

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 8 MARCH 2016
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 5.35 - 7.40 PM**

- Members Present:** S Murray (Chairman), A Mitchell (Vice-Chairman), K Chana, L Girling, S Kane, J Lea (Vice Chairman), G Shiell, J H Whitehouse and W Marshall (Tenants and Leaseholders Federation)
- Other members present:** D Stallan
- Apologies for Absence:** R Gadsby and B Rolfe
- Officers Present** A Hall (Director of Communities), P Pledger (Assistant Director (Housing Property)), S Devine (Private Sector Housing Manager), B Copson (Senior Performance Improvement Officer) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Officer)

36. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (MINUTE ITEM 39 - 23.7.02)

There were no substitutions made for the meeting.

37. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the last meeting of the select committee held on 12 January 2016 be agreed.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

39. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME

(a) Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were noted.

(b) Work Programme

The Director of Communities advised that the select committee had made good progress this year.

40. DATA QUALITY STRATEGY 2016/17 - 2018/19

The select committee received a report from the Performance Improvement Officer regarding the Data Quality Strategy 2016/17 – 2018/19.

Good quality data was essential in supporting the Council's decision making especially where these involved finance and performance. Additionally the Council's

customers, partners and others interested in the Council's performance, needed to rely on the data the Council produced for evaluation purposes. The Council was also accountable for the money it spent and managed competing claims on its accurate, reliable and timely in order to plan for the future and met customer needs.

The authority had identified principles and arrangements for ensuring high standards of data quality and had for a number of years formalised them within a strategy to support consistency and encourage high standards of practice of data quality management. Data quality arrangements included ownership of data, systems and ensuring staff had the skills and knowledge needed to deliver high standards of data and data management.

The Council also relied on data produced externally by third party organisations and therefore the data needed to be robust. This revised strategy included the development of the mapping of third party data to understand the data quality processes to which it was subjected.

The revised strategy had previously been considered by the Corporate Governance Group in November 2015 and the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee in January 2016.

RESOLVED:

That the Data Quality Strategy 2016/17 – 2018/19 be noted.

41. HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGY ON EMPTY PROPERTIES (3 YEAR REVIEW)

The select committee received a report regarding the Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategy on Empty Homes in the Private Sector from the Private Housing Manager.

There would always be empty homes and properties empty awaiting sale, re-letting or renovation as these were a normal part of a healthy housing market. However properties that were left empty for long periods of time could cause significant problems in the local and national context. They were a wasted resource in terms of housing provision, particularly in areas of high demand like the Epping Forest district where 92% of land was green belt.

The previous and current government had recognised the value of reducing the number of empty properties as part of its overall ambition to provide an additional million homes nationally by 2020. Various incentives and options for local authorities had been introduced which included the New Homes Bonus (which rewarded councils for additional homes provided) and allowing councils the flexibility to charge up to 50% extra Council Tax on property that had been unoccupied and unfinished for 2 years or more. These initiatives had contributed to marked reduction in empty properties nationally.

Within the district the number of empty homes had fallen from 1,837 in 2005 to 607 in 2015. It was the Council's intention to bring 30 empty properties into use per annum.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategy on Empty Properties in the private Sector be endorsed and recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

42. 12 MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT ON HOUSING BUSINESS PLAN ACTION PLAN 2015/16

The select committee received a report regarding the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Key Action Plan (2015/16) – 12 Month Progress Report from the Director of Communities.

In March 2015, the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan for 2015/16 was produced, incorporating the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan. The document set out the Council's objections, strategies and plans as landlord in relation to the management and maintenance of its own housing stock.

An important section of the HRA Business Plan was the Key Action Plan which set out the proposed actions the Council would be taking over the following year. It was good practice that the progress made with the stated actions was monitored which formed part of the select committee's terms of reference. An updated 12 month progress report was submitted to the select committee for endorsement to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Communities.

RESOLVED:

That the 12 Month Progress Report for the Key Action Plan contained within the HRA Business Plan 2015/16 be noted.

43. HRA BUSINESS PLAN 2016/17

The select committee received a report regarding the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2016-17 from the Director of Communities.

The HRA Business Plans dealt with the council's plans and performance for the delivery and quality of its housing services to tenants which included repair and maintenance strategies and financial forecasts for 30 years.

An important part of the HRA Business Plan related to the Council's objectives, strategies and plans connected to the repair and maintenance of the Council's housing stock over the next 30 years. This included the Council's plans for ensuring that the authority continued to meet the Government's decent homes standard in the short term and maintained the housing stock to a full modern standard in the longer term.

The select committee was advised that as a result of the required four year reduction in rents, in September 2015, the Council's Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee had considered a report on the options available to the Council for ensuring that the HRA did not fall into deficit. The report identified a number of options available to the Council to recast its Financial Plan for the future, including:

- (a) Ceasing all or some of the funding currently available within the Financial Plan for future housing improvements and service enhancements for HRA services;
- (b) Reducing investment in improvements to the Council's housing stock which would reduce the Council's Modern Home Standard accordingly;
- (c) Reducing or ceasing the Council's own Housebuilding Programme;

- (d) Undertaking further borrowing for the HRA, repaid by the end of the Financial Plan period; and/or
- (e) Combinations of the above.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2016/17 be endorsed and recommended for approval to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

44. HOUSING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI) - QUARTER 3

The select committee received a report from the Director of Communities regarding Key Performance Indicators 2015/16 Performance at Quarter 3.

A range of 36 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2015/16 were adopted by the Executive in March 2015. They were important to the improvement of the Council's services and comprised a combination of some former statutory indicators and locally determined performance measures. They assisted in directing improvement efforts towards services and national and local priorities.

Progress in responses of each of the KPIs was reviewed by the relevant Portfolio Holder, Management Board and Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees at the conclusion of each quarter. This particular report provided an overview of all KPIs and included those indicators which fell within the areas of responsibility for the Housing Select Committee.

The overall position for all 36 KPIs at the end of Quarter 3 was as follows:

- (a) 28 (78%) indicators achieved target at the end of Q3;
- (b) 8 (22%) indicators did not achieve the Q3 target;
- (c) 0 (0%) of these KPIs performed within their tolerated amber margin (the amber performance status identified indicators that had missed the agreed target but where performance was within an agreed tolerance or range); and
- (d) 28 (78%) indicators were currently anticipated to achieve their cumulative year end target.

There were 10 Key Performance Indicators which fell within the Housing Select Committee's areas of responsibility. The overall position with regard to the achievement of target performance at the end of Q3 for these indicators was as follows:

- (i) 9 (80%) indicators achieved the Q3 target;
- (ii) 1 (20%) indicators did not achieve their Q3 target;
- (iii) 0 (0%) indicators performed within their tolerated amber margin; and
- (iv) 9 (80%) of indicators were currently anticipated to achieve their cumulative year end target.

Members noted that the target in regard to reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation had not been met. Officers advised that this was largely due to the impact of Right to Buy and was out of their control.

The Director of Communities added that following the new Government housing bill's passing through Parliament, he would arrange a Housing Information Evening to inform members of its potential impact.

RESOLVED:

That the performance review against the Key Performance Indicators at the end of Quarter 3 within the area of Housing be noted.

45. HOUSING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI) - TARGETS FOR 2016/17

The select committee received a report regarding Key Performance Indicators 2016/17 – Review and Targets from the Director of Communities.

The adoption of challenging but achievable KPIs each year was an important element of the Council's Performance Management Framework and the KPIs set was reviewed annually by the Management Board to ensure the indicators and their targets were appropriate to provide challenge in the Council's key areas and meeting its objectives.

The provisional target for each indicator had been identified by service directors and relevant portfolio holder(s), based on third quarter performance for the current year. Management Board reviewed the provisional targets against outturn data for 2015/16 when this became available, any revisions to next year's targets would be reported to the select committees in June 2016.

The review of KPIs which fell within the areas of responsibility of the Housing Select Committee had resulted in 2 proposed changes to targets, these were:

- (a) COM001 Rent Collection – the target had been increased; and
- (b) COM004 Temporary accommodation – the target had been decreased.

RECOMMENDED:

That the proposed Key Performance Indicators and targets for 2016/17 for those areas which fall within the select committees areas of responsibility be endorsed and recommended to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee.

46. FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that this was the last meeting of the select committee for this Council year. The first meeting in the new year would be held on Monday 27 June 2016 at 5.30p.m. in Committee Room 1.

The Chairman thanked members and officers for their work and contribution to the select committee over the last year. The Housing Portfolio Holder echoed these sentiments and extended his particular gratitude to the Chairman who had previously chaired its predecessor, the Housing Scrutiny Panel, during his nine years as Portfolio Holder.

