

COUNCIL MEETING – 11 OCTOBER 2016

REPORT OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE

27 September 2016

Present: Councillors G Lawman, Chairman, Hallam, Vice-Chairman, Scanlon, Skittrall, Stevenson and Watts

Also present: Mrs G Chapman, Principal Community Support Manager, Mr C Culling, Assistant Principal Housing Officer, Mrs E Elliott, Head of Finance, Mrs A Wilcox, Principal Environmental Health Manager and Miss K Denton, Principal Corporate Support Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that there were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the council's code of conduct and the council's constitution, the following declaration were made.

Councillor	Min. no.	Report Title	Reason
Lawman G	5	The Anti-Social Crime and Policing Act 2014	Personal - Board member of Wellingborough Homes as Council Representative

3. SERVICES COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The annexed circulated report of the Chief Executive was received in relation to the terms of reference for the Services Committee.

The terms of reference were as reported to Annual Council on 17 May 2016.

RESOLVED that the terms of reference be agreed.

R1 RECOMMENDED that the terms of reference be approved.

4. EARLY HELP NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STRATEGY 2015-20

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received, setting out Northamptonshire's approach to early help for children and their families.

All local councils have a duty under the Children Act 2004 to have due regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Over the past

two years, partners, stakeholders and users of services had worked together to redesign Northamptonshire's approach to early help for children and their families.

The strategy set out the partnership's vision for early help in the county from 2015-2020, focussing on four main areas to ensure that all:

- children are safe
- children achieve their best in education, are ready for work and have skills for life
- children grow up healthy and have improved life chances
- vulnerable children achieve the best possible outcomes

The strategy outlined the 12 objectives for the partnership with governance provided by the Early Help Partnership and additional scrutiny by the Safeguarding Children Board.

The Principal Community Support Manager addressed the meeting and explained that "early help" meant early intervention for children up to the age of 18 and occasionally up to the age of 25. The Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board was the leading board with various sub-committees, such as the Early Help Locality Forum (Wellingborough) focussing on education and health, along with an internal "Safeguarding" officer's group at the Borough Council of Wellingborough. The council's Safeguarding Policy had recently been reviewed and would shortly be issued to employees.

RESOLVED that the Early Help Northamptonshire Strategy 2015-2020 be noted.

5. THE ANTI-SOCIAL CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received to provide an overview of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and consider authorisations required to implement the provisions of the Act.

The Act had changed the way that local authorities, the Police and other agencies were able to deal with anti-social behaviour by simplifying powers and offering flexibility to give better protection for victims and communities. It repealed some sections of earlier acts and, therefore, local delegation of new powers was now needed to be considered by members.

The report set out the powers to reduce anti-social behaviour and re-offending, including:

- Civil injunctions
- Community protection notice
- Public spaces protection order
- Closure powers
- Dispersal powers

Victims also have recourse to the powers to:

- invoke a community trigger process
- input into a community remedy arrangement

The Principal Community Support Manager addressed the meeting and explained that the changes did not bring about a variation to council policy, but, required the correct governance to be in place for the quick and easier use of other powers, such as fly-tipping enforcement.

In terms of alcohol, members were advised that a Designation Public Protection Order (DPPO) did not identify a location as a no drinking zone, it merely gave powers to issue fixed penalty notices or prosecute if people were acting in an anti-social manner in that area, having consumed alcohol.

Councillor Scanlon referred to dog fouling and dogs not on a lead and suggested that adequate signage should be visible so that people are aware of orders that are in place. It was noted that it might be easier to sign those areas where dogs being off a lead was prohibited, rather than those where it was allowed. The Principal Environmental Health Manager undertook to investigate the current arrangements for signage and would ensure this was adequate in the relevant areas.

Wellingborough Homes wished to operate within the legislation and the Principal Community Support Manager explained that it was also important for them to understand the changes and the implications for them. As such it was proposed that an agreement be brought forward to the Committee for consideration.

The Chairman suggested that the resolution (d.) be re-worded to “bring forward an agreement” rather than “request a further report on the potential for an agreement” and this was agreed.

Members expressed general concern about the level of fly-tipping and that this seemed to be on the increase.

Councillor G Lawman proposed an additional recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor Hallam, as follows:

- (e) Recommend to Resources Committee that, as part of the budget setting process, it considers enhanced resources for Wellingborough Norse for enforcement against and surveillance of Anti-social Behaviour, especially fly-tipping.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

R2 RECOMMEND that:

- (i) the new powers available to the council to tackle anti-social behaviour be noted;

- (ii) delegated authority be given as required to the Chief Executive or any one of the Heads of Service to implement the provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Policing Act 2014 as set out in Appendix 2; and
- (iii) the fixed penalty levels in use across the county as recommended through the countywide ASB and hate crime group be noted and adopted.

RESOLVED:

- (iv) that an agreement be brought forward for Wellingborough Homes to become a designated housing provider, able to serve community protection warnings and notices under the Anti-social Behaviour (Authorised Persons) Order 2015/749, complementing the council's own powers; and
- (v) to recommend to Resources Committee that, as part of the budget setting process, it considers enhanced resources for Wellingborough Norse for enforcement against and surveillance of Anti-social Behaviour, especially fly-tipping.

6. REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received seeking permission for public consultation on proposed amendments to the Environmental Health Enforcement Policy.

The Policy set out the council's approach to its statutory obligations within Environmental Health legislation and had been reviewed to take into account changes in legislation, other guidance and codes of practice.

The Principal Environmental Health Manager responded to points from members and advised that a stated aim of the Food Standards Agency included focus on displaying "Scores on the Doors" information.

Councillor G Lawman raised concern about leaflet distribution, particularly around the town centre and, whilst acknowledging that this was outside of the licensing regime, asked for it to be looked into as it was understood that a permit scheme had been considered previously.

RESOLVED that the Environmental Health Service Enforcement Policy be subject to public consultation.

7. HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received to seek approval of amendments to the Housing Allocation Policy with effect from 1 November 2016.

The last review of the Policy had taken place in 2013 and since then the local and national housing market environment had significantly changed.

The report identified a number of proposed changes to:

- Local connection: residency in the Borough of Wellingborough and employment
- Recoverable housing debt
- Sheltered/independent living accommodation
- Statutory homeless applicants
- Overcrowding
- Notice to vacate
- Right to move
- Exceptional circumstances

The Committee was informed that since publishing the report, the software provider of the housing allocations system had advised of a cost associated to one of the proposed changes. The Head of Finance advised that this cost could be met from within the existing budget of the service.

The Assistant Principal Housing Officer addressed the meeting to summarise the purpose of the review and advised that the intention was also to make the policy fairer and more equitable for those in financial hardship, reduce the demands on the service and reduce the cost of temporary accommodation. .

The Committee was advised that the change to “right to move” was aimed at people living in social housing outside of the Borough but who needed to move to be closer to their work in the Borough.

RESOLVED that amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy be approved for implementation from 1 November 2016.

8. REVIEW OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING POLICY

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received to seek approval of a number of changes as a result of new and revised legislation.

The Assistant Principal Housing Officer addressed the meeting and added that the review also sought to provide improvements to the delivery of the service.

Members referred to the Empty Property Points System, detailed at Appendix A to the report and were advised that when giving consideration to a property in poor repair, the surrounding land would also be taken in to account.

The Committee was advised that the number of empty properties had reduced over recent years from around 450 to less than 200 and focus was generally directed at properties empty for more than 2 years.

The Head of Finance explained that Compulsory Purchase Orders would be used as a last resort and officers attempt to work with the property owners by other means wherever possible.

The Assistant Principal Housing Officer referred to the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide (England) Regulations 2015. The new powers allowed the council to require a landlord to install the necessary alarms within 28 days of issuing a notice and he explained the principles on which the penalties for non-compliance were proposed to be based, identified in Appendix B.

RESOLVED to:

- (i) approve the proposed changes to the Private Sector Housing Policy at Appendix A to the report;
- (ii) approve the Statement of Principles and Charges in Appendix B to the report; and
- (iii) recommend to Resources Committee that the fees specified in 6.5 of the report be adopted in the council's schedule of fees.

R3 RECOMMENDED that the powers listed in 5.2 of the report be delegated to the Head of Planning and Local Development.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 8.00pm.