

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Panel (to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Thursday, 29 September 2022

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs K Mandry (Chairman)

Councillor S Ingram (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: R Bird, F Birkett, D G Foot and Mrs K K Trott

Also Present: Councillor Mrs C L A Hockley, Executive Member for Housing



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence given at this meeting.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Panel held on 14 July 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairman's announcements made at this meeting.

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. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

(1) Social Inclusion (homelessness) Services Contribution

There were no comments or questions for clarification in respect of this item.

(2) Fundraising and personalised employment support and private rented sector tenancies for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

There were no comments or questions for clarification in respect of this item.

7. AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation by the Head of Housing Delivery which updated members on the progress being made with Fareham Housing Sites and other relevant strategic housing matters. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes as Appendix A.

Members commented on the excellent progress being made with the current development projects. It was agreed that when the Gordon Road conversion works are complete, a visit to the site would be arranged for members to view the facilities available.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the presentation.

8. AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY REVIEW

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Housing Delivery which provided the Panel with an initial overview of those areas of the adopted Strategy that are recommended for change to ensure that it is reflective of progress to date, that the information and data is correct and that the objectives and actions are appropriate.

The Panel commented that the number of households on the Housing Waiting list at the end of July was approximately 600 which was greater than the 550 mentioned in this more recent report. It was suggested that an update be provided at a future meeting of the Panel to provide members with more information about the number of customers on the Housing Register, particularly in relation to any impact from the cost of living crisis.

It was noted that the Panel would have an opportunity to scrutinise the updated Strategy prior to it being presented to the Executive.

RESOLVED that, having considered the contents of the report, the Housing Scrutiny Panel had no concerns with the proposed approach to the review.

9. NEW HOUSING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Panel received a presentation by the Policy and Development Officer which provided members with an update on the implementation of the new Housing software for the Housing department. A copy of the presentation slides is attached to these minutes as Appendix B.

During the discussion of this item, Councillor Mrs Trott requested that the minutes record her view that outstanding work is carried out by the Housing team.

Members were impressed with the functionality of the new software and requested an opportunity to see the system in operation.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the presentation.

10. HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL PRIORITIES

The Chairman advised the Panel that from April 2023, all registered providers of social housing will need to collect and publish a range of comparable information about their service and standards. The new service standards will enable tenants to scrutinise their landlord's performance and will provide a source of information to the Regulator of Social Housing about whether landlords are meeting requirements. It was agreed that a report will be brought to the Panel's meeting in February which will provide more information about the standards and how the Council will meet them.

The Chairman also advised that a Strategy detailing how the Council will bring empty homes across the Borough back into use is in the process of being drafted and will be brought to the February meeting of the Panel for members to scrutinise.

It was agreed that, as discussed at item 8 on the agenda, an update on the Housing Waiting list will be brought to a future meeting of the Panel so that members can gain an understanding of the impact that the current cost of living crisis is having on people and how this might affect the demand for housing.

Councillor Bird proposed that an item be added to the scrutiny priorities to provide members with a broader understanding of the ongoing use of Housing Revenue Account capital funds and the Council's Housing development projects. Members raised concern that the Panel would need to satisfy itself that the benefit of receiving this information would represent a good use of officer time. Councillor Bird therefore withdrew his proposal and agreed to work with relevant officers to investigate whether this was a matter he would like to pursue further.

Taking into account the items already agreed for the February meeting it was agreed that the annual Tenancy Management, Repairs and Maintenance of council-owned properties report scheduled for the meeting in February be deferred to a later date so that it can incorporate information based on the new service standards.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel considered and updated the Scrutiny priorities.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 7.25 pm).