

**20 MARCH 2019**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel held in The Bradbury Room, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 20 March 2019

\* Cllr S P Davies (Chairman)  
Cllr D M S Poole (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

Mrs L D Cerasoli  
\* Ms K V Crisell  
Mrs P J Lovelace  
N S Penman

**Councillors:**

\* Miss A Sevier  
\* M A Steele  
\* Mrs C V Ward  
\* Mrs P A Wyeth

\*Present

**In attendance:**

**Councillors:**

Mrs J L Cleary, Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

**Also In Attendance:**

Mr P Woodroof, Tenants' Representative

**Officers Attending:**

T Davis, R Fudge, R Knott, Miss G O'Rourke, Mrs J Stainer, Ms D Tenner,  
R Thomson and Mrs K Wardle

**Apologies:**

Cllrs Mrs Cerasoli, Mrs Lovelace, Penman and Poole.

**43 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2019 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made by members in connection with an agenda item.

**45 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

**46 FIRE SAFETY POLICY FOR HOUSING (LANDLORD SERVICES)**

The Panel considered the proposed Fire Safety Policy for Housing (Landlord Services). The Policy had been produced following Cabinet approval of the overarching corporate Fire Safety Strategy in November 2018. The Strategy proposed that all individual services would have their own fire safety policies which would detail bespoke arrangements for fire safety in the specific area. The Fire Safety Policy for Housing (Landlord Services) deals with fire safety measures for Council owned housing stock.

A review had been undertaken of fire safety measures by the Housing Management team, working closely with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services. The Policy addresses the fire risk within housing specific properties and goes over and above the current legislative requirements. The Policy clearly defines roles and responsibilities, identified legislative and regulatory duties, etc.

Information guides for tenants, tabled in Appendix 4 of the proposed Policy would be provided to residents on an annual basis.

The Stay Put principle was discussed. This was where residents of purpose-built blocks of flats would stay in their property, provided an appropriate assessment of fire compartmentation had been carried out and provided the fire was not in their property.

It was proposed that the new Fire Safety Policy for Housing Services would be implemented in April 2019, following approval by the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services.

The Panel noted the detailed work which had been involved to draft the strategy.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Fire Safety Policy for Housing (Landlord Services) be supported.

**47 PROPOSED HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2019-2023 - OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION**

The Panel considered the proposed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2023 following a statutory consultation exercise. The consultation had taken place for a period of five weeks between 15 January to 20 February 2019. As part of the consultation statutory, non-statutory agencies and organisations delivering services to vulnerable people in the District, as well as all private registered providers of social housing were invited to comment on the Strategy. The consultation had also been promoted on the Council's website and the Service Manager for Housing Options had visited various organisations including the Job Centre Plus in Ringwood, for example in order to further publicise the draft proposed Strategy.

24 responses had been received. 8 had been from organisations and 16 from members of the public or elected members. The majority of those who responded expressed their support of the Strategy, including that it had been presented in a clear, easy to read format. A summary of the consultation responses, as well as the Council's response was included as Appendix 1 to the report.

Following consultation, the Strategy had been updated to include:

- Two further actions to Strategic Priority 2, relating to support to victims of domestic abuse and to households with complex needs;
- Support to the 'Hidden homeless' and ongoing support to refuge provision in Strategic Priority 2 and 3; and
- Updated figures to reflect the up to date homelessness situation both nationally and locally.

The Council's first temporary accommodation was due to be available for occupancy from 1 April 2019 and was a step towards ending the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

The Panel requested that regular timely updates be provided on the progress of the Strategy.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the summary of responses to the statutory consultation be noted; and
- (b) That the proposed revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2023 be supported.

**48 PROPOSED HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY - OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION**

The Panel considered the consultation responses to the statutory consultation on the Housing Allocation Policy.

A consultation exercise on the Policy commenced in 15 January 2019 for a period of five weeks. A consultation document containing a summary of the proposed changes, a link to the policy and a questionnaire had been made available on the Council's website as part of the consultation. All current Homesearch applicants, as well as private registered providers of social housing, statutory and non-statutory agencies and organisations had been invited to comment on the proposed Policy. The Service Manager for Housing Options had also attended a number of meetings with different organisations to promote the consultation.

250 responses had been received. 89% had been received from current Homesearch applicants. The consultation showed the majority of those who responded to be in support of the Policy. 63% of respondents confirmed that they believed it was correct for the Council to allocate the scarce social housing with reference to an applicant's housing need rather time spent on the housing waiting list. The summary of consultation responses was included as Appendix 2 to the report. The Panel noted that there was discretion in the proposed Policy to consider individual circumstances when considering the allocation of housing bands and the need for a particular size property. Having considered the consultation responses no changes had been proposed to the Policy.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the summary of responses to the statutory consultation be noted; and
- (b) That the proposed Housing Allocation Policy be supported.

**49 UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING**

The Panel received a presentation on the Council's approach to Private Sector Housing.

A review had begun regarding how the Council discharges its Private Sector Housing functions. To facilitate the review a Task and Finish Group had been established which was Chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services. The Terms of Reference and work programme of this group was tabled to the Panel. The ultimate aim was to develop a new Private Sector Housing Strategy.

Private Sector Housing consisted of the following areas:

- Keeping housing conditions under review
- Enforcing poor standards of accommodation
- HMO Licensing
- Energy conservation and efficiencies
- Bring empty properties back into use
- Disabled Facilities Grants

The Panel noted that a new Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018, known as the Homes Act had come into force. Under the Act, landlords must ensure properties, including common parts were fit for human habitation at the beginning and throughout the duration of the tenancy. Tenants were now able to take direct legal action if the landlord did not comply with the Act. This applied to all new tenancies from 20 March 2019 and would apply to all tenancies from 20 March 2020.

The Panel would be kept informed of the work of the Task and Finish Group.

**50 HOUSING STRATEGY / HRA AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Panel received an update on the Council Housing Strategy and HRA affordable housing development and acquisition programme. The four strategic priorities of the Housing Strategy were tabled to the meeting.

Within the existing housing programme the Council had been buying back ex Council properties, building properties (for example on the Compton and Sarum and Stocklands sites), converting NFDC buildings and acquiring S106 affordable housing (for example, Pennyfarthing Homes). A delay to the Compton and Sarum scheme was reported. The Stocklands scheme was expected to be completed by August 2019.

Temporary Accommodation: The provision of temporary accommodation was a high priority for the Council. Pentagon Court would be used for temporary accommodation from April 2019. A planning application for shared accommodation had been submitted for 129 Ashley Road, New Milton. A number of other potential schemes were in the pipeline and would be coming into fruition during 2019/20.

**51 PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE**

The Portfolio Holder for Housing services reported work was progressing quickly in her Portfolio area and praised officers for their hard work.

**52 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel noted the work programme for the next municipal year. Greener housing was suggested as a future agenda item to be included in the work programme.

CHAIRMAN