

Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 16 June 2016 at 18:30

PRESENT:

Councillor Carpenter (in the Chair); Councillors Borg, M Coleman, Flaxman-Taylor, Hacon, Mavroudis, Robinson-Payne, Walch, Waters-Bunn, and Williamson.

Councillor Bensly attended as a substitute for Councillor Grant.

Councillor Annison attended as a substitute for Councillor K Grey.

Mr R Read (Director of Housing & Neighbourhoods), Mr T Chaplin (Group Manager Housing Services), Mrs V George (Group Manager Housing Health & Wellbeing), Miss H Notcutt (Community Development Manager) and Mrs C Webb (Member Services Officer)

1 WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and set the scene as to how

the Housing & Neighbourhoods Committee meetings would function in the forthcoming municipal year.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that no Declarations of Interest were declared at the meeting.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Grey & Grant.

4 SMOKE AND CO2 ALARMS REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report from the Community Protection Manager with regard to the impact on the Council of the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015.

The Community protection Manager reported that the legislation placed a requirement on Local Authorities to implement an enforcement structure in respect of its duty to require private sector housing landlords to address inadequate fire detection within their properties. Where enforcement action is taken, the Regulations also allow the Local Authority to impose a penalty charge of up to £5000.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee agree the Statement of Principles and associated penalty charge of £5000.

5 OVERVIEW OF HOUSING & NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Director of Housing & Neighbourhoods gave a presentation on the remit of the Housing & Neighbourhoods Committee.

The Chair thanked the Director of Housing & Neighbourhoods for his presentation.

6 HOUSING - CURRENT SERVICES AND ISSUES

The Director of Housing & Neighbourhoods, the Housing Services Group Manager and the Group Manager Housing, Health & Wellbeing gave presentations regarding Council House Management, Housing Strategy, Housing Options & Homelessness and Private Sector Housing and Disabled Facilities grants.

Councillor Williamson reported that he welcomed the introduction of the new Housing Management Asset/Stock database.

Councillor Waters-Bunn requested a copy of Community Housing's Empty Property list for information purposes. The Housing Services Group Manager agreed to circulate the list to the Committee.

Councillor Williamson suggested that the presentation should be made available as an Information Booklet for the Committee, as it would be most useful for new Members. Councillor Williamson raised concerns regarding fixed term tenancies for tenants who had specific disabled adaptations carried out to their properties. Unless they were legally protected, as they could not be classed as exempt, this could lead them to be in a vulnerable position. The Housing Services Group manager agreed to look into this issue.

The Chair thanked the officers for their informative presentations.

7 HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received and considered the Housing Services Group Manager's report on the performance data from the Housing & Neighbourhoods Directorate for Quarter 4, of 2015/16.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the report.

8 HOUSING REVIEW APPEALS REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report from the Housing Services Group Manager which detailed the procedures for tenants and residents to review or appeal housing decisions. The Housing Services Group Manager reported that a consistent approach was adopted to enable timely and appropriate decisions and this process had the advantage of being flexible and reasonably quick to administer. This allowed applicants to be informed of revised decision as soon as possible so that they may consider all options available to them.

The Housing Services Group Manager reported that decisions made on housing matters were subject to the right of judicial review which would remain as an option should a person wish to continue the appeal process.

A Member was concerned that the Housing Appeals Committee had not been included in the new Committee structure and was unaware that this decision had been made. Councillor Robinson-Payne felt that the proposed scheme would lead to an officer reviewing another officer decision, which in the eyes of the appellant, could be seen as non-transparent decision making and she felt that the public would prefer to have their appeal considered by Members.

The Housing Services Group Manager reported that Members could still support residents in the appeal process and that the need for the Housing Appeals Committee could be considered at the Governance Committee review in six months time.

Councillor Williamson reported that he agreed with Councillor Robinson-Payne as tenants were often vulnerable or had complex housing needs and needed help and support which Members could offer through the review process. Councillor Williamson proposed an amendment to the recommendation that the Housing Appeals Committee be reinstated after six months if required.

RESOLVED:

(i) That the procedure for reviews and appeals detailed in paragraph 2.4 of the Group Manager Housing Services's report be adopted for housing decisions;

(ii) That the Housing Appeals Committee will be reinstated after 6 months, if required.

9 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Community Development Manager gave a presentation regarding Neighbourhoods That Work. She invited the Committee to attend the Annual Study Visit on 21 October 2016 at St. Georges Theatre.

The Chair thanked the Community Development Manager for her presentation.

10 NEIGHBOURHOODS THAT WORK OUTCOME REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report from the Community Development Manager.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the report.

11 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and considered the Forward Plan.

The Chairman reported that if any Member wished to add an agenda item that they should contact the Director of Housing & Neighbourhoods in the first instance.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan be noted.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair reported that there was no other business as was determined as being of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

13 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

The meeting ended at: 20:40