

Minutes of the meeting of the **SCRUTINY (POLICY AND PERFORMANCE) COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Tuesday, 15 May 2018 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor K Mills

Councillors: P M Beresford
T A Bond
M I Cosin
S C Manion
M J Ovenden
D A Sargent
P M Wallace (as substitute for Councillor J M Heron)

Also Present: Councillor P J Hawkins

Officers: Director of Environment and Corporate Assets
Director of Finance, Housing and Community
Director of Customer Services (East Kent Housing)
Head of Shared Services (EK Services)
Head of Legal Services
Democratic Services Manager

165 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R J Frost, J M Heron and M Rose.

166 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor P M Wallace had been appointed as substitute member for Councillor J M Heron.

167 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

168 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

169 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Democratic Services Manager advised that no members of the public had registered to speak on items on the agenda to which the public speaking protocol applied.

170 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET RELATING TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCRUTINY (POLICY AND PERFORMANCE) COMMITTEE

Members received the decisions of the Cabinet relating to recommendations made by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet decisions relating to recommendations from the Scrutiny (Policy and Performance) Committee be noted.

171 ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL, CABINET, SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION) COMMITTEE OR ANOTHER COMMITTEE

There were no items of business.

172 ITEMS CALLED-IN FOR SCRUTINY OR PLACED ON THE AGENDA BY A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, ANY INDIVIDUAL NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OR PUBLIC PETITION

There were no items of business.

173 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

The Democratic Services Manager presented the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions to the Committee for its consideration.

RESOLVED: That the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions be noted.

174 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Manager presented the Scrutiny Work Programme to the Committee for its consideration.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

175 UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE

The Director of Customer Services (East Kent Housing) presented the update on Universal Credit.

The roll out had started in February 2016 and approximately 500 council tenants were currently on Universal Credit. East Kent Housing were working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and other groups to ensure that affected tenants were signposted to the support they needed as part of this process.

While historically arrears in the Dover District were very low (<1%) compared to the average elsewhere of 5-6%, there were 7 new cases per day of arrears due to the switch to Universal Credit. In addition, the Council was no longer the first to receive repayments as DWP and Housing Benefit Arrears had first claim on repayments, so it was taking EKH longer to recover arrears.

EKH had a dedicated team to provide support to tenants on Universal Credit and help sustain their tenancies (i.e. budgeting advice) as well as support being provided through the Citizens Advice Bureau. This support was provided within existing resources and was used to target those switching to Universal Credit. EKH initiated contact with tenants after one week of arrears and visiting officers were able to provide a better sense of a tenant's situation than on-line or telephone contact. As a result, the number of evictions had actually decreased.

It was expected by 2019/20 that all households would be on Universal Credit and there was expected to be an increase in arrears during the first two years following the switchover to Universal Credit.

Members expressed concern over the difficulties in navigating the system and concern that private landlords would be wary of offering accommodation to those in receipt of Universal Credit.

The Director of Finance, Housing and Community advised that the financial impact was minimal as long as the arrears were eventually recovered.

RESOLVED: That regular updates be provided on Universal Credit.

176 PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4, 2017-18

The Head of Legal Services presented the Performance Report, Quarter 4, 2017/18. There were 29 Green indicators, 2 Amber indicators and 4 Red indicators.

The 4 red performance indicators for Quarter 4, 2017/18 were as followed:

East Kent Services

EKS026d (Average call waiting time in minutes)

Members were advised that the call waiting time started from the moment a member of the public reached the switchboard. A review of Performance Indicators would be conducted by Civica but the overall aim was to connect members of the public to the right people who could assist them.

The issue of a long pause before being connected to the out-of-hours service was raised by Members and it was agreed that this would be investigated.

East Kent Housing

EKHC2 (Rent arrears as % of annual debt)

EKHC3 (Former tenant arrears as % of annual debt)

Members had discussed these issues as part of the previous item of business.

Dover District Council

HOU010a (Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation including B&B)

The Director of Finance, Housing and Community advised that HOU010a includes the use of temporary accommodation owned by the Council and not just Bed and Breakfast accommodation which had significantly reduced. As a consequence, performance for indicator HOU010b (Number of households in bed and breakfast), had significantly improved.

RESOLVED: That the Performance Report Quarter 4, 2017-18 be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.16 pm.