

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 3 JULY 2012

CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 25 JUNE 2012

Title:

**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH HOUSING TENANTS**

[Portfolio Holders: Cllrs Robert Knowles and Keith Webster]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

The Council, on 23 May 2012, agreed to the proposal to rebalance the workload on Overview & Scrutiny Committees, and to move responsibility for the Housing service to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This report sets out a proposal for improving partnership working with Waverley housing tenants, and sets out a proposed structure for a sub-committee to take on the role of the Landlord Services SIG, proposed terms of reference, and membership.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

Overview and Scrutiny plays a role in achieving all of the Council's priorities, and the new structure will contribute towards improving affordable housing and understanding Waverley's residents' needs better.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no equality and diversity implications.

Environment and Climate Change Implications:

There are no environment and climate change implications.

Resource/Value for Money implications:

The change can be achieved within existing budgets.

Legal Implications:

New Housing legislation places a duty on the Council to involve its tenants more effectively.

Introduction

1. Major changes to Housing, including the new Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, have meant that the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee is in a better position to cover the rapidly changing environment of affordable housing. The new

Housing self-financing funding regime also has significant Corporate financial implications. Accordingly, the Council agreed a rebalancing of terms of reference of the two Overview & Scrutiny Committees as a pilot for the 2012/13 Council year.

2. The Landlord Services Partnership Special Interest Group, made up of Waverley's Members and tenants, has helped develop a positive working partnership with Waverley's tenants. However, the pace of change and new legislation mean that a new body needs to develop a more proactive role in monitoring service quality and helping develop service improvement, and this role would sit more appropriately under the umbrella of Overview and Scrutiny. This could be achieved by setting up a Sub-Committee of Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee with tenant representatives co-opted onto this. It could cover the existing areas that the SIG has discussed, and also cover new legislative requirements, performance monitoring, monitoring achievement of new initiatives under the HRA business plan and an overview of complaints about Housing services, with a view to taking a more proactive partnership approach to learning from complaints to improve services.

Terms of reference

3. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee adopted Terms of Reference for the new Sub-Committee which are attached as Annexe 1. The Committee is now seeking the formal approval of the Executive to the new Sub-Committee being set up, and the Executive may recall it has already approved the proposal in outline when it reviewed Special Interest Group membership at its meeting on 29 May.

Membership

4. Currently the Landlord Services Partnership SIG has sixteen members: the Housing Portfolio Holder as Chairman and seven other councillors, plus eight Tenants Panel representatives. Both the Corporate and Community Overview & Scrutiny Committees have two co-opted representatives from the Tenants' Panel to represent tenants' interests.
5. The Committee agreed that five Tenants' Panel representatives form the Tenant representation, with five Council members appointed from the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee. There is also a standing invitation for the Housing Portfolio Holder to attend, with a right to address the Sub-Committee, as set out in Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules.
6. All Council members are able to attend all meetings and Procedure Rules allow them to give notice to speak on a particular item.

Conclusion

7. The Landlord Services Partnership SIG last met on 11 June and the new Sub-Committee would start its programme of meetings in September this year, in time to report to the meeting of Corporate O&S on 24 September.
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Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 25 June 2012 in agreeing the proposal noted concerns expressed about the need to explain more fully to the Tenants' Panel the expected improvements in consultation which the new Sub-Committee offers. Officers agreed to meet the Tenants' Panel to reassure them that the intention is to develop further the existing partnership arrangements.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive concur with the proposal to set up the new Housing Improvement Sub-Committee.

Background Papers

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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WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DRAFT HOUSING IMPROVEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

(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

The Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee will be able to appoint five of its members to the Housing Improvement Sub-Committee.

The Waverley Tenants Panel will be able to nominate five members for co-option to the Sub-Committee as non-voting members but who 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.

(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 a Council member and the Vice-Chairman will be a Tenants' Panel representative, and both Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be fully involved in Chairman's briefings for the Sub-Committee.