

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel

(to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Thursday, 24 September 2015

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Councillor B Bayford (Chairman)

Councillor D L Steadman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs M E Ellerton, T G Knight, Mrs K K Trott and C J Wood

Also Present: Councillor Mrs K Mandry, Executive Member for Health and Housing (item 7)



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology of absence was received from Councillor Mrs Hockley.

2. MINUTES

It was AGREED that the minutes of the Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel held on 23 July 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that this would be Martyn George's (Director of Community) last Health and Housing Panel as he will be leaving before the next meeting.

On behalf of the Panel the Chairman passed his thanks to Martyn for all of his help and support that he has given to both the Panel and to Members over the years and stated that he would be sorry to see him go.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

6. PRESENTATION ON HAMPSHIRE'S JSNA (JOINT STRATEGY NEEDS ASSESSMENT)

The Panel received a presentation from Darren Carmichael from Hampshire County Council on Hampshire's Joint Strategy Needs Assessment (JSNA).

The presentation outlined the data that has been, which was population based data, collected for both Hampshire and Fareham, and the results that have come out of the study.

It looked at the key issues for Fareham and centred around the aging population, highlighting the issues that this could bring for Fareham in the future.

Councillor Trott enquired as to how accurate the data is. Darren Carmichael explained to the Panel that the data has been collated from a variety of sources including the Office of National Statistics and the Clinical Commissioning Group, this was to ensure that there was a wide range of data collected.

Councillor Knight asked what Hampshire is doing to tackle the problems that have been identified in this study. Darren addressed the Panel to explain that

Hampshire will not financially be able to address these issues alone and that they will be looking to work in collaboration with other organisations to tackle these issues.

It was AGREED that Darren Carmichael was thanked for his informative presentation.

7. HEALTH UPDATE

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Mandry Executive Member for Health and Housing, addressed the Panel on this item.

The Chairman addressed the Panel and explained that he had recently had a meeting with the CCG to discuss the issues surrounding the use of the Community Hospital and the charges that are being applied to those who do.

He also informed the Panel that members of the CCG will be attending the next meeting in November and that this would be a good opportunity for the Panel to raise any issues with them.

8. REVIEW OF SHELTERED HOUSING (DISPERSED SCHEMES)

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community on a review of Sheltered Housing.

Councillor Trott addressed the Panel on this item and stated that she felt that given the information provided in the previous item it has highlighted what an essential service this is and will continue to be in the future.

Councillor Wood enquired as to the purpose of the consultation. The Tenancy Services Manager explained that it was to consult with all sheltered housing tenants as to the level of service they would like to receive, and were given the 3 options outlined in paragraph 6 of the report. Previously all tenants received the same service, and did not have any choices. As a result of the consultation it has become apparent that many of the tenants did not require a higher level of support, and has therefore freed up the capacity within the mobile sheltered housing team to be able to offer the service to private accommodation tenants.

Councillor Mrs Ellerton enquired as to whether the private tenants would pay a different rate to Council tenants. The Tenancy Services Manager confirmed that private tenants would pay the same for the service as the council sheltered housing tenants.

It was AGREED that the content of the report be noted.

9. TENANCY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community on the performance of Tenancy Services in regards to rent arrears, empty homes, anti-social behaviour and estate services.

The Senior Housing Management Officer explained to the Panel that the tenancy services team are more proactive at dealing with rent arrears and engaging with tenants more regularly to discuss these problems and find a way of tackling the arrears that is both suitable to the tenant and to the team.

Members supported the changes to the management and allocation of empty properties, and welcomed the new way of working which involves working with the new tenants at the start of the process and getting them to agree to works that they would like done to the property rather than all properties being returned to a uniform standard before tenants see them.

Councillor Wood enquired as to whether the standards of the housing stock will decrease over time if there are no prescribed standards for the properties. The Senior Housing Management Officer confirmed that there is no evidence that this will happen as tenants are having the properties put to their requirements before they move in and they are extremely happy with the way that this is working.

The Head of Housing, Revenue and Benefits addressed the Panel and explained that a lot of the prescribed works were to remove adaptations to properties so that the properties went back to standard. Now instead for these properties they look for the most suitable tenant for them and therefore removing the need at times to remove the adaptations, which is cutting down the time taken to re-let these properties and is saving the Council money but removing the need to undertake unnecessary works.

It was AGREED that the Panel note the content of the report.

10. REVIEW OF FARELETS

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community which provided an update on the progress of the Farelets scheme.

Councillor Trott enquired as to whether these schemes could be used to help reduce the Council's Housing Waiting List. The Director of Community explained that there is a tenant finder scheme which could be used, but advised the Panel that it could potentially put an additional financial risk on the Council. He reminded Members that the Council has a duty to find accommodation and that a large number of people on the waiting list are not homeless.

The Head of Housing, Revenue and Benefits was asked how long the Vanguard Intervention was going to be in Housing. She informed Members that good progress is being made with the intervention and they will be rolling out the new way of working to all of the Housing Options Officers soon.

It was AGREED that the Panel note the progress made of the Farelets scheme to date.

11. WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

The Panel received a verbal update by the Head of Housing, Revenue and Benefits on the Welfare Reform.

She explained that as part of the announcement for the summer budgets was the reduction to benefits:

- Benefits rate for working age people will be frozen for 4 years. (this will include JSA and Income Support)
- There will be a cut in the amount of tax credits that claimants will receive.
- People claiming tax credits for two or more children will be capped at 2 children from 2017.
- Other Welfare Cuts to be introduced in 2018.

The impact for benefits claimants will affect those who are not working, and those who are on a low income will be affected by the tax credit cuts which could amount up to an additional loss of £1000 per year.

There has been a new timetable set up for Universal Credit and Fareham will have been implemented into the scheme by the end of the current financial year.

To start with it will only affect those who are single claimants who are claiming JSA. Payments of Universal Credit will be made monthly in arrears and claims can take up to 6 weeks to process. It will gradually be rolled out to include all benefits and it will only affect those of working ages.

Safeguards are being put in place by the Department of Work and Pensions for those people who are going to become liable for paying their own rent.

Council Tax Support Scheme will still be under the responsibility of the Local Council and the Council have to agree on a new scheme each year. The current scheme has been working well and it is proposed that the scheme will stay the same for the next financial year.

The Head of Housing, Revenue and Benefits was thanked for her very informative verbal update.

12. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel received a verbal update by the Head of Housing, Revenue and Benefits on the affordable housing programme.

Collingwood Court:

Collingwood Court is now open and nearly full with only a handful of properties left to let.

Sylvan Court:

Following the success of Collingwood Court it is hoped that this new scheme will follow on from that success. It is hoped that this scheme will be completed by November 2016.

2 General Purpose Schemes:

Silverton Court on Palmerston Road is due to open in March 2016.

Passivhaus Scheme at Coldeast Close is progressing well and they are expecting completion of the scheme in January 2016.

Several Members enquired as to how the passivhaus scheme is going to be monitored and how the data is going to be collected. The Head of Housing, Revenue and Benefits explained that they would be working in conjunction with an energy consultant who will be able to guide them with what information and knowledge they can gather over the first 12 months of occupancy.

The Head of Housing, Revenue and Benefits was thanked for her verbal update.

13. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community which reviewed the work programme for 2015/16.

It was AGREED that the proposed work programme for 2015/16 be approved.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 8.06 pm).