

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB- COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
26 February 2019 (7.30 - 9.00 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Keith Darvill (Chairman), Tony Durdin, Paul Middleton, Gerry O'Sullivan, Christopher Wilkins (Vice-Chair), Robby Misir, Timothy Ryan, Carol Smith and Christine Smith

Councillors Paul McGeary and Jan Sargent were also present at the meeting.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

17 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

18 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 5 December 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19 QUARTER THREE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Members received a presentation that outlined the six corporate performance indicators for Quarter Three that were reported to the Sub-Committee.

It was noted that three indicators were off target; and one was on target.

The other two indicators were demand (rather than performance) indicators so did not have a target assigned and therefore were not given a RAG status.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the on track indicator related to the Contractor Liaison. Residents continue to be consulted. There had been further consultation events on each site where residents had been updated on the latest ideas for their estates or scheme. Resident meetings were approximately every six months when there were new updates. It was noted that all 12 sites had had a meeting in September 2018.

The report stated that Housing complaints on CRM were not assigned correctly and the system was unable to differentiate more accurately the performance of housing services.

A new process had been put into place to deal with Housing complaints to bring about improvements to each of the service areas in Housing Services. It was indicated that since 5 November 2018, Complaints Officers had been allocated to each of the service areas and were being managed and directed by the Service Managers for Property and Land, Tenancy Sustainment and Housing Demand.

The most pressing issue was for each service area to reduce the current backlog of complaints before ensuring that the performance improved overall to meet the new corporate standards for response.

It was noted that the main repairs contractor Breyer's performance was 84.33% this quarter against a target of 95%. The main reason for the performance being below target was attributed to a backlog of overdue orders they had been allowed to accumulate. The Company had been working to an improvement plan and given assurances to the Council that the actions being taken would result in improved performance, by the end of the last quarter of 2018/19.

The improvement plan was not considered by Havering to be having sufficient impact and in view of this a revised plan had been developed and agreed.

The Sub-Committee were informed that the new plan was less complicated, more focussed on reducing the backlog and the contractor's resource required to achieve target to an agreed plan. The new plan would be reviewed more frequently at fortnightly meetings. Breyer were optimistic that the new plan should reduce the backlog of overdue orders, result in improved performance and allow them to achieve target by March 2019.

Members suggested that the performance data should be outlined using trends in order to identify a direction of performance.

The Sub-Committee noted the contents of the report and the presentation.

20 OPERATION OF THE HOUSING WAITING LIST

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on Operation of the Housing Waiting List. It was stated that there was a statutory requirement for local authorities to publish an Allocations Scheme that sets out in detail how households are prioritised for social housing. The Localism Act 2011 provides local authorities with considerable discretion in constructing the scheme.

In June 2016, the current Housing Allocation Scheme was approved by Cabinet and implemented from July 2016. The current policy was designed to focus resources where they are most effective, manage the demand for social housing, and allocate the limited supply of housing to those most in need.

The report provides information on how the policy is applied in the operation of the Council's housing waiting list, including the bidding and letting process.

The Council's Housing Allocations Scheme is used to determine which households are offered housing assistance. The Scheme recognises the contribution to the community from people who are in employment, former service personnel, volunteers, foster carers and carers.

It was stated that the council had a stock of approximately 9,000 affordable homes and with one of the most ambitious council home building programmes in London over the next 10 years, the Council will deliver additional homes to tackle the imbalance between supply and demand for affordable housing in the borough.

The current estimated waiting time for each priority band was detailed:

Priority band	Estimated waiting time
Emergency Band (ER)	6 months – 1.5 years
Community contribution Band 1 (CCR1)	1 – 2.5 years
Community contribution Band 2 (CCR2)	1 – 4 years
Home Seeker band (H)	4 - 8 years
Reduced Priority Band (RP)	>7 years

The Sub-Committee suggested that future update to include comparison and performance table.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Housing Services encourages tenants to downsize when there is a reduction in the household. The service offers financial incentives to tenants looking to give up unused rooms. It was stated that in 2018, 412 council properties became available for allocation in comparison to 580 in the previous year.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the position.

21 MOBILE HOME ACT ACT 2013

At the request of the sub-committee, officers provided a report that outlined an overview of the Mobile Homes Act 2013, and how it was implemented within Havering since it came into force in April 2014.

There were two licensed sites in the borough; Sunset Drive and Lakeview Park. The Local Authority have powers to refuse a licence where was considered that the site owner was not a fit and proper person.

On 26 March 2013, the Government introduced the Mobile Homes Act 2013, which was designed to give greater protection to occupiers of residential mobile (park) homes. This Act updated the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.

The Mobile Homes Act 2013 is largely concerned with amending civil legislation relating to the relationship between the site owner and mobile home owners living on the site. The Act places a duty on the Council to administer the site licences for mobile home sites. There is a fee of £378 per license, and the Council has the power to refuse a license where it considers the applicant is not a 'fit and proper' person.

It was noted that both mobile homes site have had issues reported by residents over the years. Officers have, and continue to, work closely with Site Owner to ensure they are complying with the Site License, including the issue of formal Notices and refusal to extend Lakeview Park. It was stated that the Council can apply to the Court to revoke a License in case of noncompliance.

The following site update was provided to the sub-committee:

- Sunset Drive is a site with approximately 70 homes on site and there was currently a Notice for Statutory Nuisance served on the Site Owner for poor conditions. Should the requirements of the Notice not be met further investigation and action will be taken.
- Lakeview Park has approximately 132 homes on site and the authority recently refused an application to extend the Mobile Home Site at Lake View Park, and therefore, license any homes outside the current boundary of the site.

The Sub-Committee noted that the site owner at Sunset Drive had agreed to undertake the required work. A Member sought clarification on the ownership of the road – Sunset Drive which was in a poor state.

The Sub-Committee **noted** the report.

22 **PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ADDITIONAL LICENSING SCHEME**

At its request, the Sub-Committee received a report that provided an update following the implementation of a Cabinet decision on Private Rented Sector (PRS) which has grown rapidly in Havering since 2001. This was attributed

to population growth; lower London median rents and new transport infrastructure are factors.

It was noted that Havering introduced additional licensing to cover all Homes of Multiple occupancy (HMOs) in 12 of 18 wards in late 2017 and enforcement of the scheme commenced in March 2018.

The report outlined progress over the last 12 months whereby the Council had successfully implemented the scheme with over 22 multi-agency operations conducted, 108 Financial Penalty Notices issued and 21 Statutory Notices served

Applications for the scheme commenced in January 2018. To date 201 applications have been received, this represents 48% of the predicted population. Income from license applications stands at £173,346.

The Team consists of 6 extra officers over and above the current team. The staffing costs together with on-costs such as legal fees, ICT equipment/software and training, totals an estimated £0.300m. The majority of this has been funded by the income from licensing fees and financial penalty notices totalling £0.210m. Any budget gap will be recuperated over the 5 year life of the project, together with a recent successful funding bid to the Controlling Migration Fund from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The first instalment of £0.190m has been confirmed.

The scheme is proving to be a powerful tool to address a range of issues, including poor housing conditions, ASB and overcrowding. Moreover, a clear correlation has been found between unlicensed HMOs and poor property management and conditions. Intelligence found during investigations are also shared with other council services, including Social Services and Council Tax.

Licensing powers are being used in combination with other council powers to address public health hazards found during property inspections, such as pests and damp and mould.

One of the key objectives of the scheme is to ensure all HMOs are licensed over the 5-year life of the scheme. The initial take-up has been quite low, however as landlords start to understand the consequences of not licensing it is likely that compliance rates will improve. A range of reasons have been uncovered as to why landlords fail to license HMO properties, ranging from a lack of awareness, through to tax fraud (local and national), to non-compliance with other housing and planning legislation.

It's too early to assess the impact of the scheme; however early indicators are that licensing is an effective tool to tackle criminal landlords and tenants in Havering.

In addition to licensing enforcement, the service is now using all its statutory powers to address serious hazards and disrepair cases, amongst the 97%

of PRS properties not covered by the Additional licensing scheme. With the first anniversary fast approaching following a successful first year, it is expected that compliance will reach more than 90% by the end of the 5 year scheme, and those that are not compliance are the subject of robust enforcement action. Further a review of options for licensing schemes in other parts of the borough and single dwelling rented properties has begun.

Members commended officers for the update and progress made so far.

Chairman