

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - HOUSING - 23
SEPTEMBER 2019

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

Present

Cllr Richard Seaborne (Chairman)	Cllr Patricia Ellis
Cllr Peter Marriott (Vice Chairman)	Cllr Michael Goodridge
Cllr Christine Baker	Cllr Anna James
Cllr Richard Cole	Cllr Anne-Marie Rosoman (Portfolio Holder for Housing),
Cllr Jerry Hyman (Substitute)	

Co-opted Members

Terry Daubney	Gillian Martin (Substitute)
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Apologies

Cllr Michaela Gray, Cllr Jack Lee, Dennis Smith (Co-optee,

Also Present

Louisa Blundell,	Annalisa Howson,
Louise Norie,	Yasmine Makin,
Mike Rivers,	Andrew Smith,

16. MINUTES (Agenda item 1.)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th June 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTES (Agenda item 2.)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Michaela Gray, Cllr Jack Lee and Mr Dennis Smith (Tenants' Panel).

Cllr Jerry Hyman and Mrs Gillian Martin (Tenants' Panel attended as substitutes.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3.)

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

19. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 4.)

There were no questions by members of the public submitted to the meeting.

20. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS (Agenda item 5.)

There were no questions by members submitted to the meeting.

21. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1 2019/20 (APRIL - JUNE 2019)
(Agenda item 6.)

Housing Delivery

Andrew Smith outlined the highlights of the Housing Delivery section of the Corporate Performance Report Q1 2019/20 (April – June 2019).

The Committee was advised that the Ockford Ridge regeneration was going well. The committee members would be invited on a site visit in the autumn to view the progress.

Work was progressing on the use of S106 agreements to purchase housing units from commercial developers. WBC was looking at acquiring units from certain schemes to rent out. The Committee asked if Waverley would be paying the same prices as social housing landlords for these units and were advised that the Council would bid in the same way as them so would not pay any more. Hyde was taking most of the units on the Amlets Lane development but there was opportunity for Waverley to bid on 5 units. The Committee also asked for information on the rent levels to be applied on the development. Advice was given that the provisional rent levels had been based on 80% of market value but the rents would be set when the development was closer to handover. A query was raised as to whether the units acquired would comply with WBC design standards? Louisa Blundell advised that this would all depend on when we started our enquiries with the developers. With regard to the Amlets Lane development we joined the conversation late so the properties may not be totally within our design standards but would be well built.

A query was raised as to why there were fewer KPI's included in this report compared with the report for Q4 2018-19. It was explained that this was the first quarter of the new year and the last committee had removed some of the KPI's which they felt were not informative.

Andrew Smith was asked to clarify the date we would know the level of Better Care Funding for 2020/21 onwards. He advised that this was not known as yet but it was likely the funding would be of a similar level if not more.

SP18/19H3.2 was highlighted as off track and a revised timetable was being drafted. The committee asked if we were now on schedule for a revised timetable to be presented to the next meeting. Andrew Smith was hopeful that this would be available.

Housing Operations

Annalisa Howson outlined the highlights of the Housing Operations section of the Corporate Performance Report Q1 2019/20 (April – June 2019).

The Committee was directed to KPI HO2 and it was explained that the dip in the time to re-let performance was expected due to demobilisation and mobilisation of the new maintenance contracts. So far in Q2 the average re-let time has dropped to 21 days.

It was highlighted that the introduction of Universal Credit had not had the negative impact on rent arrears that was feared. There were currently 100 claimants on UC in arrears but 144 were in credit.

It was noted that L1 complaint response rates were poor this quarter. This was down to one officer not prioritising responses correctly but this has been identified and additional training has been given. It was, however, noted that complaints had dropped this quarter. The committee asked how many complaints are upheld out of all those received.

It was highlighted that, as a consequence of there being 53 payment weeks in the current year, the annual rent decrease of 1% translated into a weekly reduction of 2.83%. This was explained more clearly to members and advice was given that it would also be explained to residents via the newsletter.

Officers were asked if all options had been exhausted in dealing with the ongoing legionella issue. The Committee was assured this was an ongoing piece of work which would continue until a solution had been found.

Annalisa was asked to explain how properties with long void times affected the figures. She advised with the new contracts this had now been cut down to between 10-15 days so did not adversely affect the figures.

The chairman thanked the officers for their reports.

The Committee **AGREED** the recommendation as set out in the agenda.

22. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (Agenda item 7.)

Louisa Blundell updated the Committee on current housing development projects. A graphical representation of the programme was circulated showing the current developments, number of properties and bedrooms within each development and proposed timelines.

Louisa advised that the Ockford Ridge (Site A) was progressing well. Work was being carried out with local partners (church, scout/guide HQ, primary school and Skillway) to deliver a package of community benefits.

Louisa was asked to clarify the circumstances that led to the refusal of planning permission at Ryle Road. She explained this was due to an omission in the application indicating a contribution to the SPA. This would be rectified when re-submission is made.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing was invited to comment on the material presented. She welcomed this report and programme and advised that sharing this information was key to moving forward.

Cllr Hyman questioned the anticipated total cost for the Ockford Ridge development as the net gain overall was only 38 extra homes. Andrew Smith suggested this was an unfair assumption as the existing properties were no longer fit for purpose and therefore the redevelopment of the entire site was necessary to provide acceptable homes.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and asked that their comments were considered.

23. WAVERLEY HOUSING STRATEGY 2018-23 YEAR 1 ACHIEVEMENTS (Agenda item 8.)

Andrew Smith updated the Committee on achievements by the Housing Delivery and Communities Service against Year One actions in the Council's 2018-2023 Housing Strategy. The Committee was advised that this was a living document that will be reviewed annually and revised as required in line with new government policies and Waverley BC priorities.

Headline Achievements highlighted:

- 36% of new homes completed in 2018/19 were for shared ownership
- 64% of new homes completed in 2018/19 were affordable housing for rent.
- A rural housing needs survey was carried out in the Dunsfold, Elstead, Tilford and Wonersh wards.
- A new handy person service for minor home improvements was launched

The Committee was advised that Waverley BC was looking at establishing 3 models of development to bring forward additional affordable homes. This included setting up a Housing Company to acquire homes for rental and better ways to utilise S.106 agreements via joint working with Housing Associations.

The Committee enquired about work being carried out to address the needs of elderly residents. Andrew advised that there was an ability to carry out work on providing over-55 accommodation and advised that the Waverley Design Standards accommodate for aids to be incorporated into new homes to allow them to become 'lifetime' accommodation. He highlighted that items O.d.3 and O.d.4 in the end of year 1 report addressed extra care accommodation.

The Committee asked why, when the strategy was a living document, it had been described as covering a fixed 5 year document. It was suggested this should be a rolling document and not restricted to a fixed 5 years. Andrew agreed and advised that when it was set up there were no clear plans but that this could be reviewed and an update brought to each meeting as a standing item.

The Committee welcomed the setting up of the handyman service. It was highlighted this was not a means tested service and anyone could access it regardless of income. The payment for this service was provided via a disabled facilities grant given to Waverley BC.

The red status around CLH (M.d.1, M.d.2 and M.d.3) in the report was highlighted. There had been no appetite with local groups consulted to prioritise the high level of effort required to bring empty homes back into use. It was hoped that the hiring of a New Grants Officer would enable this issue to be looked at and driven forward.

The Committee **NOTED** the report. Members were requested to feed all future comments on these issues to Alice Lean and/or Andrew Smith for consideration.

24. HOMELESS PREVENTION STRATEGY UPDATE - YEAR ONE (Agenda item 9.)

Mike Rivers updated members on the year one progress of the Homeless Prevention Strategy. He advised that introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 had not caused any great spike in the homeless figures in Waverley and this had been effectively managed.

The Committee noted the continued successes in keeping the number of households in temporary accommodation to a minimum. Key to Waverley's success has been the dedicated, highly skilled Housing Options team.

The Committee noted that there was some concern as to whether the New Burdens Funding and Flexible Homeless Grant may not be available beyond 2019-20. It was suggested that representation be made to MHCLG regarding this. Mike was optimistic that funding will be available but was not clear how much.

Concern was raised regarding rough sleepers in Farnham. Mike advised that Waverley has to submit an estimate annually on how many there are. However they are continually monitored and partner agencies will engage with them to offer assistance. He pointed out that some refuse offers of help. When this happens enforcement may be necessary. Instances of rough sleeping can be reported to <https://www.streetlink.org.uk/>

The whole Committee congratulated the team on their continued success in preventing homelessness.

The Committee members were accorded an invitation to attend the Homelessness Forum to be held from 9-13:00 in the Council Chamber on 8th October 2019.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and asked for comments to be passed to the Executive.

25. BUDGET STRATEGY WORKING GROUP (Agenda item 10.)

Councillor Peter Marriott, the Housing O&S Committee's representative on the Budget Strategy Working Group, updated the Committee on the work carried out so far by the BSWG.

The Committee was advised that:

- The working group had met five times so far this year.
- They were looking at the detailed figures behind the mid-term project plans to address any shortfalls.
- The group was currently focussing on work stream 2 relating to understanding public priorities. This involved sending out a questionnaire to a target group.
- The working group members are meeting with HoS to look at potential efficiency savings in each service area.
- It was hoped the group would be ready to make recommendations by Q4.

The chair thanked Cllr Marriott for his update and the BSWG for their work.

26. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda item 11.)

Yasmine Makin highlighted the items in the work programme scheduled for the November meeting.

Items scheduled are:

- Progress of recommendations from 'Council Housing: Pride or Prejudice' Review;
- Status report on implementation of housing maintenance contracts commenced April 2019;
- Affordable housing and housing need within the borough. (a representative of Transform will be attending).

Suggestions for additional items discussed were:

- ASB and its effects on tenants.
- The Committee asked that any plans relating to Waverley's housing stock generated by officers in response to the council's proposal to aim for carbon-neutrality by 2030 be brought to the committee for scrutiny before going to Executive..

The portfolio holder for housing advised she was having a meeting with the Chief Inspector of Godalming Town Council regards to ASB. The Safer Waverley Partnership was also looking at locality issues. She agreed to bring a short update to the next meeting. She advised she was keen to provide regular input into the O&S Committee on provision of housing and community safety issues.

27. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda item 12.)

The Committee considered, if necessary, the following recommendation on the motion of the chairman:

Recommendation

That pursuant to Procedure Rule 20 and in accordance with Section 100A(4) 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 a disclosure to them of exempt information (as defined by section 100I of the Act) of the description specified in the appropriate paragraph(s) of the revised Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

28. ANY ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED IN EXEMPT SESSION (Agenda item 13.)

There were no matters relating to aspects of any reports on this agenda which were felt needed to be considered in Exempt session.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and concluded at 8.58 pm

Chairman