

HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

4 February 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bennett (Chairman), Mrs Pendleton (Vice-Chair), Bicknell, Mrs Catterson, Mrs Haywood, Hughes, Ms Thurston and Edwards (Substitute for Mrs Cooper)

Councillors Mrs Gregory, Cabinet Member for Residential Services was also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Cooper

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

19. MINUTES

The minutes of the Housing and Customer Working Group meeting held on 5 November 2020 were approved and it was agreed that the Chairman would sign these as soon as practicably possible.

20. SOCIAL HOUSING WHITE PAPER

The Group Head of Residential Services presented her report to members, she explained that it had come from the green paper published in 2019. She summarised that this paper was to incorporate more responsibilities onto the Landlords and to ensure that accountability was held when needed. Homes would be inspected at least once every four years. The complaints process would have changes made to ensure that these would be dealt with properly, fairly and respectfully. The designated person role was to be removed and complaints would instead go to the ombudsman at this stage of the process. She explained that it was to ensure that the Council complied with its health and safety responsibilities.

Members took part in a full debate, where the following points were raised;

- Did the Group Head of Residential Services believe that the current procedure/process was up to scratch in terms of consultation with tenants
- Would there be an impact on the Council's housing stock

The Group Head of Residential Services provided full answers to the points raised, she explained that there was a review currently underway specifically looking at how resident engagement could be improved and that she did not believe that there would be a direct impact on the Council's housing stock.

The Cabinet Member for Residential Services highlighted to the Working Group that in section 1.4 of the report, that many of the required improvements were already being carried out by the Council. She further explained that it would be much easier to manage with the new IT system once implemented.

The Working Group noted the report and white paper.

21. GAINING ACCESS TO RESIDENTS HOMES POLICY

The Group Head of Residential Services presented her report to members where she explained that the policy set out exactly what legal remedies the Council would take should access be refused by tenants and that the detail of this had been set out at section 1.2 in her report and 2.1 in the policy.

Members took part in a full debate, where the following points were raised, were there a lot of instances where the Council had been refused access, how many times would the Council seek to gain entry before injunctions would be enforced and members welcomed the policy as it was very much needed for the safety of all the Councils tenants.

The Group Head of Residential Services provided full and detailed answers to all points raised.

The Working Party

RECOMMEND to CABINET that

- 1) the Access Policy be adopted; and
- 2) delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Residential Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Residential Services to make changes to the policy

22. REPORT BACK FROM CABINET/FULL COUNCIL

The recommendations made to Cabinet on 5 November 2020 were noted by members.

23. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

The Group Head of Residential Services advised members what would be covered at the next meeting of the Working Group.

There was a request for a report from Stone Pillow of which the Chairman advised that this would be better being received at the first meeting of the new committee under the new committee structure starting in May 2021, the Vice-Chairman

Subject to approval at the next Housing & Customer Services Working Group meeting

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also made comment that a presentation from Stone Pillow and other charities would be gratefully received

The Working Group noted the work programme update.

(The meeting concluded at 6.30 pm)