

Minutes of the meeting of the **SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION) COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Wednesday, 4 July 2018 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor L A Keen

Councillors: P I Carter
N Dixon
G Cowan
P J Hawkins
P D Jull
M J Ovenden

Officers: Chief Executive - East Kent Housing
Director of Customer Services - East Kent Housing
Democratic Services Manager

12 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T A Bond, R J Frost and N A G Richards.

13 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members appointed.

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

15 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2018 and 16 May 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 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.

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

There were no items of business.

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

There were no items of business.

19 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.

20 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.

21 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

Members were asked to email their key questions relating to local health services to the Democratic Services Manager.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

22 EAST KENT HOUSING

The Committee welcomed the Chief Executive (East Kent Housing), Director of Customer Services (East Kent Housing) and the Chair of the Dover District Tenant Group.

Q1. How do tenant reps find out and represent the views of tenants?

The 'Engaged Tenant' role meant that tenants were not providing a representative role but rather sharing their experience and knowledge with East Kent Housing (EKH). The Engaged Tenants were not a point of contact for other tenants' problems and as a consequence, their contact details were not publicised. This change in role was supported by the former tenant representatives.

There were currently four Engaged Tenants for the Dover District with three more who were in the process of becoming engaged tenants or had expressed an interest in doing so. The maximum number of Engaged Tenants for the Dover District was twelve. For comparison purposes, Canterbury currently only had 5 Engaged Tenants.

There were no elections for Engaged Tenants and there were no fixed terms of office. This position would be reviewed after 12 months to see how it had operated. EKH had advertised for the position of Engaged Tenant and offered support with training and coaching for successful applicants.

The Engaged Tenants were only reimbursed for costs as payments for the role could cause issues with benefits for some potential applicants.

EKH had a dedicated councillor contact point to ensure that elected members could fulfil their representative role in respect of tenants and also encouraged

direct contact from tenants about problems. EKH had adopted a variety of engagement methods to get feedback from tenants.

- Q2. How do tenants know who their reps are, and how to get into contact with them? Or are there no longer tenant representatives as such – or are they subsumed within the Local Groups? Are these up and running – have not been invited to the Aylesham one, for example?

There was one group for the Dover District with a maximum of 12 tenants on it. However, in addition to this non-members of the group could come and speak at the meetings and EKH tried a number of different methods to engage tenants.

- Q3. I understand there have been there is the issue of resignations from the Area Board; what is happening, and have these people been replaced?

The Area Board no longer existed.

- Q4. EKH state that “as part of our Customer Access Strategy we set out the range of options that are available for communications with residents this includes face to face, letter, phone, email and through our website. Where residents have expressed a preference we will use that as appropriate” What does the last bit mean? How are tenants empowered to say they want paper copies of newsletters, etc.?

The tenant magazine was published twice a year and tenants had the option of getting paper copies if they wished. EKH also communicated with tenants through a number of other methods, including social media.

- Q5. Anecdotally, there seem to be problems with the new heating contractors – could we have an update please on how well this is working, and how any problems are being resolved.

The Chief Executive (East Kent Housing) advised that contractual information could not be disclosed in open session.

It was moved by Councillor G Cowan, duly seconded by Councillor M J Ovenden, and

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the business on the grounds that the items to be considered involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

At the conclusion of the discussion, it was moved by Councillor G Cowan, duly seconded by Councillor M J Ovenden, and

RESOLVED: That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

- Q6. What are the methods used for assessing customer satisfaction with repairs and maintenance? Is the system of the contractor giving a comments form

out at the end of his/her visit, asking for it to be completed, and then receiving it back still in operation?

Tenants had the option of sending the comment form back separately and not giving it to the contractor.

Q7. How well is the new dedicated member enquiries system working?

The feedback received was that the system was working well. The advantage of using the dedicated member enquiries system was that it allowed EKH to track member enquiries and ensure that they were being dealt with properly.

RESOLVED: (a) That it be recommended to the Cabinet that it request East Kent Housing introduce 5 year fixed terms of office for Engaged Tenants, with the Engaged Tenant having the opportunity to reapply at the end of fixed term, to reduce the risk of institutionalisation and provide opportunities for new tenants to become involved.

(b) That East Kent Housing be requested:

(i) To provide the Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee with details of the number of formal and informally engaged tenants and the formal and informal methods by which tenants are involved by East Kent Housing in decision-making.

(ii) To update a future meeting on the performance of contractors.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm.