

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 14 September 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Chris Peace (Chair), Sue Auckland, Michelle Cook, Richard Crowther, Dawn Dale, Terry Fox, Mark Jones, Magid Magid, Karen McGowan, Zahira Naz, Zoe Sykes, Jack Clarkson (Substitute Member), Andy Nash (Substitute Member) and Richard Shaw (Substitute Member)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies for absence, together with their nominated substitutes, were received as follows:-

<u>Apology</u>	<u>Substitute</u>
Councillor Penny Baker	Councillor Richard Shaw
Councillor Keith Davis	Councillor Jack Clarkson
Councillor Joe Otten	Councillor Andy Nash
Councillor George Lindars-Hammond	No substitute nominated

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

- 2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 Councillor Michelle Cook declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7 (Challenge for Change – The Quality of Rehousing Services), as she was a former member of the Challenge for Change Tenant Scrutiny Group.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6th July, 2017 were approved as a correct record and, arising from their consideration, it was noted that the Policy and Improvement Officer would follow-up on (a) the provision of statistics on prosecutions for hate crime and (b) the circulation of the minutes of the meetings of the Sheffield Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership to Committee Members.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

- 5.1 There were no questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

6. CHALLENGE FOR CHANGE - THE QUALITY OF REHOUSING SERVICES

- 6.1 The Committee received a report of the Challenge for Change (C4C) Tenant Scrutiny Group, on the Group's recent project to review the quality of Rehousing Services. The overall purpose of the project was to examine how well the Council's Housing Service delivered rehousing services and to check how it compared with similar organisations.
- 6.2 The report was supported by a presentation which was given by one of the Group's members, Angela Moreno, which covered the project objectives, reality checks, conclusions and recommendations.
- 6.3 Also in attendance for this item were Tina Gilbert (Performance and Risk Manager), Ian Alexander, Linda Moxon and Max Richardson (C4C representatives).
- 6.4 During the presentation, Linda Moxon related her experiences, initially as a mystery shopper, who found that she had been de-registered and had to go through a complicated appeal procedure to become re-registered for rehousing.
- 6.5 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-
- In relation to the appeal process, Linda Moxon indicated that she had provided the information requested, but had received no reply to an email which she had sent and had been given no notification of the expiry date for the appeal period. However, once the Rehousing Customer Services Team Manager had become involved, the issue was resolved. In the light of this management involvement, she felt that the appeal process would be further examined.
 - Extra help should be made available for those who were unfamiliar with using a computer to register. This could take the form of officers helping or being able to do this by phone.
 - A Member commented that it appeared that promises made to review the de-registration process prior to October, 2016 had not been kept.
 - In the light of experiences at the Howden House office, customers discussing personal information with officers should be offered private facilities. It seemed that the situation had improved since a mystery shopping exercise, with the use of two queues now, one being for Council tax matters and another for Housing matters.
 - It was important that the de-registration process did not put people off putting in an appeal and, with new staff coming in to the Housing Service due to Housing+, they should be properly trained. It was felt that if the correct information was presented, then an appeal should succeed and it seemed that officers were now communicating appropriately by email.
 - Privacy was particularly important in situations which involved domestic abuse victims.

- The differing experiences of customer service found by the Group highlighted the importance of appropriate training of staff, particularly in relation to their dealings with vulnerable people.
- Young people in particular were finding it very difficult to provide the required identification/references.
- The patch officers should be able to identify vulnerable individuals in their area.
- In relation to unreceived letters, it may be appropriate for three letters to be sent before any registration was cancelled.
- With regard to getting years re-credited, it was felt that customers were not respected or taken seriously.
- The C4C representatives agreed that security staff saw themselves more as bouncers rather than ambassadors for the service and that their role needed to be examined.

6.6 The Chair, Councillor Chris Peace, summarised the concerns expressed by Members as relating to administration, training, including a suggestion that a flow chart be produced of the process and procedures involved, the operation of the appeals process, the role of security staff, the registration of vulnerable and young people, the way in which systems and staff were to be tested, and the evaluation of documentation and procedures.

6.7 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks the Challenge for Change representatives and Tina Gilbert for their contribution to the meeting and their valuable work in producing the report;
- (b) notes the contents of the report and presentation, comments made and responses to questions; and
- (c) requests that:-
 - (i) more information on the rehousing policy, process and procedures be sought from the Rehousing Manager; and
 - (ii) an update item be included on a future Committee meeting agenda to cover progress made on the Challenge for Change report's recommendations and the Members' concerns now mentioned, with the Challenge for Change representatives being invited to such meeting.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer, attaching

the Committee's Work Programme for 2017/18 for Members' consideration.

- 7.2 As a preliminary to the discussion, the Chair, Councillor Chris Peace, proposed that, for future meetings a half hour pre-meeting would take place at 4.00 p.m., followed by a 15 minute break, with the Committee meeting to start at 4.45 p.m. She suggested that this operated for the next two Committee meetings and be reviewed in the New Year. In addition, she proposed that the next Committee meeting scheduled for 12th October, 2017 be postponed because of the Brighton Ward by-election being held on that day and be rearranged to be held on 9th November, 2017 if possible.
- 7.3 In relation to the Work Programme, the Chair suggested that the next meeting should have a one item agenda on Street Culture – Safe City with representatives of the South Yorkshire Police, City Centre Ambassadors, Archer Project, Drug Advisory Services and Shelter being invited. A briefing paper on Tower Blocks could also be circulated with the agenda for that meeting. Councillor Terry Fox suggested that it might be appropriate for this meeting to be held outside the Town Hall and the Chair asked the Policy and Improvement Officer to explore the possibility of this, with the Cathedral being suggested as a potential venue.
- 7.4 The Chair suggested that the December Committee meeting should focus on Community Safety – Neighbourhood Policing.
- 7.5 For the January 2018 meeting, the Chair suggested an item on Tower Blocks, with a briefing paper on the effectiveness of the Local Area Partnerships to be circulated with the agenda.
- 7.6 Following a request by Councillor Mark Jones, the Chair indicated that discussion of the Private Rented Housing Sector would be included in the Housing+ discussion at the March, 2018 Committee meeting.
- 7.7 RESOLVED: That the Committee approves the contents of the Work Programme 2017/18, subject to the proposals, amendments and suggestions now reported.

8. WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

- 8.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-
- (a) notes the contents of the Welfare Reform Update Report; and
 - (b) requests that:-
 - (i) individual concerns regarding the introduction of Universal Credit be sent by email to the Policy and Improvement Officer to be forwarded to the appropriate Council officers; and
 - (ii) graphs be included in any future Welfare Reform Update to indicate trends.

9. TOWER BLOCKS UPDATE - FIRE SAFETY ON COUNCIL HIGH RISE

RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS

- 9.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the Tower Blocks Update – Fire Safety on Council High Rise Residential Blocks Report.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 10.1 It was noted that it was proposed to hold the next meeting of the Committee on Thursday, 9th November, 2017 at 4.45 p.m., at a venue to be arranged, possibly outside the Town Hall.