

**Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee**

**Meeting held 25 September 2014**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Steve Ayris (Deputy Chair), David Barker, Simon Clement-Jones, Richard Crowther, Roy Munn, Josie Paszek, Sioned-Mair Richards, Lynn Rooney, Richard Shaw and Sarah Jane Smalley

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sheila Constance and George Lindars-Hammond.

**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 There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014, were approved as a correct record.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 Responses to questions from Mr Alan Kewley were provided as follows:-

**Community Engagement**

The Chair, Councillor Chris Weldon, stated that the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) worked in different ways to engage the community in their areas. It was too soon for the effectiveness of these procedures to be assessed, but a request would be made to the appropriate officers, for a written report from the LAPs on community engagement, for the next meeting of the Committee.

**Crime and Disorder**

The Chair indicated that Councillor Roy Munn was a member of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel and that Councillors Sheila Constance and Sioned-Mair Richards had represented the Committee at a meeting of the Panel to discuss potential joint working protocols and ways of information sharing. As such, the Committee was monitoring the work of the Panel and would seek to develop best practice.

### Committee Proceedings

The Chair agreed that meetings should be made more accessible to the public and pointed out to the questioner that he always invited those asking public questions to sit at the Committee table. He added that tenant representatives were present and were participating in the meeting, but emphasised the importance of Members trying to get out and about to meet tenants and their representatives. He considered that it was too early to visit the Crystal Peaks Housing Office to see how the Housing+ Service was operating. The points made about table layout and the possibility of webcasts were noted.

In conclusion, the Chair informed Mr Kewley that he would receive a full written response to his questions.

## **6. CHALLENGE FOR CHANGE - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- 6.1 The Committee received a report of the Challenge for Change Tenant Scrutiny Group on its Community Engagement Project which investigated how people got involved as volunteers with the Council Housing Service, looked at who got involved and considered whether there were any barriers or obstacles that prevented different groups of people from getting involved. The Committee was also provided with a document setting out the outcomes and recommendations from the Project.
- 6.2 The report was supported by a presentation given by Tony Merrygold, who was one of the four main scrutinisers. Also in attendance for this item were Linda Moxon, Ian Alexander, Michelle Cook, Max Richardson, Tony Watson, who were all involved in the Project, and Gary Westwood, Planning and Performance (Housing).
- 6.3 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-
- It was hoped that the Housing+ model would help with community engagement, particularly in areas where there was no Tenants' and Residents' Association (TARA).
  - Courses were available through the TARAs to support and develop people in getting involved in community engagement.
  - Young people appeared to be less inclined to get involved than the older generation and it was fair to say that a small group of individuals attended about 90% of meetings. There was a need for increased use of social media, but it should be noted that younger people were more likely to be working and/or have childcare issues.
  - The appendices to the report had not been included in the circulated papers as these just included the supporting statistics.

- Catherine Hill, Assistant Manager, Council Housing Service, had been interviewed as part of the Project, as she had responsibility for community engagement.
- The links with Housing Associations provided an important means of sharing best practice.
- It was accepted that the Recognition Policy raised contentious issues.

6.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks the Challenge for Change Tenant Scrutiny Group and Gary Westwood for the report and their contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the report and responses to questions; and
- (c) requests that:-
  - (i) the full report, including appendices, be circulated to all Tenants' and Residents' Associations; and
  - (ii) a further report, focusing on progress made in relation to the twelve issues identified in the report, be presented to the Committee in six months' time, with the appropriate officers and tenants' representatives being invited to attend the meeting.

## **7. THE HOUSING+ MODEL AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION**

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Interim Director, Housing and Neighbourhoods Service, which provided details of what Housing+ was, its aims and implementation. The report was presented by Janet Sharpe, Interim Director, Housing and Neighbourhoods Service, and was supported by a presentation given by Paul Voyse, Area Manager, which gave examples of case studies of officers' experiences in working with the model. Diana Fleming, Housing Co-ordinator, and Danielle Warren, Housing Officer, were also present at the meeting to provide an officer view.

7.2 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-

- Each patch was expected to contain between 280 and 300 properties, with challenging neighbourhoods containing less. The interventions in each area had been modelled to work out appropriate patch sizes and the back office services required, and these were now being tested to check that patch sizes were correct. A review of these would be held after 12 months.
- Councillors would be informed as to who their patch officers would be. The aim was to try to build up a relationship between the Team Leaders and

Councillors, and consideration was being given as to how lines of communication could be set up. Events were also to be held to consider engagement with the Local Area Partnerships.

- Communications were assisted by having Neighbourhoods and Community Safety within the same part of the organisation.
- In relation to staff support and risk management, training programmes were provided for officers and the reshaping of services would encourage good local relationships. The Service also worked closely with the South Yorkshire Police and the Adult Social Care Service. Where any particular problems arose, attempts would be made to resolve these by the use of support services. There was a team approach to operations in each Ward with staff readily supporting each other. It was recognised that information management was a challenge throughout the Council and it was emphasised that Safeguarding Training had always been provided to staff, with the new model making a positive contribution to joining up information.
- Intensive training had taken place, with Ward teams covering a number of roles and experience, so officers had confidence in the new service. Team Leaders were also available if staff needed help. It was accepted that some staff would need more support than others.
- Attendance had varied at the drop-in sessions, but each household in the patch had received a letter which identified their patch officer. Early indications were that customers were taking advantage of the new ways of working.
- In terms of lessons learnt, there was a long issues list and a training package to address these was being set up. This appeared to be the biggest challenge so far.
- It was early days in the process, with the 'test phase' in the South East of the City only operating for 2 to 3 months, so it would probably be better for the Committee to go out and meet tenants to assess implementation when the model had been in operation for a longer period.
- Parts of the Housing+ model were being implemented in other local authorities, but in the end it all came down to savings and efficiency. Representatives of other authorities had visited Sheffield to see how the service had been modelled and how issues were being tackled. In turn, officers from Sheffield had visited Redditch Council to learn from their experiences.
- There had been extensive tenant involvement in setting up Housing+ with service design groups being involved and a consultation programme implemented.
- It was considered that tenant liaison and customer engagement was

everyone's job. The aim was for officers to liaise with the TARAs and this would be embedded in the process. Lead responsibility for this was with the Ward Team Leaders.

- A review of the number of Housing Officers was being undertaken, with consideration being given to co-location.
- Data and analysis would be captured through the model's plan, with this being particularly relevant in relation to dealing with other services. It was hoped to strengthen local fora to identify what was working and what wasn't. A systems analyst was being employed to assess data and a task and finish group had been set up to look at TARAs and engagement.
- In relation to the timetable, change proposals would be tabled with staff at the end of October or the beginning of November, with a three month consultation period then taking place. Recruitment would take place during April/May, with staged implementation from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015. The aim was to achieve this without compromising performance and service delivery.

7.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Janet Sharpe, Paul Voyse, Donna Fleming and Danielle Warren for their contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the report and presentation and the responses to questions; and
- (c) requests that arrangements be made for the Committee to visit the South East of the City, that being the area operating the 'test phase' of the model, no later than March 2015, to meet tenants and assess the implementation of the Housing+ model.

## **8. SOUTH YORKSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL - JOINT WORKING PROTOCOL PROPOSAL**

8.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer, which presented a proposed Joint Working Protocol between the four South Yorkshire Local Authority Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees and the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel. A copy of the proposed Protocol was appended to the report.

8.2 In response to a Member question, the Policy and Improvement Officer stated that the Protocol dealt with the way in which the Committee and the Police and Crime Panel exchanged information. He added that the Panel provided updates to the Committee and that endorsement of the Protocol would enable the Panel to produce work plans and provide the Committee with an annual briefing. The Chair, Councillor Chris Weldon, indicated that if there was something of concern, information on it would be circulated as seen fit and that adopting the Protocol would open up lines of communication.

8.3 Councillor Roy Munn, who was a member of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel, provided the Committee with an update on the recent meetings of the Panel, following the publication of the Jay Report on Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, particularly in relation to the resignation of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Shaun Wright.

8.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) approved the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel Joint Working Protocol proposal as set out in the appendix to the submitted report and asked the Policy and Improvement Officer to report this to the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel; and
- (b) supports the resolution agreed at the meeting of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2014, namely that:-

“Having carefully considered the response provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner today, and acknowledging the significant strength of public feeling, the Police and Crime Panel resolves:

- (1) that it has no confidence in the Police and Crime Commissioner and calls for his immediate resignation;
- (2) to write to the Home Secretary to support the recommendation of the Home Affairs Select Committee for an urgent review of legislation to ensure that Police and Crime Panels have the authority to be able to remove a Police and Crime Commissioner in exceptional circumstances such as these, and also to fundamentally review the current role and powers of Police and Crime Panels;
- (3) to write to Keith Vaz, MP, to support his call for emergency legislation to be enacted to enable the urgent removal of Police and Crime Commissioners in these circumstances; and
- (4) to write to the Chief Constable to ask for full and clear information with regard to those matters upon which the Police and Crime Commissioner failed to provide a response.”

## **9. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15**

9.1 The Committee received a report the Policy and Improvement Officer, which provided details of the Committee’s Work Programme for the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

9.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) approves the Work Programme 2014/15 as detailed in the report, subject to

the Challenge for Change item on Community Engagement being included on the agenda for the Committee meeting to be held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2015; and

- (b) requests that a Special Meeting of the Committee be arranged in December 2014 to consider the four Community Safety items listed in the Work Programme.

**10. WELFARE REFORM - SEPTEMBER 2014 UPDATE**

- 10.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the Welfare Reform September 2014 Update report now submitted and requests that this be circulated to all Council Members.

**11. RIGHT TO BUY UPDATE - SEPTEMBER 2014**

- 11.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the Right to Buy September 2014 Update report now submitted.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 12.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014, at 2.00 pm in the Town Hall.

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