

COMMUNITY POLICY AND REVIEW PANEL

Meeting held on Thursday, 14th September, 2017 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr M.D. Smith (Chairman)
Cllr S.J. Masterson (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr R. Cooper
Cllr J.H. Marsh
Cllr Marina Munro
Cllr J.J. Preece
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr P.F. Rust

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr M.S. Choudhary.

7. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th June, 2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

8. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY UPDATE

The Panel welcomed Ms Zoe Paine, Strategy and Enabling Manager, who presented the 'Housing and Homelessness Strategy Update September 2017', as detailed in Report No. EHH 1711. The Report provided the Panel with an overview of the good progress made in the delivery of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy over the six-month period from March to September 2017. The Panel noted that the Strategy was designed to be a rolling document to enable it to be updated to reflect changes in national housing policies.

In relation to the Council's housing objectives contained in the Strategy, the Panel was reminded that these fall into four overall housing themes:

- (a) The right homes in the right places;
- (b) Making the best use of housing stock;
- (c) Helping people solve their housing problems and provide a suitable home when needed; and
- (d) Enabling people to live in good quality accommodation that is right for their needs.

Zoe Paine outlined the key achievements, opportunities and challenges for each of the four housing themes. These included:

(a) The right homes in the right places

- An increasing number of affordable homes being completed;
- Housing and planning officers working more closely to secure policy compliant schemes, including liaison at an earlier stage with developers and providing developers with guidance on affordable housing;
- Removal of prioritisation for local residents on the purchase of shared ownership properties;
- Universal Credit only providing under 35s with funding for a room in a shared property rather than funding for their own property.

(b) Making the best use of housing stock;

- Registered Providers have agreed in principle to share data to improve understanding of the composition of households living in affordable housing stock;
- Lettings plan targets have been achieved on the Maida phase of the Wellesley development ensuring maximum movement / occupancy for each unit;
- New Empty Homes Policy has been published with officers across the Council providing feedback and information to the lead officer;
- Ongoing issue of there being a mismatch between household sizes and available accommodation i.e. under occupation in the owner-occupied sector and overcrowding in the private rented sector.

(c) Helping people solve their housing problems and provide a suitable home when needed

- The Trailblazer project funding has resulted in the recruitment of new staff to prepare for the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and to develop a person-centred approach to homelessness prevention;
- Working more with the armed services and private landlords to identify empty properties;
- Positive outcomes for street homelessness due to North Lane Lodge;
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is likely to increase the number of people approaching the Council for advice, assistance and temporary accommodation.

(d) Enabling people to live in good quality accommodation that is right for their needs

- Employment of an experienced caseworker to support vulnerable residents through the Disability Facility Grant process;
- Financial Assistance Policy being drafted to enable the Council to extend the scope of works that can be carried out with grant assistance;
- Comprehensive review of fire safety issues following the Grenfell Fire;
- Evidence that Welfare Reform is pushing people into cheaper, poorer quality accommodation;
- Guidance awaited on the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the extended Mandatory Licencing Scheme for HMOs.

The Panel reviewed and provided feedback on the Delivery Plan for the Housing and Homelessness Strategy, noting that none of the actions had been identified as not being on target.

The Chairman thanked Zoe Paine and the team for a comprehensive and informative report.

9. **HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - CONSULTATION ON OVERNIGHT RESPITE FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

The Panel noted Hampshire County Council's Consultation on proposals to close overnight respite services at Sunbeams in Aldershot. Panel members were encouraged to provide individual responses to the consultation by the deadline of 2nd October, 2017.

10. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel noted the updated work programme for 2017/18 Municipal Year.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

CLLR M.D. SMITH (CHAIRMAN)
