

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 21 July 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Tony Damms (Chair), Sue Auckland, Michelle Cook, Richard Crowther, Lewis Dagnall, Dawn Dale, Keith Davis, Adam Hanrahan, Mark Jones, Magid Magid, Peter Rippon, Richard Shaw (Deputy Chair) and Zoe Sykes

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nasima Akther and Tony Downing.

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 Community Engagement Report, as a member of the Tenant Scrutiny Group, undertaking the independent review of services delivered by the Council Housing Service.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 7th April and 18th May 2016, were approved as correct records.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 Alan Kewley raised the following questions:-

(a) What arrangements were now in place for Members of the Committee to receive updates following meetings of the Police and Crime Panel now that the Member who used to provide such briefings (Councillor John Campbell) was no longer a Member of the Council?

(b) Further to the meeting of the Police and Crime Panel held on 8th July 2016, at which the appointment of the new Chief Constable for South Yorkshire (Stephen Watson) had been approved, and the announcement by Mr Watson that one of the police's priorities would be to increase neighbourhood involvement, could the Council take steps to improve its community involvement including re-establishing PACT (Police and Communities Together) and other such meetings?

- (c) Would it be possible for the Committee to undertake a scrutiny exercise into the role and responsibility of the Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership?

5.2 The Chair stated that, as well as requesting that written responses be provided to Mr Kewley, some of the public engagement meetings, including Neighbourhood Action Groups, had not, historically, been well attended in the past, and whilst the Council was in favour of encouraging public engagement, such meetings were not always successful due to low attendance figures. In terms of the Police and Crime Panel, he stated that he would look to make arrangements for at least two written update reports, to be submitted to this Committee during 2016/17. He added that Councillor Talib Hussain was Chair of the Police and Crime Panel, and could be asked to attend meetings to provide an update.

6. CHALLENGE FOR CHANGE - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT - UPDATE

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Challenge for Change Tenant Scrutiny Group containing a progress update against the recommendations made by the Group following its review of community engagement, presented to this Committee at its meeting in September 2014.

6.2 In attendance for the item were Catherine Hill (Manager, Community Engagement, Council Housing Service, Communities), Nassim Koriba (Manager, Communications, Resources) and Tina Gilbert (Assistant Manager, Business Strategy, Communities).

6.3 Tina Gilbert introduced the report, indicating that tenants had been invited to attend this meeting.

6.4 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- There was no specific reference to how Job Centres had been involved as this had been considered to be part of the Council Housing Service's ongoing work. The Council does not have any powers to instruct Job Centres.
- When people signed up for a Council property, the Council would obtain as much information as possible about that person. They would also be asked for their preferred method of being contacted, with a significant number of tenants choosing e-mail. This had resulted in the number of e-mail addresses on the Council's database growing considerably over the last few years, and had been recognised as the quickest, easiest and most cost-effective method of contacting tenants. They have been contacted by this method to promote tenant participation and activity, as well as being informed of a number of initiatives and campaigns. In addition, major cost savings in terms of printing and delivery costs had been made in connection with the distribution of the tenants' newsletter, which is sent out three times a

year.

- The Council Housing Service was very optimistic in terms of the opportunities and benefits Housing Plus could bring with regard to enabling people to live independently in good quality homes. It could also help to promote those areas which had Tenants and Residents' Associations (TARAs), as well as providing intelligence to TARAs on a range of issues.
- All TARAs had to comply with an agreed policy, which had helped to strengthen the Council's ability to challenge such organisations when required. The Council Housing Service worked closely with all TARAs, both to support them and ensure that they acted within the agreed policy. However, as such organisations were self-governed, it was accepted that there would always be some issues in terms of their operation.

6.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made and the responses provided to the questions raised; and
- (b) thanks the officers in attendance for responding to the questions raised and for the excellent work undertaken in connection with Challenge for Change.

7. OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE AND REMIT OF THE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

7.1 The Committee considered a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Diane Owens) providing a brief overview of the role and remit of the Committee, including details regarding areas of responsibility and legislative powers.

7.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted; and
- (b) following a request from a Member of the Committee, agrees that arrangements be made for the establishment of a Task Group to look at hate crime, to meet a maximum of four times a year and to report back to the Committee on its findings.

8. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

8.1 The Policy and Improvement Officer submitted a report containing the Committee's draft Work Programme 2016/17, which set out a number of different topics for consideration by the Committee at its scheduled meetings during 2016/17. The report also attached, as an appendice, a log of the issues looked at by the Committee during 2015/16.

8.2 Further to a query by Councillor Richard Shaw, the Chair stated that whilst a report on an update on the Housing Plus model had been earmarked for the

meeting on 6th April 2017, there would be regular briefing updates at meetings during the year. In addition to this, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee would be meeting with the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Service to receive regular updates, with any Member being able to refer any queries or questions to the Director, through them.

- 8.3 The Committee noted the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made.

9. WRITTEN RESPONSES TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 9.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the written responses to public questions report.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 10.1 RESOLVED: It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday, 22nd September 2016, at 4.00 pm, in the Town Hall.