

Agenda

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Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Wednesday 30 November 2022**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Zoom - Remote meeting**

For further information please contact:

Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

☎ 01865 252955

✉ DemocraticServices@oxford.gov.uk

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- may record all or part of the meeting in accordance with the Council's [protocol](#)

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Committee Membership

Councillor Paula Dunne (Chair)

Councillor Lizzy Diggins

Councillor Laurence Fouweather

Councillor Jabu Nala-Hartley

Councillor Rosie Rawle

Councillor Jo Sandelson

Agenda

	Pages
1 Apologies	
2 Declarations of interest	
3 Housing and Homelessness Work Plan The Panel is asked to consider which themes it would like to place on its work plan to consider at its meetings on 02 March and 24 April.	
4 Notes of previous meeting The Panel is asked to agree the notes of the meeting held on 06 October 2022 as an accurate record, having made any necessary amendments.	7 - 10
5 Co-option of Tenant Ambassador(s) The Head of Law & Governance has submitted a report proposing arrangements for Tenant Ambassador co-option and contribution to the Housing and Homelessness Panel. The Panel is asked to consider the report and is recommended to agree to recommend the arrangements to the Scrutiny Committee.	11 - 12
6 Tenants Forum Update The Head of Regulatory and Community Safety has submitted a report updating the Panel on the development of a Tenants Forum which arose as an action from the Council motion on DSS Discrimination. The Panel is asked to consider the report and is recommended to note and comment on the current position with regard to the development of a Tenants Forum.	13 - 14
7 Housing Performance Report The Head of Housing Services has submitted a Housing Performance Report. The Panel is asked to consider and comment on the report and to agree	

any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet.

Report to follow

8 Dates of future meetings

The Panel is asked to note that meetings of the Panel are scheduled for 02 March 2023 and 24 April 2023.

The Panel is also asked to note that members of the Housing and Homelessness Panel are invited to participate in the scrutiny of the Housing elements of the meeting of the Budget Review Group on Tuesday 10 January.

Information for those attending

Recording and reporting on meetings held in public

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- Not to disturb or disrupt the meeting
- Not to edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes not editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those being recorded.
- To avoid recording members of the public present, even inadvertently, unless they are addressing the meeting.

Please be aware that you may be recorded during your speech and any follow-up. If you are attending please be aware that recording may take place and that you may be inadvertently included in these.

The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to suspend or terminate any activities that in his or her opinion are disruptive.

Councillors 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; licenses 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". 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 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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Minutes of a meeting of the Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee) on Thursday 6 October 2022

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Committee members present:

Councillor Dunne (Chair)

Councillor Diggins

Councillor Fouweather

Councillor Rawle

Councillor Sandelson

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

Alice Courtney, Committee and Member Services Manager (Interim Acting)

Nerys Parry, Head of Housing

Amie Rickatson, Strategy & Service Development Manager

Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager

1. Apologies:

Councillor(s) Nala-Hartley sent apologies.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan

The Scrutiny Officer reported that he anticipated two more items would be available for consideration at the November Panel and was confirming that with officers. The Panel agreed that, during this municipal year, it wanted to consider thematic items rather than primarily focussing on Cabinet reports. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would liaise with the Panel after the meeting so that the Panel could identify the themes it wanted to explore.

The Panel noted the work plan and agreed that amendments would be made after the meeting.

4. Draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, presented the consultation on the Draft Housing, Homelessness, and Rough Sleeping Strategy which was due to be

considered by Cabinet on 19 October. Cllr Smith explained that the scope of the strategy was extremely broad and that she welcomed the Panel's input. Cllr Smith highlighted that the strategy document was organised in five areas:

1. More, affordable homes;
2. Great homes for all;
3. Going towards net zero
4. Preventing homelessness and adopting rapid rehousing response
5. Ending rough sleeping

Cllr Diggins joined the meeting.

Questions were raised by the Panel which were answered by Cllr Smith as well as by Nerys Parry, Amie Rickatson, and Richard Wood.

In a wide-ranging discussion, the Panel suggested that a glossary might be included to accompany the strategy for the consultation period so that the technical terms contained might be more easily understood.

The Panel expressed a preference that the Council might move away from referring to residents and service users as customers so as to emphasise that the Council is a provider of services to those with connections to the City rather than simply existing in a transactional way with people.

The Panel queried why there were seemingly four different figures for new houses in Oxfordshire and established that the different numbers relate to different targets. The Panel considered that it would be beneficial to explain this clearly within the strategy.

The Panel noted that the strategy refers to 2000 new homes in Oxfordshire and asked if this solely related to the houses considered necessary in other districts to meet Oxford's unmet housing need or whether it included houses in Oxford. The Panel heard that this included homes of all types, including some for private sale.

The Panel questioned why there were not specific targets for numbers of affordable homes and social rents but that, instead, reference was made to 'many' or to 'the majority.' The Panel heard it explained that the numbers largely related to OX Place's business plan for the next decade rather than to specific schemes that are planned in the short- to medium-term future. As a result, it was difficult to specify particular numbers. It was also explained that the statement of intent demonstrated a commitment to social rent.

The Panel also asked how realistic long-term plans were given the abandonment of the Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan ('Oxfordshire Plan 2050') and heard that there were ongoing discussions. The Panel was advised that, whilst the action plan would change from year to year, the strategy necessarily had a longer-term focus.

Cllr Sandelson joined the meeting.

The Panel discussed the interaction between the strategy and the Local Plan and it was confirmed that the Local Plan was the principal document which set out the Council's priority areas for housing. The Panel also discussed whether the strategy would have benefited from discussing the potential for higher density housing. However, the Panel accepted that this was a matter of planning policy and so also came under the auspices of the Local Plan.

The Panel explored what was meant by various terms in the strategy and considered that the strategy would benefit, in some places, from revision so that it was clearer.

It was explained that the consultation would end in December and that revisions following the strategy were planned to be completed by March which is when the strategy would go to Cabinet for approval.

The Panel resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet which would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee for its approval on 11 October 2022:

- 1. That the Council produce a glossary for the consultation so as to make engagement more accessible.
- 2. That the Council employ the language of residents rather than customers in the strategy.
- 3. That the Council makes clear the difference and interplay between the different numbers of new houses (on, for example, pages 11, 27, 31, and 170)
- 4. That the Council consider revising page 23 of the draft strategy, particularly in the section headed 'Improve standards for new developments of council housing in the city' so that it is more readily accessible and understandable.
- 5. That the Council consider including reference in the strategy itself to the importance of the contribution the universities and colleges and the contribution could make.

5. Co-option of Tenant Ambassador

The Panel noted the report on the co-option of tenant ambassador(s). The Panel agreed that it wanted to co-opt more than one tenant ambassador but that it considered four to be the maximum number. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would make contact with the Tenant Involvement Team to ask for expressions of interest. The Panel was keen that expressions should be sought from as diverse a range of people as possible.

The Panel resolved to defer the agreement of the arrangements and the recommendation of them to the Scrutiny Committee until its next meeting. In the meantime, the Scrutiny Officer was asked to progress arrangements.

6. Dates of future meetings

The Chair advised the Panel that she would be unable to attend the next meeting on its scheduled date. The Panel agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would liaise with members to identify a suitable alternative date.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.10 pm

Chair
2022

Date: Tuesday 1 November

When decisions take effect:
Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.

To: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Date: 30 November 2022
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Co-option of Tenant Ambassador(s)

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To agree arrangements for Tenant Ambassador co-option and contribution to the Housing and Homelessness Panel
Key decision:	No
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation(s): That the Housing and Homelessness Panel:	
1.	<p>Agrees to recommend to the Scrutiny Committee the arrangements for Tenant Ambassador co-option for the 2022/23 municipal year, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of Tenant Ambassador co-optees; • How contributions to Panel meetings will be managed and facilitated. • The co-option of Anthony Church, Gillian Taylor, and Jerry Assongu onto the Housing and Homelessness Panel.

Introduction and Background

1. At its meeting on 06 October 2022, the Panel agreed that it wished tenant ambassadors to be co-opted onto the Panel as had been the case in previous years.
2. The Panel requested that the Scrutiny Officer would liaise with the Tenant Involvement team in order to seek volunteers. The Panel considered that more than one Tenant Ambassador would be preferred but that it considered more than four would be difficult to manage during meetings.
3. The Panel did not consider that any formal recruitment process was necessary but asked that informal expressions of interest be sought, via the Tenant Involvement team, and suggested that it would be beneficial to the work of the Panel if the Tenant Ambassadors proposed for co-option were as diverse as possible, including living in different parts of the city.

Candidates

4. Three candidates expressed an interest in being co-opted as a tenant ambassador. They are from different parts of the city, and are of different ethnicities, age ranges, and genders.
5. It is recommended that the members of the Housing and Homelessness Panel recommend that the Scrutiny Committee co-opts Anthony Church, Gillian Taylor, and Jerry Assongu as members of the Housing and Homelessness Panel for the 2022/23 municipal year.

Arrangements

6. The Tenant Involvement team asked that the Panel extend an invitation to its meetings to a representative of that team in order to support the ambassadors to participate. It is recommended that this request is agreed.
7. In its discussion on 06 October 2022, the Panel confirmed that it was keen for any co-opted members to participate as full members of the Panel with the same right and ability to question during meetings, in the same way as any other member of the Panel, whilst subject to the Chair's oversight of the meeting. However, as per the Scrutiny Operating Principles, co-optees will not have voting rights.

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To: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Date: 30 November 2022
Report of: Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety
Title of Report: Tenants Forum Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update the Panel on the development of a Tenants Forum which arose as an action from the Council motion on DSS discrimination
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
Corporate Priority:	Deliver more affordable housing, Support thriving communities
Policy Framework:	None
Recommendation(s): That the Housing and Homelessness Panel:	
<p>1. Notes and comments on the current position with regard to the development of a Tenants Forum.</p>	

1. At the Council meeting on 26 July 2021, a cross party motion was passed regarding DSS discrimination and four actions were agreed. These have all been acted upon and three have been completed.
2. The fourth action related to establishing a tenants forum and the purpose of this report is to update the Panel on progress on the following:

Action 4

Establish a permanent “tenants’ forum”, which should:

- *Be composed of community groups and stakeholders representing tenants, both in private and council housing;*
- *Be invited to consult directly with the Housing and Homelessness Panel bi-annually at least and whenever decisions significantly impacting the rental sector come before Council;*

3. At the time of the previous update report in March this year Councillor Thomas was the champion for private tenants and was in the process of setting up a tenants' forum. Publicity was issued and a number of private tenants came forward who were interested in joining a forum.
4. However, the level of interest was not considered sufficient to launch a forum at that time in a sustainable manner. There are also other organisations that operate in the city to support private tenants and it was considered important to ensure there was buy in across the sector for the initiative.
5. With the change of portfolios and reprioritisation of focus following the government's approval of the citywide Selective Licensing Scheme the forum has not progressed further at this stage. The introduction of Selective Licensing on 1 September 2022 means that every privately rented property in the city now needs a licence and it has changed the power balance within the sector. For example, tenants cannot be evicted from unlicensed properties. The impacts of the scheme are yet to be felt and the benefits or disbenefits for tenants will only become apparent once Selective Licensing has become business as usual and the enforcement activity has begun which will be in the New Year.
6. Once Selective Licensing has moved to the enforcement stage in the New Year those tenants who expressed an interest will be recontacted to make sure that they are still interested and further promotional work will take place to generate additional interest from private sector tenants. Engagement will also take place with other organisations that operate in the city to support private tenants to assess their willingness to work with the Council.
7. Once this work has been carried out the Panel will be advised of progress and the proposed membership of the forum.

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