

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - HOUSING - 3 JULY 2018

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the Meeting)

Present

Cllr John Ward (Chairman)
Cllr Carole Cockburn
Cllr Patricia Ellis
Cllr Michael Goodridge

Cllr Tony Gordon-Smith
Cllr Simon Inchbald
Cllr Richard Seaborne
Cllr Liz Townsend

Cllr Bob Upton (Substitute)

Tenants Panel Representative

Adrian Waller

Apologies

Cllr Pat Frost and Miss Brenda Greenslade

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR 2018/19 (Agenda item 1.)

Councillor John Ward was confirmed as the Chairman of the Committee for the 2018/19 Council Year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR 2018/19 (Agenda item 2.)

Councillor Pat Frost was confirmed as the Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the 2018/19 Council Year.

3. MINUTES (Agenda item 3.)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 March 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTES (Agenda item 4.)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pat Frost and Miss Brenda Greenslade. Councillor Bob Upton attended as a substitute.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 5.)

There were no declarations in relation to items on the agenda.

6. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 6.)

There were no questions.

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS (Agenda item 7.)

There were no questions.

8. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WAVERLEY SCRUTINY GROUP'S REPORT ON RECHARGES (Agenda item 8.)

The Committee was reminded that the Waverley Scrutiny Group had completed a review on how the Council managed the process of recharging certain costs to tenants and leaseholders. This report had been received at the meeting in March and Members were now presented with information on how the Housing Service Team was addressing the recommendations raised on recharges.

The Committee was advised that of the 14 identified recommendations, work had commenced on all actions; eight had been completed. Completed recommendations included:

- The review of the Recharge Policy to reflect officer decision making and responsibilities
- New accountancy system codes had also been created to easily identify and report on recharges; and
- New tenants were encouraged to take up home insurance.

The Committee noted that the aim was to complete actions against the remaining recommendations by September 2018.

The Committee thanked the Group for their report and supported the implementation of the scrutiny recommendations and action plan. It was agreed that an update report be brought to the meeting in November 2018 on implementation of the recommendations and details of the number of recharges and income received during 2018/19.

9. UPDATE ON THE RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WAVERLEY SCRUTINY GROUP REPORT ON VOIDS REPAIRS (Agenda item 9.)

The Committee received a report providing an update on the Housing Service's response to the recommendations made by the Waverley Scrutiny Group in relation to how the Council managed void repairs.

The Committee was advised that the report identified ten recommendations that the Waverley Scrutiny Group concluded would result in improvements to the current void process. The Housing Service had agreed or partially agreed with all of the recommendations, and actions agreed. The re-use of key safes and recycling locks had been investigated but not progressed further: there were already processes in place for the removal of key safes, and the recycling of locks removed from properties had been considered and costed but was not cost effective. Of the remaining eight recommendations, only one was outstanding: the review of the re-let standard had been delayed, but the project had commenced and would be completed by the end of July 2018.

The Committee reiterated its thanks to the Scrutiny Group for conducting its review into how the Council managed void reports, noted the response of the Housing Service, and thanked Officers for their engagement with the Scrutiny Group.

10. TENANT INVOLVEMENT PROGRESS REPORT (Agenda item 10.)

The Committee received a report on progress with the last year's tenant involvement activities and future plans for 2018/19.

The Committee noted that the Tenants' Panel continued to be actively engaged with all levels with the Housing Service. There were monthly meetings with the Tenants' Panel Chair and Vice Chair, and members of the Tenants' Panel had attended a 2017 Housing-related Support consultation at the eight Waverley Senior Living Schemes. It was noted that their aim for the rest of the year would be to continue to visit and meet with residents at the Senior Living Schemes to hear feedback on how the new service was operating.

The Committee asked whether it was difficult to attract volunteers. Members were advised that this was always hard and any help from them to promote the service would be appreciated. Volunteers were offered officer support and bespoke training to empower them in their roles with courses, online resources and awareness sessions. They would have an annual review to identify capacity, interests and training needs to support their role. To develop the service further the Tenant Involvement Officer had attended a number of networking and training events held by Voluntary Action South West Surrey. This had helped to inform good practice and network with other agencies such as the Clinical Commissioning Group. Working with these organisations they could now offer a comprehensive induction pack to welcome new volunteers and would look to be recognised with a national award such 'Investors in Volunteers'.

The Committee noted the Tenant Involvement achievements and supported the actions for 2018/19 and acknowledged and thanked those tenants who volunteered for the Housing Service.

11. HRA ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2015-2020 - INTERIM REVIEW (Agenda item 11.) (Pages 9 - 10)

Hugh Wagstaff, the Head of Housing Operations, delivered a presentation to the Committee and Members received a report outlining findings of the latest review and gave an overview of performance against commitments made.

The review had highlighted that although there had been progress with a number of key objectives, there had been a loss of momentum in delivery of some objectives since the rent reduction directive which required the Council to re-focus where investment would be targeted. Asset management was a critical function for the Council and through the recruitment of the Strategic Asset Manager, any pledges made within the Strategy would be more closely monitored and managed.

The Committee was advised that robust performance management of contractors had been a key focus in recent years and had resulted in the Council having tighter control of its contracts. This had resulted in an improvement in performance but had required significant staff resource in order to achieve this. The necessary change in focus had meant that other objectives had been impacted upon. However, many actions had been achieved and there were only three that had not in relation to meeting high energy efficiency standards, tackling dampness across the Council's stock and reviewing effectiveness of estate inspections and walk-about.

The Committee thanked officers for the report and noted progress against the strategic objectives and strategic 5 year plan actions within the HRA Asset Management Strategy.

12. HRA ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021-2026 - SCOPING REPORT
(Agenda item 12.)

The Committee was reminded that the Asset Management Strategy covered a period 2015 - 2020. Members received a report setting out a pathway to the proposed 2020-2026 HRA Asset Management Strategy and they were asked for endorsement of its scope.

The Committee noted that the Strategy would be effective from March 2020 and to begin the review process Members' views were sought with regard to the elements to be included within the new Strategy. The current Strategy needed to be updated to ensure that it reflected

- changing needs and demands
- changes in legislation and regulation
- changes in funding regimes and the impact on investment
- changes in corporate objectives
- changes in aspirations and future priorities

The Committee agreed that it also needed to reflect changes in development and technology.

Members noted that the key learning point from the review of the current Strategy was that it contained a number of pledges setting out what was to be achieved without a plan detailing how they would be delivered. This had meant that actions were not adequately monitored and some pledges were not prioritised as they should have been. Consequently, moving forward any pledges set out in the Strategy would be pulled into an action plan where responsibilities could be assigned which would ensure team ownership. There would be a considered approach to determining priorities and these would be mapped to resources to identify where there were additional needs to enable delivery.

The Committee noted the proposed approach and endorsed the scope of the new HRA Asset Management Strategy. The Committee asked that they have the opportunities to scrutinise the draft Strategy as it developed over the next 18 months.

13. HOUSING DESIGN STANDARDS REVIEW - WORKING GROUP REPORT
(Agenda item 13.)

The Committee received a report setting out the work undertaken and recommendations made by the Member Scrutiny Review Working Group into Housing Design Standards for new Council Homes. The intention was that the recommendations of the review would inform the design proposals for Site C at Ockford Ridge, and future housing development schemes.

The Committee noted that the Scrutiny Review focussed on:

- new homes developed and funded by Waverley Borough Council including general needs and affordable housing for rent
- Internal design (space) standards, including internal storage space provision and potential use of roof space
- Accessibility and adaptability standards
- External space standards / gardens / amenity space
- Parking provision
- Materials – e.g shaver sockets/towel rails
- Opportunities for future proofing and adaptation to changing circumstances.

The Committee welcomed the report and hoped that the planners took on board some of the recommendations arising from the review. In particular those that were in relation to being elderly/dementia friendly and those in relation to improving emissions and energy efficiency.

The Committee thanked the Working Group for its report and endorsed the recommendations contained within it to the Executive.

14. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT - QUARTER 4, 2017/18 (JANUARY - MARCH 2018/19) (Agenda item 14.)

The Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee reviewed performance management indicators for the Housing Service for Quarter 4, 2017/18 and was pleased to see the good performance overall. Members were asked to comment on the presented performance data and the suggestions for 2018/19 key performance indicators.

The Committee noted that only two indicators had not met the target. The Committee was pleased to note that 76 homes were re-let during Quarter Four with an overall average turnaround time of 19 working days. The breakdown by month demonstrated that performance was on target throughout eight months of the year, and this was a marked improvement from 2016/17 when the target was not met for eight months of the year.

The Committee noted that the Team had an excellent record on rent collection performance but due to the water charge credit and some proactive work to ensure rent was paid in advance there had been a reduction in the total rent collected. This was because tenants in credit had reduced their payments.

The Committee was advised that there had been an overall improvement in tenant satisfaction with the responsive repairs service achieving over 90% in 2017/18. This was due to improved ease of contact, operatives arriving on time and reduction on time taken to complete repairs.

It was recommended to the Committee that in addition to the new affordable homes delivered indicator, there were two further new indicators, and these were:

- New affordable homes planning permission granted; and
- New affordable homes started on site.

In addition, it was proposed that to reflect the new Homelessness Reduction Act, a replacement indicator for number of homelessness cases prevented as follows:

- Number of HRA 2017 Prevention and Relief duties discharged.

The Committee considered the proposal and agreed to recommend the above additional performance indicators and amendment to the Executive.

15. HOUSING SERVICE PLAN ANNUAL OUT-TURN REPORT FOR 2017/18 (APRIL 2017 - MARCH 2018) (Agenda item 15.)

The Committee received a report giving Members an opportunity to scrutinise the outturn of the Housing Service Plan for 2017/18. The analysis of the Housing Service Plan objectives for the financial year showed an excellent performance with all 5 objectives and 17 sub-objectives being achieved, giving an overall 100% completion rate.

The Committee noted that through the year the new five year Housing Strategy had been approved and its ongoing implementation would be reviewed annually. A revised tenancy Agreement had been introduced in June 2018 to allow more effective management of homes and tenancies. The Team had progressed work to develop online forms and had also implemented a new telephone system to increase the customer satisfaction and speed up service delivery. Finally a refugee had been successfully resettled in Waverley as part of the "Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme" and the lessons learnt from the process would be used to facilitate resettlement of four further families.

The Committee thanked the Team for its hard work in completing all the objectives and had no comments to make to the Executive.

16. OCKFORD RIDGE UPDATE (Agenda item 16.)

The Committee received a detailed update on progress with the Ockford Ridge redevelopment. Members noted that Housing Officers were working with Planning colleagues to establish a Local Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) to reflect the ecological report and the Landscaping Plan included in the original consent for Site A. The site had now been fully vacated, final utility disconnection works and hoarding works had been completed and Demolition contractors R G Collard were due to start demolition works w/c 9 July 2018.

In relation to Site B, Reserved Matters were approved by the Central Planning Committee on 29 November 2017, for appearance, landscaping, layout and scale. The construction programme for Site B would be reliant on the progress of Site A.

Stephen Taylor Architects had prepared some options for Site C Ockford Ridge. These had been considered by the Member Working Group as part of their review of the current Design Standard Guidelines. Pre-application advice had been received and the architects were now preparing an Outline Planning Application for submission in July 2018. The residents of Ockford Ridge had been invited to a drop-in consultation event to view these plans and ask any questions on 18 July 2018, which Members were welcome to attend.

The refurbishment contractor TCL Group had changed their site team on 10 April 2018 and a programme for handover was agreed by TCL and the new site manager. Unfortunately this programme had not been adhered to by TCL and this

led to some moves being deferred and in some cases properties handed over with snagging issues. However all properties had now been handed over and outstanding snagging works were now being completed.

The Committee thanked officers for the very useful update on the project.

17. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda item 17.)

Yasmine Makin, Graduate Management Trainee, introduced the Committee's Work Programme and drew attention to the items currently scheduled to come forward in September.

It was noted that the item on Homelessness would move from September to November. There would though, be the Health Inequalities report and a report on Housing Fraud in September.

18. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda item 18.)

At 8.23pm, it was RESOLVED that, pursuant to Procedure Rule 20 and in accordance with Section 100B(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information (as defined by section 100I of the Act) of the description specified in paragraph 3 of the revised Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the act, namely:-

Paragraph 3: Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any Particular person (including the authority holding that information).

19. CONTRACT PROCUREMENT (Agenda item 19.)

The Committee considered the Exempt report on Contract Procurement and endorsed the recommendations to the Executive.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and concluded at 8.25 pm

Chairman

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Funding for managing assets and building new homes

- Rents – Management Costs = Surplus for:
 - ✓ Re-investment (planned capital programme)
 - ✓ New Build



Delivering Excellent Asset Management

- Sound business planning developing new and creative approaches to managing homes and assets is a core part of providing decent affordable homes
- Ensuring we manage and maintain our homes in the most productive and efficient way is crucial.



Overview

- Strategy developed in 2015
- Political (Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016) and financial challenges have taken place since the strategy was developed (£4m reduction to capital allocation)
- Performance management of key contractors has required focus on day to day services and need to re-procure new services going forward
- STAR 2017



Strategic Objectives - page 51

- Meet tenant aspirations
- Strive to meet high energy efficiency standards
- Stock condition surveys
- Garage sites
- Health and Safety -



Where should the focus be?

- Tenant satisfaction – what level?
- Tenant aspirations
- Lowest housing cost possible?
- Transforming lives – how do we measure?
- Decent Homes standard
- Internal – kitchen and bathrooms
- “kerb appeal”
- Parking and garages
- Energy efficiency
- Flexibility



New Homes (page 103)

- Small sample survey but..
- Are we transforming lives through the new build? Should we?
- Satisfaction levels – areas of satisfaction?

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Moving Forward

- Determine Waverley's approach to prioritised investment in the future
- Consider closing the gap between new build homes standard and Waverley's Maintenance Standard based on tenants feedback – are we building and refurbishing homes which make a real impact?
- Obtain greater understanding of existing tenant feedback in order to develop programmes which seek to increase satisfaction with the stock – how do we target improvements to older stock which have less satisfied tenants?
- Continue to improve the way health and safety risks are managed and ensuring this remains a priority within the Council

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Conclusion

- The 2015-2020 Asset Management Strategy set out strategic objectives and a high level action plan
- It also set out a number of pledges, aspirations and commitments which sought to better manage the Councils assets and meet the needs of its tenants
- There has been some real progress against these but it is accepted that further work is needed
- In order to maintain momentum, the Council, through the appointment of the Strategic Asset Manager will ensure a more focused approach in the monitoring and delivery of the commitments made

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