

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 3 December 2015

PRESENT: Councillors Tony Damms (Chair), Steve Ayris (Deputy Chair), Penny Baker, David Barker, John Campbell, Richard Crowther, Keith Davis, Denise Fox, Aodan Marken, Roy Munn, Peter Rippon, Richard Shaw and Zoe Sykes

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 There were no apologies for absence.

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 8th October 2015, were approved as a correct record and, arising from their consideration, it was noted that:-

(a) the operation of the Local Area Partnerships was being considered as part of a bigger review and enquiries would be made as to its progress; and

(b) no specific date had been set for a representative from the Gateway Project to be invited to a future meeting of the Committee, but this would be followed up by the Policy and Improvement Officer.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 In response to a question from Alan Kewley regarding the operation of the Local Area Partnerships, the Chair, Councillor Tony Damms, confirmed that this was being considered as part of a bigger review and, only when this had been completed, would it be appropriate for a representative to report to the Committee.

5.2 Written answers would be provided to Mr Kewley in response to his further questions on the new Community Safety meetings and the operation of the Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership, with the Chair adding that a representative of the Partnership would be invited to attend the Committee's February 2016 meeting, which would focus on Community Safety.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

6.1 Sally Kilic reported on the Community Team Engagement Review which had been undertaken by a Task and Finish Group (the Group) established by the Housing and Neighbourhood Advisory Panel. The purpose of the Group was to review the current Community Engagement programmes/meetings and find out if they were viable as they currently were, or whether they could work in a better, and perhaps more cost effective, manner. The meetings included in the review were:-

- Citywide Forum
- Community Engagement Partnership Group
- Local Area Housing Forum
- Local Estates and Investment Forum
- Estates Working Group
- Investment and Repairs Partnership Group
- Sheltered Housing Forum
- Customer Service and Equalities Partnership
- Challenge For Change.

6.2 The main way in which information was obtained for the review was by means of a questionnaire which was handed out at the above meetings.

6.3 Sally Kilic went on to refer to the role of the Tenants' and Residents' Associations, which the Council was keen to see remain a key element of the community engagement structures, and also mentioned the good engagement practices of the Sanctuary Housing Association which the Group had examined. She also outlined the vision for community engagement which the Group had agreed, but added that there was no confidence in this vision at the moment. In conducting its review, the Group had also taken into account the cost of community engagement and how the Housing+ initiative could contribute.

6.4 Some of the Group's recommendations were as follows:-

- The number of Citywide Forum meetings should be reduced to three per year.
- The Community Engagement Partnership Group should meet every two months and should be used as a sounding board for the Tenants' and Residents' Associations.
- The Local Area Housing Fora should stay as they were, as should Challenge For Change.
- The Cleaner, Greener Partnership Group meetings should be reduced to three per year.
- There should be a 15 minute question and answer session at the start of every meeting, with the responses being minuted.

6.5 The Chair, Councillor Tony Damms, highlighted the need to address some of these issues and made particular reference to the amounts spent on community engagement in Sheffield compared with that of Rotherham, adding that any financial savings would contribute to improving Council properties. He also commented that it was often the same people attending meetings and asking the same questions. In terms of the actual meetings, he felt that the Local Area Housing Forum should be the basic building block and that the Housing and Neighbourhoods Advisory Panel should continue, whilst Challenge For Change needed more focus and purpose. He considered that the Citywide Forum didn't have much of a future and could be organised by tenants if they wanted it to continue. In contrast, the Tenants' Conference was productive and worth funding.

6.6 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Sally Kilic for her contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the information reported; and
- (c) requests the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services to work with tenants and officers to see what efficiencies could be made in the Council's Housing Service's Community Engagement budget.

7. HOUSING AND PLANNING BILL UPDATE

7.1 The Committee received a presentation, which was introduced by Janet Sharpe (Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services), on the implications for the Council of the Housing and Planning Bill, which was presently going through Parliament.

7.2 Liam Duggan (Manager, Housing Business Plan Team) gave the presentation, which covered the background, significant national policy announcements for social housing in 2015, the extension of Right to Buy, higher rents for higher earners and the review of lifetime tenancies. The presentation concluded by considering the major implications for housing in the joint Autumn Statement and Spending Review.

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

- The Secretary of State would arrive at a calculation as to what was a high value Council home and also consider how quickly such homes would turn over, and then set a bill for Sheffield each year, which would fund the extension of Right to Buy for Housing Association tenants. It would be up to the Council to decide as to how the funding for this bill was to be raised, which could involve selling properties or raising the funds by other means. Any late payments would attract interest.
- It was not yet known how higher earning tenants would be identified, but it could be through either disclosure by the tenant or via tax records from Her

Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

- One approach which the Council could adopt would be to sell off high value Council properties, so the basis for the Government's calculation would be reduced for the following year.
- The Housing Bill as drafted contained provisions, which required the Government to consult with Local Government before raising the charge relating to high value Council homes.
- Officers would be working with the Housing Associations in Sheffield, in relation to the approach to the extension of Right to Buy provisions and how social housing in the City might be best protected. At the moment, there was some uncertainty in the sector as to whether they would be fully compensated and what would happen if Housing Associations chose not to adopt the policy.
- The homes which would be considered high value by the Government were likely to be "normal" Council homes, but in areas where the local housing market was strong.
- It was not yet known how the Government would determine "high value".
- The homes which Housing Associations must provide, to replace those lost through Right to Buy, would not necessarily be homes for rent, but could be other tenures such as shared ownership.
- A property was classed as being vacant at the change of tenancy, but officers would check the detail of this.
- The London Borough of Barnet had introduced fixed term tenancies.

7.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Janet Sharpe and Liam Duggan for their contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the presentation and responses to questions; and
- (c) in view of the importance of these legislative proposals, extends an invitation to the attending officers to attend future Committee meetings, to provide updates on the implementation of the Housing and Planning Bill, as and when appropriate.

8. POLICE AND CRIME PANEL UPDATE

8.1 Councillor John Campbell reported on the last meeting of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel, at which Councillor Sioned-Mair Richards had been appointed as Chair. The meeting had considered an update from the Police and Crime Commissioner on the ongoing investigations into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham. The revised Complaints Procedure was also considered, with a

flowchart being available from Councillor Campbell or on the Panel's website. The final part of the meeting covered ongoing complaints against the previous Police and Crime Commissioner. The minutes of the meeting would be made available on the Panel's website.

- 8.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the information reported and requests Committee Members to direct any questions for the Committee's next meeting on Community Safety to either Councillor John Campbell or the Policy and Improvement Officer.

9. WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

- 9.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer which provided details of the Committee's draft Work Programme for 2015/16.

- 9.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) approves the draft Work Programme 2015/16 as detailed in the report; and
- (b) notes that:-
 - (i) a report from the Prevent Task Group would be presented to the Committee at the appropriate time; and
 - (ii) the Policy and Improvement Officer would circulate the link to the TellMAMA website, which was a national project which supported victims of anti-Muslim hate and measured and monitored anti-Muslim incidents.

10. RIGHT TO BUY UPDATE

- 10.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the Right to Buy Update report.

11. SHEFFIELD MONEY

- 11.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the Sheffield Money report and that a review of Sheffield Money was to be undertaken every six months.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 12.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday, 4th February 2016, at 4.00 pm, in the Town Hall.

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