

HOUSING PANEL (PANEL OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE)

Thursday 22 January 2015

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Sanders, Hollick (Chair), Wade and Smith.

CO-OPTES PRESENT: Linda Hill

OFFICERS PRESENT: Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer), Nichola Griffiths and Deborah Haynes

76. APOLOGIES

None.

77. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

78. FUEL POVERTY

The Panel noted that the definition of fuel poverty has changed and that fewer people meet the newer definition. The Panel heard that modelling the 'fuel poverty gap' could help the City Council to target the worst affected residents, and that officers are looking at how this approach could be applied in Oxford.

The Panel also noted that energy efficiency is the main component of fuel poverty that the City Council can really affect.

The Panel questioned to roll out of solar PVs and suggested that tenant-facing staff in Direct Services could play a role in keeping an eye on installations and advising tenants on the use of free electricity.

The Panel questioned whether the City Council has looked at purchasing energy in bulk, citing the example of Tower Hamlets Borough Council, and whether this is within the scope of the new Energy Strategy. The Panel heard that this is something that officers are aware of but that it would be quite complicated to do and would require some additional expertise.

The Panel requested further information about the availability of emergency support, and energy tariffs for vulnerable persons.

The Panel also asked to review the latest excess winter deaths figures for Oxford.

79. STAR SURVEY RESULTS

The Housing Panel reviewed the STAR Survey results 2014 at its meeting on 22 January 2015. The Panel would like to thank Nicola Griffiths for introducing this item and answering the Panel's questions.

The Housing Panel noted the tenant satisfaction results were down across the board compared to last year. However, the City Council is awaiting data from other local authorities which should indicate whether this is a national trend.

The Panel noted that more tenants had been contacted in 2014 than in 2013 but returns were down. The Panel questioned why the sample size was small and suggested that door-knocking would be more effective than sending letters. The Panel heard that the STAR Survey is conducted by a consultation service but that there will be an opportunity to review this arrangement following the 2015 survey.

The Panel questioned how the results would be used and whether any improvements are planned in response.

80. WORK PROGRAMME

Noted.

81. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Noted.

82. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.10 pm