

Agenda

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Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Date: **Monday 11 April 2016**

Time: **5.00 pm**

Place: **St Aldate's Room, Town Hall**

For any further information please contact:

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As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record the meeting please let the Contact Officer know how you wish to do this before the start of the meeting.

Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Membership

| | |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Chair | Councillor Linda Smith |
| | Councillor Gill Sanders |
| | Councillor Elizabeth Wade |
| | Councillor Elise Benjamin |
| | Councillor David Henwood |
| | Geno Humphrey (co-optee) |
| | Councillor Michael Gotch |

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AGENDA

Pages

1 APOLOGIES

Substitutes are not allowed.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 TENANT INVOLVEMENT

7 - 24

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| Background Information |
| The Council's Tenant and Resident Involvement Strategy was adopted in 2012 and can be found in the 23 November 2012 City Executive Board paperwork (item 52) . |
| Why is it on the agenda? |
| For the Housing Panel and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel to consider how tenants are involved in decisions that affect them. The Housing Panel requested a report on tenant involvement including information about current activities, tenant feedback, successes, future plans and case study examples. |
| Who has been invited to comment? |
| Stephen Clarke – Head of Housing and Property Bill Graves – Head of Landlord Services Simon Warde – Tenant Involvement Manager Tenant Scrutiny Panel members |

4 HOUSING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

25 - 26

This is the final Housing Panel meeting of the current Council year. In June the Scrutiny Committee will agree its standing panels and work plan priorities for 2016-17.

The Panel may wish to suggest additional items for inclusion on the 2016/17 scrutiny work plan. The Committee has asked for ideas by 20 May 2016 and a list of suggestions received to date is included for information.

5 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

27 - 32

For the Panel to agree and note the record of the meeting held on 9 March 2016.

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Meetings are provisionally scheduled as follows:

7 July 2016
5 October 2016
9 November 2016
1 March 2017
3 May 2017

All meetings begin at 5.00pm.

DECLARING INTERESTS

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licences for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest.

If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". What this means is that the matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those of the member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

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To: The Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)
Date: 11 April 2016
Report of: Head of Housing and Property
Title of Report: Tenant Involvement

Summary

Purpose of report: To provide a briefing on the Tenant Involvement function within Housing & Property Services.

Key decision No

Executive lead member: Councillor Mike Rowley

Report author: Simon Warde, Tenant Involvement Manager

Corporate Priorities: Meeting Housing Need; Strong and Active Communities; An Effective and Efficient Council

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Tenant Involvement Activities

Appendix 2 – Resident Feedback

Appendix 3 – Involvement Case Studies

Appendix 4 – Acknowledgements

Appendix 5 – Involvement Focus 2016-17

Introduction

1. This report provides a briefing to Panel Members on the activities of the Tenant Involvement team.
2. The Tenant Involvement team's primary function is to empower and support Oxford City Council tenants and leaseholders towards co-regulation, influencing, developing, monitoring and scrutinising housing related services.

Background

3. In March 2012 the Council commissioned TPAS (the Tenant Participation Advisory Service) to support the setup of a Tenant & Resident Involvement Strategy.
4. The purpose of the Strategy was to embed a culture of involvement, provide a fully flexible approach for residents, limit the time asked of residents and deliver real outcomes in terms of service improvement and value for money.
5. Between March 2012 and October 2012, TPAS, working with a Steering Group consisting of tenants, a leaseholder and staff, generated the Strategy, which was approved by the City Executive Board on 23 November 2012.
6. A detailed action plan was also prepared, aligned with the TPAS Landlord Accreditation.
7. The Tenant Involvement team consists of three full-time staff- the Tenant Involvement Manager and two Tenant Involvement Officers.
8. In addition, the Tenant Involvement Manager also manages the Housing Management Apprentice and the Resident Liaison Coordinator (Tower Block Project).

Day to Day Involvement Activities

9. Tenant Involvement has developed significantly over the last three years. Recruiting and retaining tenants and leaseholders into involvement is often one of the most difficult tasks, but due to some new approaches, the team have seen some considerable success in the number of tenants & leaseholders showing initial interest and then becoming involved in one or more activities.
10. As the opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to become involved have increased, this has empowered them further, meaning they are able to influence a wider range of services and work programmes, become involved in staff recruitment and be a key stakeholder in contract procurement.
11. The involvement activities which are now a day to day part of the service are set out in Appendix 1 – Tenant Involvement Activities.
12. Although many aspects of involvement clearly have great benefits to tenants and leaseholders, e.g. training, system testing, tours and newsletters, these activities can be difficult to measure and we are often reliant on feedback. Feedback from involved tenants is set out in Appendix 2 – Resident Feedback
13. Other involvement activities have a clearer outcome and the true benefits are easier to record. These are set out in Appendix 3 – Involvement Case Studies

Promotion of Service

14. As the success of involvement activities has progressed, the Involvement Team have been publicising the success of working closely with customers through internal messages, team meetings across the Council, Council Matters and in the Tenants' Newsletter.

Acknowledgements

15. In January 2016, the Tenant Involvement Team were awarded the TPAS Landlord Accreditation, only the third Local Authority to receive the award, which comprises a review of 26 Themes and over 99 individual expected involvement outcomes. More details about the Accreditation and other acknowledgements are set out in Appendix 4 – Acknowledgements.

Involved Tenants and Leaseholders

16. As part of this report, it must be recognised that without the tenants and leaseholders, involvement and co-regulation would not happen. The hard work and dedication of the tenants and leaseholders who give up their spare time to help shape future services and priorities deserves special mention.

Work Plan Focus 2016-17

17. As the elements of the original Strategy and action plan are now embedded as day to day activities, the main focus of the Tenant Involvement Team has shifted to using the activities and tools to support involvement in housing related activities across the Council. The key elements of focus for 2016-17 are set out in Appendix 5 – Involvement Focus 2016-17.

Next steps – The Committee is asked to note the report, provide comment and to consider when to receive a further update.

Name and contact details of author:-

Name: Simon Warde

Job title: Tenant Involvement Manager

Service Area / Department: Landlord Services, Housing & Property Services

Tel: 01865 252839 e-mail: swarde@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None

Version number: 1.0

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Appendix 1 - Tenant Involvement Activities

The Tenant Involvement team delivers various activities for and with Oxford City Council tenants & leaseholders. An example these activities are as follows:

Scrutiny

There are ten members in the Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP), which consists of nine tenants and one leaseholder. In addition, one tenant is part of the Housing Panel (of the Scrutiny Committee).

The TSP carry out reviews on Oxford City Council Services, but also have the opportunity to be involved in other activities such as meeting with the Head of Service to discuss potential changes and impacts of housing legislation.

Previous TSP reviews have included first time fix (Repairs), the Oxford Standard and an Atkyns Court power outage.

Tenants in Touch

Tenants & Leaseholders are able to influence the content and layout of housing publications, as well as write their own articles for the quarterly Tenants in Touch magazine.

System Testing

Tenants were involved in testing of the new Online Repairs Portal prior to it going live, influencing final design and process.

Procurement/Tendering

Tenants & leaseholders are now involved the procurement process on some projects, helping to evaluate tenders documents and interviewing potential contractors, providing invaluable opinion and insight. To date this has included the Tower Block Refurbishment Programme and the Furnished Tenancy Scheme.

Tenant/Leaseholder Interview Panels

Our tenants & leaseholders now form part of interview panels for vacant housing roles. This has included recent interviews for the Leaseholder Management Officer and the Resident Liaison Coordinator (Tower Block Project).

Housing Tours

The Tenant Involvement team has taken tenants on tours to investigate our new housing developments, as well review alternatives building methods. This has included visits to the new developments at Denny Gardens & Bradlands, plus the Stewart Milne construction factory in Witney and the Building Research Establishment in Watford.

Joint Partnership working

The Involvement teams and tenants of both Oxford City Council and Reading Borough Council are now working together to review best practice and plan joint initiatives.

Consultation

The Tenant Involvement team support corporate projects by carrying out consultation exercises and exhibitions. This has included the Tower Block Refurbishment Project, the Oxford Standard and the Great Estates programme.

Annual Tenant & Leaseholder Conference

The Tenant Involvement team organise and run the Tenant & Leaseholder Conferences. These events provide tenants & leaseholders with an opportunity to be updated on housing issues, meet staff from across the council, receive information on our services and attend theme based workshops.

External Conferences

The tenant Involvement Team take tenants to conferences run by external agencies to increase their awareness of national housing policy, meet tenants from other social landlords and learn about alternative methods of involvement. This has included conferences run by TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) and ARCH (Association for Retained Council Housing)

Local Offers

Tenants are involved in the generation of Local Offers. The Local Offer Working Group has negotiated measures & targets on Oxford City Council services such as Repairs, Planned Maintenance and Anti-Social Behaviour.

Tenant Review Groups

Tenant Involvement has started to setup focus groups to both learn the workings of and review services such as Repairs, Anti-Social Behaviour, Tenancy Management and the Income Team (Rents) as well as contributing to the Older Persons Housing Review.

Secret Shopping

The Tenant Involvement team manage the Secret Shopping Program. This is a method where by Oxford City Council residents can test our services without our staff being aware. To date Secret Shopping has been carried out on services such as the Contact Centre, Direct Services, Town Hall and the Corporate Service Standards.

Budget Reviews

The Tenant Involvement team set up meetings between tenants and senior managers to discuss the annual review of rent setting and the Housing Revenue Account budgets.

Training

The Tenant Involvement Team deliver direct training to tenants, meeting their personal development needs on topics such as Tenant Involvement, Equality & Diversity, Secret Shopping, Crafts and "Upcycling". Further opportunities are provided for training in different Council service areas, gardening and first aid.

The Tenant Academy

The Tenant Involvement team have started to deliver a five week awareness & training programme to tenants of our sheltered housing blocks. A certificate is provided to those tenants who successfully complete this programme.

Block Representatives

With the Tower Block Refurbishment project now underway, the team have been recruiting Block Representatives. These are residents who can learn more technical detail about the works, become a contact the contractor can seek views from and a resident who can become a support to their neighbours as well as a local voice.

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Appendix 2 – Resident Feedback

A variety of residents have taken part in involvement activities. Some of their comments are below.

JK - Tower Block Refurbishment Tender Process

“I found today very interesting and informative, looking forward to the next session”

CM – Housing Tour

“I so enjoyed the experience! Thank you!”

BW - Furnished Tenancy Procurement Interview Panel

“It was a privilege to be part of the group awarding the contract and seeing what factors are involved in making this decision”

JB – Tenant Involvement Introduction Training

“The Involvement Team provides a space for all tenants’ voices to be heard, where ideas are appreciated and feedbacks are valued. An hour’s involvement could mean a lifetime’s achievement for the community. So please join!”

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Appendix 3 – Involvement Case Studies

Rent Arrears Escalation Process

The Incomes Team (Rents) were keen to review the Arrears Escalation Process. They approached the Tenant Involvement team to support the review and generate feedback to help influence changes to this process.

The Tenant Involvement team developed a workshop and invited tenants to participate. The existing arrears process was presented to tenants, showing when and how Oxford City Council communicated with tenants in rent arrears. The involved tenants then had the opportunity to change the ordering of when and how they were communicated with.

The second part of the workshop involved our tenants reviewing the text of correspondence sent out to tenants during the rent arrears process. This enabled the tenants to edit the text and remove non-essential jargon to make the letters clearer and more engaging.

As an outcome of this review, Oxford City Council now communicates verbally with tenants at an earlier stage of the process, rather than simply issuing standard letters. In addition, a new traffic light warning system has been added to the arrears letters, making the arrears stage clearer to the tenants.

Tower Block Consultation

As part of the Tower Block Refurbishment Programme, the Tenant Involvement team were commissioned to consult with the resident base on some of the programmes' priorities and influence the final design.

To ensure the consultation was inclusive, the team ran drop-in events at community facilities very close to each of the five blocks, carried out door step surveys and generated online surveys.

The team collated all of the feedback from each of the consultation methods and generated a report of their findings. The findings were initially present to the Project team and then the Project Board.

As an outcome of this consultation, the residents influenced works such as garden rooms & balconies and the final design of the five tower blocks.

Editorial Panel

Within the pages of the quarterly Tenants in Touch publication is the 'Have Your Say' section. This acts as a prompt for tenants & leaseholders to both provide feedback on services or current issues, as well as show an interest in Tenant Involvement activities.

Although the form included a prepaid return envelope, minimal responses were being received. This concern was presented to the tenants on the Editorial Panel to make suggestions. After some discussion, the panel recommended that the form should be included in the publication but loose from the pages, believing that tenants & leaseholders would be more likely to act and take the time to respond.

The outcome of this change has resulted in the responses increasing in each of the last three editions. We are now receiving approximately three times the amount of responses compared to before the change was made.

Tenant Interview Panel

In the last twelve months, Landlord Services has advertised two new posts, a Leaseholder Management Officer and a Resident Liaison Co-ordinator.

The Tenant Involvement team ensured that tenants & leaseholders formed part of the recruitment process by being involved in either a stakeholder or interview panel. The Tenant Involvement team worked with the Council's HR team to train the residents on interviewing skills, assisting them in their new role.

The tenants & leaseholders were able to ask questions during the interviews and feed back on the candidates' responses. The outcome being that the tenants & leaseholders were able to directly influence which candidate the Oxford City Council employed.

The Oxford Standard

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) carried out a joint review with the Housing Panel on the Oxford Standard (Decent Homes plus).

Not only did Tenant Involvement support the TSP through this process, but the joint panel commissioned the Tenant Involvement team to consult with tenants on their priorities for improvement works to their homes, as well as the specification of those works.

The Tenant Involvement team carried out six days of doorstep surveys across the city. This was followed by two consultation events being held and an online consultation survey being made available.

The Tenant Involvement team collated the results from various surveys and presented the findings to the joint Panel.

The Joint Scrutiny Panel presented their recommendations to the City Executive Board. The outcome was that the Oxford Standard was approved, including over 30 individual elements that were improvements on the previous Decent Home Standard.

Local Offers

As part of the Tenant & Resident Involvement Strategy, Oxford City Council is committed to deliver Local Offers.

The Tenant Involvement team setup a Local Offer Working Group (LOWG) made up of tenants, who would then support the creation of such offers. The LOWG first decided on three services they wanted to have Local Offers. These were Repairs, Planned Maintenance and Anti-Social Behaviour services.

The LOGW worked with senior managers responsible for these three service areas and negotiated a set of measures & targets that the service areas would become responsible for delivering as their “Offer” to tenants.

This result was that the LOGW successfully negotiated a series of measures & targets with all three services and three Local Offers were drafted.

All three Local Offers were approved by the City Executive Board. Regular updates on performance against the Local Offers are provided by the service areas and a final report on the performance against the Local Offers will be provided jointly by the LOWG and the service areas, to be published in the summer 2016 issue of Tenants in Touch.

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Appendix 4 - Acknowledgements

Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Accreditation

In April 2015 the Tenant Involvement team applied to TPAS for Landlord Accreditation.

To achieve this accreditation, there was a review of 26 Themes and over 99 individual expected Involvement outcomes.

The first stage of the accreditation consisted of the team completing a comprehensive self-assessment. This was then followed by a desktop review by TPAS. The final stage involved an intense three-day reality checking exercise where TPAS conducted interviews with tenants, leaseholders, operational staff, managers, senior managers, a director and a Ward Councillor.

In January 2016 the Tenant Involvement Team became one of only three Local Authorities to receive the TPAS Landlord Accreditation.

TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Regional Awards

In February 2016 the Tenant Involvement Team were shortlisted in three categories at the Regional TPAS Awards 2016:

- Team of the year.
- Tenant of the year.
- Contractor Engagement of the year.

Although the team did not actually win any of the categories, to be shortlisted from hundreds of entries across the housing sector is a great achievement .

Tenant Participation Advisory Service National Conference

TPAS have invited the Tenant Involvement team to deliver workshops on Successful Tenant Engagement at their National Conference in July 2016,

The team are focused on delivering these workshops jointly with tenants.

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Appendix 5 – Involvement Focus for 2016-17

In addition to their day to day work, in 2016-17 the Tenant Involvement team will put additional investment in the following:

Virtual Involvement

This is a term used to describe involvement that can be more flexible and less time consuming for our tenants & leaseholders.

By providing our tenants & leaseholders with the opportunity to get involved at a time and location that is suitable to them, we will increase the number of residents that are able to be involved, providing more feedback on our services and areas for improvement.

Examples of Virtual Involvement include online video training, online and mobile phone surveys, social media dialogue and use of phone applications.

Tenant Involvement Review Group

Where tenant & leaseholder Review Groups exist for other Oxford City Council Services, the aim is to establish something similar for Tenant Involvement. Such a group will review the involvement policies, incentives, expenditure and the Tenant & Resident Involvement Strategy. The group will also negotiate measures to continually monitor the effectiveness and impact of Tenant Involvement activities.

Housing Development

Tenant Housing Tours have been a great success and their feedback on newly built council homes has been extremely useful. In an effort to deliver well designed and practical homes for the future, there is real benefit in involving our tenants at a much earlier stage. This will not only include influencing the build method, but also the internal layout of homes and the type and quality of fixtures and fittings used.

Operational Activities

Throughout 2016 and 2017, the Tenant Involvement Team will be active in a number of high profile projects and area improvement initiatives, such as continuing to support the Tower Block project, the Great Estates Programme and delivering effective consultation to residents on the major improvements planned in Barton.

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Long list of suggestions for 2016/17 scrutiny work plan

| Agenda item | Issue Type | Description | Lead Officer |
|--|-------------------|--|---|
| City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order | Scrutiny item | To monitor the impacts of the City Centre PSPO, including the numbers and types of early interventions and enforcement actions. | Richard Adams, Community Safety and Resilience Manager |
| Devolution plans for Oxfordshire | Scrutiny item | To monitor the progress of devolution proposals for Oxfordshire. | Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive |
| Oxfordshire Growth Board | Scrutiny item | To monitor agendas and minutes published by the Board. | Paul Staines, Oxfordshire Growth Board Programme Manager |
| Local Plan | Scrutiny item | To consider one or more aspects of the Local Plan which is subject to review | Patsy Dell, Head of Planning and Regulatory |
| Fusion Lifestyle performance | Scrutiny item | To monitor an annual Fusion Lifestyle contract performance dashboard. | Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services |
| Discretionary Housing Payments | Scrutiny item | To monitor Discretionary Housing Payments spend mid-way through the year. | Paul Wilding, Revenue & Benefits Programme Manager |
| Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations | Forward Plan item | To consider a report on the allocation of grants to the community and voluntary organisations for 2017/2018. | Julia Tomkins, Grants & External Funding Officer |
| Planning Annual Monitoring Report | Forward Plan item | To consider the effectiveness of planning policies contained within Oxford's Local Development Plan. | Rebekah Knight, Planner |
| Transfer Station for Recycled Material | Forward Plan item | Proposal to create and operate a Council managed Transfer Station for City collected co-mingled recyclate, green waste, street arisings and engineering works spoil. | Roy Summers, Deputy Head of Direct Services |
| Performance monitoring | Scrutiny item | Quarterly reports on a set of Corporate and Housing service measures chosen by the Committee. | N/A |
| Response to national policy changes | Scrutiny item | To receive a briefing on the City Council's responses to Government housing and welfare policy changes. | TBC |
| Homelessness prevention funding | Scrutiny item | To receive an update on homelessness prevention funding from April 2017, including the expected impacts of County Council funding cuts and plans to mitigate these. | Ossi Mosley, Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Officer |

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|---|-------------------|--|---|
| Under-occupation in the Council's housing stock | Scrutiny item | To receive an update on the levels of under-occupation in the Council's housing stock and efforts to reduce under-occupation, including support and incentives for downsizing. | Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager |
| Choice Based Lettings refusal reasons | Scrutiny item | To receive a briefing on reasons given by Choice Based Lettings applicants for refusing Council properties, including requests for minor adaptations. | Tom Porter, Allocations Manager |
| Great Estates | Scrutiny item | To receive an update on progress made in developing masterplans for estates and working up and delivering a rolling programme of priority improvement schemes. | Martin Shaw, Property Services Manager |
| A Housing Company for Oxford | Scrutiny item | To monitor progress of the Housing Company for Oxford in its first year of operation. | David Edwards, Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing |
| Rents performance | Scrutiny item | To monitor the Council's rents performance including current and former tenant arrears. | Tanya Bandekar, Revenue and Benefits Service Manager |
| Empty Property Strategy | Scrutiny item | To consider a refresh of the Council's Empty Property Strategy 2013-18. | Mel Mutch, Empty Residential Property Officer |
| Tenant satisfaction | Scrutiny item | To monitor tenant satisfaction survey results. | Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager |
| Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy | Forward Plan item | To review the Council's draft budget for 2017-18 and Medium Term Financial Strategy | Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services |
| Budget monitoring | Forward Plan item | To monitor the Council's finances at the end of each quarter. | Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services |
| Treasury Management Strategy 2017-18 | Forward Plan item | To consider the Treasury Management Strategy 2017-18 and monitor Treasury performance. | Anna Winship, Management Accountancy Manager |
| Capital Strategy 2017-18 | Forward Plan item | To consider the Council's Capital Strategy for 2017-18 | Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services |

HOUSING PANEL (PANEL OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE)

Wednesday 9 March 2016

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Sanders, Wade, Smith (Chair), Benjamin, Henwood and Gotch and Geno Humphrey (Co-optee),

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Rowley

OFFICERS PRESENT: Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer), Stephen Clarke (Head of Housing and Property), Daryl Edmunds (Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team Manager), Tom Porter (Allocations Manager), Martin Shaw (Property Services Manager), David Watt (Finance Business Partner), Anna Winship (Management Accountancy Manager), Alan Wylde (Housing Development & Enabling Manager), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Financial Services) and David Edwards (Executive Director City Regeneration and Housing)

34. APOLOGIES

The Panel was advised that the following people were unable to attend:

- Councillor Dee Sinclair (item 7)
- Councillor Tom Hayes (item 9)
- Jack Bradley (item 6)

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations.

36. HOUSING PERFORMANCE - JANUARY 2016

The Head of Housing introduced the report and said that the overall picture was positive. The number of households in temporary accommodation was a challenge but this pressure was currently being held. There had been significant improvements in rents performance and the commentary around these measures would be circulated to the Panel.

37. DE-DESIGNATION OF 40+ ACCOMMODATION - YEAR 5 REPORT

The Allocations Manager introduced the report and explained that this was the final year of a five year programme of de-designating most of the Council's properties that were designated to persons aged 40 years and over.

The Panel questioned the levels of incentives available to people who may wish to downsize and heard that these were comparable with those offered by other local authorities in the region. Incentives were not always the key issue and the quality of accommodation and support with moving were more important to many people. Council officers would be actively seeking views of tenants who were

under-occupying larger properties in Barton and using this information to help to inform new developments nearby at Barton Park.

In response to a question about bungalows, the Panel heard that these types of developments were relatively low density but Council officers were exploring options to develop new bungalows in some small infill sites.

The Panel noted the report and agreed:

- To request a report to scrutiny on under-occupation in the Council's housing stock and incentives and support for downsizing.
- That information previously requested on Choice Based Lettings refusal reasons would include details of requests to make minor adaptations to Council properties.

38. GREAT ESTATES PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Property Services Manager introduced the report and provided a presentation that included before and after photographs of individual schemes. He said that the great estates programme had been delayed due to uncertainties around Housing Revenue Account funding and that a resulting under-spend would be carried into next year. Some cyclical maintenance budgets would also be rolled in to funding allocated to estates regeneration. Over time, the effects of this programme should be seen in tenant satisfaction measures.

In response to a question about member walkabouts, the Head of Housing advised that local members needed to be involved when schemes were being drawn up. The survey methodology that had been developed at Barton would be rolled out to other areas. This would involve taking a holistic approach on an estate-wide basis to identify significant problems and working up a rolling four-year programme of priority schemes, as £4.8m over four years would not solve all issues.

The Panel asked whether Barton was the only site with a masterplan and when other masterplans would be developed. The Head of Housing advised that there was not yet a timetable for developing further masterplans but member involvement would be built in to these plans.

The Panel welcomed plans to survey and assess all garage sites and heard that pragmatic decisions would be made on whether to redevelop garage sites based on factors such as condition, location and usage. The Board Member for Housing advised that he would encourage community groups with storage needs to rent garages.

39. TOWER PROJECT UPDATE

The Head of Housing and Property Services Manager introduced this report.

The Panel questioned whether the budget allocated for tower block refurbishment included works to kitchens and bathrooms and the installation of CCTV. The Panel heard that kitchens and bathrooms were replaced on a cyclical basis and that the Oxford Standard specifications were built in to ongoing maintenance works and budgets. CCTV was also being installed in

priority areas. All tower blocks now had CCTV with the exception of Hockmore Tower.

In response to a question about payment options and whether potential difficulties in obtaining contributions from leaseholders would affect the delivery of the project, the Panel heard that the £20m that has been budgeted for represented the full cost of project and no income had been assumed for ten years. There were a number of payment options and all leaseholders would be treated individually but it was expected that in most cases the Council would be taking an equity stake in the properties and recovering the refurbishment costs in future. Some landlords were expected to be able to afford their contributions and the Council would pursue these if necessary.

40. SECURITY IN TOWER BLOCKS

The Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team Manager introduced the report and explained that each tower was different. A Public Spaces Protection Order was in place at Foresters Tower which had had a significant impact on reducing anti-social behaviour (ASB), whereas relatively few issues were reported at Hockmore Tower. Different types of groups tended to congregate in communal areas at some blocks and within a tower block there may be issues on certain floors that residents on other floors may be unaware of. Different enforcement approaches were taken with different age groups and an appreciative enquiry was being undertaken to engage directly with youths.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that a brief survey had been sent to the seven Block Reps in order to canvas their views on ASB issues in tower blocks. Block Reps had been asked to respond using their own knowledge and opinions and five responses had been received. The Scrutiny Officer summarised the responses and said that the following observations could be made:

- The results were skewed towards Hockmore Tower.
- The majority of Block Reps stated that ASB and crime took place 'quite often' but none had responded with 'very often'.
- The majority of Block Reps stated that residents were 'quite affected' by these issues.
- No Block Reps stated that residents were 'not affected' by these issues.
- Issues of vandalism and graffiti, noise, rubbish or litter and damage to property were considered by more than one Block Rep to be either a 'fairly big problem' or a 'very big problem'.
- A minority of Block Reps responded that residents typically felt 'very unsafe' in communal areas during the evening and / or 'at night'.
- Block Reps had also provided some suggestions for improving security.

In response to a question about whether there was a need for outside shelters where youths could congregate, the Panel heard that there was an excellent range of facilities in the city and officers routinely signposted youths to these. However, some individuals were not interested in any facilities. The appreciative enquiry aimed to enable the Council to better understand what youths wanted and use that information to fund these things, for example through the Youth Ambition programme.

The Panel welcomed the youth work as excellent and also welcomed plans to reduce graffiti tagging across the city, including by possibly involving artists and commissioning murals.

In response to a question, the Panel heard that Youth Forums had been created in response to 12-15 year olds at Barton saying that they wanted a voice. The Panel encouraged plans to mainstream this work in various ways including through engaging young people in community groups and helping to support elderly residents.

The Panel noted the importance of good youth club provision and questioned whether youths who generally behaved badly tended to be rewarded, for example with trips, while those who generally behaved well were not. The Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team Manager agreed and said that rewards for positive behaviours, such as attendance at certain clubs, were being looked at and could potentially include things like free leisure activities. These ideas had not yet been developed into reality as officers wanted to make sure that schemes could be cost-neutral.

The Panel questioned whether feedback would be provided to residents following a door knocking exercise at Evenlode Tower and whether there were plans to do this at other towers. The Panel also noted from the survey responses that there was a request for occasional police patrols at Hockmore Tower.

The Panel agreed to make the following recommendations:

1. That door-knocking to seek views from residents on the behaviour of groups of young people in communal areas should be rolled out to other towers.
2. That the local police teams should be asked to undertake occasional patrols of tower blocks, and where necessary should be given the means to access communal areas of other towers, as they can at the two towers at Blackbird Leys.
3. That the Council should continue to look at ways of integrating youth engagement activities with other forms of resident and community engagement.

41. ALLOCATION OF HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION FUNDS

The Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager introduced the report and said that the City Council was maintaining a £1.3m budget for homelessness prevention but cuts to County Council budgets were presenting a major challenge.

The Panel questioned what would happen when the County cuts took affect at the end of the coming financial year. The Panel heard that funding is rarely allocated for more than one year at a time and that officers would be taking stock and assessing what was business critical from April 2017 onwards. There would be very significant changes to the provision of services and support in the city. Talks were taking place between the City Council and district and health partners on pooling resources but there would inevitably be difficult decisions about re-commissioning services.

In response to a question, the Panel heard that the Council would know more by summer 2016 and that there could be an opportunity for member involvement at that stage.

The Panel questioned how many big Issue Sellers were being supported in Oxford. The Panel heard that the Big Issue comprised two sister organisations, a sales arm which operated in most cities and a foundation that worked to support vendors in fewer locations, of which Oxford was one. Of approximately sixty vendors based in the city a cohort of some thirty individuals that had accommodation and wanted to move through the system were receiving specific support.

In conclusion the Panel expressed disappointment at the County Council cuts and agreed to request a further report to Scrutiny in summer 2016.

42. A HOUSING COMPANY FOR OXFORD

The Housing Development and Enabling Manager introduced the report and explained that it sought agreement to the principle of setting up a Local Authority wholly owned housing company and delegated authority to set up an appropriate company structure. The overarching aim of the Company was to increase the supply of affordable housing.

The Panel then heard from a public speaker who spoke on behalf of Homes for Oxford.

In response to a question about the merits of a Community Land Trust model of ownership, the Panel heard that initial discussions had taken place. The Council needed to view any opportunities at specific sites on their merits and ensure best value. The report was not seeking decisions on any sites other than Barton and nothing else was being ruled out or given a green light at this stage. In the short term, the Company would not be doing anything the Council wasn't planning to do anyway. These plans included delivering homes at Barton and estate regeneration. Other sites the Council was planning to develop would come forward in due course and be subject to separate decisions. The Company would also enable further opportunities that may follow in future, such as developing outside the city.

In response to a question about whether the articles of the Company could preclude it from investing in alternative housing models, the Panel heard that the articles of the Company would be drawn as flexibly as possible and the Company structure would enable the Company to partner with anybody but there was a need to balance risk given that the Company would be wholly Local Authority owned.

The Panel observed that there may be merit in appointing non-executive Directors from the start in order to bring in outside expertise and high profile support.

The Panel also sought and received assurances on the following:

- That there was sufficient officer capacity at senior levels.

- That the Company would be able to rent out properties on a range of tenures including social and market rent.
- Any General Fund borrowing would be prudent and affordable.
- That the terms of the loan facility would be determined when the Company required the funding.
- That future executive decisions would be open to scrutiny.

The Panel agreed to welcome and support the creation of the Company and make the following recommendations to the City Executive Board:

1. That the Company articles should be drafted in such a way so as not to preclude entering into any funding arrangements or partnerships that could help to increase the supply of affordable housing, including working with alternative housing providers and models (such as co-housing or a community land trust).
2. That consideration should be given to enabling wider member oversight and input into decisions delegated to officers, in particular decisions about the articles of the Company, shareholder agreements, and details of agreements regarding the acquisition of affordable housing at Barton Park.

43. HOUSING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted that members of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel would be encouraged to attend the joint session on 11 April which would be focused on tenant involvement.

The Panel also noted that members were being asked to contribute suggestions for the 2016/17 scrutiny work programme. An item on under-occupation and a homelessness prevention funds update would be added to the long-list.

44. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Noted.

45. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 7.20 pm