chair of the tenants and leaseholder committee people aren't impressed with the consultation process, so this may come up. Going forward she recommended that it's better to consult tenants and to appear as transparent as possible.

F Williamson said that there is a tenants and leaseholder meeting tomorrow. This was a difficult situation due to legal proceeding so it was a matter that had to be done.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to the garages, what do we do if tenants can't find space on a site, is there a policy for ear marking sites we want to clear.

N Howcutt said that there is no policy, garage sites are assessed and ones that aren't used are sold.

F Williamson said if a garage is vacant then they go through a spreadsheet to see who has registered interest in that area.

The new system will go live at the end of September, this will automatically match garages for tenants.

Cllr Mahmood asked if there was a process if tenants don't want to move from a garage.

N Howcutt said we simply write to them and give them notice, we ensure that there are garages within 3/5 miles that they can access.

Cllr England said in July he asked for a garage information for Adeyfield West, he said he was aware of garages in his ward but not on the list. He will feedback this information to Fiona.

F Williamson said that the postcodes weren't matching up and there were errors, they have done a data cleanse and the information should now be correct.

Cllr Conway said she was concerned that there are 6 empty flats in sheltered accommodation in Tring.

F Williamson said she will pick this up in the quarter 1 report.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe said when you do the budget do you include all the council tax/rent etc in it for the new builds that have had slippage.

N Howcutt said yes they do but in the scale of things it's a very small percent so you don't even notice it, its like 0.01%.

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

N Howcutt said in terms of finance it's a bad thing, we allow for slippage and under 10% is acceptable.

In some cases, it's better to have slippage so it just depends what the slippage is.

Cllr England asked what impact he thinks Brexit will have on the budget.

N Howcutt said he believes that Brexit is expected to have an impact but the what that may be is uncertain at present, as Brexit terms are uncertain. He also stated that the labour market is the area expected to be most impacted by Brexit, in particular the low skilled labour market which for DBC would be Waste and cleaning services.

226 Q1 PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE AND INNOVATION

L Roberts introduced herself to the committee and presented the report giving a brief overview on the last quarter highlighting that there were no recommendations it was more just for information.

Cllr Bassadone said that she had been in town recently and hadn't notice the waterfall being on.

Cllr Harden said its working fine and as far as he was aware it's been on.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe asked what their relationships were like with community Centres, he is a trustee on one and is worried about the lack of support.

L Roberts said she will get a definitive answer on this and come back to the committee.

227 Q1 HOUSING - INCLUDING RESULTS OF HOUSING SERVICE BIENNIAL TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' SURVEY

F Williamson presented the report and was happy to take questions from members.

Cllr Conway said that she was aware of 3 flats that were ready and haven't been occupied.

F Williamson said she will look into this specific issue.

Cllr Mahmood asked if we could look at more candidates for sheltered housing.

Cllr Imarni said can we have a review of how we allocate them.

F Williamson said that they are reviewing the housing strategy and they will be looking at the total demands and looking at supporting people that want sheltered schemes. She will happily report back once its been done.

Cllr Mahmood said he is surprise that there are a high number of households that don't own computers or tablets.

N Howcutt said this is why we have computers downstairs there are also floor walkers down there to provide help.

Cllr England referred to VOIDS, what are the letting times, last year the performance had improved, is this fluctuation normal. He also added is it worth looking at adaptation properties.

F Williamson said they will pull together the trend data for the last 4 years all measure all categories separately.

228 **FIRE SAFETY POLICY**

R Lang presented the report and was happy to take questions on the report.

Cllr Mahmood said as a landlord do they need to ensure that they have smoke detectors and what is the minimum requirement.

R Lang said that there are 330 properties that don't have anything in them at all. We will write to them and ask them to install one but they don't have to take up the offer. The minimum requirement is a CO2 for landlords.

229 **UPDATE ON VICTIM SUPPORT OFFICER**

N Harden gave a verbal update on the victim support officer, at present they have recruited twice and both times they have been unsuccessful for the fix term 6-month contract. N harden will go back to David Austin to discuss this further.

Cllr Imarni said that it had previously been discussed at this committee before and they had agreed that they wanted more of a long term post rather than a 6-month post, this is one of the reasons why applicants aren't applying as the 6 months is off putting. Cllr Imarni was not happy that it had been agreed for 6 months without consulting the committee.

The Meeting ended at 8.55 pm