

**MINUTES OF THE ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 7PM, ON
TUESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2020
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

Committee Members Present: Councillors N. Simons (Chair), R. Bisby, S. Bond, A. Ellis, John Fox, C. Harper, J. Howard, J. Howell, A. Iqbal, I Yasin
Co-opted Member: Parish Councillors Neil Boyce and James Hayes

Officers Present: Adrian Chapman – Service Director, Communities and Partnerships
Belinda Child - Head of Housing, Prevention and Wellbeing
Sarah Scase - Housing Needs Operations Manager
Sean Evans - Head of Housing Needs
Sharon Malia - Housing Programmes Manager
Sarah Hebblethwaite – Deputy Housing Needs Manager
David Beauchamp – Democratic Services Officer

Also Present: Councillor Steve Allen – Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Recreation
Kitran Eastman – Managing Director, Peterborough Limited
Pat Carrington – Principal, Peterborough City College

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Brown. Councillor Harper was in attendance as a substitute.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda Item 8. Portfolio Holder Progress Report – Housing Culture and Recreation

Councillor Simons declared a non-pecuniary interest on this item due to being a Board Member of Peterborough Limited. A limited dispensation had been granted by the Monitoring Officer to allow Councillor Simons to continue to speak, but not vote, on this item.

15. MINUTES OF THE ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2020.

The minutes of the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 30 September 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

16. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISIONS

There were no requests for call in to consider.

17. DRAFT AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY 2021 – 2025 AND HOUSING RENEWALS POLICY 2021 – 2024

The report was introduced by the Housing Programmes Manager and the Head of Housing, Prevention and Wellbeing. The report provided members with the opportunity to scrutinise the council's draft Affordable Warmth Strategy and the refreshed Housing Renewals Policy.

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- It was confirmed that the reduction in Care and Repair Handy Person cases to 586 was due to the COVID-19 pandemic as non-essential repairs had been delayed. Work had now restarted.
- Members asked how officers identified people with mental conditions in fuel poverty, noting that they may be harder to identify than other groups. Officers responded the Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP)'s Poverty Outreach Programme identified isolated people who would benefit from assistance. The programme had very wide, self-assessed, eligibility and it aimed to reach as many people as possible.
- Members asked how the COVID-19 lockdowns had affected the Council's ability to reach people in need of assistance. Officers responded that calls could be made to the Early Help Team from both new and existing clients and conversations about clients' home environments took place. The Council worked with community hubs to identify people in need.
- Members asked if there was sufficient funding available for Disability Facility Grants and if decisions to award these grants were made on a case by case basis. Officers responded that the Council had a statutory duty to provide mandatory Disabled Facility Grants once a person's need had been identified by an occupational therapist. Some of the Better Care Fund was specifically assigned to these mandatory grants. There were two types of discretionary grant. The first was a 'top up' to the mandatory grants of up to £20,000 beyond the £30,000 limit. The second was grant was to assist the Adult Social Care team, e.g. where conditions at home prevented discharge from hospital. This fund could also be used to make property improvements to prevent people needing to go into hospital in the first instance, e.g. by tackling hoarding. These discretionary grants were funded from the Council's Capital Programmes for renewals and it was hoped that this budget would continue to be available. The amount of funding was dependent of the needs of the person and in some cases exceeded both the statutory funding and the top-up in which case charitable and external funding would need to be sought.
- Several sources were used to generate the fuel poverty figures in section 3.4 of Appendix 1 (page 24 of the reports pack) including the English Housing Survey.
- Members referred to page 20 of the reports pack and asked how the faith and voluntary sector workers to help people with cold homes would be chosen. Members also asked how awareness would be raised among practitioners and the public about how to keep warm at home. Officers responded that the Affordable Warmth Strategy had been built in line with the NICE guidelines on preventing excess deaths, a key emphasis of which was training people to spot the signs of fuel poverty. There had been success in training many stakeholders, including covering the offerings of the LEAP service.
- Members asked how the services mention in section 4.3 on page 27 of the reports pack were promoted to people not already identified by the Council.

Officers responded that people could self-refer and would be screened for eligibility for all services. Advertising campaigns took place at events and via LEAP, Facebook, and the local partnership networks. The Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) worked on green energy schemes and undertook visits on the Council's behalf. Officers aimed to find other ways to promote the services that were available.

- Members referred to section 4.5 of Appendix 1 (page 31 of the reports pack) and asked why only 54 of 250 identified properties had been improved from an EPC rating of F or G to E. Officers responded that the figures represented those landlords who had come forward and were starting points for improvements. Future enforcement might lead to an improvement of these figures. Properties with an EPC rating of F or G should not be rented out but funding was available to assist landlords to become compliant before the end of the grace period on 1 April 2021. Landlords in selective licencing areas had been directly targeted and informed of the Green Homes Grant.
- Members asked if officers had considered using the Voluntary Sector COVID-19 support hub to promote the LEAP scheme. Officers responded that this did take place, e.g. through meetings with Think Communities Place Based Leads.

RECOMMENDATION

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to endorse the Affordable Warmth Strategy 2021-25 and Housing Renewals Policy 2021 - 2024 for approval by the Executive.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Scrutinise the draft Affordable Warmth Strategy and refreshed Housing Renewals Policy which include:
 - a) the schemes, initiatives and assistance the Council will pursue in order to tackle fuel poverty and to ensure that vulnerable, low income residents can afford to heat their home
 - b) the proposed assistance that will be available to vulnerable householders whose housing conditions are such that they may be detrimental to their health, safety, wellbeing or their ability to access their home due to disability.
2. Provide challenge where necessary and to suggest ideas and initiatives to support further activity

18. HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Recreation, the Housing Needs Operations Manager and the Head of Housing Needs. The report provided an update on the current homelessness levels, access to accommodation and support available throughout the city. The review would inform the development of the Homelessness Strategy and its strategic objectives.

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary,

key points raised and responses to questions included:

- It was confirmed that the Council kept a record of homeless veterans and discussions regarding work in this area were ongoing.
- Members praised efforts to find accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic and asked for information on the status of the 75 people who had found longer term accommodation. Officers responded that support had been provided for people to find accommodation though some arrangements had fallen through necessitating new offers being made. Mental health issues and substance misuse were common causes for the failure of accommodation arrangements.
- Members asked how the 48 people who left emergency accommodation without long term accommodation in place would be supported. Officers responded that work continued with partners (e.g. the Garden House) to help these people leave the streets. Support would always be provided and no one would be refused help.
- Members raised concerns that the closure of St. Peter's arcade and drinking restrictions on the Guildhall could move problems elsewhere. Officers responded that the support offered by the outreach team, the Safer off the Streets Partnership and the Garden House made them confident that people would not be displaced. The Service Director added that work was underway regarding St. Peter's arcade and it was important that this was undertaken in close association with colleagues from the housing team. The process would be transparent and subject to public scrutiny. There was confidence that any displacement would be rapidly identified. The benefits of the closure should be taken into account.
- Officers were confident that the prediction of 5 rough sleepers for 2020 was accurate. Outreach work took place early in the morning to identify true rough sleepers.
- Members referred to section 4.3.12 on page 97 of the reports pack and noted that the reasons for rough sleeping were multi-faceted. Officers responded that a 'housing first' approach was used for people with complex needs with other services wrapped around the initial provision of accommodation.
- Members commented that appropriate disabled parking arrangements should continue to be made and improved in the St. Peter's Road area.
- Members asked if homeless families who had been subject to domestic abuse would be placed in refuges or other accommodation more suited to families. Officers responded that this was a complex issue and a number of options were available. Refuges were not always the best option as they could displace families' support networks so temporary accommodation might be provided instead. Housing Officers worked closely with Domestic Abuse Services to find the best options for households.
- Members asked how officers ensured the suitability of properties for people with substance abuse problems under the Housing First Policy. Officers responded that these people were allocated to supported housing settings with on-site support.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED**

to:

1. Reviews the contents of the Homelessness Review and endorse the development of a new Homelessness Strategy.
2. Supports the development of the Homelessness Strategy from the information provided in the Homelessness Review.

19. PETERBOROUGH HOMES ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Recreation, the Housing Needs Operations Manager and the Deputy Housing Needs Manager. The report updated the Committee on the direction of travel for the Housing Allocations Policy, aimed to gather views from members on the proposed amendments and asked for the Committee's support for the commencement of a 12-week consultation period prior to bringing back a further report with the results of the consultation and the final draft version of the policy.

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- There was an emphasis on having a strong homelessness prevention service by prioritising applicants threatened with homelessness who were unable to be helped to stay in their current home and who agreed to work with the Council.
- Members were pleased to see a reference in the Policy proposals to supporting members of the armed forces and noted that good progress had been made in this area.
- Members sought reassurance that the policy was not being amended to reduce the number of people on the housing register.
- Members praised the proposals in section 4.1 (page 113 of the reports pack) to introduce a sliding income threshold for qualification to be on the housing register depending on the number of bedrooms required.
- Members asked what the time limit was for a person subject to an anti-social behaviour injunction to be reconsidered for inclusion on the Housing Register. Officers responded that this question would form part of the consultation. A panel would need to deem the person to be safe.
- Members asked how the panel would be made fully aware of a person's behaviour. Officers responded that they would consult with the Prevention and Enforcement Service (PES) and with landlords to identify the issues experienced with maintaining their tenancies.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Review the contents of the report and endorse the development of a Housing Allocations Policy
2. Support the commencement of the consultation period by Cabinet

20. **PORTFOLIO HOLDER PROGRESS REPORT – HOUSING, CULTURE AND RECREATION**

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Recreation, accompanied by the Managing Director, Peterborough Limited and Principal of City College Peterborough. The report was presented to the Committee to allow them to scrutinise the work being undertaken under the portfolio of the Cabinet Member.

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members thanked the Cabinet Member for his support for a new swimming pool in Werrington.
- Members requested information on the impact of the pandemic on hoarding and what was being done to address the issue. Officers responded that more waste had been collected during lockdown due to people working from home. Bulky collections had to be temporarily suspended. The Household Recycling Centre (HRC) had reopened. Members requested a briefing note on the impact of the pandemic on hoarding and what was being done to address the issue.
- Members praised the transition of services from Vivacity to the City College and Peterborough Limited in the difficult circumstances caused by the pandemic.
- Members asked how the November 2020 lockdown had impacted services. Officers responded that a number of sites had re-opened prior to lockdown including the Regional Pool and Hampton Leisure Centre. Plans had been in place for the re-opening of the swim academy. Officers were making the most of the lockdown by conducting deep cleans and ensuring facilities were ready for re-opening. The damaged 3G football pitch was being repaired. The aim was to re-open all services as soon as possible. Officers were also investigating the potential opening of the facilities shared with schools at an appropriate time. One floor of the Central Library would be open during the lockdown. It was expected that Peterborough Museum would re-open a day after the end of lockdown and invitations had been sent out.
- Members requested an update on future for the Regional Pool. The Cabinet Member responded that the opportunity to relocate the pool was being investigated and the proposal would go out for consultation.

ACTIONS

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Request a briefing note on the impact of the pandemic on hoarding and what was being done to address the issue.

21. **PROPOSAL FOR A TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO EXAMINE ISSUES WITH CAR CRUISING IN PETERBOROUGH**

The report was introduced by the Service Director, Communities and Partnerships which set out the proposed detail for the Task and Finish group agreed at Full Council on 21 October 2020, to focus on issues related to car cruises in Peterborough.

Members commented that the proposed Terms of Reference for the Group would require further refinement.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agree to the formation of a time-limited cross-party scrutiny task and finish group
2. Agree the Terms of Reference for the proposed task and finish group
3. Agree that the outcomes of the task and finish group should be presented back to the Committee at the relevant meeting

22. PROPOSAL FOR A TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO EXAMINE BARRIERS TO EQUALITY

23. PROPOSAL FOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO EXAMINE ISSUES EXPERIENCED BY BAME COMMUNITIES IN ACCESSING COUNCIL SERVICES

The reports were introduced by the Service Director, Communities and Partnerships which set out the proposed detail for the Task and Finish groups agreed at Full Council on 21 October 2020, to focus on barriers to equality and to examine issues experienced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in accessing council services.

The Service Director commented that the theme of equality was common to both proposals and the background work required by the two groups would be similar. The Director suggested that the two groups could be merged with a revised, combined terms of reference to be agreed at the first meeting of the group.

Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Iqbal, proposed merging the two Task and Finish Groups into a single group. This was UNANIMOUSLY agreed.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to

1. Agree to the formation of a time-limited cross-party scrutiny task and finish group
2. Agree the Terms of Reference for the proposed task and finish group
3. Agree that the outcomes of the task and finish group should be presented back to the Committee at the relevant meeting
4. Agree to the merging of the two Task and Finish Groups into a single group.

24. MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which enabled the committee to monitor and track the progress of recommendations made to the Executive or Officers at previous meetings.

There was UNANIMOUS approval to change the status of items marked with an asterisk to Completed.

Members requested an update regarding the Committee's recommendation to extend Selective Licensing across the whole city,

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the responses from Cabinet Members and Officers to recommendations made at previous meetings as attached in Appendix 1 to the report.
2. Request an update regarding the Committee's recommendation to extend Selective Licensing across the whole city,

25. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which invited members to consider the most recent version of the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions and identify any relevant items for inclusion within the Committee's work programme or to request further information.

There were no further comments from Members.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to consider the current Forward Plan of Executive Decisions.

26. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the item which gave members the opportunity to consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2020/21 and discuss possible items for inclusion.

ACTIONS AGREED :

The Committee noted the work programme for 2021/21

27. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

19 January 2021 – Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee

CHAIRMAN

7pm – 8.58pm