



Towns and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Annual Report 2020/2021

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

Members,

This year has been difficult for all our residents including those in council-run properties, social care and all other public services.

I would firstly like to thank all of the staff at the Council who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to maintain the high standards our residents are used to. They have done a superb job in ensuring that all residents in our Borough, including the most vulnerable have had access to homes throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the past year, my fellow Councillors and I on the Towns and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee have spent considerable time scrutinising and investigating the repairs programme, specifically why problems arose and how the Council could reduce the frequency of call backs and return visits and I am pleased to say that this has been a huge success.

I would like to thank officers for their work in preparing reports for the Sub-Committee alongside their day-to-day jobs, allowing myself and my colleagues on the Committee to efficiently and effectively scrutinise the council's housing strategy and allocation scheme allowing those with the greatest needs access to the high standard housing this Council provides.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Ray Best

Chairman of Towns & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee

REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Towns and Communities deals with planning and building control, the town centre strategy, licensing, housing retained services, parks, housing allocation, leisure, arts and culture

REVIEW OF ACTIVITY

This report is the annual report of the Sub-Committee, summarising the Sub-Committee's activities during its year of operation ended May 2021.

It is planned for this report to stand as a public record of achievement for the year and enable Members and others to have a record of the Committee's activities and performance.

SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Ray Best (Chairman)
Councillor Robby Misir (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Keith Darvill
Councillor Tony Durdin
Councillor Paul Middleton
Councillor Gerry O'Sullivan
Councillor Timothy Ryan
Councillor Carol Smith
Councillor Christopher Wilkins

During the year under review, the sub-committee met on 3 occasions and dealt with the following issues:

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Throughout the year the Sub-Committee continued to receive the Quarterly Performance Reports that had previously been reported to Cabinet and Demand Pressure Dashboards which illustrated the growing demands on Council services and the context that the performance levels set out in the reports had been achieved within.

UPDATE – HOUSING REPAIRS & GAS SAFETY

As part of its statutory duties as a landlord, the Council was required to undertake responsive repairs to its properties. This includes those associated with gas appliances and heating systems.

The Sub-Committee was informed of the provisions of responsive repairs and which gas safety checks has been undertaken to Council owned and managed housing stock, following on from the initial report from July 2019.

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ENFORCEMENT SCHEME 2 TO EXPAND

The Sub-Committee was presented with results following a public consultation regarding the introduction and operation of a selective private landlord licensing scheme in Romford Town and Brooklands wards, with an additional house in multiple occupation (HMO) scheme in Cranham, Emerson Park, Hacton, Hylands, St Andrews and Upminster.

HOUSING STRATEGY

The Sub-Committee received a detailed report from the Director of Housing regarding the Council's housing strategy and its ongoing commitment to provide affordable housing and to support vulnerable members of society to have a home. The strategy set out aims over the coming 5 years, 2021 – 2026, which included a 12 estate regeneration project across the Borough.

HOUSING ALLOCATION

The Local Authority is required by the Housing Act 1996 Part VI to give reasonable preference in the way they allocate their available social housing.

The Sub-Committee was briefed on how the Council allocates social housing across the Borough with a draft policy presented. The draft policy set out updated priority bands to ensure housing was allocated fairly and to those with the greatest needs.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Legal implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Human Resources implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Equalities implications and risks:

While the work of the Sub-Committee can impact on all members of the community, there are no implications arising from this specific report which is a narrative of the Sub-Committee's work over the past year.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.