

## **Review Committee – 3 March 2015**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **3 March 2015** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr M Hoy  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs T J Capon

Cllr C I Black	Cllr J L Lawmon
Cllr J C Burton	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn	Cllr Mrs M H Spencer
Cllr J D Griffin	

### **VISITING MEMBER**

Cllr J E McPherson – Portfolio Holder for Community  
Cllr T E Mountain

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R R Dray and B T Hazlewood.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

S Scrutton	-	Director
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

### **ALSO PRESENT**

E Keegan	-	Managing Director, Rochford Housing Association
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## **49 MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **50 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs M Hoy, Mrs T J Capon and Mrs J E McPherson each declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 5 of the Agenda, Homelessness, by virtue of being on the Board of Rochford Housing Association.

## **51 HOMELESSNESS**

The Committee heard from the Portfolio Holder for Community and E Keegan, Managing Director of Rochford Housing Association (RHA). (The other housing associations based in the Rochford District had been invited to attend but had declined to do so.)

In response to questions from Members, the following was noted:-

- RHA is committed to having available eight housing units (either one or two bedrooms) for temporary accommodation. It has an additional six units in the District available for temporary accommodation if required. As well as these 14 units, RHA can make available those properties that become available but which are not suitable to be used as long-term accommodation. Other housing associations in the area that have housing units available are: Genesis Housing Association (9 units), Swan Housing Association (3 units), NACRO Housing (3 units) and Sanctuary Housing Association (1 unit).
- Rochford District Council officers will provide the Committee with statistics that show the average length of time that people stay in temporary accommodation (which will be dependent on the size of the family and their needs).
- When there are children involved in a homelessness case, effort is made to allow them to continue to attend their usual school. Where possible, accommodation is allocated with facilities appropriate for the needs of families with young children. However, bed and breakfast accommodation will usually be used in these cases. There are currently 42 families in temporary accommodation in the District, with 13 of these in bed and breakfast accommodation. The Citizens Advice Bureau offers advice to families on dealing with rent arrears and managing finances. Due to preventative work being undertaken, there are fewer cases of homelessness this year than last year. The Children's Partnership can be contacted in respect of housing issues that involve children/young people.
- The cost of keeping a person in temporary accommodation was included in the budget figures approved by Full Council in February. The Committee will be provided with this information, including ancillary costs, such as storage of furniture.
- The Committee will be provided with information on how much of the bed and breakfast accommodation is based in the Rochford District and how much in neighbouring boroughs, and the cost of this provision.
- The Rochford District Council Homeless Strategy has recently been updated and will shortly be published on the Council's website, to replace the current Strategy document. There is a register of people on the housing waiting list.
- The Committee will be provided with information on provisions in the Localism Act for dealing with homelessness.

- The key stakeholders in Rochford District Council homeless prevention strategy include the Rochford District social housing providers, NACRO, Citizens Advice Bureau, St Mungo's Charity and Basildon Women's Aid.
- All those who present themselves to the Council as being homeless will have their case assessed to determine whether they meet the necessary criteria for being considered as homeless. The Council has a statutory duty to provide these people with temporary accommodation while their case is being assessed. Details of any issues where a person who presents themselves as homeless to the Council is not given appropriate treatment can be given to the Portfolio Holder, who will look into the matter.
- In cases where, for example, people are released from hospital, escaping from domestic abuse or have been declared intentionally homeless, the Council can enlist the support of its partners to provide help.
- In 2014/15 three households were evicted by RHA: one because of anti-social behaviour and two due to rent arrears. RHA works with partners in order to sustain tenancies where possible.
- The Council actively works to reach as many community groups as possible to try to contact and provide support to those who have not come forward as being homeless.
- The Council has the responsibility for determining if there is a need for temporary accommodation in the District and what the priorities for housing its residents are.
- There is a facility whereby private landlords can make property available to local authorities for social housing; however, there has been no take-up to date.
- RHA does not employ a full-time ASB officer; it employs two qualified housing officers for tenancy and housing management issues, including anti-social behaviour.
- The Food Banks in the District are based on the Trussell Trust model, which actively engages with residents to support them. People can be referred to a food bank or can turn up in person.
- Rochford District Council currently has 148 people on its housing register. The Council has a statutory duty to provide housing for homeless people; as a result homeless people may move ahead of people on the waiting list. The Council has a duty to house people from outside the District who meet the criteria for being considered homeless.

- The Portfolio Holder for Community was asked to attend the Review Committee on 14 April to provide the information requested above, to discuss further the steps the Council is taking to reduce homelessness in the District and to provide statistics in this respect.

### **Resolved**

That the information requested by the Committee be provided in advance of the next meeting on 14 April and that the Portfolio for Community be invited to attend this meeting.

## **52 CAR PARKING INCOME**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning and Transportation on the change in car park income in the first six months of operation since the parking changes were increased on 4 August 2014.

In response to questions, the following was noted:-

- Members would be provided with a breakdown of ticket sales on Saturday mornings for the period from August 2014 to January 2015.
- There appears to be an increase in people coming into the towns to go to cafes rather than to shop. Mobile phone payments for parking are increasing, which takes the pressure off people and can make more money for the Council.
- There was concern that capacity in the car parks may be tested as new housing developments are built in the District.

It was requested that consideration be given to using the higher than expected increase in income from car park ticket sales during the August-January 2014/15 period to offer possible benefits to residents, including free parking after 6 pm, free parking all day on Saturdays, completely free parking for Blue Badge holders in certain car parks and/or an extension to the free car parking offered in the Council's car parks on Saturdays in December leading up to Christmas, to include the two Saturdays directly following Christmas (to encourage people to shop locally in the January sales).

The Portfolio Holder for Enterprise and the Council's Director, Shaun Scrutton, would be invited to attend the next Review Committee on 14 April to provide further information and costings on the above ideas.

### **Resolved**

That the report be noted.

### 53 REVIEW OF ROCHFORD DISTRICT MATTERS

The Committee considered the report of the Review Committee project team following their review of Rochford District Matters (RDM).

During discussion, it was noted that, as a way of auditing circulation figures, Councillors and staff are asked as part of the distribution process to report on whether RDM has been delivered to their address.

#### **Recommended to the Portfolio Holder for People and Technology**

- (1) That Rochford District Matters continues in paper format.
- (2) That the readership of the online version of Rochford District Matters be reviewed on an annual basis.
- (3) That residents be encouraged to suggest a new name for the paper.
- (4) That the size of the paper be reduced to 320 mm x 260 mm.
- (5) That the paper be divided into clearly defined sections.
- (6) That more is done to encourage resident engagement with the paper.

### 54 WORK PLAN

The Committee considered its work plan for the current year.

It was agreed that the following items be considered at the meeting scheduled for 14 April:-

- Report on the Operation of the ICT contract
- Report on the Review of issues around the use of iPads for Council Business
- Report on the review of Third Party Software Contracts
- The Council's Car Parks – further information requested
- Homelessness – further information requested.

The Committee suggested that the Building Control review could be continued in 2015/16 to ensure all the information requested has been received. It was also suggested that the proposed review of Potholes be continued in 2015/16.

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The meeting closed at 9.50 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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