

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Wednesday 20 July 2016** at **4.00 pm** at the **Conference Chamber West, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU**

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Diane Hind
Vice Chairman Jeremy Farthing

Simon Brown
Patrick Chung
Paula Fox
Susan Glossop
Richard Rout
Angela Rushen
Andrew Speed

Clive Springett
Sarah Stamp
Jim Thorndyke
Frank Warby
John Burns
Tony Brown
Paul Hopfensperger

By Invitation:

Sara Mildmay-White, Cabinet Member for Housing

REMEMBRANCE:

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Committee observed a one minute silence in memory of the Council's Commercial Manager, Richard Hartley who had recently passed away.

90. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes declared.

91. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence received.

92. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2016, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

93. **Public Participation**

There were no questions/statements from members of the public.

94. **Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Housing**

(Councillor Jim Thorndyke arrived at 4.15pm during the consideration of this item)

(Councillor Susan Glossop left the meeting at 4.45pm during the consideration of this item).

As set out in the Council's Constitution, at every ordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting at least one Cabinet Member would be invited to attend to give an account of his or her portfolio and answer questions from the Committee. Therefore, to carry out this constitutional requirement, members were asked to consider the responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Housing, who had been invited to the meeting.

Report No: OAS/SE/16/017, set out the overall responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Housing, which were:

- Choice based lettings;
- Homelessness advice;
- Public health;
- Private sector housing and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs);
- Safeguarding;
- Social care; and
- Strategic housing and housing policy.

Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, Cabinet Member for Housing opened her presentation by thanking the Committee for the invitation. She then set out the broad areas of responsibility including structure; recent performance; key challenges and priorities for the year. There were three services areas which covered development and partnerships; housing options; and housing standards.

The presentation also included information on the West Suffolk Housing Strategy 2015-2018 and key themes which were:

- Increasing the supply of new homes;
- Making the best use of existing housing; and
- Specialist housing and support.

Members discussed the presentation in detail and asked a number of questions of the Cabinet Member for Housing and officers, to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In particular detailed discussions were held on Barley Homes Group Limited and the number of sites they were proposing to develop in Bury; anticipated income from Barley Homes Group Limited; homelessness applications; Home-link's new software operating system and recent software glitches; affordable housing figures and starter homes; devolution and how that would help to deliver housing; houses in multiple occupation and the frequency of inspection intervals; what plans the council had for providing more rented properties or building council houses; and how to bring empty properties back into use.

The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that it would be a challenge to provide more rented homes, as the Government was targeting starter homes and shared ownership. She explained that affordable rent was set at 80% of the market rent. £300m would be available through devolution, but the council, along with other councils would have to bid for that money to be used for affordable housing.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Housing on her informative presentation.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the presentation.

95. **Dog Fouling in West Suffolk**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/16/018, which updated Members on previous information provided in relation to the extent of dog fouling in St Edmundsbury and the actions that were taken to combat it.

The report provided an overview of the actions and investigations undertaken to combat dog fouling, including an update on progress with the trial at the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham to investigate the use of DNA registration to tackle dog fouling.

The report also included a summary on a trial with Wickhambrook Parish Council on the effective reduction of dog fouling; Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO); Fixed Penalty Notice Reward Scheme; DNA registration guidance for staff and additional projects.

There were a number of hot spots for dog fouling across the district and officers could carry out patrols and put signage up. However, the aim of the campaigns was to encourage local people to work with the council – to get the local connection.

Members discussed the report in detail and asked a number of questions, to which officers provided comprehensive responses. In particular discussions were held on the affects of Toxocara Canis; PSPO and what would be included; the potential for rolling out the Wickhambrook scheme in Haverhill; and how enforcement would be exercised.

In response to a question raised officers agreed to revise the charities listed in Appendix 2 to the report (potential PSPO for St Edmundsbury) and remove the reference to the time set out under the “exclusion”.

The Vice-chairman of the Committee endorsed the reward scheme, and suggested that the scheme be widened out even further to include people littering, especially along the A14. The dog fouling scheme would be an excellent starting point.

The Committee **noted** the results of the DNA registration trial at the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

With the vote being unanimous it was,

RECOMMENDED

That the Head of Operations be asked to progress the:

- (1) Trialling of a reward scheme as a means to encourage information to be reported about dog fouling incidents.
- (2) Proposed conditions for a potential Public Space Protection Order in St Edmundsbury.

96. Review and Revision of the Constitution

As set out in the Council's Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis would receive a report from the Monitoring Officer setting out minor amendments made arising from changes to legislation; changes to staffing structures/job descriptions or changes in terminology.

The Monitoring Officer had advised that in Quarter 1, no such amendments had been undertaken by the Monitoring Officer under delegated authority.

Therefore, there being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the update.

97. Directed Surveillance Authorised Applications - (Quarter 1)

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Directed Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources) Order 2010 required that Members should scrutinise the authority's use of its surveillance powers on a quarterly basis.

The Monitoring Officer had advised that in Quarter 1, no such surveillance had been authorised. Therefore, there being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, Quarter 1 update.

98. Decisions Plan: July 2016 to May 2017

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/16/019, which requested that Members peruse the Cabinet Decisions Plan for the period July 2016 to May 2017 for which it would like further information on or might benefit from the Committee's involvement.

The Committee considered the Decisions Plan, and was disappointed to see that the Destination Management Organisation had been removed from the Plan and that it would be reconsidered in spring 2017. The Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) advised that the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth was scheduled to attend the Committee's meeting in September 2016 and suggested that the DMO could be raised as part of the Committee's questioning.

The Committee also discussed the Newbury Community Centre Project to which Councillor Paul Hopfensperger provide background information to the project.

There being no decision required, **noted** the contents of the Decisions Plan.

99. **Work Programme Update**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/16/020, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2016-2017 (Appendix 1).

The Service Manager (Planning –Development) attended the meeting to update Members on the current position of the New Housing Development Sites Joint Task and Finish Group. A briefing paper had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting, which provided an overview; highways adoption/maintenance conditions; and planning conditions and smarter corporate working.

The Joint Task and Finish Group (the Group) was formed to look into the problems of adoption sometimes encountered on larger housing developments. The adoptions related to both open space and highways matters. Problems had been encountered in the past when houses were occupied before the promised open space or access roads had been completed and adopted. The Group considered ways in which the Development Management Service and other corporate teams such as parks and SCC Highways could work smarter together to avoid these problems in the future with major housing schemes.

The introduction of standard conditions regarding adoption would improve the situation the Council currently had and the good practice of pre-application advice and the development team approach would also provide benefits to address the concerns raised by the Joint Task and Finish Group. It was reported that whilst the adoption conditions for Highways had yet to be agreed across the Suffolk Authorities, officer would continue to work to achieve this.

The Service Manager (Planning –Development) confirmed that a final report including recommendations would be presented to the Committee on 14 September 2016.

Members considered the update from the Service Manager (Planning – Development) and asked a number of questions in relation to the work of the Joint Task and Finish Group to which responses were duly provided.

The Chairman informed members that following discussions held with the Chairman of Forest Heath's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on devolution it was agreed that a Joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting would be held on Tuesday 4 October 2016, at 6pm at West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds to consider the item.

Finally, some members of the Committee raised concerns regarding a number of issues relating to the Bus Station in Bury St Edmunds. Following a short discussion, the Chairman informed the Committee that she would speak with the Head of Families and Communities regarding the Committee's concerns and would also complete a work programme suggestion form on behalf of the Committee.

The Committee **noted** the update on the current status of its forward work programme; the verbal update on the Joint Task and Finish Group; and the Joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting scheduled for 4 October 2016.

The Meeting concluded at 6.15 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
