

Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 February 2015 at 7.00 pm

- Present:** Councillors Gerard Rice (Chair), Barry Johnson (Vice-Chair), Chris Baker, Susan Little and Susan Shinnick
- Apologies:** Councillor Sue Gray
- In attendance:** Councillor Lynn Worrall
Kathryn Adedeji, Head of Housing, Investment and Development
Barbara Brownlee, Director of Housing
Leanna McPherson, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

22. Minutes

The Minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 7 January 2015, were approved as a correct record.

23. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

24. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

25. Sheltered Housing Decommissioning - Next steps

The Director of Housing introduced the report to Members which considered how the Council would complete the decommissioning of sheltered housing schemes following the Sheltered Housing Review which came before the Committee on 16 July 2014.

The Committee noted that due to the double purdah periods that the Council experienced in 2014, the department was delayed in this process.

The Committee were advised that Phase 1 of decommissioning would cover the following schemes:

- Langland and Nottage
- St Cedds
- Chichester Close

Any decommissioning taking place would have the following principles:

1. It was intended that no tenant would be forced to move from their current accommodation.
2. Tenants would receive a disturbance payment which would cover the cost of moving, storage and reasonable new furnishings needed in their new property.
3. Tenants would be supported by a dedicated officer to help them with the decommissioning.

The Committee were further advised that the Council was in need of one bedroom properties due to the condition of the current housing market, however it was noted that properties would not be re-let until they were empty.

RESOLVED: To note the report and endorse the approach to decommissioning of the identified units/schemes.

26. Draft Housing Strategy 2015-2020

The Director of Housing introduced the report to Members and gave a detailed presentation on the draft Housing Strategy 2015-2020.

The aim was to create an engaging and aspirational document for both internal and external stakeholders. The Strategy would define the inherent relationship with health and wellbeing and support Thurrock Council's Corporate Plan and five strategic priorities. The vision for the strategy was:

Thurrock is a destination of choice with growing healthy and prosperous communities, living in high quality housing across all tenures where residents are empowered to help themselves, and supported with consistently excellent services.

There were three core priorities that underpin the Housing Strategy vision:

- Core Priority 1 – Raising the Bar: Delivering high quality housing and services.
- Core Priority 2 – In on the Ground Floor: Proactively supporting residents to maximise health, wellbeing and employment outcomes.
- Core Priority 3 – Looking Ahead: Creating sustainable communities and boosting housing supply.

Each core priority was supported by objectives and an action plan detailing how this will be realised between 2015 and 2020. The Strategy had been developed in consultation with key stakeholders and was supported by a robust evidence base.

The Committee considered the report and presentation before them and welcomed the draft Housing Strategy at a time when young people were struggling with the current housing market and conditions.

The Committee raised concerns that salaries within the Borough were still not high enough to enable first time buyers to purchase properties.

The Director of Housing advised the Committee that the message was getting out to residents that the housing provided by the Council was of a good quality. Gloriana proposals were moving forward well and would provide high quality affordable properties within the Borough.

The Committee were also concerned that some London Boroughs were using private landlords to re-house their homeless residents in Thurrock. This could result in an increased number of homeless residents in Thurrock once the agreements ended, which was a concern for both Members and officers. It was noted that this practice was not used by Thurrock Council.

Further questions were raised by the Committee in relation to antisocial behaviour within the Councils housing Stock and antisocial behaviour orders. In response, the Cabinet Member for Housing advised the Committee that although the Antisocial Behaviour Team was currently small, there were plans in place to expand it to tackle antisocial behaviour across the Borough. Information on antisocial behaviour orders would be circulated to the Committee separately.

The Chair congratulated and commended the Director of Housing and the Housing Team for their hard work in developing a Housing Strategy for the Borough.

RESOLVED: To endorse the Housing Strategy and proposed actions to 2020.

27. Work Programme

The Committee noted the work programme and requested that an item concerning garages be brought back to a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To note the work programme.**
- 2. To include an item on garages at a future meeting.**

The meeting finished at 7.59 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**