

BUSINESS AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE

7 October 2019

Attendance:

Councillors
Hiscock (Chairperson)

Rutter
Craske

Gottlieb

Deputy Members:

Councillor Godfrey (Standing Deputy for Councillor Scott)
Councillor Horrill (Standing Deputy for Councillor Lumby)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Learney (Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management) and
Thompson (Leader and Cabinet Member for Communications).

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillors Bronk and Weir (Cabinet Member for Local Economy)

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Humby, Lumby and Scott

2. **DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Gottlieb declared an interest in any matters that might relate to the St Clement Street Surgery and the regeneration of central Winchester under the item relating to the new Council Strategy. There were no direct references to these matters during consideration of this item and he spoke and voted on this item.

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting TACT representatives: Mrs M Gill and Mr M Fawcitt.

4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18 JUNE 2019**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 June 2019 be approved and adopted.

5. **TO NOTE THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2019/20**

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme for 2019/20 be noted.

6. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Representations from the public are set out under the respective item where the Chairperson invited contributions from the TACT representatives.

7. **TENANT SURVEY RESULTS - PRESENTATION**

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management and the Housing Policy and Projects Manager gave a presentation on the results of the Tenant Survey.

During Public Participation, in summary, the representatives of TACT asked questions and raised comments, which were responded to where appropriate:

- Residents of sheltered housing were reluctant to be kept in a long queue on the telephone to access Housing Services.
- There were continued challenges in engaging young tenants to become involved with TACT.
- The views of those undertaking the survey would be analysed in depth.
- In answer to a question on Social Housing Green Paper: A New Deal for Social Housing it was commented by the Strategic Director: Services (Interim) that the Government was rethinking its housing policy.

Members raised questions and also commented regarding the following:

Stanmore

- There were lower levels of tenant satisfaction in Stanmore and could these results be attributed to the demographics of the area, for example tenants being younger and not on benefits.
- In depth analysis was required to establish why Stanmore delivered lower results of tenant satisfaction as this area contained a high number of council houses and the figures from Stanmore affected the overall total results.

Internet and WiFi

- It was established that WiFi was directly provided at all sheltered schemes by the Council and that general needs tenants self provided. An outcome of the survey might be to identify take up of the Internet at

the sheltered housing schemes.

- It was enquired whether access to the Internet also had a link to the take up of benefits.
- It was asked if the Council encouraged tenants that were not on the Internet to take up this provision to enhance their access to Council services and was there a range of other methods of communication including paper form?
- It was requested that the results for the reporting of faults online through the customer portal be circulated to Members.

General

- It was asked how the demographic makeup of tenants was changing across the District over time and what the trend for those receiving benefits was.
- It was commented that other registered housing providers had comparatively higher rates of dissatisfaction from tenants. There was evidence of demand from tenants of other registered housing providers wishing to become council tenants which could impact on the Council's future strategy.
- It was commented that the public's understanding of the difference in the level of care provided between extra care and sheltered housing should be improved so that provision could be matched with tenant expectation.
- It was noted that tenants that received benefits were more satisfied than those that did not receive benefits and it was enquired whether the changes to universal credit had impacted on this result.
- Following the Grenfell fire it was asked whether future risks to housing were scanned for.
- It was asked how improvements to repairs and maintenance would be delivered as this was a top service priority.
- It was commented that including Leaseholders in future surveys be considered and it was noted that they were included in the fire safety survey.

At the conclusion of debate the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management stated that consideration would be given to the channels of contact between tenants and the Council and whether they were effective and how they could be improved, including by Internet and telephone contact. Further consideration would also be given to the Stanmore area to improve tenant satisfaction.

The Strategic Director: Services (Interim) added that the results would be analysed to feed into the emerging business plan which would be brought to this Policy Committee later in the year.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management and the Housing Policy and Projects Manager thanked Members and TACT representatives for their input.

RESOLVED:

That the Presentation be noted.

8. **NEW COUNCIL STRATEGY - PRESENTATION**

The meeting received a presentation from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Communications and Transformation and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management on the new Council Strategy.

Members raised questions or commented regarding the following:

Challenges We Face

- In reply to questions asking how the challenges listed on page 6 of the presentation were defined (for example, how was it known that young people were not retained in the District and that Winchester had inequality in mental health wellbeing over and above those the other surrounding towns and also questions related to the changes in technology and its impact on the economy and how the Council would address these), the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management stated that the evidence was available to support their inclusion and would be contained in an annexe to the strategy.
- It was asked how the Council would work in partnership to address issues such as public transport (with Hampshire County Council) and mental health wellbeing.
- It was suggested that the strategy should be developed through a method plan to be very clear on how the challenges would be responded to. For example, to address the changing pattern of employment within Winchester from the effects of technological change and virtually working (with home working reducing the number commuter of trips per week from Winchester station to London) and also considering the provision of start-up businesses.

Retaining young people in the District

- It was suggested that the strategy needed to define the methods that would be undertaken to attract and retain younger people to the District.
- It was suggested that the strategy required more emphasis on the need for affordable business spaces to retain young people in the area.

Key Projects

- It was suggested that the strategy include reference to key projects such as the Carfax and the Cattle Market sites as part of the Council's consideration of the wider use of town centre properties and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management stated that this would be given consideration.
- It was suggested that the future of the former River Park Leisure Centre site be the subject of wide consultation and not just with the residents of the Winchester Town area. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Communications and Transformation responded that this would be achieved through the Local Plan process which would be run separately to the consultation on the Council's Strategy.

Other

- It was suggested that acknowledgment should be made in the strategy of non operational Council resources, such as its offices, landholdings and the Guildhall.
- It was suggested that mention should be included in the strategy of the Council's staff and this inclusion was agreed by the Leader and Cabinet Member for Communications and Transformation and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management.
- It was commented that the five week period for consultation was too short a period.
- It was commented that the District should be recognised in the strategy as well as the town area.
- That the terminologies of transformation programme and carbon neutral should be defined.

The representatives of TACT commented on:

- The need to take action to balance the Council's finances in view of challenging budget forecasts.
- The effects of retaining young people in the area on the provision of Council housing, and;
- Economic planning and the allocation of employment land in the Local Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the Presentation be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.35 pm

Chairperson