

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 SEPTEMBER 2013

REPORT TO THE COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2013

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**CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13**

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1. This report details the work undertaken by the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee and the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee during 2012/13, for submission to the Council in accordance with Article 6.03(e) of Waverley Borough Council's Constitution.

**Meetings**

2. The Committee met six times, on 25 June, 2 July (Call-in meeting), 24 September and 26 November 2012, and 29 January and 18 March 2013.
3. The Committee also met jointly with the Community O&S Committee on 12 March 2013, to review Service Plans for 2013/14.

**Membership**

4. The membership of the Committee during 2012/13 was:

Cllr Paddy Blagden	Cllr Tom Martin
Cllr Brian Ellis	Cllr Stephen Mulliner
Cllr Pat Frost	Cllr Elliot Nichols
Cllr Richard Gates	Cllr Donal O'Neill (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Michael Goodridge (Chairman)	Cllr Chris Storey
Cllr Lynn Graffham	Cllr Simon Thornton
Cllr Peter Isherwood	Cllr Liz Wheatley
Cllr Peter Martin	

Substitutes:

Cllr Gillian Beel	Cllr Nick Holder
Cllr Stewart Stennett	Cllr Nick Williams
Cllr Maurice Byham	Cllr Ian Sampson
Cllr Jim Edwards	Cllr Ross Welland

5. On 17 April 2012, Council agreed to revise the membership of Corporate O&S Committee to include two co-opted members from Waverley's Tenants' Panel, in response to the transfer of responsibility for scrutinising Waverley's Housing service to Corporate O&S Committee from Community O&S Committee.
6. The co-opted Tenants' Panel Members were Jane Rawlings and Jan Knott (25 June 2012 and 2 July 2012), Jan Knott and Helen Jones (24 September 2012), Helen Jones (26 November 2012), and Brenda Greenslade and Christine North (29 January and 18 March 2013).
7. Details of members' attendance at committee meetings during 2012/13 are given at Annexe 1.

## **Terms of Reference of the Committee**

8. At its meeting on 25 June 2012, being the first meeting in the Council year, the Committee noted its terms of reference and the O&S Procedure Rules. As agreed by the Council on 17 April 2012, responsibility for scrutiny of Waverley's Housing service had been transferred to Corporate O&S from the start of the 2012/13 Council year.

### Annual Report 2011/12

9. At its June 2012 meeting, the Committee received a report that detailed the work it had undertaken during, which was submitted to Council on 17 July 2012.

## **Housing Improvement Sub-Committee**

10. Further to the transfer of responsibility for scrutiny of Waverley's Housing service to Corporate O&S, at its meeting on 25 June 2012 the Committee considered a proposal to replace the Landlord Services Partnership Special Interest Group with a sub-committee of the Corporate O&S Committee. Whilst the Landlord Services Partnership SIG had helped develop a positive working relationship between the Council and tenants, it was felt that changes in the regulation of social housing and in the housing finance regime, introduced in the Localism Act, now required a more formal level of partnership working and scrutiny of Waverley's Housing service. Whereas the Landlord Services Partnership SIG was an advisory body to the Housing Portfolio Holder, the sub-committee would report formally to the Corporate O&S Committee. However, it was intended that the Housing Portfolio Holder would have a standing invitation to attend all meetings of the sub-committee, and with a right to address the sub-committee as set out in the O&S Procedure Rules.
11. The Committee, including the co-opted Tenants' Panel representatives, was largely supportive of the proposal to bring the landlord-tenant partnership body into the Council's formal reporting structure, which would give its comments and observations more weight than previously. It was recognised that the role was slightly different to that of the SIG, but it was felt that it was sufficiently close that to run the SIG and sub-committee in parallel would be unnecessary duplication.
12. The Committee therefore RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive that a Housing Improvement Sub-Committee of the Corporate O&S Committee be established. The Executive considered this recommendation at its meeting on 3 July 2012 and approved the proposal to set up a new Housing Improvement Sub-Committee to replace the Landlord Services Partnership Special Interest Group.
13. The Terms of Reference of the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee, as amended following consideration by the Committee, are attached at Annexe 2.
14. Having agreed that the Chairman of the Corporate O&S Committee would also chair the Sub-Committee, nominations were invited to fill the remaining places, and it was agreed that the following Waverley members would become members of the sub-committee: Cllr Michael Goodridge (Chairman) and Cllrs Pat Frost, Richard Gates, Chris Storey and Stewart Stennett.
15. The Housing Improvement Sub-Committee met on 4 occasions in 2012/13, on 10 September and 5 November 2012 and 7 January and 4 March 2013. The final

meeting of the erstwhile Landlord Services Partnership SIG took place on 11 June 2012. Details of members' attendance at sub-committee meetings during 2012/13 are given at Annexe 2.

16. The minutes of the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee are submitted to the next following meeting of the Corporate O&S Committee, including any recommendations to the Committee. Details of recommendations submitted to the Corporate O&S Committee are summarized below; a summary of other items considered by the HISC is provided in Annexe 2.

#### *Recommendations from the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee*

17. At its meeting on 29 January 2013, Corporate O&S Committee considered recommendations from the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee regarding:

##### *17.1 Decent Homes – Bathroom Specification*

The Executive had been concerned at the number of tenants refusing new bathrooms offered under the Decent Homes programme. Anecdotal evidence had suggested that the one of the reasons tenants refused a new bathroom was that the specification regarding the shower did not meet their expectations. The Executive had asked that this be explored further with tenants, and alternative specifications be considered by the Sub-Committee.

Research by officers showed that the current bathroom specification had not been a significant reason for tenants refusing the offer of a new bathroom, however, the possibility of including an over-bath shower in the specification had been positively received by tenants.

The Housing Improvement Sub-Committee met on 7 January 2013 and discussed the outcome of the tenant survey and the proposed offer of either an electric over-bath shower or thermostatic mixer shower taps as part of the bathroom specification. The Sub-Committee was pleased with the choices being proposed, which had been welcomed by the Tenants' Panel and which would help promote responsible use of water. The Sub-Committee agreed that any tenant opting for a thermostatic mixer shower tap should be asked to sign a disclaimer to accept that there may be variations in the water pressure which might affect the power of a shower.

Corporate O&S Committee endorsed the observations of the Sub-Committee, and the recommendation to the Executive that,

1. tenants due to receive a new bathroom under the Decent Homes programme be offered (for a trial period of 6 months), a shower with thermostatic mixer taps (subject to survey), and where thermostatic mixer taps were not appropriate, an electric shower; and
2. at the end of the trial period a review of feedback from tenants is undertaken along with a decision as to whether any permanent change in the bathroom specification was appropriate.

The Executive agreed the proposals at its meeting on 5 February 2013.

## 17.2 *Tenancy Fraud Policy*

The Sub-Committee considered the draft Tenancy Fraud Policy and noted that this had been developed to reiterate the Council's commitment to tackling Tenancy Fraud, to formalise current practice and implement industry good practice, and to provide a framework for publicising, reporting, investigating, responding to and reporting tenancy fraud. Officers advised that whilst tenancy fraud was not a major problem in Waverley, it was important to be vigilant and to highlight the consequences of tenancy fraud via the website and tenants' newsletter.

The Sub-Committee endorsed the Policy to the Corporate O&S Committee, who had no additional comments to make. The Tenancy Fraud Policy was adopted by the Executive on 5 March 2013.

## 17.3 *Sheltered Housing Scooter Policy*

The Sub-Committee considered the draft Sheltered Housing Scooter Policy which had been developed in response to an Internal Audit recommendation. The Council had seen an increase in the number of requests from tenants of sheltered housing schemes who wished to use and store a mobility scooter. The Policy formalised current practice and ensured that going forward the Council and tenants would have a safe, fair and reasonable policy and procedure for dealing with new requests to store and charge mobility scooters.

The Policy and Procedure required that any tenant obtained written permission from the Sheltered Services Manager before acquiring a Mobility Scooter if they wished to store it at their sheltered scheme. Permission would not be unreasonably withheld, but an assessment would be made to establish a suitable storage area, and views of other tenants sought. Availability of storage space for scooters varied between the different schemes, and where storage facilities needed to be provided, these would be funded from the existing Re-modelling budget.

The Sub-Committee recognised that this could be a very contentious issue for tenants in sheltered schemes and welcomed the development of the Policy as a way of providing clarity on our approach and consistency in its application. The Sub-Committee endorsed the Policy to the Corporate O&S Committee, who had no additional comments to make. The Sheltered Housing Scooter Policy was adopted by the Executive on 5 March 2013.

18. At its meeting on 18 March 2013, Corporate O&S Committee considered a recommendation from the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee regarding:

### 18.1 *Tenancy Policy*

The Sub-Committee received a report setting out the background to the draft Tenancy Policy, the purpose of which was to ensure that the most appropriate tenancies were granted to enable the best use to be made of the Council's housing stock, while maintaining cohesive communities. The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012 required all social landlords to publish a Tenancy Policy, and Waverley's draft Tenancy Policy had due regard to the Council's adopted Tenancy Strategy, which had been developed in consultation with elected members, statutory stakeholders, local housing associations, Town and Parish councils, the Tenants' Panel and existing tenants and applicants.

The Sub-Committee endorsed the draft Tenancy Policy to the Corporate O&S Committee who had no additional comments to make. The Tenancy Policy was adopted by the Council on 23 April 2013, and came into effect from 1 July 2013.

## **OVERVIEW ITEMS**

### **Housing Service**

#### *Review of Housing Services – restructuring proposals*

19. At its meeting on 25 June 2012, the Committee received a report setting out the context and justification for the proposed restructure of the Council's Housing service. Historically, government policies had starved Waverley's housing services of resources, leading to under investment in substantial parts of the housing stock. The Council had been at the forefront of the successful national campaign to have the system of funding changed, and in future the rents that local people paid would be reinvested by the Council into local Council housing. The Council had agreed a 30 year investment strategy to ensure that all homes met the Decent Homes Standard by 2015, and that surpluses would be invested in new affordable housing and in improving the quality of the Council's existing housing stock. The Housing Service also needed to be able to respond to changes in legislation affecting the regulation of social housing and other external drivers, including welfare reform and the wider localism agenda.
20. In order to achieve this ambitious programme, it had been necessary to reconsider how best to provide the Council's housing services, including the organisation structure. The proposals had been shared with Housing staff in a formal consultation process, and had also been considered by the Landlord Services Partnership SIG on 11 June, whose comments were also circulated to the Committee. In summary, the restructuring proposals would introduce an area-based approach to providing housing services, offering tenants and Members a clear point of contact for all enquiries and service requests; this would provide greater accountability, and the ability to manage performance.
21. The Committee was pleased to see the re-introduction of area based teams, but sought reassurance that the level of staffing would be appropriate for the number of houses in each area.
22. The proposals, including comments from the Landlord Services Partnership SIG and Corporate O&S Committee were considered by the Executive on 3 July, and agreed by Council on 17 July.

#### *Affordable Homes Delivery Plan*

23. At its meeting on 25 June 2012, the Committee received the Affordable Homes Delivery Plan, which formed part of the implementation of the 2012-14 HRA Self-Financing Business Plan. Changes in the housing finance regime had created the opportunity for the Council to invest directly in building new Council homes, with the advantage that the Council would maintain control over its land and provide an income stream for the long-term. The purpose of the Plan was to ensure the Council had a clear approach and programme of potential development opportunities. It was estimated that the Council could develop up to 300 new affordable homes over a 10 year period, which would help support local communities, services and businesses.

24. The Committee was pleased to learn about the exciting plans for the Council to take a much more proactive approach to increasing the stock of affordable housing available in Waverley, but emphasised the importance of the outcome of delivering of affordable homes, rather than the Council maintaining control of the entire process. Members were therefore pleased to see that this was one of a number of approaches that would be explored for each site, and the most appropriate would be chosen for each case.

#### Amendments to Waverley's Housing Allocation Scheme

25. At its meeting on 26 November 2012, the Committee received a report setting out the proposed changes to Waverley's Housing Allocation Scheme. The revised Scheme reflected freedoms permitted by the Localism Act 2011, so that the housing register better served those most in housing need and with a connection to Waverley. The amendments also took account of changes under Welfare Reform with regard to the number of bedrooms that a household could reasonably expect to have to be suitably housed; and, Government guidance on prioritising the needs of former armed forces personnel in housing need and their bereaved spouses/partners.
26. Proposals had been widely supported by residents and stakeholders who responded to the consultation earlier in the year. The underlying principles of the revised Allocation Scheme were: recognition of housing need, rather than want; a scheme that was clear, fair and equitable, promoted choice and responsibility and addressed the risk of fraud; and where changes that would adversely affect those who currently had a realistic expectation of being re-housed, measures would be put in place to limit/mitigate the negative impact on these households. The revised Scheme featured three main priority bands (reduced from 5) plus a discretionary pool of applicants whom the Council was legally obliged to consider or that the Council may need to house in the future. It was envisaged that the changes would result in at least 1,000 applicants being removed from Waverley's Housing Register.
27. Having considered the proposed revised Housing Allocation Scheme, the Committee had no particular observations to pass on to the Executive, and endorsed the recommendations to the Executive as set out in the report. The new Scheme was approved by the Council on 11 December 2012, for implementation with effect from 1 January 2013.
28. At its meeting on 18 March 2013, the Committee noted the update on implementation of the new Housing Allocation Scheme reported to the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee on 4 March. An early outcome had been a considerable reduction in the number of applicants on the Housing Register, following a request to all applicants to verify their personal data against the new revised allocation criteria. Officers continued to work through returned verification forms and would provide further updates in during the year, ahead of a formal review of the Scheme in 2014.

#### Draft Tenancy Strategy

29. At its meeting on 26 November the Committee received the Draft Tenancy Strategy which had been approved by the Executive as the basis for a public consultation. The Committee noted that the Council had a duty to develop and publish a Tenancy

Strategy by 31 January 2013, which would set out guidance for all social housing providers in the borough on how to implement the new flexibilities within the Localism Act. All Registered Providers in the borough would be required to “have regard to” the Council’s Tenancy Strategy when developing their own Tenancy Policy. The Strategy enabled the use of flexible and fixed tenancies, affordable rents and set out guidance for their use. The objectives of the Strategy were to make the best use of the affordable housing stock; and, meet the housing needs of Waverley residents who are unable to secure a home for themselves in the private sector.

30. The Committee supported the objectives and proposals set out in the draft Tenancy Strategy, and had no additional comments to make in response to the consultation. The Tenancy Strategy was adopted by Council on 11 December 2012, subject to an Annual Review.

#### *New arrangements for referring Housing complaints to the Housing Ombudsman*

31. At its meeting on 29 January 2013, the Committee received a report setting out the new arrangements which would come into effect on 1 April 2013, whereby complaints against local authorities in their role as social landlords would be considered by the Housing Ombudsman once the authority’s internal complaints procedure had been exhausted.
32. The Committee noted that the Localism Act 2011 had created a single service for investigating complaints about social landlords by transferring powers in relation to housing matters from the Local Government Ombudsman to the Housing Ombudsman. From 1 April 2013, a tenant or leaseholder who had exhausted the Council’s internal complaints procedure and who remained unhappy with the response to their complaint would be able to ask a ‘designated person’ to refer their complaint to the new Office of the Housing Ombudsman. Alternatively, a complainant could by-pass the ‘designated person’ by waiting a period of 8 weeks from the date on which they completed the Council’s complaints procedure.
33. A draft scheme had been prepared by the Housing Ombudsman setting out how complaints referred to him after 1 April 2013 would be handled. This was awaiting approval by the Secretary of State ahead of the 1 April 2013 implementation date. The principles underpinning the proposed scheme were: local resolution; the role of ‘designated persons’; a new potential finding of ‘service failure’ reflecting the lower end of maladministration; focus on outcomes; adherence to a 6 month time limit from the date at which the complainant exhausts their landlord’s complaints procedure to bringing the matter to the attention of the Housing Ombudsman.
34. The Committee noted the proposed role of ‘designated persons’. A ‘designated person’ could be any Member of Parliament (MP), a councillor from the local housing authority district, or could be a designated tenant panel, i.e. a group of tenants which was recognised by a social landlord for the purpose of referring complaints against the social landlord. The designated person(s) would consider a complaint once the Council’s complaints procedure had been exhausted and would be expected to decide whether or not to refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.
35. The Committee noted that the pressing issue for the Council was how to approach the issue of designated persons. Currently, very few Housing complaints

progressed to the Local Government Ombudsman for resolution, and there was no reason to think that this might change under the new framework. However, the role of designated person could be quite challenging and possibly time-consuming. In order to be effective, those carrying out this role would require both a good knowledge of social housing and skills in complaints handling and dispute resolution. The Council would need to consider what information, advice and training it offered, whilst still recognising the independence of the role.

36. The Committee discussed the suggestion that Waverley identify a small number of Councillors to act as 'designated persons' in progressing housing complaints with the Housing Ombudsman service. However, it was felt that this role naturally fell within the remit of a ward councillor and that all councillors should receive some training on the scope of the role. The Committee noted that it was proposed to nominate up to three members of the Tenants Panel to take on the role of a designated tenants complaints panel for Waverley's tenants, and the training and support issues around this. The Committee supported this proposal, and agreed with the Tenants' Panel representatives who observed that it would be important to give a full briefing to any tenants interested in this role, so that they were aware of the requirements before making a firm commitment to take it on and proceed with training.
37. The Committee RESOLVED to note the new arrangements for referring Housing Complaints to the Housing Ombudsman, and to pass the following observations to the Executive:
- i) that all Councillors should be prepared to act as 'designated persons' as part of their ward councillor role, and in due course to receive an appropriate briefing on how to respond to any approach they receive from tenants; and,
  - ii) that up to three, and no less than two, tenants on Waverley's current Tenants Panel should be nominated to form a designated tenants complaints panel, and be provided with appropriate training to enable them to perform this function.
38. Corporate O&S Committee received a further report at its meeting on 24 June 2013 providing further detail on the role of a 'designated person' and the skills needed for the successful resolution of complaints.

## **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

### *Ombudsman's Investigations into Complaints made about Waverley's Services in 2011/12*

39. At its meeting on 24 September 2012, the Committee received a report addressing the issues raised in the Ombudsman's annual letter to Waverley for the year 2011/12. This included information about the types of complaint made to the Ombudsman about Waverley's services over the past year, Waverley's approach in responding to such complaints, and the eventual outcomes.
40. The Committee noted the report and was pleased to hear that another year had passed with no findings of maladministration in respect of complaints made about Waverley's services, and that the Ombudsman had no concerns about Waverley's response times. The Committee looked forward to this high standard of performance being transferred to general complaints handling.



41. The Executive considered the report, and the observations of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 2 October 2012, and agreed to ask the Committee to review and analyse the issues in more detail and report back to the Executive with a more detailed report.

#### Complaints Handling in Waverley in 2011/12

42. At its meeting on 24 September 2012, the Committee received a report providing information on complaints handling in Waverley in 2010/11, including the number of complaints received, Waverley's performance in responding to complaints, levels of customer satisfaction and lessons learned.
43. The Committee noted that the number of complaints received had decreased slightly, from 271 in 2010/11 to 215 in 2011/12. The decrease in complaints had been most marked at Level 1, and it was noted that Corporate Management Team was concerned that there may have been some under-reporting of Level 1 complaints across the Council. Staff had been reminded of the importance of logging all complaints received, even if they were resolved immediately, in order to track any problems in service delivery.
44. There had been fall in the number of complaints responded to within the Council's target of 10 working days, from 89% in 2010/11 to 84% in 2011/12, against a target of 95%. There was no obvious reason for the longer response time on some complaints, other than the fact that many were quite complex and it was felt to be important to investigate each one thoroughly before responding to the complainant.
45. The Committee noted that the satisfaction survey had achieved a response rate of 22% for the year, which was similar to previous years. It was important to continue to scrutinise performance, even if customers' satisfaction with how their complaint had been handled might have been affected by the outcome of their complaint. It was noted that there was a corporate project on improving customer care, which would include an emphasis on responding positively to complaints.
46. In response to requests made in relation to consideration of the 2010/11 report, a breakdown had been provided of the total number of complaints per service, and information on the outcome of complaints. The Committee noted that Housing had received the highest number of complaints, followed by Planning and Environmental Services. Overall, 67% of complaints had not been upheld; 17% had been partly upheld, and 16% had been upheld.
47. The Committee had been disappointed to see the drop in the Council's performance on the time taken to respond to complaints, and looked forward to receiving a more detailed analysis of complaint-tracking once the new complaints handling database had been implemented. The Committee noted that the implementation of the new database would be accompanied by staff training on logging of complaints to ensure that these are captured regardless of how they are received and how quickly they are closed. It was hoped that further training on communication and customer service would also be provided, as this appeared to be a common theme to complaints.
48. The Executive considered the report, and the observations of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 2 October 2012, and agreed that it would like a more detailed report on the range of complaints and lessons learned.

### Appointment of Performance Sub-Committee

49. At its meeting on 25 June 2012 the Committee agreed that the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee would have primary responsibility for reviewing the Key Performance Indicators relating to the Housing service, and passing comments to the Corporate O&S Committee where necessary. The Committee agreed not to appoint a Performance Sub-committee for 2012/13, and Key Performance Indicators on other areas of the Council's work falling within the remit of the Committee would be reported directly to the Committee each quarter.

### Performance Management, Quarter 4 2011/12, (January - March 2012)

50. At its meeting on 25 June 2012, the Committee received the report detailing performance for the fourth quarter 2011/12 for those indicators within the remit of the Corporate O&S Committee, now including performance indicators relating to Housing services.
51. LI 12, Number of Housing Benefit prosecutions and sanctions – the Committee noted that 13 prosecutions and sanctions had taken place in Quarter 4, bringing the total for 2011/12 to 25, which was higher than previous years. Officers advised that this reflected the extra resources employed in carrying out home visits and exploring changes in claimants' circumstances, which could lead to fraudulent claims. It was noted that the Council received a one-off reward subsidy from the Government for its good performance in reducing overpayments, which had amounted to £100,000 in 2011/12.
52. LI 8, Average annual rate of return on Council investments above market rates - the Committee noted that the return on investments had dropped to 0.16% over market rates in Quarter 4. Officers reminded the Committee that the Treasury Management Strategy, endorsed by the Committee and approved by Council in February 2012, placed an even higher priority on security of investments over the return. Bearing in mind most of the Council's investments were overnight or very short-term deposits, it was a very positive outcome to still be exceeding the 3-month market rate.
53. Officers reminded the Committee that at the end of the 3rd quarter they had discussed whether the target should be reduced, reflecting the current investment environment. Whilst recognizing that the target was unlikely to be achieved, at that time the Committee had decided not to recommend that the target be reduced before seeing the outcome for the 4th quarter. In light of the continued pressure on the investment market, and the clear trend over the last two years, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Executive that the target for this indicator be changed to an average annual rate of return of 0.25% over market rates.
54. LHM2 Percentage of annual boiler services and gas safety checks undertaken on time - Members were concerned to see that performance had dropped to 90.67% in the 4th quarter, and were reassured by the Chief Executive that urgent action had been taken to address this, and a recovery plan was in place to bring performance back to 100% as soon as possible.
55. The Committee RESOLVED to note the performance figures for Quarter 4; and to recommend to the Executive that the target for LI8 be amended for 2012/13 to an average annual rate of return of 0.25% above 3-month market rates.

56. At its meeting on 3 July 2012, the Executive considered and noted the performance figures for Quarter 4 and the end of year, including action plans to address areas where performance was not meeting target, and the observations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Executive thanked the O&S Committees for their observations regarding the Quarter 4 and year end outturn performance and invited them to consider the appropriateness of the performance indicators and make recommendations for improvements for the future.

Performance Management, Quarter 1 (April-June) 2012/13

57. At its meeting on 24 September 2012 the Committee received the performance report for the indicators falling within its remit. The Committee noted the comments of the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee, which had reviewed the Housing Service Key Performance Indicators for the 1st Quarter of 2012/13 (April – June) at its meeting on 10 September 2012.
58. The Sub-Committee had been disappointed that there was no data available for maintenance and repairs indicators for the first quarter 2012/13, and expressed concern about the ongoing communication difficulties between contractors and Waverley which was preventing collection and reporting of performance data. Officers advised that Housing Service Managers were meeting regularly with contractor representatives to work through operational issues affecting performance on repairs and maintenance, as well as agreeing the new performance indicators and how these would be reported. As part of this process, it had been agreed that the data on maintenance management system would be transferred back to Waverley, and this would help with the production of robust performance data.
59. On a more positive note, the Sub-Committee was very pleased to hear from officers that the performance on annual boiler services and gas safety checks (LHM2) was back to 100% at the end of August 2012 following the transfer of the Home Safety Contract back to CHS.
60. The Sub-Committee was pleased to see that performance on rent collection was being maintained compared with 2011/12 and was largely on target. Similarly, the number of homelessness cases prevented and the number of households in temporary accommodation were on target.
61. The Sub-Committee had some concerns that the average number of days taken to re-let council homes continued to be above the target of 22 days, and Members had agreed to follow this up at future meetings to enable the Sub-Committee to explore the issues around this performance indicator, including voids standards.
62. The Corporate O&S Committee was re-assured by the Strategic Director that the performance of the main Housing contractor was being closely managed, and had improved considerably over the summer. Although there were still some concerns there was good progress being seen on performance and tenant satisfaction which should be reflected in the next quarter's reports. A great deal of work was being done to improve communication between Waverley, the contractor and the tenant customers, as poor communication and data management had been at the root of a lot of the mobilisation problems on the new contract.
63. The Committee endorsed the comments of the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee regarding the Housing Service Performance Indicators, and had no

comments on the remaining KPIs other than to reiterate its recommendation to the Executive from the meeting on 25 June 2012, that the target for LI8 (Average annual rate of return on Council investments above market rates) be amended for 2012/13 to an average annual rate of return of 0.25% above 3-month market rates.

64. The Performance Management Reports and comments of the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee and Corporate O&S were considered by the Executive on 2 October 2012.

#### Performance Management, Quarter 2 (July-Sept) 2012/13

65. At its meeting on 26 November 2012 the Corporate O&S Committee received the performance report for the indicators falling within its remit, and noted that the Housing Service performance indicators had been scrutinised by the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee on 5 November 2012.
66. The Committee noted the dip in performance on NI181 (Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events) in the second quarter which had been a result of Phase 2 of the Department for Work & Pensions submitting a large batch of change of circumstance notifications which impacted on Housing Benefit entitlement. It was noted that measures had been taken to provide additional resources to deal with the additional workload and as a result performance on NI181 had improved and it was expected to be back on target for the third quarter.
67. The Committee was pleased to see the continued good performance on payment of invoices, and Cllr Band advised that Waverley had been given an award by the Forum of Private Business in recognition of the Council being the third fastest paying council in 2011/12.
68. The Committee noted the performance indicators for the second quarter of 2012/13, and had no additional observations to pass to the Executive.

#### Performance Management Quarter 3 (October – December) 2012/13

69. At its meeting on 18 March 2013, the Committee received the performance report for the key performance indicators falling within its remit, and noted that the Housing Service performance indicators had been scrutinised by the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee on 4 March 2013.
70. The Housing Improvement Sub-Committee had noted that overall there had been good performance against targets, other than with regard to Void re-let periods which had been discussed previously and which was being addressed as a priority. The repairs and maintenance indicators had been superseded by the Key Performance Indicators set out in the various works contracts. Officers would be reviewing with the contractors the suite of KPIs specified in the contracts to ensure that the measures were robust and meaningful. However, the indicators on customer satisfaction with the responsive repairs service showed consistently high levels of customer satisfaction with the service since July 2012.
71. Corporate O&S considered a proposal from officers to split the NI181 indicator (Time taken to process Housing and Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events) from 1 April 2013/14 in order to report separately on time taken to process

new claims and change events. Whilst new claims were processed at the counter, changes were submitted in batches from the DWP and took longer to process. Splitting the performance measure would give a more accurate reflection of performance in relation to volume of caseload. The Committee was happy in principle with this proposal and noted that suggested targets would be proposed at the next meeting.

72. The Committee was pleased to note the continued good performance on collection of Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates. Officers were confident that the target for collection of 99% of Council Tax would be achieved, and optimistic that the NNDR collection target of 99% would also be achieved although this would be challenging in the current economic climate and reflected the efforts of officers to work with businesses to help them keep up their NNDR payments.
73. The Committee also considered the usefulness of the staff turnover indicator (L2c) as it was difficult to identify any pattern from it, and it was not something that could be directly influenced by Waverley. It was agreed that it would be more beneficial to have a regular, 6 monthly, report on HR issues including staff turnover, absence rates and volunteering. It was noted that reports would be coming forward over the next O&S cycle on the outcomes of the recent staff survey, and workforce profile.
74. The Committee RESOLVED to note the performance indicators for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2012/13, and had no additional observations to pass to the Executive.

#### Treasury Management Activity 2012/13

75. Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been charged by the Executive with responsibility for reviewing treasury management operations, and received reports on key activity information relating to treasury management in 2012/13 at their meetings on 24 September 2012 and 26 November 2012, and 18 March 2013.
76. In September the Committee noted that the average rate of return for the year to 01/08/12 was 0.15% above the average Sterling Interbank 3-month rate. The average rate of return reported to the November meeting, for the year to 08/11/12 was 0.18% above the average Sterling Interbank 3-month rate. The rate of return had improved further for the year to 15/02/13, to 0.27% above the average Sterling Interbank 3-month rate.
77. The Committee noted that the investment climate continued to be challenging in terms of balancing risk and return on investment, and appreciated the prudent approach taken to treasury management by the Council.

#### Service Plan Out-turn Report 2011/12

78. A meeting of the Joint O&S Committees in February 2012 had considered the Service Plans for 2012/13. In June 2013 the Committee reviewed the Service Plans and outcomes achieved in 2011/12. The Committee noted the reasons for the delay in completing the double-glazing programme and were reassured by Officers that the contract to carry out this work had now been let and it remained a Council priority to complete this programme of work as soon as possible.
79. On 26 November the Committee had 6 month progress updates on the 2012/13 Service Plans falling within the remit of Corporate Overview & Scrutiny. The Committee was pleased to see that good progress had been made across all service areas.

80. On 12 March 2013, a meeting of the Joint O&S Committees considered the Service Plans for 2013/14.

#### *Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty*

81. At its meeting in June 2012 the Committee considered a report setting out the general and specific duties imposed on local authorities by the Equality Act 2010 and which came into effect in January and April 2012. The report set out these duties and the actions taken to ensure compliance. The Committee endorsed the approach taken to comply with the general and specific duties under the Equality Act 2010.

### **FINANCIAL ISSUES**

#### *Budget Issues 2013/14*

82. At its meeting on 26 November 2012 the Committee received a report that outlined the financial background to producing the Council's four-year Financial Strategy and the proposed approach to be taken to the 2013-14 Budget.
83. The Committee noted that the latest budget position for 2013/14 showed a shortfall of £440,000 including Star Chamber savings identified in previous years which still had to be verified through the current year's Star Chamber process. It was also noted that the details of the Government Grant Settlement for 2013/14 would not be known until 19 December, which prevented the full General Fund Budget position from being considered with any certainty until January 2013.
84. The Committee considered whether there were areas within the Committee's remit where discretionary spending might be reduced and to identify high priority services where expenditure should only be reduced as a last resort. Corporate O&S Members noted the potential budget shortfall, and the uncertainty arising from the delay in the announcement of the Government Grant Settlement for 2013/14, but felt that after three years of scrutiny through the Star Chamber process it was no longer possible to identify easily budget areas that could be cut significantly.

#### *Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme*

85. At its meeting on 24 September 2011, the Committee received a report setting out a high level overview of the Government's proposals to localise Council Tax Benefit through the introduction of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1 April 2013, and to highlight the potential implications for the Council and its residents. It was noted that the Council was currently consulting on a draft scheme, and the Committee would receive a full briefing at its meeting in November on the proposed final scheme, which had to be approved by 31 January 2013.
86. The report set out the options for the Council, and the financial implications and risks of each option. The report also touched on new powers being introduced to enable councils to reduce or eliminate second home discounts and empty home exemptions, and to introduce empty home council tax premiums as a way of raising additional revenue to close the funding gap from council tax benefit.
87. Corporate O&S Committee endorsed the principles agreed by the Executive to underpin the Draft Scheme, and at this stage felt that the approach outlined in Option 2 demonstrated fairness (to all council tax-payers, not just recipients of council tax benefit) and encouraged claimants back to work.

88. At its meeting on 26 November, the Committee received a report setting out final proposals for a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Waverley for 2013/14. The proposals were supported by an analysis of the comparative costs and the outcome of the consultation which had been undertaken on the draft scheme which the Committee had considered at its meeting in September 2012.
89. The Committee noted that there were two main issues imposed by the Government to be addressed in developing the local Scheme: as well as transferring responsibility – and risk – from Central to Local Government, the Government intention was to cut the level of grant to local authorities by 10% which for Waverley amounted to a cut in grant of £0.6m; the Government had also prescribed that pension-age Council Tax Benefit claimants should be protected under local schemes, meaning that any measures to reduce the 10% funding gap would have to fall on working-age claimants.
90. It was noted that there had been a good response to the consultation and in addition to the general questionnaire participation had been specifically invited from town and parish councils, Waverley Tenants' Panel, 3-Counties Debt Advice, Waverley Citizens Advice and the Disability Forum. The proposed Scheme for 2013/14 included some changes from the draft scheme, with some options being excluded for the time being, but flagged for possible inclusion in later years. Officers also explained the possible contributions from Surrey County Council and the Government to support the implementation of local schemes, and the current uncertainty around whether, and when, any one-off funding from either might be confirmed. Given this uncertainty, it was recommended that Waverley should move towards setting a Local Scheme for 2013/14 determined on local factors rather than trying to second-guess the actions of Surrey County Council or Government.
91. Whilst some individual members of the Committee had reservations about particular elements of the proposed Local Scheme, including restricting the minimum payment to £5 per week and restricting the maximum benefit award to the Band D liability, overall the Committee RESOLVED to endorse the proposal to adopt the 'Local Scheme – with Changes', subject to confirmation of appropriate support from the other major pre-cepting authorities, and had no further observations to pass onto the Executive.
92. The Executive considered proposals for a final Scheme at a Special Meeting on 22 January 2013, which recommended a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Waverley for 2013/14 based on the principles of the current council tax benefit scheme but incorporating changes to some specific elements for working age claimants. At a Special Meeting of Council following, it was agreed that Waverley's local council tax reduction scheme for 2013/14 should be based on the current council tax benefit scheme but incorporating the changes to some specific elements for working age claimants; and that a hardship fund be created from the 2013/14 government grant, with the amount to be agreed as part of the budget setting report, with delegation given to the Head of Finance to assess and approve one-off payments from the fund to claimants during the year.

#### *Council Tax Empty/Second Home Exemptions*

93. At its meeting on 26 November 2012, the Committee received a report setting out recommendations on changes to council tax discounts and exemptions in relation to

empty and second homes. It was noted that under the Government's localism agenda new flexibilities had been proposed that would give councils local discretion to vary certain discounts and exemptions that currently were prescribed by statute. The Government was specifically encouraging local councils to use these flexibilities to help close the funding gap relating to the introduction of Local Council Tax Reduction Schemes, and 85% of responders to Waverley's consultation on its draft Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme indicated that they would be in favour of Waverley introducing these measures.

94. Whilst there were some reservations about removing exemptions or reducing discounts for empty homes, overall the Committee endorsed the recommendations for changes to Empty and Second Home Council Tax Exemptions and Discounts, and had no particular observations to pass to the Executive. The changes were approved by the Council on 11 December 2012.

#### National Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy Review

95. At its meeting on 26 November 2012, the Committee considered recommendations for the NNDR Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for the 3-year period 2013/14 to 2015/16 inclusive. The Committee was reminded that in November 2011 the Council had undertaken its four-yearly review of Waverley's policy for awarding NNDR Discretionary Rate Relief. At that time, in view of the uncertainty over the impact on the policy of draft legislative changes published by the Government in the Localism Bill, the Council had agreed not to make any changes for 2012/13 and to review the position in November 2012 for 2013/14 onwards.
96. The Committee noted that the Localism Act 2011 had amended section 47 of the Local Government Act 1988 to enable local authorities to go beyond the limited circumstances where relief could be given on a shared basis between local and central government, to enable relief to be given in any circumstances, subject to relief only being granted where it would be reasonable to do so having regard to the interests of council tax payers in its area. However, the full cost of granting relief under this provision would have to be met fully by Waverley and not shared with the Government. It was recommended that power to make decisions under this power be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in conjunction with the Finance Portfolio Holder, with referral to the Executive in cases where an objection was received.
97. The Committee also noted that under the existing policy there were two organisations – Farnham Museum and Sandy Hill Bungalow community centre - that qualified for discretionary relief but did not currently receive it. It was recommended that these two organisations be awarded discretionary rate relief in line with the current policy.
98. The Committee endorsed the recommendations that: the policy for granting discretionary rate relief for the 3-year period 2013/14 to 2015/16 should remain the same as the current policy, with the additional award of relief to the Sandy Hill Bungalow, Farnham and the Farnham Museum; and granting discretionary rate relief to any body other than those currently included in the approved policy should be on a case-by-case basis, where the proposed reduction was clearly in the wider interests of Waverley council taxpayers, and delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in conjunction with the Finance Portfolio with any objections to be referred to the Executive.



99. The Executive endorsed the recommendation at its meeting on 4 December 2012, which was approved by Council on 11 December 2012.

#### Treasury Management Policy Framework 2013/14

100. Corporate O&S Committee is responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the Council's treasury management strategy and policies. At its meeting on 29 January 2013, the Committee considered a report setting out the Policy Framework for 2013/14. It was noted that the November 2011 revisions to the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, which incorporated the implications of the new HRA Self-Financing framework and tightened up on the requirements for the management of risk, had been incorporated into Waverley's Treasury Management Policy in February 2012. Subsequent minor changes by CIPFA to two prudential indicators were now proposed to be incorporated in Waverley's Treasury Management framework for 2013/14.
101. The Committee noted that in November 2012 the Executive had agreed that following the implementation of the HRA self-financing arrangements, Waverley no longer required such a high level of treasury advice as had been provided by external advisors, Arlingclose. Whilst their advice had been of significant value during the transition to HRA self-financing, their input had now been scaled down to a robust information service. Accordingly, the treasury management strategy for 2013/14 had been updated to reflect the change in level of support from external advisors.
102. The Corporate O&S Committee congratulated officers on the continued prudent approach to treasury management, and had no further observations on the proposed revisions to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2013/14 or Annual Investment Strategy 2013/14 reflecting the change in the level of service provided by the Council's external Treasury Management advisors.
103. The Executive endorsed the recommendations to approve the Treasury Management Policy; the 2013/14 Treasury Management Strategy (including the TMPs and the requirements of the latest CIPFA code of practice); the Annual Investment Strategy for 2013/14; and, the Prudential Indicators for 2013/14 to 2015/16, at its meeting on 5 February 2013, and these were approved by the Council on 19 February 2013.

#### Financial Strategy 2013/14 – 2016/17

##### 104. General Fund Budget 2013/14

- 104.1 At the meeting on 29 January 2013 the Committee considered the draft General Fund Revenue Budget for 2013/14. Officers outlined the financial background to producing the Council's four-year Financial Strategy and the approach taken to the 2013/14 Budget. The Committee was reminded that over recent years Waverley had faced significant financial pressures, to which the Council had responded and already delivered savings now amounting to £7.5m over 5 years.

- 104.2 On top of the substantial reductions already made to Waverley's Government Support Grant as part of the Government's radical revision of the entire Local Government system, a further reduction of £470,000 in 2013/14 had been advised. The Government had announced a further year's Council Tax Freeze Grant for 2013/14. If council tax was held at this year's level, Government Grant of around £90,000 would be received based on a notional increase of 1% in council tax income. The 2013/14 grant would be paid for two years, but would present a pressure in 2015/16 as it prevented Waverley embedding the increase in the base budget.
- 104.3 The Committee noted the reconciliation of the budget shortfall forecast at the Members' Finance Seminar in September 2012 to the latest budget proposals, and in particular highlighted the 'Star Chamber' proposed savings and growth items and the additional revenue contribution to capital of £610,000.
- 104.4 The Chairman congratulated the Portfolio Holder, Finance Director and officers for their work in bringing the proposed budget forward in such challenging times. The Portfolio Holder commended Heads of Service for the positive and enthusiastic way in which they had brought forward proposals to deliver services in more efficient ways, recognising the need sometimes to invest now to generate future savings. The reason that Waverley was able to propose a balanced budget for 2013/14 was because the process had begun in setting the 2012/13 budget.
- 104.5 Committee members sought clarification from officers on a number of points, including the proposed reduction in staff vacancy saving, which reflected reduced staff turnover; and the reduced contribution to the Insurance Reserve. Some members expressed concern about the progressive 10% annual reduction in Compensatory Grants to Parish Councils. The purpose of these Grants was to reduce the impact of Council Tax for parishes that provided their own 'leisure facilities'. Every 10% cut put extra pressure on parishes, which would eventually need to raise their precept to fund these services. Members were therefore pleased to see that it was proposed to review the annual reduction in the light of changes to the Town and Parish tax base arising from government reforms.
- 104.6 The Corporate O&S Committee congratulated the Portfolio Holder and Officers for the way in which the Council had responded to the significant financial pressures over recent years, and which had meant that Waverley had entered the budget-setting process for 2013/14 in a much better position than many other councils; and, endorsed the budget recommendations for the service areas within its remit subject to the following observation being considered by the Executive:

The Committee was concerned about the impact on parish councils of the progressive 10% annual reduction in Compensatory Grants, as detailed in the Star Chamber proposals, and looked forward to the planned review of this proposal in the light of Town and Parish tax base changes arising from government reforms.

#### 105. General Fund Draft Capital Programme 2013/14

- 105.1 The Committee considered the draft General Fund Capital Programme for 2013/14. Proposals totalled £4,369,200 including indicative proposals for works to improve the Herons Leisure Centre at Haslemere which would mark the completion of the Council's Leisure Centre Strategy. For 2013/14, total external funding was

estimated to be £2,433,867 with £1,935,333 to be met from Waverley's own resources.

- 105.2 Officers provided clarification on a number of points including the use of capital funds for projects (e.g. the Rowledge electoral review), where there were no on-going costs to the service once the review had been concluded; the office maximisation project; piloting different models of mobile working, including trialling use of tablet computers by members instead of providing committee papers in hard copy; and purchase versus leases for desktop hardware and software licenses.
- 105.3 The Corporate O&S Committee endorsed the recommendations for the General Fund Capital Programme 2013/14 for the service areas within its remit, subject to the following observations being considered by the Executive: that officers might explore options to lease computer hardware (thin clients) and software licences (Microsoft Enterprise) rather than purchase outright; and the Committee was not convinced that the refurbishment of the Members toilets, currently programmed for 2014/15, was necessary.
106. The Council's General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2013/14 were approved by Council on 19 February 2013.
107. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2013/14 and Revenue Budget 2013/14
- 107.1 Officers introduced the report and updated the Committee on the latest position regarding the HRA Revenue Estimates and the updated 30-year Business Plan for 2013/14. In particular, the Committee's views were sought on the proposed Rent Setting principles, and the proposed Rent increase for 2013/14.
- 107.2 The Committee was reminded that in March 2012 Waverley had entered into a new method of funding the provision of council housing services and had taken on borrowing of £189m. The new funding arrangement had given Waverley much greater financial freedom, to retain all of its rental income, service the debt and manage and improve the stock much more effectively as a result. The average interest on the borrowing was 3% and the loan portfolio minimised exposure to risks. Repayments had been profiled to commence in 2017, to allow retained income to be re-invested in the stock via the decent homes scheme and major stock improvement together with the building of new homes for social rent.
- 107.3 In considering the financial model of the Business Plan, the aim had been to protect the amount of income available for investment in the first 5 years of the Business Plan. The updated assumptions for 2013/14 showed that as a result of various cost savings, the income budget could be maintained by a 3.7% rent increase for 2013/14, which was lower than the 4% in the original Business Plan approved by the Executive.
- 107.4 The Committee reviewed the draft rent setting principles which it was proposed would underpin a policy appropriate to achieving Waverley's Business Plan objectives. It was noted that the proposed rent increase for 2013/14 complied with the draft principles and the Committee agreed that they would provide a good framework for a consistent approach to rent-setting in future.

- 107.5 Corporate O&S Committee was pleased to endorse the draft rent-setting principles, and the proposed flat-rate rent increase for 2013/14 of 3.7%, with an addition of up to £2/week for those properties where rent is below their target rent.
108. Housing Revenue Account 2013/14 Capital Programme, New Affordable Homes Programme and Stock Improvement Programme
- 108.1 The Committee considered proposals for the 2013/14 Capital Programme element of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan. In addition to the programme for major works to existing stock, the Capital Programme now also encompassed the New Affordable Homes programme and the Stock Improvement Programme. It was noted that the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) had agreed to bring forward Waverley's 2014/15 Decent Homes backlog funding of £2.9m, with £400k brought forward into 2012/13 and £2.5m into 2013/14. This would enable the Decent Homes backlog programme to be completed by 31 March 2014, a year earlier than originally planned. The total capital programme for Decent Homes work and other programmed maintenance for 2013/14 therefore totalled £12.2m, including four new temporary staff posts to ensure the Council had sufficient resources to manage and deliver the accelerated Decent Homes programme.
- 108.2 The 30-year HRA Business Plan also included funding streams for delivery of new affordable homes and major improvements of existing stock, which in 2013/14 amounted to £4.7m and 1.4m respectively. These programmes would be overseen by the Housing Delivery Board. The Committee noted that feasibility studies and preliminary work had been carried out on a number of Council owned sites in the proposed 2013/14 affordable homes delivery programme; although estimated costs at this stage were only indicative as on the scheme for Station Road, Godalming had been prepared and costed in detail. Similarly, the only stock improvement project at an advanced stage was the re-modelling of Rolston House to improve the standard of accommodation and make units more attractive for letting. Indicative costs had been included for two further projects currently being developed.
- 108.3 Corporate O&S Committee was pleased to endorse the exciting capital programme planned for 2013/14 to address the Decent Homes backlog, delivery of new affordable homes, and major stock improvement.
109. The Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2013/14 were approved by Council on 19 February 2013.

#### **CALL-IN ITEM - WESTFIELD LANE RECREATION GROUND, WRECCLESHAM**

110. At its meeting on 29 May 2012 the Executive considered a report on an approach for the future management of the Westfield Lane Recreation Ground, and agreed to support a proposal by Badshot Lea Football Club to lease and develop the site, including a commitment of £50,000 capital funds to assist in the provision of a new Pay to Play football pitch and improvements to the pavilion changing rooms, subject to other external funding being obtained by Badshot Lea FC.
111. Following the Executive meeting, four members of Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Cllrs Pat Frost, Gillian Beel, Paddy Blagden and Liz Wheatley – asked that the Committee scrutinise the decision.

112. Corporate O&S Committee met on 2 July 2012 to review the Executive's decision. It was noted that Cllr Chris Storey had a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to the call-in item, as his home overlooked the Westfield Lane site, and he had therefore given his apologies for absence from the meeting. Cllr Stephen O'Grady, Portfolio Holder for Green Spaces, and Cllr Julia Potts, Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Culture attended the meeting.
113. Cllr Pat Frost outlined her reason for calling in the Executive's decision in relation to the Westfield Lane Recreation Ground. Cllr Frost proposed that any decision relating to the Westfield Lane site should be deferred pending full consultation with all stakeholders on the merits or otherwise of the proposals. Whilst noting that the proposed use by Badshot Lea FC might be less intensive than previous use by Farnham Rugby Club she was concerned that there had been no consultation with the local ward members or the local community about the impact of the proposed development of the ground and options for alternative approaches. There were particular concerns about traffic implications around the site, and the impact on other users of the site including the nursery and general amenity users. Whilst noting that the proposals would require planning permission in due course, Members did not feel that the ability to make representations through the planning process was an adequate or timely form of consultation.
114. The Committee was generally supportive of Cllr Frost's proposal that there should be some form of local consultation before a decision was made on the future management of the Westfield Lane site. To minimise the risk of any undue delay impacting on availability to Badshot Lea FC of grant funding, the Committee RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive that any decision relating to the Westfield Lane site be deferred pending full consultation, within the next 8 weeks, with all stakeholders on the merits or otherwise of the proposals. The resolution was carried by 7 votes in favour and 2 against. Cllr Beel wished it to be recorded that she had voted against the resolution.
115. At its meeting on 3 July 2012, the Executive considered the comments and recommendation from the Corporate O&S Committee, and thanked Corporate O&S Committee for its observations on the proposal. In order to enable the Sport England application to go forward, the Executive reaffirmed in principle its previous decision taken on 29 May 2012; but agreed that a local consultation be organised including a drop-in exhibition to raise awareness in the community and to give local people an opportunity to raise any concerns they may have.

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### **Recommendation**

That Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the Annual Report for 2012/13, and agrees to submit it to Council in accordance with Article 6.03(e) of the Constitution.

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### **Background Papers (CEx)**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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**CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13**

The Committee met six times, on 25 June, 2 July (Call-In), 24 September and 26 November 2012, and 29 January and 18 March 2013; and jointly with Community O&S Committee on 12 March 2013. The membership and attendance at meetings is detailed below:

	25 June 2012	2 July 2012 (Call-in)	24 Sept. 2012	26 Nov. 2012	29 Jan. 2013	12 Mar. 2013 (Joint)	18 Mar. 2013
Cllr Michael Goodridge (Chairman)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Cllr Donal O'Neill (Vice-Chairman)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cllr Paddy Blagden	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Cllr Brian Ellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cllr Pat Frost	✓	✓				✓	
Cllr Richard Gates	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Cllr Lynn Graffham	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cllr Peter Isherwood				✓	✓		
Cllr Peter Martin				✓	✓		✓
Cllr Tom Martin	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cllr Stephen Mulliner			✓		✓		✓
Cllr Elliot Nichols					✓		
Cllr Chris Storey	✓		✓				
Cllr Simon Thornton	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cllr Mrs Liz Wheatley	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b><u>Substitutes</u></b>							
Cllr Gillian Beel		✓					
Cllr Stewart Stennett	✓	✓					✓
Cllr Maurice Byham					✓		
Cllr Jim Edwards	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Cllr Nick Holder					✓	✓	✓
Cllr Nick Williams							
Cllr Ian Sampson							
Cllr Ross Welland						✓	
<b><u>Co-opted Members</u></b>							
Jane Rawlings	✓						
Jan Knott	✓						
Helen Jones							
Christine North			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brenda Greenslade				✓	✓	✓	✓





## **CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** **HOUSING IMPROVEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE 2012/13**

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1. Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee were agreed by the Corporate O&S Committee at its meeting on 25 June 2012:

### **A. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- (a) To meet at least five times per year on dates to be mutually agreed by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.
- (b) To scrutinise all matters relating to the housing management service, in particular the HRA Business Plan and receive regular reports on progress on this.
- (c) To receive and consider proposals to improve the services to tenants and ensure the regulatory tenant standards are met.
- (d) To advise the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee on proposals which have policy implications, so that the Committee can, if appropriate, report on to the Executive.
- (e) To give considered opinions on options for the future of the housing service as and when they arise and to pass those views on to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (f) To review performance information regarding Landlord services and make recommendations for improvement.

### **(B) MEMBERSHIP**

To comprise five elected members of the Corporate O&S Committee, and five elected members of the Tenants' Panel as non-voting co-opted members.

The Waverley Tenants' Panel will be fully involved in the discussion and reaching any conclusions on matters discussed. They can request that matters of concern to them be placed on the agenda and discussed at the Sub-Committee.

The Housing Portfolio Holder(s) to have a standing invitation to attend all meetings of the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee with a right to address the sub-committee, as set out in the Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

### **(C) COMPLAINTS**

The Sub-Committee may have a role in reviewing complaints from service users that have reached the end of Waverley's three stage complaints process and before a complainant decides if they wish to submit their complaint to the House Ombudsman.

### **(D) CHAIRING**

The Sub-Committee will be chaired by the Chairman of the Corporate O&S Committee, and the Chair of the Tenants' Panel will be Vice-Chair of the Sub-Committee.

2. The Housing Improvement Sub-Committee met on 4 occasions in 2012/13, on 10 September and 5 November 2012 and 7 January and 4 March 2013. The final meeting of the erstwhile Landlord Services Partnership Special Interest Group took place on 11 June 2012.
3. Details of members' attendance at sub-committee meetings during 2012/13 are given at below.

	10 Sept. 2012	5 Nov. 2012	7 Jan. 2013	4 Mar. 2013
Cllr Michael Goodridge (Chairman)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cllr Pat Frost	✓	✓	✓	
Cllr Richard Gates		✓	✓	✓
Cllr Christopher Storey		✓		
Cllr Stewart Stennett				✓
Jan Knott	✓			
Brenda Greenslade (Vice-Chairman w.e.f 7 January 2013)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ivan Keemar	✓	✓		✓
Ann Powis	✓	✓		
Adrian Waller	✓	✓	✓	✓
In attendance: Cllr Keith Webster, Portfolio Holder for Housing	✓	✓	✓	✓

4. Summary of business items considered by the Sub-Committee:
  - 4.1 At each meeting the Sub-Committee has received monitoring reports on customer feedback (complaints and compliments) and key performance indicators. The Sub-Committee has considered the following additional items:
    - 4.1.1 Introduction to Housing Co-Regulation and Scrutiny: under the new Regulatory Framework for social housing there was a distinct new role for scrutiny by tenants, separate to that of the Council's scrutiny role in relation to its Housing Service. The Tenants' Panel, with the support of officers, would now be forming a Scrutiny Panel, and progress would be reported to future meetings of the Sub-Committee.
    - 4.1.2 Voids Management: Officers were continuing to work with the contractor to improve the performance on turnaround of void properties, and with the Tenants' Panel to develop the role of tenants in inspecting void properties. The Sub-Committee asked the Tenants' Panel and officers to explore different incentives that might be offered to out-going tenants who left their property in a good state of repair and cleanliness. The Sub-Committee continued to monitor voids issues closely at each meeting, and at the March meeting officers had given an in-depth report on work undertaken to address weaknesses in the management of void properties. In particular, there was now better understanding of the key performance indicator for voids, described as the average number of calendar days taken to re-let a property. Whilst the indicator had deteriorated over recent quarters, to 30 days in Q2 and 28 days in Q3, the perception of tenants was that many void properties were empty for much longer than this. Officers had investigated how the KPI was calculated, which revealed that

'major' voids, i.e. those requiring significant or structural works, were effectively removed from the calculation. Now that there was a better understanding of the indicator, Housing Officers and Mears managers were working closely to improve the performance on bringing 'normal' and major voids back into management.

- 4.1.3 Solar PV Panel Project: The tenant satisfaction survey had reported an overall 77% of tenants were satisfied with the installation of Solar PV Panels. Officers reported that tenant dis-satisfaction centred on issues around the sub-contractors who did the actual installations, and providing assurance to tenants that the PV Panels were operating and providing a benefit. Officers also reported that they were exploring options to extend the project with further installations, but the business model was more complex than in the original project due to reductions in the Feed In Tariff.
- 4.1.4 Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) Results: The Sub-Committee had received an interim report on the results of the 2012 survey of tenants and residents. The key results of the survey showed high levels of overall satisfaction with the Housing service, and with the quality of their home. High levels of satisfaction were also reported in relation to their neighbourhood as a place to live, attitude of workers, helpfulness of staff and ease of getting hold of the right person at Waverley. The results also showed areas where levels of satisfaction were relatively low, including final outcomes of reported anti-social behaviour, environmental factors on estates (e.g. parking, litter) and opportunities for participation. The results also highlighted that younger tenants (under 35 years) were more inclined to be dissatisfied with the service. The results had been presented to Waverley staff and Tenants' Panel members at workshops and the discussions would inform an action plan identifying priority actions to ensure service improvements. For example, it was intended to explore further the views and expectations of younger tenants specifically by way of focus groups, and through greater use of Facebook and Twitter.
- 4.1.5 Welfare Reform Project: The sub-committee had received a report outlining the initial findings of the six national pilot projects trialling direct payment of Housing Benefit which had been running since June 2012, and the implications for Waverley. The headlines were that some tenants were not managing to pay their rent and were struggling to meet household expenses; landlords' had seen rent arrears increase to an average of 8% across the six pilots; and costs for evictions were increasing. All the pilot landlords had asked for the trigger for housing benefit to be paid directly to the landlord to be reduced from a tenant being 12 weeks in arrears to 4 weeks.

Officers had reported on the work being undertaken to prepare Waverley residents and tenants for the welfare changes being introduced from 1 April 2013, and to moderate the risk to Waverley of increased rent arrears. The Sub-Committee suggested that Waverley make representations to the Department of Work & Pensions on reducing the period of rent arrears from 12 weeks to 4 weeks as the trigger for re-instating Housing Benefit payments to be made direct to the landlord.

- 4.1.6 Housing Allocation Scheme – Implementation Update: The Sub-Committee noted that the early outcome of the introduction of the new Housing Allocation Scheme was a considerable reduction in the number of applicants on Waverley's Housing register. Verification forms had been sent to 3,315 existing housing applicants on 2 January 2013 asking for verification of personal data against the new allocation criteria. Of the 1,806 forms returned by the end of February, 1,045 forms had been

processed by the Homechoice team: 884 applicants had been able to remain on the housing register, whilst 161 applications had been cancelled. The remaining 761 returned forms would be processed during March. A further report would be made to the June 2013 sub-committee.