

# COMMUNITY POLICY AND REVIEW PANEL

Meeting held on Thursday, 9 June 2016 at the Concorde Room, Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

## **Voting Members**

Cllr M.D. Smith (Chairman)  
Cllr M.S. Choudhary (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr R. Cooper  
Cllr Jennifer Evans  
Cllr A. Jackman  
Cllr S.J. Masterson  
Cllr J.J. Preece  
Cllr P.F. Rust  
Cllr J.E. Woolley

## **1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED:** That Cr. M.D. Smith be appointed Chairman for 2016/17 Municipal Year.

## **2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED:** That Cr. M.S. Choudhary be appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

## **3. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 7th April, 2016 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

## **4. REDRESS SCHEME**

The Panel received Report No. EHH 1614 on the Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) (England) Order 2014. The purpose of the Report was to advise Members of the legislation that had come into force on 1st October, 2014. It was noted that the regulations required all letting and management agents to be a member of one of three designated government administered redress schemes.

Members were advised that there were three designated government administered redress schemes: Ombudsman Services Property, Property Redress Scheme and The Property Ombudsman. The aim of the redress schemes were to make letting and management agents accountable for their practices, allowing tenants and landlords to complain to the relevant redress scheme if they were unhappy with the service they had received. Hilary Smith, Private Sector Housing

Manager, explained that it was the responsibility of the Private Sector Housing Team to ensure that all letting and managing agents were members of one of the schemes.

It was noted that failure to comply with the scheme could result in a monetary penalty of £5,000, a Notice of Intent and a Final Notice. Members questioned the appeal process and the grounds for an appeal:

- the decision to impose a monetary penalty was based on an error of fact
- the decision was wrong in law
- the amount of monetary penalty was unreasonable
- the decision was unreasonable for any other reason

Questions were focused on the final ground for an appeal, for any other reason. Members expressed the view that they would prefer the legislation to be clear and concise, however, the Panel was informed that there had been no need for enforcement in Rushmoor so it was not known how the “First-tier Tribunal” would respond.

The Panel was updated on the Council’s position and the work the Private Sector Housing Team had done after the introduction of the legislation. This included sending letters to all known managing and lettings agents, publishing details on the Council’s website and making regular checks to ensure all were members of one of the three schemes.

The Panel **NOTED** the Report.

## 5. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING SURVEY UPDATE

The Panel received Report No. EHH 1613, which provided an update on the progress that had been made with the private sector housing survey that had commenced on 29th March, 2016. It was noted that there had been an increase in the dependency on the private rented market and some residents had been accepting lower standards, including poor housing conditions, disrepair and overcrowding. This had resulted in the Government recommending a pro-active approach.

The Private Sector Housing Team had appointed a qualified Housing Surveyor in March 2016 on a twelve-month contract. The Team had identified twelve high-risk areas by looking at geographical spread, population, age of residents, indices of multiple deprivation and local intelligence. It was noted that the aim of the survey was to identify houses in multiple occupation (HMO), disrepair and poor housing conditions, overcrowding, to gather further intelligence about Rushmoor’s housing stock and to uncover illegal conversions and identify rogue landlords.

Members were informed of what the housing survey had raised so far, including HMOs with no or defective fireproofing, property with severe dampness, trip and fall hazards and defective windows and guttering. It was noted that as each issue had been identified, the Private Sector Housing Team would deal with it, resulting in immediate improvement action being taken.

The Panel noted the process that the Housing Surveyor followed in order to gain access to properties. If the surveyor was unable to gain access after three attempts, the Private Sector Housing Team followed an enforcement route, e.g. Notice of Entry or warrant, if disrepair, overcrowding or multiple use was suspected. The information collected would be used to assess the way forward with private sector housing in the Borough.

It was concluded that the survey was due for completion on 11th March, 2017, when an assessment would be made of what the Private Sector Housing Team had found, which would then inform the future approach.

The Chairman thanked the Private Sector Housing Manager and the Housing Surveyor for the update. The Panel stated its strong support of the work being done by the Team.

The Panel **NOTED** the Report and **AGREED** to request an update at the end of the survey.

## 6. **APPOINTMENTS**

The Panel agreed the following appointments for the 2016/17 Municipal Year:

### (1) **Mid-Cycle Meetings –**

**RESOLVED:** It was agreed that Cr. P.F. Rust would attend the mid-cycle meetings in 2016/17 as a representative of the Labour Group, along with the Chairman (Cr. M.D. Smith) and Vice-Chairman (Cr. M.S. Choudhary).

### (2) **Health Issues Standing Group –**

**RESOLVED:** That the Chairman (Cr. M.D. Smith) and Vice-Chairman (Cr. M.S. Choudhary) and Cr. P.F. Rust be appointed to the Health Issues Standing Group for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

### (3) **Housing Strategy Standing Group –**

**RESOLVED:** That the Chairman (Cr. M.D. Smith) and Crs. R. Cooper, Jennifer Evans, S.J. Masterson and M.J. Roberts be appointed to the Housing Strategy Group for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

### (4) **Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group –**

**RESOLVED:** That the Chairman (Cr. M.D. Smith), Crs. Jennifer Evans, A. Jackman and M.J. Roberts, be appointed to the Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group for the 2016/17 Municipal Year, with attendance by the Cabinet Member for Concessions and Community Support (Cr. G.B. Lyon) as required.

### (5) **Registered Providers of Social Housing Review Group –**

**RESOLVED:** That the Chairman (Cr. M.D. Smith) and Vice-Chairman (Cr. M.S. Choudhary) and Crs. R. Cooper, Jennifer Evans and M.J. Roberts be appointed to the Registered Providers of Social Housing Review Group for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

## 7. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel noted that the work programme and work schedule would be updated at the first Mid-Cycle meeting of the Municipal Year.

The meeting closed at 8.06 pm.

CLLR M.D. SMITH (CHAIRMAN)

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