

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
19 JULY 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Community Room, Castle Heights, Flint, CH6 5NG on Wednesday, 19 July 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Ron Hampson (Chairman)

Councillors: Sian Braun, David Cox, Jean Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Ian Dunbar, Mared Eastwood, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Ted Palmer, Mike Reece and Paul Shotton

APOLOGIES: Councillors Rosetta Dolphin and George Hardcastle. Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development; Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Housing Asset Manager, Service Manager (Enterprise & Regeneration); Benefits Manager; and Contract Surveyor

IN ATTENDANCE: Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

8. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 14 June 2017 were submitted.

Accuracy

That Councillor Dave Mackie's name under Chairman be amended to Councillor Ian Dunbar.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above amendment the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9. IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2016/17 OUTTURN REPORT

The Committee received the regular update report to consider progress towards the delivery of the impacts set out in the 2016/17 Improvement Plan, focussing on the areas of under-performance relevant to the Committee at the end of year.

The Benefits Manager provided an update on homeless households for whom homelessness was prevented for at least 6 months. She reported that the quarter 4 figure was lower than the rest of the year as some outcomes had rolled over but

across the year 89% of cases were prevented or relieved which had exceeded the 87% target.

The Benefits Manager informed that triage had handled 3,362 cases and that 63% were managed at first point of contact or through wider teams freeing up homeless officer time for those at risk of homelessness. The Welfare Rights team who have been based with the Citizens Advice Service since September 2016 had generated additional benefit income of £1,579,380 which was less than last year but had exceeded the target for the period.

The Benefits Manager continued that the figures for new claims processing for the year fell just outside the 20 days target due to performance being under target for quarter 1 and quarter 2, however, the figures for quarter 3 and quarter 4 showed improved performance and were within target. Regarding changes of circumstances processing, the Service performed within target for the year.

The Contract Surveyor reported that all contracts were delivered on time and exceeded targets with the exception of the following:

- The envelope contract (roofing works) was delayed due to work by Scottish Power to replace mains electrical cables, however, this has now been addressed and the contract is back “on track”.
- The Off Gas Programme in Treuddyn and Penyffordd was completed last year, but due to low oil prices uptake was low, however, there has been a rise in the demand for gas boilers as the price of oil has increased.

Councillor Paul Shotton expressed appreciation for the progress achieved in Housing to date. He referred to the Red Hall development and asked if a completion date had been determined. Councillor Bernie Attridge explained it was anticipated that properties would be allocated between August/September 2017.

Councillor Ron Davies asked that the Local Member be informed when any major capital works were being carried out in their Ward. The Contract Surveyor said that this should already be happening and would look into this to make sure it continued in the future.

The Service Manager (Enterprise & Regeneration) referred to the home renovation loans which were available to repair/improve private sector dwellings through the Council’s capital programme and the Welsh Government’s (WG) national Home Improvement Loans. He commented that the take up of both loans had been low and was being reviewed with the WG to consider a radical change on how home loans were delivered.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson commented that the home loan schemes were not being advertised sufficiently and there was a need to raise greater public awareness. The Service Manager acknowledged the point made and said more needed to be done to bring properties back into use and to encourage home-owners on low incomes to take up the schemes available.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

10. FLINT HIGH RISE ASSURANCE

The Housing Asset Manager gave a verbal update to assure the Committee and share information on fire safety measures in Flint high rise properties. He also distributed copies of a report which had been submitted to a meeting of the Cabinet on 18 July, on the measures taken and planned with regard to fire safety of Flintshire County Council high rise properties.

The Housing Asset Manager gave an overview of the measures in place to protect and ensure the safety of tenants in the event of fire and reported on the main points concerning the following six areas:

- building protective measures in place
- inspection regimes
- reassurance and communication measures
- external wall insulation fitted to other properties
- Fire Safety Audit
- further action to be taken going forward

The Housing Asset Manager referred to the undertaking of annual regulatory fire risk assessments or whenever a significant event or refurbishment takes place, the installation of sprinkler systems, fire protective doors, smoke and heat detectors, and personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEP). He also reported on the research and work carried out with Flintshire's Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire and Rescue Services training centre in the midlands.

The Housing Asset Manager explained that the reassurance and communication measures which had been put in place had been well received by tenants and would continue to be a priority. In response to the Freedom of Information requests which had been received a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section had been developed on Flintshire County Council's website to address the ongoing local and national enquiries and concerns received.

Councillor Bernie Attridge reported that the Authority, with 3 other local authorities, had met with the Welsh Government recently to submit evidence on the fire safety measures in place on high rise properties in Flintshire and to suggest any improvements that could be made going forward. He said the outcome of the meeting was positive and no issues had arisen on the evidence reviewed.

Members expressed their appreciation to the Cabinet Member and officers for the prompt action taken by the Authority to reassure tenants and local residents following the fire at Grenfell Tower, London, in June 2017.

Councillor Ian Dunbar thanked the Housing Asset Manager for an informative and detailed update. He commented on the number of low rise properties in Flintshire and asked for reassurance that protective measures were in place for these properties.

The Housing Asset Manager outlined the measures taken to protect tenants in low rise buildings and referred to the regular undertaking of fire risk assessments, testing, and inspection procedures. A separate action plan for low rise properties in Flintshire had been completed and would be reviewed annually.

Councillor Mike Reece asked whether consideration was being given to installing outdoor stairwells as an additional means of fire escape. Councillor Attridge advised that this was being considered.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

11. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration. She asked Members to consider the suggestion to hold a short workshop on the Economic Growth Deal prior to the beginning of the next meeting of the Committee on 20 September 2017, and this was agreed by the Committee. It was also agreed that an additional meeting of the Committee would be held during October 2017 to consider the proposed Social Housing Grant Programme and the proposed Business Plan.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be amended; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

12. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 10.50 am)

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Chairman