

Review Committee – 5 September 2017

+Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **5 September 2017**
when there were present:-

Chairman for the meeting: Cllr R Milne

Cllr N L Cooper
Cllr R R Dray
Cllr B T Hazlewood
Cllr N J Hookway
Cllr M Hoy
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr J E Newport
Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr C M Stanley
Cllr A L Williams

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs Mrs D Hoy, Mrs T R Hughes, D J Sperring and M Webb

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs J C Burton and Mrs J R Gooding.

ALSO PRESENT

CI G Westley - Essex Police

OFFICERS PRESENT

L Moss - Assistant Director, Community and Housing Services
M Hotten - Assistant Director, Environmental Services
L Athey - Principal Street Scene Officer
P Gowers - Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power - Democratic Services Officer

176 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

177 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Community and Housing Services, which provided an update on the current priorities and joint work through the joint Castle Point and Rochford District Community Safety Partnership (CP & RDCSP).

It was noted that the date stated in paragraph 3.1 of the report should be 2016/17.

Chief Inspector G Westley advised Members that the Community Safety Hub was scheduled to be operational by December 2017. There would be six

Police Constables and six PCSOs, half from Canvey and half from Rayleigh. He confirmed that although the front office is closed, Rayleigh Police Station continues as an operating base to provide a 24/7 Policing response.

CI Westley detailed statistical data during the period July 2016 to July 2017, as follows:

- An increase of 188 vehicle crimes. A bid had been submitted for additional resources, including a number plate reader facility. A media campaign was in place to highlight the dangers of leaving cars unlocked.
- Violence with Injury and Violence without Injury. Both offences had seen a slight increase. Body cameras, which were useful in capturing evidence in these cases, were not yet available in Rochford.
- Burglary. Offences had dropped by 20%. Operation Titan used DNA technologies to identify and charge individuals committing offences.
- ASB was down by 97 incidents, a reduction of 6.5%.
- State-based crime, including drug-related and offensive weapons offences, had shown an increase of 19% over the period.

In response to Member questions, CI Westley advised:

- Although there were three Police Constables and three PCSO's for each area (Canvey and Rochford), this was a unified team and, as such, would be deployed to the area where there was need for policing. The team was supplemented by 24/7 response teams.
- The switch off of lights in Webster's Way car park had been a week-long pilot; lights had now been switched back on. There had been positive feedback from residents in the area who had seen fewer issues of ASB during the pilot switch-off period.
- The report to Members differed from that shown on the Castle Point website only in that its focus lay on what had been achieved in the Rochford area. In future a more detailed update to include the Castle Point policing area could be included in the report.
- The J9 initiative had been refreshed last year and a further awareness session organised for partners; all existing participants had been made aware of the programme and invited to the session.
- In respect of the introduction and development of police cadets in the county, there would be a passing out ceremony for 30 cadets that week from the recently formed Castle Point & Rochford cadet group.

- Active Citizen volunteers engage with the public by providing reassurance and advice on crime prevention via displays in libraries and supermarkets etc throughout the District. The Police social media sites would be updated with details of locations.
- The Police force engages well with the Fire Service locally. The Police Crime Commissioner would become the Police and Fire Commissioner, which would bring the services closer together.
- The emergence of an organised crime gang in Canvey had necessitated the deployment of the District's Police to Canvey; the situation had been dealt with and appropriate policing had now returned to Rayleigh.
- CI Westley was not aware of incidents of keyless car entry crimes using scanners; he would look into this and report back.
- There would be a meeting of the current Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) Co-ordinators in Rayleigh on 13 September in an effort to promote and invigorate NHW in the District. Information would be on the Essex Police website and Twitter and on the Rochford District Council website. NHW would be part of the Hub when it goes live in December.
- Although organised crime gangs/modern day slavery was not a big problem in the Rochford District, the CP&R CSP was aware of the issues in surrounding areas; a gang awareness session had been held for partners and a further session would be held in the coming year. Partnership work was ongoing to prevent modern slavery; a day of action had been held recently.

Resolved

That the work of the joint Castle Point and Rochford District Community Safety Partnership, as outlined in the officer report, be noted. (ADC&HS)

178 CHARGING FOR WHEELED BINS

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Environmental Services, informing Members of the effectiveness of the current approach to charging for the supply of wheeled bins to new properties.

In response to questions, the following was noted:

- There had been a good response from developers of the larger developments; the majority had taken responsibility for payment for bins rather than passing on the cost to homeowners.
- The bins supplied by the Council were advertised as 'bins for life' but it was not specified how long this would be. The Assistant Director advised

that 'life' is taken to mean the life of the scheme; although how long this would be is not known; however, the Council is likely to retain the current scheme past the end of the current contract period.

- Monies charged for replacement bins were not set aside in a separate budget. The Assistant Director, Environmental Services would confirm with the Section 151 Officer that the income would be kept in a separate account in future.
- In respect of new single development properties, the resident who moves into the property would be charged for the bin. Generally, the builder will supply the bins for new build developments, though this could not be included as a planning condition. The situation of a resident declining to pay for a bin had not occurred to date.
- When the current contract comes to an end in four years' time, it is unlikely that the scheme would change significantly; the Council is contractually bound through the Inter-Authority Agreement with Essex County Council to collect bins in a prescribed way. It was recognised that there would be conflict if the scheme was to change and all residents were charged for replacement bins.
- It would be impracticable to share a joint bin collection scheme with another authority as each area has different needs and a different method of collection.
- Members requested that a further report on the effectiveness of the new bin invoicing system be submitted to the Committee as soon as possible.

Resolved

That a review of the effectiveness over a three month period of the new bin invoicing system be undertaken, and that, on the conclusion of this review, a further report be submitted to the Review Committee at its meeting on 6 February 2018. (ADES)

179 SANCTUARY HOUSING ASSOCIATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee considered questions that had been raised at the meeting of Council on 18 July 2017 following referral of the issue of allocation of affordable homes. Council had resolved that responses to the questions raised would be provided to all Members of the Council; to date this had not been done. The Review Committee wanted to ensure that answers were provided, particularly as the topic had been referred by the Review Committee.

The following questions were detailed:

- (1) Why did the Council largely forgo the delivery of 50 affordable homes per year over 10 years when its housing register and the numbers on it

were increasing?

There was an expectation/aspiration of 50 affordable houses provided by Sanctuary; this was raised by the Review Committee at its meeting on 9 February 2010. Since this date the Council doesn't seem to have pursued it further. A Member added that the matter should have been pursued, particularly in view of the fact that the number of applicants on the housing register had risen to 893, 90 of whom were in temporary accommodation.

- (2) Why the Council didn't fix the number and tenures for delivery at the outset of the new agreement?
- (3) Has this agreement and the development programme that is behind it been discussed by Members of the Council at the Sanctuary Committee?
- (4) If Councillors are on Development Committee or are substitutes are they in some way fettered as they have actually entered into an agreement with a developer to deliver a number of houses that are not in the core strategy, they are windfalls?

The question was clarified: if a Councillor is a Member of the Development Committee as an individual or substitute, bearing in mind that they had already voted on this agreement with Sanctuary, does this in any way, as with the Investment Board, fetter that Member's ability to make decisions.

(Cllrs Mrs J R Lumley and Mrs L Shaw each declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item as Members of Sanctuary in Rochford Committee. Cllr M Hoy declared a non-pecuniary interest as a former member of the Rochford Housing Association Board.)

The Committee requested that the matter be pursued and answers provided from officers to be fed back to the Committee. If officers could not supply these answers they would be asked to attend the next meeting of the Committee to explain where the difficulty lay.

Resolved

That officers be requested to provide the Committee with answers to the questions raised at Full Council on 18 July 2017 (detailed above) and that if officers could not supply these answers they be requested to attend the next meeting of the Committee to explain where the difficulty in providing responses lay.

180 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

The Committee considered the Key Decisions Document (KDD).

During discussion, the following was noted:

Four of the Key Decisions on the KDD (06/17, 07/17, 08/17, 09/17) were in respect of evidence based documents relating to the Local Development Plan. Members enquired as to why the Planning Policy Sub-Committee had not met to review these strategic documents as they felt that it was important that Members understand the implications for the District of the assessment findings. A view had been taken by officers that as these purely evidence based documents had been revised and findings accepted there was no need for review by the Sub-Committee. The Committee felt that it was essential that the documents are reviewed in a formal Committee situation so Members have on going up to date information at the time of revision of the core strategy evidence documents.

At present the Planning Policy Sub-Committee only addressed matters relating to public consultation; Members felt that evidence-based documents should also be part of the remit of the Sub-Committee.

The Committee would invite the Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services to its meeting on 3 October to provide a report containing all the evidence based documents that have gone through as Decisions since revision of the Core Strategy and to discuss with Members the implications of these documents.

Members requested that due to the number of Key Decisions exceeding the original date detailed in the KDD, officers be reminded that they should set more realistically achievable dates.

Resolved

That the Committee invites the Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services to its meeting on 3 October to provide a report containing all the pieces of evidence that have gone through as Decisions since revision of the Core Strategy and to discuss with Members the implications of these evidence documents.

181 WORK PLAN

The Committee considered and approved its Work Plan.

- Following an agreement by the Committee at its meeting in July 2018 that a request for topics for review be made via social media, a resident suggestion had been received relating to the Council's use of social media. Members felt that this request would include a review of the Council's communication process generally, including press releases. Members requested that this item be passed to the Managing Director to examine the issues involved and to allocate appropriately to the relevant officers to report back to the Committee. It was suggested that the resident be invited to attend the meeting.

- It was noted that Sanctuary Housing Association (SHA) had been invited to attend the meeting but had declined and had provided reasons for not attending. The Committee could review the issues raised on behalf of residents even if SHA did not attend a meeting.

Members stated that there was a need for better communication by SHA with both its tenants and with Councillors. There were instances of Councillors requesting information that was not then provided by SHA. There were two possible issues for review by the Committee: the failure of the District's Housing Associations to communicate appropriately and/or Repair and Maintenance of Social Housing across the District. It was noted that Councillors could raise issues with the Portfolio Holder for Community or with Members of the Sanctuary in Rochford Committee to take up on their behalf.

The Review Committee wished to consider how residents are best being served in terms of Housing Providers' repairs programmes and complaints received. Members felt they had a responsibility to ensure the procedures of the social housing schemes work effectively so that it could be established what was working well, what was not and what needed to be changed.

All Members of the Council should be requested to advise the Overview and Scrutiny Officer of any issues raised by/complaints received from residents relating to any of the District's social housing providers and how/if these issues had been resolved (no personal details of residents would be included in these communications).

- In respect of photos that had been made available to Members of the Committee that showed examples of private rented properties that were sub-standard, it was noted that concerns about health and safety aspects could be raised with the Council's Environmental Health team. The Assistant Director, Housing and Community Services and appropriate officers could deal with specific individual issues tenants have raised; it was not appropriate for these to be discussed by the Review Committee.
- The following two additional items submitted by Members of the Committee for the work Plan were discussed:
 - (1) Emergency Planning - the Council's Strategic Policy following a potential disaster affecting residents, such as an incident at London Southend Airport. It was noted that officers are currently considering this issue. The Review Committee would consider at its January meeting what the Council is putting forward as its Emergency Planning procedures, including how to manage communications and PR following a large scale emergency event.

- (2) De Montfort University Local Governance Research Unit report. Members requested that the Managing Director, with support from the Assistant Director, Democratic Services, provide a report to the Committee's meeting in March 2018 on how the recommendations in the report impact on the Council.

Resolved

- (1) That a review be undertaken of the Council's use of social media and communications process and that this item be passed to the Managing Director to allocate to the relevant officers to report back to the Committee.
- (2) That a review of Repair and Maintenance of Social Housing across the District be undertaken; all Members to be requested to advise the Overview and Scrutiny Officer of any issues raised by/complaints received from residents relating to any of the District's social housing providers and how/if these issues had been resolved.
- (3) That a review be undertaken of the Council's proposals for updated Emergency Planning procedures, including how to manage communications and public relations: to be considered at the Committee's January meeting.
- (4) That the Managing Director, with support from the Assistant Director, Democratic Services, provides a report to the Committee's meeting in March 2018 on how the recommendations in the De Montfort University Local Governance Research Unit report impact on the Council.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm.

Chairman

Date

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