

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2015
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 5.35 - 7.45 PM**

Members Present: S Murray (Chairman), K Chana, R Gadsby, L Girling, S Kane, C Roberts, G Shiell, J H Whitehouse and W Marshall (Tenants and Leaseholders Federation)

Other members present: D Stallan

Apologies for Absence: J Lea (Vice Chairman) and B Rolfe

Officers Present A Hall (Director of Communities), R Wilson (Assistant Director (Housing Operations)), L Swan (Assistant Director (Private Sector Housing & Communities Support)), R Wallace (Housing Options Manager), H Thorpe (Housing Assets Manager) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant)

1. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

There were no substitutions made at the meeting.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Pursuant to the Member's Code of Conduct, Councillor S Murray declared a non pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of his mother being a user of Careline. The Councillor indicated that he would remain in the meeting for the duration of the discussion on the item and any subsequent voting:

- Item 9 Housing Service Strategy on Older People's Housing Services

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME

The Select Committee received a report regarding its draft Terms of Reference and Work Programme from the Director of Communities.

Officers had produced common Terms of Reference for the four new Select Committees, with a small number of additional terms added to each Select Committee to cover their specific functions. The Select Committee were advised that since the new Overview and Scrutiny structure was in place it was being proposed that representations made from and to scrutiny select committees to and from Portfolio Holders and Cabinet Committees directly would no longer be possible, and the draft Terms of Reference had been drafted on this basis. The framework now proposed that all such committees had a reporting route through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). The OSC could then recommend to the Cabinet or Portfolio Holders as appropriate.

The Members felt that this new approach was not feasible as potentially it would take a greater length of time to process reports, which it was suggested, could be urgent. The Housing Portfolio Holder was concerned at the lack of a direct route from the

Portfolio Holders and the Cabinet to the Select Committees for referring matters. He was equally concerned at what he felt had been insufficient consultation with members on this new process.

The Chairman of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation also expressed concerns about the nature of having to refer all matters through the OSC and felt that this may prove too lengthy a process.

The Director of Communities advised that it would be best to direct these comments to the OSC at its next meeting, when the OSC considered the approval of the Terms of Reference.

It was also suggested that a Select Committee should be able to create small working groups of Members to examine issues in a more detailed way and to report back to the Select Committee.

With regard to the draft Work Programme, the Select Committee observed that the draft Work Programme reflected the previous Housing Scrutiny Panel's Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the draft Terms of Reference for the Housing Select Committee prepared by officers on a generally common basis be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a recommendation that they be amended to reflect the Select Committee's role in making direct representations to and from Portfolio Holders and the Cabinet; and

(2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee include provision within the Terms of Reference of Select Committees to enable them to be permitted to establish small working groups on an ad hoc basis for the purpose of limited, more detailed scrutiny that would report back to the Select Committee.

4. REVIEW OF THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The Panel received a report from the Housing Options Manager regarding the Review of the Council's Homelessness Strategy. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities had a duty to review and publish their Homelessness Strategy on at least a 5 yearly basis. As this area of work regularly changed, it had previously been agreed that the Council's Homelessness Strategy would be reviewed every three years. The strategy linked with the Council's Housing Strategy, Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Policy. The strategy set out achievements since 2012 and incorporated the needs and demands on the service and actions that needed undertaking over the coming three years. The Select Committee was asked to consider the Draft Homelessness Strategy, which was included in the Work Programme and report any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder prior to adoption.

A consultation exercise on the draft Homelessness Strategy would be undertaken over an 8 week period with all stakeholders following the Select Committee meeting. The strategy would take effect from 1 September 2015. Select Committee Members supported the Homelessness Strategy and asked that officers should consult with parish churches on homelessness, where appropriate, as they were often approached by homeless persons seeking support.

RECOMMENDED:

- (1) That subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise, the updated Homelessness Strategy be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for approval; and
- (2) That a consultation exercise be undertaken for a period of 8 weeks with all stakeholders with an interest in homelessness including Town and Parish Councils and parish churches, with the outcome of the exercise and any proposed changes being reported to the Housing Portfolio Holder for consideration when adopting the revised Homelessness Strategy.

5. HOUSING SERVICE STANDARDS PERFORMANCE REPORT 2014-15 AND REVIEW

The Panel received a report from the Director of Communities regarding Housing Service Standards – Performance for 2014/15 and Review.

In 2007, following consultation, the Housing Portfolio Holder agreed a range of Housing Service Standards covering all of the Housing Service's main areas of activity. It was also agreed that, annually, the Housing Service's performance against the Housing Service Standards should be considered and whether any changes should be made to the standards. The Director of Communities had reviewed the Housing Service Standards, having regard to performance in 2014/15 and changes in legislation and Council policy. As a result, a small number of changes were proposed. As part of the subsequent discussion, Members requested that a target of issuing two issues of Housing News during the municipal year should be set, instead of the current target of three issues and the current performance of one per year.

RECOMMENDED:

- (1) That, subject to the views of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, the proposed changes to the Housing Service Standards be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder and that relevant leaflets be updated to an appropriate time; and
- (2) That the Housing Service Standards and performance against the Service Standards in 2015/16 be reviewed again in June 2016.

6. COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE'S HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGY ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The Panel received a report regarding the Communities Directorates' Housing Service Strategy on Energy Efficiency from the Assistant Director Private Housing and Community Support.

The Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategies were originally produced more than 15 years ago, in accordance with an agreed standard framework and had since been updated. The strategies gave more detail than the Council's main Housing Strategy on the various housing services provided, a total of 16 strategies had been produced to date.

The strategies were produced to a common format that set out how individual housing services would be delivered. They assisted the directorate in achieving the Customer Service Excellence Award and Quality Accreditation and had been important to meeting the minimum requirement for Housing Related Support funding.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategy on Energy Efficiency be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for approval.

7. HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGY ON HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT

The Panel received a report regarding the Housing Service Strategy on Housing and Neighbourhood Management from the Assistant Director Housing Operations.

It was noted that this Housing Service Strategy had been drafted on a slightly different basis to previous ones and, as a result, was much shorter and sharper.

RECOMMENDED:

(1) That the Housing Service Strategy on Housing and Neighbourhood Management be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for approval; and

(2) That the new format for Housing Service Strategies be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for all future strategies produced.

8. HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGY ON OLDER PEOPLE'S HOUSING SERVICES

The Panel received a report regarding the Housing Service Strategy on Older People's Housing Services from the Assistant Director Housing Operations.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Housing Service Strategy on Older People's Housing Services be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

9. HOUSING STRATEGY: 6 MONTH PROGRESS REPORT ON KEY ACTION PLAN 2015/16

The Panel received a progress report regarding the Housing Strategy 6 Month Progress on the Key Action Plan 2015/16 from the Director of Communities.

At its meeting in September 2009, the Council's Cabinet adopted the Housing Strategy 2009-12 which assessed the District's current and future housing needs and set out the Council's approach to meeting those needs. It was noted that production of the new strategy had been deferred, pending the production of the Local Plan Preferred Options. The strategy also included an annual Key Action Plan which set out the proposed actions that would be taken by the Council to contribute towards the achievement of the housing objectives. The Cabinet had agreed that Key Action Plans for the strategy should be produced and updated on an annual basis.

The latest Key Action Plan was agreed in January 2015 with progress being monitored on a 6 monthly basis by this Select Committee.

RECOMMENDED:

That the 6 Month Progress Report on Key Action Plan 2015/16 be noted.

10. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2014/15 - OUTTURN (Q4) PERFORMANCE

The Select Committee received a report regarding Key Performance Indicators 2014/15 – Outturn (Q4) Performance from the Director of Communities.

A range of 36 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the whole Council for 2014/15 were adopted by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee in March 2014. The KPIs were important to the improvement of the Council's services and the achievement of its Key Objectives, they directed improvement effort towards services and the national priorities and local challenges arising from the social, economic and environmental context of the district.

From 2014/15 each former scrutiny panel became responsible for the review of quarterly performance against KPIs falling within its area of responsibility. This report therefore included in detail only those indicators which fell within the areas of responsibility of the Housing Select Committee.

Ten of the Key Performance Indicators fell within the Housing Select Committee's areas of responsibility with the overall position in regard to the achievement of target performance at the end of the year, as follows:

- 10 (100%) indicators achieved the cumulative end of year target.

RESOLVED:

That the Key Performance Indicators 2014/15 – Outturn (Q4) Performance be noted.

11. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman advised that he would update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Select Committee's progress.

12. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Select Committee would be held on Tuesday 8 September 2015 at 5.30p.m. in Committee Room 1.