

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 28 November 2013

PRESENT: Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), Simon Clement-Jones, Sheila Constance, Richard Crowther, Rob Frost, Qurban Hussain, Roy Munn, Robert Murphy and John Campbell (Substitute Member)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received and a substitute attended the meeting as follows:

Apology

Substitute

Councillor David Barker

Councillor John Campbell

Councillor Sioned Mair-Richards

No substitute nominated

Councillor Philip Wood

No substitute nominated

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26th September 2013, were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 There were no petitions received or public questions submitted.

6. SCHEDULE OF REQUIREMENTS FOR BED AND BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATION USED TO HOUSE HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Communities, which provided Members with information to enable them to provide an input into the revision of the Schedule of Requirements (SOR) that was in place, between the Council and Bed and Breakfast (B&B) establishments which were used to accommodate homeless households. Attached to the report was the current SOR.

The report was introduced by Zoe Young, Service Manager, Housing Options and Advice, who particularly referred to the need to revise the present SOR and was also pleased to inform the Committee that, at the present time, the Council had no homeless families in B&B accommodation.

Members made various comments, particularly in relation to the high standard of B&B accommodation which some of them had visited. It was felt though that more information could be provided to the residents on local transport facilities and how to find their way around the areas surrounding the accommodation.

In response to Members' questions, Zoe Young stated that officers were working with the appropriate agencies to improve out of hours provision, particularly in relation to young people and families. She added that work was also being undertaken with Asiana in relation to the provision of dispersed properties and with the B&Bs as to the provision of facilities for different cultures and religions.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- (a) thanks Zoe Young for her contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the report and the responses to questions; and
- (c) agrees that the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Executive Director, Communities, to congratulate staff on achieving a situation where the Council had no homeless families presently in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

7. HOMELESSNESS PERFORMANCE UPDATE

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Communities, which provided an update on Homelessness Key Performance issues. The report was introduced by Zoe Young, Service Manager, Housing Options and Advice, with particular reference being made to current performance against key targets, a comparison of Homeless Acceptances with Core Cities, key customer information and an update on key actions including the Homeless Strategy, the prevention of homelessness, the Supported Accommodation Pathway and the impact of Welfare Reforms. Appended to the report was a schedule of Prevention Action Plan Key Points.

7.2 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:

- There were presently thought to be 16 rough sleepers in the City which comprised a core group of 10, with the rest being a changeable group. Officers were meeting with partners such as the South Yorkshire Police, Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Turning Point to undertake action planning for each individual rough sleeper.
- Reports of individuals sleeping in multi-storey blocks were being dealt with

and the South Yorkshire Police were reporting any such incidents to the Council.

- The soup kitchens in the City were used to make a connection with rough sleepers and it had been suggested that Turning Point could play an important part in this.
- It was difficult for those with complex needs to find accommodation, with risk and safeguarding sometimes being an issue. The Council could discharge its legal duties through the private sector, but in these cases it was necessary to offer a one year tenancy. It was felt that some of the Social Landlords could be more helpful in providing accommodation for homeless people.

7.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Zoe Young for her contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the report and the responses to questions; and
- (c) agrees that the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods, to inform him that the Social Landlords in the City could do more to provide accommodation for homeless people.

8. MANAGEMENT OF HRA LAND

8.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Communities, and the Executive Director, Place, which provided information on the work that had recently commenced between the two Portfolios to look at future land responsibility and management arrangements within the Council.

8.2 The report was presented Janet Sharpe, Interim Director of Housing, who explained that a significant proportion of land in Sheffield still remained in Council ownership, and was maintained each year from funding from the Council's own resources, mainly the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Historically, Council land had been divided up and managed within Council individual Portfolios and based on old agreements, and this made having a consistent maintenance standard difficult to achieve and communicate to customers in the City. As a consequence, it had been agreed between the Communities and Place Portfolios to carry out a review of land management arrangements.

8.2 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-

- The initial task was to work out who owned what pieces of land and ensure that the boundaries made sense. For example, there was a pocket of land in the Woodseats area of the City which had no adjacent Council housing.

There would be community consultation and the aim would be to ensure the best use of land in the City.

- The Council's call centres were aware that people may be reporting issues relating to these pieces of land, as a result of this project.
- Tenants had been involved in recommending this project through the Future of Council Housing Project and the 'Greener, Cleaner, Safer Group' and officers would report on progress to the Council Housing Board. The Committee's comments welcoming uniformity and the importance of community involvement would be passed on to the Walkabout representatives.

8.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Janet Sharpe for her contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the report and the responses to questions; and
- (c) approves the formation of a project to look at Council owned land across the City.

9. WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

9.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer which outlined the Committee's Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2013/14. The report was presented by Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer, who informed the Committee that a briefing paper on the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting would be circulated with the agenda for the January 2014 Committee meeting.

9.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) approves the Work Programme as detailed in the report; and
- (b) notes that an update on the Management of Housing Revenue Account Land would be included in the Review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, for consideration at the March 2014 Committee meeting.

10. WELFARE REFORM - NOVEMBER UPDATE

10.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the Welfare Reform, November Update.

11. COUNCIL HOUSE SALES UNDER THE RIGHT TO BUY SCHEME

11.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the Update Report on Council Housing Sales under the Right to Buy Scheme.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 12.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday, 30th January 2014, at 2.00 pm in the Town Hall.

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