

Minutes of the meeting of the **SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION) COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Wednesday, 15 November 2017 at 6.01 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor L A Keen

Councillors: T A Bond
P M Brivio (as substitute for Councillor N A G Richards)
P I Carter
G Cowan
N Dixon
R J Frost
P J Hawkins
M J Ovenden
G Rapley

Officers: Director of Customer Services
Resident Engagement Manager
Head of Strategic Housing
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer

70 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor N A G Richards.

71 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor P M Brivio was appointed as substitute for Councillor N A G Richards.

72 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

73 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

74 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.

75 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET RELATING TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION) COMMITTEE

That the decision of Cabinet relating to recommendations from the Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee be noted.

76 ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL, CABINET, SCRUTINY (POLICY AND PERFORMANCE) COMMITTEE OR ANOTHER COMMITTEE

There were no items for consideration.

77 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 for consideration.

78 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.

79 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

Members were asked to provide the Democratic Services Manager with questions for Stagecoach and Kent County Council in advance of the meeting in December when the recent changes in bus provision would be discussed. Members requested that an invitation be extended to parish councils to provide questions to put to the relevant authorities regarding the recent changes.

Members requested that an update be provided to the committee on the current situation of Gypsy and Traveller sites being identified within the district.

RESOLVED: (a) That the Work Programme be noted.

- (b) That the Policy and Projects Manager be invited to a meeting of the committee to update members on the current position with regard to Gypsy and Traveller sites.

80 EAST KENT HOUSING - PROPOSED NEW FORMAL RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRUCTURE

The Director of Customer Services and the Resident Engagement Manager of East Kent Housing (EKH) provided members with details of the proposed new Formal Resident Involvement Structure for East Kent Housing. Dover tenant representatives were also in attendance.

Members discussed the various ways residents had been involved in the re-structure process which included surveys, workshops, 'Task and Finish' project groups as well as involvement from Tenant Representatives, to seek their views on the re-structure. They were pleased with residents' level of involvement and the appointment of an independent tenant advisor to help co-ordinate the proposals.

Members noted that the new structure had removed the Tenant Representative role and had been replaced with Engaged Tenants. The role of an Engaged Tenant was to provide an overview of the community and to scrutinise EKH. Engaged Tenants would comprise the Dover Local Group and in addition, three Engaged Tenants would sit on the Residents' Panel on behalf of Dover. Members of the Residents' Panel would serve a 3 year term with a maximum of 3 terms. There were twelve positions available on the Local Groups for Engaged Tenants with no limit on the amount of time they would be appointed. The recruitment process for Engaged Tenant was unclear and Members sought a more transparent recruitment process.

Members were concerned that Engaged Tenants were no longer required to have the same degree of involvement with residents as the Tenant Representatives had previously had. The old structure allowed for residents to approach the representatives with concerns and to take up issues on their behalf. Residents were now encouraged to approach EKH directly with their concerns or complaints. In addition officers and representatives in attendance advised of the difficulty encouraging residents to get involved as volunteers and to fill the positions. Many residents did not have time to commit however there would be the opportunity to be involved in various 'Task and Finish' project groups and carry out short tasks.

Members discussed the methods of communication East Kent Housing chose to have with their residents. The tenants' newsletter was no longer being posted to residents and would be available electronically and on the EKH website. It was an ongoing concern with Members that some residents would remain un-engaged. Not all residents had access to the internet or email and would not receive the same level of information as those that did however, residents were able to request a paper copy of the newsletter if required.

Officers advised Members that they were looking at tasking a specific team of officers to identify vulnerable groups within the community and to proactively contact those individuals. In addition they would contact residents throughout the year for various other reasons and any important updates could be included on the reverse of letters sent to residents as an alternative method of communication. It was noted that whilst it was important to offer different methods of contact and communication

to residents, that not all wanted to be contacted and should have the option to opt in or out.

RESOLVED: (a) That East Kent Housing be requested to:

- (i) Review its methods of communication with tenants, including the tenants' newsletter, to ensure that all tenants have access to communication via a method of their choice.
 - (ii) Review its arrangements for appointing tenants to the Dover Local Group to ensure that there is transparency in the method of appointment, that they are representative of the district as a whole and that there are defined terms of office.
 - (iii) That clarification be provided to the Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee on (1) the method of appointment and (2) the wider representative role of tenants on the Dover Local Group following the change from elected tenant representatives to unelected engaged tenants.
- (b) That East Kent Housing and the tenant representatives present be thanked for attending the meeting.

81 UPDATE ON EAST KENT HOUSING

The Director of Customer Services and the Resident Engagement Manager of East Kent Housing gave a verbal update to Members on East Kent Housing (EKH).

Having managed the housing services on behalf of the local councils in Dover, Canterbury, Shepway and Thanet since 2011, a recent restructure of EKH had been carried out to create a more streamlined service of all four authority's practices and procedures for dealing with enquiries from their tenants. The restructure would result in a more consistent quality of service across the four authorities. As a result of the restructure three manager roles had been removed.

In terms of contacting EKH there had been no change. Telephone numbers and email addresses remained the same however the way the enquiry was dealt with had changed. There was a dedicated complaints officer who reported directly to the Chief Executive and designated officers to deal with customer contacts. A dedicated email address for Members had also been created to ensure Members received a more timely response to their queries.

Members welcomed the restructure and providing resilience to the service.

RESOLVED: That East Kent Housing be thanked for attending the meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.19 pm.