

MINUTES

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH 2016

Present:

Councillors:

Banks	Imarni
Bassadone	Mahmood (Chairman)
Conway	McLean (Vice-Chairman)
Hearn	Silwal
Link	Howard

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

Officers:

Richard Baker	Group Manager (Financial Services)
Julie Still	Group Manager – Resident Services
Elliott Brooks	Assistant Director - Housing
Natasha Brathwaite	Group Manager, Strategic Housing
Niamh Turner	Housing Strategy and Communications Officer
Cynthia Hayford	Independent Review Officer
Kayley Johnston	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting began at: 7:30pm.

OS/81/15 MINUTES

The minutes of the Housing and Community OSC meeting on 28 January and 4 February 2015 were agreed by members and signed by the Chairman.

OS/82/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Cllr Fethney, Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe, Cllr S Adshead, Cllr Timmis, Cllr M Griffith and Co-Opted TLC Members Cook, Howard and Horn

OS/83/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There was no declaration of interest.

OS/84/15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

OS/85/15 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL IN

None.

OS/86/15 QUARTER 3 BUDGET

R Baker presented the budget report for Quarter 3 and provided details on the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme.

R Baker was happy to take questions on the report.

Cllr Mahmood referred to page 5, and queried if the referendum in June is pencilled in the budget.

R Baker said no its not in next year's budget but it will be fully funded.

Cllr Mahmood referred to page 6, 3.1 if it's in brackets is that to be taken as a saving.
R Baker They are either an underspend on the budget or an over achievement of income.

Cllr Mahmood said that he didn't think Colum 6 at the bottom added up correctly. R Baker agreed to look at this.

Cllr Mahmood referred to page 10 and asked what the reason was for the increase in this instance.

R Baker said the key variances for that are in 4.7 and one hundred and sixty thousand of that is to do with general fund properties being used by the HRA, and the transfer of income from HRA. Fourty thousand is for legal fees recovered from 14-15.

Cllr McLean referred to item 4.6 on page 7. How many more houses does that equate to that which we have taken out of rental stock?

E Brooks said about one hundred properties were forecast for the year where tenants have exercised their right to buy.

Action: None

Outcome: The report was noted.

OS/87/15 QUARTER 3 HOUSING

E Brooks presented the Quarter 3 update on Housing Service Plan. He pointed out three key points, firstly section 2.1 Osborne's is green but it doesn't give a full picture, there have been some complaints. The majority of the complaints have been response repairs and this was raised with Osborne at a meeting and it was due to one key individual not performing. They are aware of it and are addressing the situation and have a new interim Manager in place so there is assurance that things will improve. Cllr Imarni had also been up to Osborne's recently to get some reassurances that systems were in place

Second thing was that Layna Carman presented a report on Tenants and Sustainment. The committee has asked to start seeing the performance indicators around that area. They are reviewing the performance indicators for 2016. The first year they collected the data and now that the data is robust and more reliable we can include this in next year's performance information.

Thirdly just to note a positive on 4.0 page 17 with regards to Longlands which is finally finished and people are living in the new flats.

E Brooks was happy to take questions.

Cllr Mclean referred to 3.0 HRA Capital Programme, it doesn't say the percentage. Could that be clarified?

E Brooks said that the next time he brings the data it will be end of the year so he will give the committee the year total.

Cllr Mahmood asked with all the budget changed with buy-to-let private landlords, is there some contingency in place just in case they pull out due to the tax changes.

E Brooks said they do a lot of work in Strategy Housing Private Sector so they are working with approximately 150ish landlords. They also have incentive packages and they will review again in a few months. The private sector is an issue because a lot of the homeless come from the private sector.

There needs to be a varied housing option for people and they do try and encourage it.

Cllr Mahmood asked about the operational risk register on page 37 onwards, are some of these realistic risks and how do we benefit from this as a scrutiny committee.

E Brooks said it's beneficial to him he uses this quarterly format. It is refreshed every year, some come off and some stay on, he wouldn't want to lose this register, it is rare that they are questioned on it and it could be more user friendly for those that don't use it much.

Cllr Imarni referred to page 38, what can we do about it, it's highlighted as a concern but hard to predict.

E Brooks said they look at prevention and have to be flexible about accommodation. B&B's are expensive these are only used in emergencies and are kept to a minimal. They do use some of their general needs HRA stock for temporary accommodation but this fluctuates depending on demand.

There is potential for a large property home that has six bedrooms which they can't let so they are going to look at turning this into temporary accommodation.

Action: None

Outcome: Report was noted.

OS/88/15 QUARTER RESIDENT SERVICES

J Still presented the Quarter three resident services report, she highlighted the following things.

- The Adventure Playground figures were only down due to the closures over Christmas and the wet half term which we had.
- The crime figures has risen but they are still lower than 2010.
- There has been some good work from the ASB Team, premises closures, and injunctions for domestic abuse.
- Love your Neighbourhood in Bennetts End was one of the most well attended.
- The October European Democracy week went down well within schools
- The Old Town Hall has had good Christmas attendance 97% and the fun palace which they took place in was also well attended and enjoyed.
- WRAP training 400 people have had training and they are still going on to train more.

J Still was happy to take questions.

Cllr Imarni referred to the crime figures and stated that she had noticed that violent crime had gone up and wondered if that was because of the new way of reporting crime.

J Still said violent crime has gone up and work is taking place on trying to reduce it. They are addressing the issues which come from the Town Centre and they are working with licence holders to reduce this.

Cllr Howard asked what Silver Street is.

J Still said Silver Street is an agency led initiative bringing information to residents to make them safer.

Cllr Mahmood asked if there was a budget for verge hardening.

J Still said yes there is funding for the project and it has been approved. There is a list road, the roads which need to be done and she is happy to take suggestions for roads to go on the list, it will be a case of prioritisation for works carried out. It will be on going for 5 years depending on the budget.

Action: None.

Outcome: Report was noted.

OS/89/15 VULNERABLE PERSONS HOUSING STRATEGY 2014-2017

N Brathwaite presented this report which was introduced in 2014. An internal review was done in 2015 and appendix 1 has the amendments. The main amendment is the removal of the action plan.

Cllr Mahmood said that they have previously spoken about the uptake of sheltered housing. N Brathwaite said its driven by demand there was previous issues with the up take in certain places but this has since improved. There is promotional work within the service to promote downsizing for those under occupying.

Cllr Mahmood said page 65, does the policy cover other people.

N Brathwaite said it's an overarching strategy across the housing service they do policies that focus on certain areas like a homeless policy.

Cllr Mahmood said there is no formal channel for vulnerable people. There needs to be something that sets out what we provide and what the County Council do, so we don't pay for what someone else should be doing.

N Brathwaite said this strategy document does not specifically set out the Councils remit however there are other strategies which sets this out we don't tend to duplicate information in strategies.

Cllr Mahmood said when we get new policies come to committee could we have a front page which highlights the new changes so one know exactly what the change is.

N Brathwaite agreed.

Action: None

Outcome: The report was noted.

OS/90/15 HOMELESSNESS REVIEW UPDATE

E Brooks presented this report as the committee had requested this information as there was a change in the process.

N Brathwaite hoped the report was self-explanatory and wanted to ensure the committee was happy with the change in process. She introduced Cynthia Hayford the independent review officer who is undertaking the reviews.

N Brathwaite and was happy to take questions.

Cllr Bassadone referred to page 79 question 3, in that paragraph it say there weren't any county court appeals then underneath it says there were 5, were these outstanding from when the committee did it.

N Brathwaite confirmed that was correct.

Action: None.

Outcome: The report was note.

OS/91/15 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Agreed

OS/92/15 APPENDIX A – WORK PROGRAMME 2016/2017

E Brooks highlighted a few changes.

To remove Vulnerable Persons Strategy in June and add Total Asset Management. (E Brooks has since request this to come in July)

Add Andy Vincent's name next to Community Alarm Update

The meeting closed at 8:32pm