

## **Briefing paper on 2018/19 Housing O&S items**

### **'Rolling over' items**

The Housing O&S Committee considered various items in 2018/19. The items of work which were suggested to return to the Committee are listed below with explanatory detail, in order for the new Committee to decide whether or not it wishes for them to be included in its work programme for 2019/20.

Each item should be thoroughly tested through the work programme criteria and have a clear purpose for scrutiny. Items of interest without clear potential to add value ('update' or 'to note' items) should be circulated to the Committee members.

#### **1. Actions from 'Council Housing: Pride or Prejudice' Scrutiny review**

A task and finish group of the Housing O&S Committee completed a study of attitudes to social housing within the borough in February 2019.

The report and recommendations contained within it were endorsed by the Committee and agreed by the Executive. The recommendations were assigned owners and collated in an action plan. The individual items recommended to return to the Committee for scrutiny are listed below.

- a) Review of existing customer satisfaction data regarding how enquiries are dealt with.

The Committee is asked to decide how it wishes to be involved in / consulted on the review and its outcome.

- b) Review of priority areas for external appearance improvement and implementation of action plan to address any issues.

The Committee is asked to decide whether or not it wishes to receive an item on the outcomes of this review.

- c) Review of whether or not the introduction of flexible tenancies has so far met the original objectives.

The Committee is asked to decide how it wishes to be involved in / consulted on this review and updated on its outcome.

- d) Review of the Housing Allocations Policy

(See number 14).

#### **2. Private Sector Housing**

The Council has a Private Sector Housing Team which carries out a range of functions relating to private properties in the borough including providing advice for tenants and landlords, licensing of houses of multiple occupation (HMOs), investigating complaints by private tenants and coordinating adaptations to private properties. This item would introduce Committee members to the legislation around private sector housing, enforcement standards and compliance of private landlords. Given the rise in number of households living in private rented accommodation it is

important that the Housing O&S Committee understands 1) the shape of the private rented housing sector in Waverley, 2) understands how the Council and its partners seek to oversee the sector, and 3) understands the private rented housing sector in the wider context of housing policy and homelessness.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to add this item to its future work programme and, if so, liaise with officers as to which meeting.

### **3. Affordable housing**

Given the Council's commitment to deliver housing options for people in need of affordable housing and to prevent homelessness (within the Corporate Strategy 2018 – 2023), an item to consider the level of affordable housing in the borough compared to need was a potential item on the 2018/19 work programme. The Housing Strategy and Enabling team are undertaking work in 2019/20 to profile housing need in the borough and so the outcome of this work could come to the Committee.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to add this item to its work programme for 2019/20 and, if so, liaise with officers as to which meeting.

### **4. Housing and mental health**

Following the briefing to the Committee on the housing related findings of the Community Wellbeing O&S review into health inequalities in the borough, the Committee requested a further item to come to a future meeting from an external organisation to hear about the links between housing and mental health and the role local authorities have in contributing to the wellbeing of residents through housing.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to add this item to its work programme for 2019/20 and, if so, liaise with officers as to which meeting.

### **5. Corporate Performance Reports**

The performance of the Council across all services is reported through the quarterly (September, November, February and June) Corporate Performance Reports. They contain information on: all of the corporate key performance indicators (KPIs); Service Plan actions; profile of the workforce; complaints; budget forecast and areas of concern. The housing section of the Corporate Performance Report now includes the information which was previously presented in a separate Housing Performance Report. Performance reports enable the Committee to monitor the performance of the Council and potentially identify further areas for scrutiny.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to continue to receive the quarterly Corporate Performance Reports.

### **6. Housing development update**

As the Council delivers new housing across the borough this report details schemes completed, schemes on site and pre-development schemes. This update was originally an update on the Ockford Ridge development but was broadened to include all Council housing developments.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to continue to receive this report and whether or not it would be most appropriate for circulation to committee members outside of the meeting with any concerns being raised in the Committee meeting.

### **7. Annual Review of Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023**

The Housing Strategy first came to the Committee for their input in March 2018. The Strategy must be reviewed annually and having it on the Committee's agenda provides the Committee both an opportunity to scrutinise the achievements during the first year of the Strategy and contribute to the development of future years of the Strategy.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to continue to review this Strategy annually.

### **8. Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2023**

Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 2017), Waverley created the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2023. The Committee received an update on the effect of the HRA 2017 in November 2018. This item would be an update on the strategy, the actions contained within it and will highlight the challenges and opportunities going forward.

The Committee is asked if it would like to add this item to its work programme and, if so, liaise with officers as to which meeting.

### **9. Housing Revenue Account – Green Spaces**

Following discussion about upkeep of housing communal areas at the September 2018 meeting, the Committee requested to hear from officers regarding proposals to charge owner occupiers for maintaining green spaces surrounding private properties.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to add this item to its work programme and, if so, liaise with officers as to which meeting.

### **10. Tenancy and Estates update**

In September 2018 the Committee received an update on the staffing and customer service changes relating to the Tenancy and Estates team. The further update was requested to detail the roles and responsibilities of the Tenancy and Estates officers.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to add this item to its work programme and, if so, liaise with officers as to which meeting.

### **11. Uptake and income of garages**

In November 2018 the Committee endorsed the proposal to maintain garage rents over the next year. This recommendation came as a result of a garage rental review report detailing a renewed focus on maximising the income from Council owned garages. A report on the uptake and income of garages was requested by the Committee for one year's time (November 2019) to monitor the impact of the freeze on rents.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to add this item to the work programme for November 2019.

## **Potential items**

In addition to the items rolling over from 2018/19, below are some potential items for 2019/20 scrutiny the Committee may wish to add to its work programme.

Purpose and nature of the item should be agreed before adding an item to the work programme.

### **12. Housing Associations (HAs)**

Although O&S has no formal instrumental power to directly scrutinise HAs, its role is wider than just scrutinising the housing services the Council provides directly. HAs provide around a quarter of social housing properties in the borough, meaning that a significant proportion of the households on Waverley's housing register are housed by HAs. The Housing Strategy and Enabling team is undertaking extensive work with HAs in 2019/20 and there will be opportunities in the year for the Committee to input into these and learn about the role of HAs and their connection with the Council.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to add items concerning Housing Associations to its work programme for 2019/20 and, if so, liaise with officers as to a specific item and meeting.

### **13. Universal Credit (UC) impact report**

As residents are increasingly enrolled onto Universal Credit more and more of Waverley's tenants are in receipt of the benefit. Initial figures suggest that tenants claiming UC are more likely to be in arrears than those not on UC. As well as presenting issues for our tenants, this has the potential to impact on the Housing Revenue Account and the Tenancy and Estates team as they focus on sustainment of tenancies.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to add this item to its work programme for 2019/20 and, if so, liaise with officers as to which meeting.

### **14. Review of the Housing Allocations Policy**

The policy is due for revision and will be renewed in light of the findings and recommendations made by the Committee's working group whose report ('Council Housing: Pride or Prejudice') went to the February 2019 meeting. The Allocations Policy is a document that has the potential to impact thousands of residents and is due to be reviewed by the end of the year.

The Committee is asked to consider how it wishes to be involved in / consulted on the review of the Council Allocation Policy.

Given the commitment within the Housing service plan to review the Policy this year and the work already done by the Council Housing: Pride or Prejudice working group, this may be a piece of work the Committee wishes to pursue in-depth.

### **15. Review of value for money achieved through the Housing Service kitchens and bathrooms contract**

At the Value for Money and Customer Service Committee meetings in January and February 2019 attention was drawn to the amount budgeted for in the 2019/20 Housing Revenue Account kitchens and bathrooms rolling programme (£800,000). The Committee (endorsed by the Coordinating Board) suggested undertaking a Scrutiny review regarding the Housing Revenue Account procurement policy and value for money achieved.

On 24 June 2019 the Value for Money and Customer Service O&S (VFM CS) Committee will be asked to decide if it would like to pursue this piece of work. Officers will provide an update to this Committee (25 June 2019) as to the outcome of the VFM CS Committee meeting.

### **16. Status report on implementation of housing maintenance contracts commenced April 2019**

In early 2016 O&S undertook extensive work to appraise the options for procuring the housing maintenance contracts which took effect April 2019. At request of the Housing O&S Chairman, this item would be to receive a status report to monitor how the new contracts are bedding in, including service delivery and any challenges.

The Committee is asked to decide if it would like to add this item to its work programme and which meeting to schedule it for.