

## MINUTES

### HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 2019

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

Armytage	Hearn
Adeleke	Imarni (Vice-Chairman)
Conway	Mahmood (Chairman)
England	Pringle

**Portfolio Holders** – Councillor Griffiths (Housing)

**Officers:**

Lin Hunt	Private Rented Sector Lead Officer
Fiona Williamson	Assistant Director (Housing)
Natasha Beresford	Strategic Housing Group Manager
Kayley Johnston	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting began at: 7:30pm.

**OS/001/19 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Housing and Community OSC meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018 were agreed by Members and signed by the Chair.

**OS/002/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received from Banks, Bassadone, Fethney, Mills and W Wyatt-Lowe

**OS/003/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There was no declaration of interest.

**OS/004/19 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**OS/005/19 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL IN**

None.

The Chairman asked F Williamson to give a verbal update on the Osborne and Sun Realm contract from the report that was presented at November's OSC.

F Williamson explained that it was agreed on 11 Jan 2019 after a meeting to defer the further years contract and explained that they still had the 4 years extension but just hadn't bagged the 5 year as of yet, which was due to lack of evidence in two areas.

Cllr Adeleke asked if they had provided reasons for the failed accounts. He also referred to the reviewing of the contract and asked if they have interim discussions on it or if it's just reviewed after the 4 years.

F Williamson said it's not that they have failed it's due to lack of evidence supporting their figures. As they, both use different reporting systems it does not come over correctly so to protect the Council's safety they have deferred it until evidence can be provided. It is a suspended decision until they can show us quality of information.

#### **OS/006/19                      HMO PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING FEES**

N Brathwaite introduced the report explaining that it's to set out a proposed revision of licence fees payable by landlords of Houses in Multiple Occupation in order to meet the statutory requirements of fee setting. The aim of the report is for members to provide feedback on the fees schedule for the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation and associated activities, as set out in the report and Appendices.

Cllr Pringle asked if the initial assessment fails how is it down to the council to manage it.

N Beresford said that if people fail to comply with the HMO then we look at the safety of the residents and take on any works that need to be done to bring the property up to standards. We will then re charge the property owner, serve improvement notices, or even give civil penalties. Any income gained can only be re invested in the private sector housing.

Cllr Armytage referred to page 13, could you please explain.

N Beresford said they liaise corporately and they drill down on funds to do that survey. We need to identify what we need from the private sector housing and the key pieces of work for this year.

Cllr Hearn referred to page 10, recommendations for the Team Leader, when would it be suitable for it to be filled.

N Beresford said asap, on 4<sup>th</sup> Feb the figures will be included in the budget report if this is agreed it will then go to Full Council for Councillor approval.

Cllr Hearn asked if the group could support this as the post is needed for them to successfully do their jobs.

Cllr Griffiths added to that stating that she did mention about a post in the last budget report and this was the post she was referring too.

Cllr Conway asked if it was a monitored process or if they wait for a complaint.

N Beresford said that previously that was the case we would not know unless people complained, as they had no records. The process in the last 12 months is to review it at year 2 and then again at year 4.

Cllr Pringle asked if the information was or could be shared with other Councils to see if people were abusing the systems or if they were repeat offenders.

N Beresford said yes there is and we do have a system in place that shares data. Unfortunately, the system is fairly new and under used and there isn't much on the data base but this does inform other councils of rogue landlords. There is also a group that benchmark it.

Cllr Mahmood asked if it was correct that it was licensable for 5 or more in 1 house hold and how do we monitor it.

N Beresford said yes so for 4 people there is no fee but its monitored and we support landlords to get accreditation and engage with high street agents and target new areas. There is a lot more work going on this year and there are also 120 homes in Dacorum that have been empty in the last 2 years that also need targeting and brought up to standards so we are also working with those agents.

Cllr Mahmood asked if there is room for a landlords forum every 6 months.

N Beresford said yes we do currently have landlords forum meetings in conjunction with St Albans.

***Cllr Adeleke left at 8:20pm***

Cllr Mahmood asked if the fees set out in the report could be renewed.

N Beresford said yes they can, she also believes it's an under estimate and that they needed to put something in place asap that was lawful. There is further scope in the future; this is just the bare basic.

Cllr Mahmood said that he felt the first two figures were fine but the last one could be raised.

Cllr Imarni asked if landlords were aware of the penalties.

N Beresford said yes landlords are aware we keep the website upto date and put mail in local shops and on social media etc they have already notified people and when they work with more agencies and more people they will be able to get the word out.

The report was noted.

**OS/007/19                      EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Agreed

**OS/008/19                      APPENDIX A – WORK PROGRAMME 2017/2018**

The meeting closed at 8:30pm