

Review Committee – 14 March 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **14 March 2017** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J C Burton
Vice-Chairman: Cllr B T Hazlewood

Cllr N L Cooper	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr R R Dray	Cllr R Milne
Cllr N J Hookway	Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr C M Stanley
Cllr Mrs C M Mason	Cllr A L Williams

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs Mrs D Hoy, Mrs J R Lumley, D J Sperring and I H Ward.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs J R Gooding and M J Lucas-Gill.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr D Merrick - for Cllr Mrs J R Gooding

ALSO PRESENT

Inspector Fergus Caulfield, Essex Police

OFFICERS PRESENT

L Moss	-	Assistant Director, Community and Housing Services
M Thomas	-	Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Democratic Services Officer

53 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2017 were agreed as a correct and signed by the Chairman, subject to Cllr J E Newport being shown as a Visiting Member.

54 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr M Hoy declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 7 of the Agenda 'Delivery of Rochford District Council's Building Control Service' by virtue of a business relationship with a number of builders in the District who may use Building Control services.

55 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Community and Housing Services, which provided an update of the annual review and refresh of the joint Castle Point and Rochford District Community Safety Partnership (CP & RDCSP) priorities and actions.

Members were provided with a summary of Police performance to January 2017 and other information.

In response to questions, Inspector Caulfield advised:-

- In respect of the Violent Crime Without Injury category of crime, although the public can record incidents on their mobile phones as they are happening as a way of discouraging crime, most public order offences are spontaneous and over in a few minutes. The Police and Crime Commissioner has recently encouraged residents to upload information as part of on-line recording of incidents.
- The three CP & RDCSP strategic priorities identified for 2017/18 are high level and will be underpinned by operational objectives and actions. These are currently being refreshed by partners.
- The Community Safety survey had 279 responses, most of which were on-line; very few of the surveys were completed at engagement events. A visual summary of the results are currently being worked on and will be available for residents to view from the website. The CP & RDCSP will also consider options for undertaking surveys differently in future, including on an on-going basis throughout year.
- Cyber bullying is a crime and will be investigated if reported; a specific policy to prevent this category of crime is not necessary. Vulnerable people already have access to support mechanisms from other agencies; preventative work in this respect is important. Social media sites have a reporting facility and residents should do as much as they can to reduce cyber bullying, such as blocking people who are making unacceptable comments. Police work with the administrators of these sites but will only be involved in serious cases. The CP & RDCSP organises awareness training courses that focus on prevention and education; Crucial Crew events cover the issue of cyber bullying also.
- Most rapes reported are domestic rapes or historic rapes, very few are stranger rapes; all reported rapes are recorded. If the victim doesn't want to progress to prosecution, no further action will be taken unless there are safeguarding issues. It is often difficult to solve these crimes as there is rarely independent evidence and the offence is usually not witnessed. The Police undertake preventative work around domestic abuse and sexual assault as well as work around the night-time economy in the town centres

to help to keep females safe.

- The Fire Service runs an Active Citizen programme and the Police should work in tandem with this.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner's office has guidance on the requirements for advertising the operation of CCTV on private property.
- There is no marked increase in any specific crime type in the District and, to date, Robbery of Personal Property and Dwelling Burglary offences are decreasing.
- The new Drop-In facility at Rochford District Council offices is now in operation, which allows the community policing team to use Council facilities for general administrative tasks, which saves them having to go to Rayleigh Police Station, which can improve response times to calls
- The decrease in reporting rates for ASB crimes is not due to the public under reporting because of a perception that it is now more difficult to report crime. People are encouraged to phone the Police to report crime and there is also the online reporting facility.
- The CP & RDCSP budget is £12,337 for 2017/18; the next report to the Committee can include details of the funding allocated to the other CSP's in Essex.
- There is no specific concern around the emergence of street gangs in the District. Drug dealing is often localised and drug use has reduced. The Police continue to monitor the situation.

Resolved

- (1) That the Council's actions to support and deliver on the community safety agenda and the statutory requirements set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that updates on the CP & RDCSP and its ongoing priorities will be agreed at the Local Strategic Partnership Executive on 9 June 2017. (ADC&HS)

56 CARAVAN SITE FEE POLICY AND LICENSING FEES

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Democratic Services on the call-in of an Executive Decision.

During discussion, the following was noted:-

- Members had concerns that the time estimate for inspecting sites and for the cost of administration was not realistic and did not reflect the time

taken. Officers would revisit this aspect of the Policy.

- The District has six sites, all of which are relatively large. It was felt that the charges proposed under the Fee Policy and Site Licensing and Registering of Site Rules penalised smaller sites when considered on a 'per caravan' basis, with smaller sites incurring a much higher charge per unit than larger sites. A suggestion was that a base fee be charged for each site and then a fee for each unit on the site. There was concern that the proposed charges would be passed on to residents and that a revision of the charges to make them fairer was needed. The Policy should be equitable for caravan sites currently and in the future.
- Officers confirmed that the costs are inclusive of overheads and that owners can increase pitch fees, to include the cost of the licence, for the first year only. There were records of time spent kept for the year, so an assessment for accuracy can be undertaken.

The Committee agreed to accept the Portfolio Holder Decision but recommended that its observations and concerns be taken into account when the Policy charging structure is reviewed next year. It requested that a detailed log of officer time spent administering and assessing the sites be recorded.

Members wanted it to be noted that they were happy with the manner in which Council officers were currently managing the system.

Resolved

That the report be accepted but that the Committee's observations and concerns relating to the charging structure and the estimates of the staff time spent inspecting sites and administering the system be considered when the policy is reviewed next year. (ADDS)

57 DELIVERY OF ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL'S BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services, which updated Members on the Council's Building Control service.

During discussion, the following was noted:-

- There was anecdotal evidence of complaints from builders about the lengthy response times (often up to four weeks) taken by the Council's Building Control Service and that private building control firms, which often offered a much quicker service, were being used as an alternative.
- In response to Member concern in respect of the lack of detailed figures for the benefits and costs of the option chosen and whether other options had been considered, the Assistant Director advised that the only other option considered was the creation of an Essex-wide building control service,

which was not taken forward by any of the authorities in the county.

- Additional funding had been identified in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the review of the Building Control Service and budgets and salaries going forward. Consideration had been given to how best to restructure the service, in line with the structure of the other services in the planning department. The Building Control Service had been under-resourced for the past two years, with no management structure in place. When appointed, the Building Control Team Leader would put forward a service aimed at growing the service and increasing the market share.
- The Building Control Team Leader would review the level of discretionary charges to establish whether in the future a charge might be applied to non-chargeable activities.
- There could be opportunity for the Council to offer a building control service to other authorities and businesses. The priority, however, was to secure the existing service, recruit appropriate staff and then look at different options for delivering and growing the service.
- Overheads could be shown separately as being either fee earning and non-fee earning. The possibility of outsourcing the Council's building control service requirement to another body or authority could be considered if this was a cheaper alternative to providing an in-house service. When appointed, the Team Leader would examine costings closely with the Finance team.
- Members queried robustness of the projected income figure of £246,000 in the MTFS. The Service is currently achieving the level of fees against those projected in the MTFS and there would be a better rate of return when the Service is staffed by permanent staff. This should allow for an increase in income from the £246,000 estimate in the MTFS, as long as there is capacity to grow as a viable business. The monthly staff contract costs are currently being covered by the fee income being achieved and there was a fee increase in July 2016. The MTFS takes into account salaries, insurance and car allowance, but not internal re-charges.
- The recruitment process for the vacant posts will take up to six months: it was anticipated that a full complement of permanent staff would be in post by October, by which time there would be a good idea of how the service would look, going forward. On this basis, an interim report would be made to the Review Committee at its November meeting and a further update reported in February 2018. The Team Leader would look at the strategy and objectives to take the service forward and to evaluate whether it can be grown as a business.

It was noted that the figure of £41 in paragraph 5.2 of the officer report should be amended to £4,150.

Resolved

- (1) That the details of the re-design of the in-house building control service and the arrangements for developing the commercial focus be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that a county-wide building control shared service in Essex has not been pursued.
- (3) That an interim report be made to the Committee in November 2017 following appointment to the vacant posts in the Building Control Service. A further update and full business case to be provided to the Committee at its February 2018 meeting. (ADP&RS)

58 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

The Committee considered the Key Decisions document and noted its contents.

2/17 Sanctuary Housing's Community Investment Plan. This item is not a Key Decision and should be removed from the key Decisions Document.

59 WORK PLAN

The Committee considered its Work Plan and noted its contents.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

60 SANCTUARY HOUSING

The Committee considered the information provided at the February meeting of the Review Committee, where Members received a presentation from Sanctuary Housing with an update on their development programme. Members were not able to discuss their concerns regarding the detail of the Deed of Variation at the February meeting, as this was an exempt legal document.

There was discussion in relation to the tenure mix of the 363 properties that Sanctuary Housing was committed to deliver under the Deed of Variation approved by Council on 8 June 2016.

Detail on the discussion and the recommendation to Full Council is set out in the exempt appendix to the Minutes.

The meeting closed at 10 pm.

Chairman

Date

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