

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
8 JULY 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Community and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold, on Wednesday, 8 July 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Ron Hampson (Chairman)

Councillors: Amanda Bragg, Ron Davies, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Alison Halford, George Hardcastle, Ray Hughes, Brian Lloyd, Vicky Perfect, Mike Reece and Gareth Roberts

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Paul Shotton (for Peter Curtis)

APOLOGY: Councillor Paul Cunningham

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Bernie Attridge and Tony Sharps

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Housing, Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise), Economic Development Manager, Community Support Services Manager, Acting Senior Manager Council Housing Services, and Housing Strategy and Regeneration Manager

For minute number 10 – update on Tenant Involvement

Mr. John Ennis, Chair of Flintshire Tenants and Residents Federation, and Eddy Jones, Vice Chair of Flintshire Tenants and Residents Federation.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Community & Enterprise and Education & Youth Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 20 May 2015 and 1 June 2015 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10. UPDATE ON TENANT INVOLVEMENT

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Mr. John Ennis, Chair of Flintshire Tenants and Residents Federation, and Eddy Jones, Vice Chair of Flintshire Tenants and Residents Federation, to the meeting.

The Acting Senior Manager, Council Housing Services, introduced a report to provide assurance to the Committee on the commitment and approach to Customer Involvement within the Council Housing Services. The report provided an update on on-going activities and proposed further development of a number of measures to ensure effective customer Involvement and customer focused service.

The Acting Senior Manager, Council Housing Services, provided background information as detailed in the report and referred to the key consideration concerning the customer involvement strategic review.

Mr. John Ennis spoke in support of the report and thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to comment on customer involvement. He expressed his appreciation to the Chief Officer and her team for the support provided to the Tenants Association. He commented on the value of the meetings which had been held previously between Members and tenants and said he would welcome the continuation of these meetings in the future. The Cabinet Member for Housing agreed to review the arrangements for Member and tenant meetings. Mr. Eddy Jones, Vice Chair of Flintshire Tenants and Residents Federation, also endorsed the report and spoke in support of the assistance provided by Officers to the Tenants Association.

The Chairman invited Members to raise questions.

Councillor Vicky Perfect spoke in support of the social events held locally to engage with customers to promote the services and support available to both tenants and residents of the County and other visitors to the areas. The Acting Senior Manager, Council Housing Services, said the outcomes from such events provided positive feedback which enabled the Service to move forward.

Councillor George Hardcastle asked how many members of staff were using the handheld computer devices provided by CAPITA software system. The Acting Senior Manager, Council Housing Services, agreed to provide the figure following the meeting. In response to the further queries raised by Councillor Hardcastle the Senior Manager advised that the system was working well and the project was on course.

During discussion the Senior Manager responded to the further questions and comments raised by Members concerning communication through publication of a Housing News magazine which is delivered twice a year to all tenants and the use of social media. Councillor Rosetta Dolphin asked if a copy of the Housing News magazine could be provided to all Members in future. Councillor Dolphin also commented on the information

which was sent to tenants to allow them to choose their bathroom and kitchen for example, and asked whether a copy of this could be sent to her. The Senior Manager agreed to email a copy to her following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the on-going service activity in relation to customer involvement be noted; and
- (b) That the revised Customer Involvement Strategy, as outlined in the report, be supported.

11. YEAR END CHIEF OFFICER PERFORMANCE REPORT AND YEAR END IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORTS

The Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise) advised that she would give a joint presentation on the 2014/15 Year End Service Performance report produced for her portfolio and the Year End Improvement Plan Monitoring Report relevant to the Committee. She reported on the areas of positive performance regarding Customer Services, Benefits and Welfare Reform and Revenues and referred to any areas of concern. She also reported on progress on the Northern Gateway Scheme as detailed in appendix 6 of the Year End Improvement Plan report. She invited Officers present to outline the work which had been undertaken to improve performance in their respective areas.

The Economic Development Manager reported on regeneration and referred to the Vibrant and Viable Places programme in Deeside, Flint regeneration, the rural development programme, and Communities First programme. The Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager commented on the areas of concern and around the Disabled Facilities Grant scheme. Referring to appendix 7 of the Year End Improvement Plan report the Economic Development Manager also commented on the European regional development of a number of town centres.

The Acting Senior Manager, Council Housing Services, gave a brief presentation on the areas of positive performance concerning the Housing Revenue Account and referred to the areas of concern. He also referred to appendix 1 in the Year End Improvement Plan report and reported on progress towards achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

The Community Support Services Manager gave an update on developments in Community Support Services and referred to the SARTH project, the Homeless Prevention pilot and the CBASS service. The Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager reported on Fuel Poverty and the work undertaken to protect people from poverty as detailed in appendix 5 of the Year End Improvement Plan.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their detailed reports and invited Members to raise questions.

Councillor Alison Halford expressed concerns relating to the payment of grants to Community First areas and said the problem had been highlighted by the Welsh Audit Officer. The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) acknowledged the point and said that there was a need to be more robust concerning how grants were managed. Referring to the subject of regeneration Councillor Halford asked if a short note outlining what Vibrant and Viable places was could be e-mailed to her following the meeting. The Economic Development Manager agreed to provide this to her.

The Community Support Services Manager responded to the queries from Councillor George Hardcastle concerning the change to a new common housing register for Flintshire. The Cabinet Member for Community and Enterprise suggested that Members of the Committee be invited to go and have a look at how the SARTH system works.

In response to a question regarding homelessness and use of bed and breakfast temporary accommodation the Community Support Services Manager said she would provide this information as part of a wider report on the SARTH policy to the meeting of the Committee to be held in October.

Councillor Amanda Bragg referred to the matter of voids and the condition that some properties were left in when a tenant left. She asked if information on what the bond scheme was could be e-mailed to her. The Community Support Services Manager agreed to provide this.

In response to Councillor Ian Dunbar's comments concerning information on the Council's website about the Welsh Government Home Improvement Loan, the Housing Strategy and Regeneration Manager said he would review and improve this information.

In response to the earlier comments from Mr. John Ennis on future tenant and Member meetings, the Cabinet Member for Housing suggested that a report to outline terms of reference to set up a group to meet regularly be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the reports be noted; and
- (b) That feedback be provided to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee who are responsible for the overview and monitoring of improvement targets.

12. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Community and Enterprise and Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the report to consider the Forward Work Programme for the Committee.

The Facilitator advised that an all Member workshop had been arranged for 22 July 2015, for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to populate their Forward Work Programmes for the remainder of the year. She advised that prior to the workshop she would be liaising with the Chair and the Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) to populate a draft Forward Work Programme for the Committee for the forthcoming year.

Members reviewed the current programme and agreed that the following item be considered at the next meeting to be held on 2 September 2015:

- Rent Arrears

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme, as amended, be noted.

13. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting for the following item by virtue of exempt information under paragraph(s) 15 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

14. SENIOR MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE

The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) introduced a report on a new management structure in Community and Enterprise to deliver savings in management costs, provide opportunities for career development and talent management, and meet the organisational design objectives around layers and spans of control. She provided background information and referred to the key considerations as detailed in the report, and reported on the proposed new structure which was outlined in appendix 2 to the report.

RESOLVED:

That the revised structure be recommended to Cabinet at its meeting on the 14 July, 2015.

15. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.05 am)

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Chairman