

HOUSING PANEL (PANEL OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE)

Thursday 27 June 2019

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Wolff, Bely-Summers (Chair), Wade, Howlett and Taylor.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Andrew Brown (Committee and Member Services Manager), Stephen Clarke (Head of Housing Services), Rachel Lawrence (Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager) and Anita Bradley (Head of Law and Governance)

194. APOLOGIES

The Panel noted apologies for lateness from Cllr Bely-Summers and elected Cllr Taylor to chair the meeting in her absence.

Apologies were also noted from Cllr Gotch, Cllr Rowley (Cabinet Member for Housing) and for item 6 from Nerys Parry (Housing Strategy and Needs Manager).

195. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

196. HOUSING PANEL WORK PLAN

The Panel reviewed the list of items referred from the Scrutiny Committee and took advice from officers. In respect of these items the Panel agreed that:

Item 1 – could be removed as kitchen and bathrooms were only replaced with the tenant's agreement.

Items 2 & 8 – the Committee and Member Services Manager would speak to the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety and report back on possible areas of focus. This item could involve engagement with the new tenancy union.

Items 3 & 4 – were premature and would not be taken forwards at this time.

Item 5 – would be scheduled for the November meeting.

Item 6 – would be delayed to next year as the methodology for conducting tenant surveys was being reviewed in response to a Housing Green Paper but tenant satisfaction should remain as a standing item on the annual work plan.

Item 7 – would be scheduled for November.

Item 9 – would not be taken forwards due to a lack of available data about tenants' health

The Panel also agreed to add the following items to its work plan which had not been referred by the Scrutiny Committee:

- Housing and Homelessness Strategy mid-point review (October)
- Review of the balance of spend in the Housing Revenue Account (October)
- No Local Connection Review – 12 month update (November)
- Hackitt Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety (TBC)
- Housing Associations' tenancy management standards (TBC)

Councillor Bely-Summers arrived during this item.

197. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Cllr Bely-Summers took the chair at the start of this item.

The Panel agreed the notes of the meeting held on 8 April 2019 with two minor changes to reflect the status of the tenant co-optee and the attendance of officers.

The Panel noted that the four recommendations from the previous meeting had been presented to Cabinet and had all been agreed.

198. QUARTER 4 HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT

In discussion about the performance report the Panel noted that:

- The delivery of new homes at Barton Park was behind schedule, as were some other schemes that were not Council-driven.
- Affordable homes at Barton Park were always going to be subject to management charges for the maintenance of parks and communal areas and the Council would only allocate the properties to people who could afford them.
- The Council's affordable housing policy would be delivered or exceeded on Council-owned sites including the Temple Cowley Pools and Blackbird Leys redevelopment projects.

199. NO LOCAL CONNECTION REVIEW GROUP: PROGRESS ON AGREED RECOMMENDATIONS

The Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager introduced the report, noting that lots had happened over the last six months, in which time the Council had secured nearly £2m of external funding. Progress had been made in implementing almost all of the Review Group's recommendations that were agreed by Cabinet although this had been more challenging in respect of joint-commissioning. Council officers had embraced the spirit and thinking of the Review Group's work and the Floyds Row project would transform the front end approach to supporting people experiencing homelessness.

The Panel welcomed the excellent progress that had been made including on the plans for the new assessment hub at Floyds Row. In discussion the Panel noted that:

- The winter provision at Floyds Row was expected to be operational by the end of October while the Somewhere Safe to Stay element would follow by the end of the calendar year. This was a very complex project that was being delivered within a very challenging timeframe.
- Service user participation had informed the design principles of the Floyds Row building and services.
- Contracts with service providers would set clear expectations about ongoing engagement with service users. Feedback on strategic issues would be escalated to the Council as the commissioner of services.
- The Council was committed to building up a reference group of people with lived experience of homelessness.
- The government would be seeking evidence of delivery where it had provided grant funding for homelessness interventions.
- The opening of the new assessment centre at Floyds Row was expected to alleviate issues at O'Hanlon House arising from the mix of non-hostel based services currently delivered at that location, some of which would be relocated to Floyd's Row.
- There would be a fundamental review of the homelessness pathway county-wide with a view to taking a greater focus on preventative action. In the meantime the pooled funding arrangements were being rolled forwards for 2 years.

The Panel resolved to note progress made against the recommendations and agreed to visit Floyds Row when opened.

200. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Panel noted the date of the next meeting being 3 October 2019.

The meeting started at 6.10 pm and ended at 7.45 pm