



**MILTON KEYNES
COUNCIL**

Minutes of the meeting of the HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2013 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Coventry (Chair)
Councillors Bradburn, M Burke, Hoyle, Kennedy, Klein, O'Neill, C Williams and Wallis

Officers: L Ellen (Head of Housing Management), C Caves (Head of Housing Access), N Hanley (Community Solutions Programme Manager) and Z Dhamani (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Exon

Also Present: Councillor Bald, S Jarman (Opinions Research Services), J Lee (Opinions Research Services) and 6 members of the public

HC07 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 July 2013 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

HC08 PRIVATE RENTED PROPERTY LICENSING CONSULTATION UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation on the interim findings from the consultation on private rented property licensing, from representatives of Opinions Research Service (ORS), who were carrying out the consultation on behalf of the Council. It was noted that the consultation was due to end on 1 November 2013.

The presentation included the following points:

- (a) background and experience of ORS;
- (b) the approach taken to engagement during the consultation and further areas of work;
- (c) a high level analysis of the responses received so far which included:
 - (i) a comparison with incidents of antisocial behaviour against areas with a high proportion of privately rented accommodation, and
 - (ii) a comparison between social rental properties and antisocial behaviour incidents;

- (d) an overview of the household survey where six wards were targeted due to the high proportion of privately rented accommodation;
- (e) the interim high level analysis of the:
 - (i) range of stakeholders who had responded; and
 - (ii) the views of landlords and the views of individuals;
- (f) a summary of the feedback from the Landlords Forum; and
- (g) a summary of the next steps, which included interviews with stakeholders and the receipt of further responses to the consultation.

The Committee noted the following points:

- (a) that concerns had been raised regarding the availability of the questionnaire in hard copy format;
- (b) that concerns had been raised regarding the length of the survey, but it was acknowledged that this was due to the questionnaire being designed to enable responses to be sought from a range of stakeholders to inform the decision making process; and
- (c) that the Committee was particularly keen to see the results broken down by estate and type of tenure when the results were presented to Committee in December.

The Chair thanked the representatives from ORS for their update.

HC09

FIXED TERM (FLEXIBLE) TENANCIES

The Committee received the report which was to be presented to the Cabinet on 16 October 2013, on progress on a Council Tenancy Policy, which included proposals for the development of fixed term (flexible) tenancies. The report highlighted the need for further research to be carried out before conclusions were drawn on the way forward for a Tenancy Policy for Milton Keynes.

Members of the public, present at the meeting, raised concerns regarding the flow of communication during the consultation and engagement process, particularly at resident association meetings.

The Committee also raised concerns regarding the low level of feedback to the consultation.

Officers reported that it was considered important to seek the views of existing and future tenants on this issues and that people who attended options interviews had been asked to complete the questionnaire.

The Committee discussed the need for further research to be carried out and considered the need for this to include the impact on communities and future tenants.

RESOLVED -

That the Cabinet be recommended, in developing a Tenancy Policy to take account of the following view of the Housing and Communities Select Committee with regard to Fixed Term (flexible) Tenancies:

‘That a Tenancy Policy be developed that does not contain a firm decision about the adoption of Fixed Term (Flexible) Tenancies, but which commits to carrying out more research which includes a reasoned business case; a financial assessment; an impact assessment on future tenants; and an impact assessment on communities, so allowing the Cabinet to come to a informed view on an approach to Fixed Term (Flexible) Tenancies at a later date.’

HC10 COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER PROGRAMME

The Committee received an update on the Community Asset Transfer Programme and commended officers for the valuable monthly update circulated, which provided relevant information on the progress made.

HC11 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVIEW GROUP

The Committee received an update on the outcomes from the work of the Homelessness Strategy Review Group, which presented its report and recommendations to the Cabinet in September 2013.

It was noted that it was now proposed that officers undertake further work on the Homelessness Strategy, incorporating the recommendations of the Group, and present the revised Strategy to this Committee for further consideration.

HC12 REFERRALS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

It was reported that the Corporate Affairs and Performance Select Committee, at its meeting held on 23 July 2013, considered the quarterly performance report and requested that this Committee consider performance indicator MKC 027 (End to end time [days] for re-letting of empty Council homes [a tenant moving out and a new tenant moving in]) which had not met its target.

Officers had provided details of the factors which impacted on this performance indicator and the work which had begun to take place to address the performance.

Officers highlighted that some properties take longer to let than others and this impacted on the average figure for vacant properties.

Members also raised the impact the completion of maintenance to properties, once they became vacant, had on re-letting and how this could be addressed, so both improving performance and also ensuring people were housed efficiently.

Members discussed the need for further work to be undertaken to address this issue and suggested that consideration be given to seeking external experience, in particular to investigate how other local authorities managed their housing stock.

RESOLVED

1. That Audit Committee be requested to consider carrying out an audit of void Council housing properties which will include the full implications of the cost of voids to the Council, both in terms of financial cost and the impact on Council performance and that any audit draws on both internal officer views and practice elsewhere, including other registered social landlords and, if appropriate, the private sector.
2. That, if the Audit Committee agrees to undertake an audit, the Select Committee consider the report as soon as possible.
3. That officers be requested to bring a report to this Committee on the work which is currently being undertaken on the review of building services for Council properties before the findings are submitted to Cabinet.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9:24 PM