

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 30 NOVEMBER, 2016 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK
PART 1

PRESENT:: Councillors:

Foley, D. (Chairman)
Burnett, G. (Vice-Chairman)

Cooper, Miss. J.	Hoare, M.W.A.
Dean, A. (Substitute)	Snape, D.J.
Dudson, A.	Stretton, Mrs. P.Z.
Grice, Mrs. D.	Witton, P.T.
Hardman, W.T.A.	

13. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. S.M. Cartwright, Mrs. C.L. Peake, Miss. S. Whitehouse, F.W.C. Allen (Housing Portfolio Leader) and P. A. Snape (Substitute for Councillor Mrs. C.L. Peake). Apology also received from Mike Walker, Environmental Protection Manager.

Councillor A. Dean was in attendance and substitute for Councillor Miss. S. Whitehouse.

Nirmal Samrai, Head of Housing and Waste Management reported that the Environmental Protection Manager would give a presentation at the next meeting with regard to Houses in Multiple Occupation.

14. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members

No further declarations were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members Interests.

15. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September, 2016 be approved as a correct record subject to an amendment to Minute 12, Page 7 and Councillor M. Hoard being amended to Councillor M. Hoare.

16. Notes

The Notes of the Housing (Allocations) Sub-Group held on 11 October and 15 November, 2016 were received for information.

17. Quarter 2 Performance Update 2016-17 – More and Better Housing Priority Delivery Plan

Members considered the Quarter 2 Performance Information 2016-17, More and Better Housing Priority Delivery Plan (Item 4.1 – 4.6).

More and better housing: increasing the supply of affordable housing

It was reported that the target figure of 165 homes would not be achieved this year. This was due to one site being completed last year and included in the figures for this year.

Increasing the supply of affordable housing – Progress the redevelopment of 25 former garage sites and other areas of Council owned land

It was reported that five sites had been selected and Novus would commence works from January, 2017. It was anticipated that the programme would be complete around March, 2018.

The garage sites selected were Berwick Drive, Coulthwaite Way, land at Hannaford Way, Woodlands Close and Brinsford Road.

Review of voids process to improve turnarounds and sustain tenancies

Nirmal Samrai reported that an action group had been established and a plan would be submitted to the next meeting.

Planning for the housing needs of the District

A Member asked about income and targets for affordable housing, and future plans against what the Council could deliver.

Nirmal Samrai advised the Member that Michael Tichford, Head of Economic Development may be better placed to respond to the query.

Members noted the Quarter 2 Performance Update 2016-17 – More and Better Housing Priority Delivery Plan.

18. Review of Allocations Policy – Recommendations from Housing (Allocations) Sub-Group

Members received a presentation from Janet Baldasera, Strategic Housing and Tenancy Services Manager who outlined the following:

- Out of Area Applicants and the qualification
- Arrears – Statute of Limitations – Qualification and Allocation

- Review Issues
- Out of Area – Local Connection
- Under-occupation/Bedroom Tax – Band 1 and Band 4
- Low Demand Properties/Communal Flats – Property Eligibility – Two bedroom flats and one bedroom in a mature block
- Tenancy Sustainability – Pre-Tenancy 2 – Payment method and withdrawal of offers
- Tenancy Sustainability – Pre-Tenancy – Making an application
- Homelessness Applicants – Suitable properties EOI – Expression of Interest

In response to a question raised by a Member, Janet Baldasera advised that there would be no changes to sheltered accommodation.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed amendments to the Council's Allocations Policy as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be agreed, and recommended to Cabinet.

19. Estate Management Review – Overview

Members received a presentation from Janet Baldasera, Strategic Housing and Tenancy Services Manager and Belinda Wildey, Estate Management Team Leader who outlined the following:

- Structure of the Tenancy Services – Estate Management Team
- Objectives of the Service
- Tenancy Management
- Tenancy Audits – April-Nov
- Tenancy Management Performance – April-Nov
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Anti-Social Behaviour Performance – April-Nov 2016
- Tenancy Sustainment
- Tenancy Sustainment Performance – July-Nov 2016
- Tenancy Fraud
- Tenancy Fraud Performance – April-Nov 2016
- Estate Caretaker Service
- Estate Caretaking Performance – April-Nov 2016 (Monthly Inspection Programme)
- Minor Works
- Minor Work Improvements – April-Nov 2016
- Review of Service
- Estate Walks
- Estate Walks Annual Evaluation Comparison
- Implementation

It was reported that estate walks would be phased out and an emphasis would be placed on the development of a tenancy sustainability strategy. Proposals for this would be brought back to the next meeting.

In response to a question raised by a Member, Belinda Wildey advised that those tenants who stored large amounts of rubbish and other items in their properties would be offered support through a range of different services to try and help with the problem.

She also advised that estate walks of the neighbourhood areas had become very resource intensive and often work was duplicated around highways and staff conducting ground visits. An annual evaluation and comparison had been undertaken which showed that serious issues had reduced from 2011-12.

A Member commented on the work produced in the report and referred to the tenancy audits, he asked if there were any plans for more in-depth profiling of tenants.

Nirmal Samrai responded and advised that it may be worth conducting a tenant census, however whilst data had been collected on new tenants, it was more difficult historically. She reported that the Council managed over 5000 properties and any further in-depth profiling would need to be carried out in stages.

A Member referred to the abandoned properties and asked if there were any future plans for work to be carried out on reducing them and finding out the causes.

Belinda Wildey explained that the Tenancy Sustainment Officers would now be able to investigate this through the tenancy sustainment plan. She also referred to the case study which had been circulated which showed how the sustainability plan would intervene and help those tenants that were vulnerable and assist with maintaining their tenancy.

In response to a question raised by a Member, Belinda Wildey referred to the success on tenancy fraud and advised that anonymous complaints, residents coming forward, suspicion on tenancy audits and the investigation into abandonments could lead to fraud being detected.

Members of the Committee referred to the estate walks and commented how useful these had been over the years, particularly those where residents groups had been involved. Officers responded and advised that if Members wished to continue with the estate walks they were welcome to do so.

The Chairman and Members discussed 'champions' and asked if this could be extended to estate walks. Belinda Wildey explained that the Council had tried through various social media tools including Facebook and Twitter to attract new people but had received no response.

In response to a question raised by a Member concerning those families with certain needs, Belinda Wildey responded and advised that the Council worked in conjunction with other partners and there was now an officer responsible for the Resilient Families Project.

The Chairman referred to minor works and asked what the maximum budget was

which could be applied for.

Belinda Wildey responded and advised that the maximum budget was £5k which could be applied for but could not cross over with other repairs. She also indicated that there would be some refusals due to the criteria not being met. There was £10k available per neighbourhood and there were thirteen estates per neighbourhood. Information regarding this was available in the Hometalk magazine and the tenants newsletter.

CHAIRMAN

(The meeting concluded at 5.10 p.m.).