

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS O&S COMMITTEE –
PUBLIC MEETING**

1400 hours on Tuesday 12th March 2019, Committee Room 6

Present:

Councillor Penny Holbrook (Chair)

Councillors Akhlaq Ahmed, Deirdre Alden, Gurdial Singh Atwal, Marje Bridle, Eddie Freeman, Roger Harmer and Mahmood Hussain

Also Present:

Councillor Karen McCarthy

Councillor Julien Pritchard

Guy Chaundy, Senior Service Manager, Housing

Julie Griffin, Acting AD, Housing

Colette McCann, Acting Head of Development

Chris Neville, Acting Director, Regulation and Enforcement

Karl Robinson, Housing Trailblazer Lead/PRS Team Manager

Jayne Bowles, Scrutiny Officer, Scrutiny Office

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chairman advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.civico.net/birmingham) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

3. APOLOGIES

None.

4. ACTION NOTES

(See document no 1)

RESOLVED:

- The action notes of the meeting held on 8th January 2019 were agreed.

5. ACTION TRACKER

(See document no 2)

The action tracker was discussed and the following points were made:

- Performance Reporting will in future be programmed on a more regular basis;
- Localisation will stay with Co-ordinating O&S Committee and members of this Committee will be invited to attend meetings when this item is on the agenda.

RESOLVED:

- The action tracker was noted.

6. OPTION TO RETURN POLICY FOR HOUSING REGENERATION SCHEMES

(See document no 3)

Julie Griffin, Acting AD, Housing, Guy Chaundy, Senior Service Manager, Housing, and Colette McCann, Acting Head of Development, attended for this item.

Councillor Julien Pritchard was also in attendance.

The following were among the main points raised:

- The final report had not been written and therefore a presentation had been produced for the meeting;
- Members will still want to see the full report before it goes to Cabinet and it was therefore agreed that this would be brought to Committee in April;
- In response to concerns around the timing of reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny, the Chair undertook to raise this with the other O&S Chairs to understand what is happening in other meetings;
- The motion to City Council had asked for a right to return policy, however this refers to an option to return policy and a request was made for this to be looked at;
- Members asked for a stronger emphasis to be placed on the importance of keeping communities together;
- Early engagement is critical and this has been evidenced with the Druids Heath consultation where, as of a couple of weeks ago, there had been a 40% return rate and of that 40%, 50% said they would like to consider the option to return;
- There is a need to draw on good examples of previous returner schemes;
- The understanding is that moves will be on tenure likeness, so anyone already in a secure tenancy will move to a secure tenancy;
- Each individual scheme will have a Local Lettings Plan, written into the allocations policy to deliver what is required locally and an example of a local lettings plan will be included with the Cabinet report;
- Members expressed some concern around eligibility criteria and the need to look at individual cases to manage supply and demand versus offering like for

like and were advised that the Local Lettings Plan is where flexibilities would be picked up;

- There was further concern regarding exclusions and it was suggested that some re-wording is needed in relation to exclusion due to rent arrears, where it was pointed out that if there is an issue with rent arrears this should be managed in the current property;
- Members asked that something be included in the policy around people who have been in temporary accommodation long enough to be part of the community to get them a permanent move into that area if that is their wish. It was confirmed that this could be written into the local lettings plan.

RESOLVED:

- Cabinet report to be brought to Committee in April;
- Chair to raise the issue of timings of reports with the other O&S Chairs.

7. PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR – LICENSING AND ENFORCEMENT

(See document no 4)

Julie Griffin, Acting AD, Housing, and Karl Robinson, Housing Trailblazer Lead/PRS Team Manager, attended for this item.

Councillor Karen McCarthy, Chair of Planning, was also in attendance.

The following were among the main points raised:

- A presentation was given which included an overview of the PRS service powers, strategic development and funding;
- Members were told that there had been a major delay to PRS service capacity due to the Northgate IT solution not being fit for purpose and there was a request that Committee be kept informed regarding an alternative solution and recovery of costs;
- Extra staff are being recruited which will give capacity to catch up with the backlog of work until the IT system is fit for purpose;
- With regard to the selective licensing proposals for Stockland Green and Soho and additional licensing proposal for Selly Oak, Counsel advice had been sought around implementation and concerns had been raised around the robustness of the evidence base;
- The service has therefore redeveloped the approach to ensure reduced chance of challenge and data will be gathered and mapped; the service will then put together a report recommending the areas that require action to be taken;
- If Members are aware of further data sets which could be used then they should let Karl know so they can be added to the evidence base;
- The Chair asked that, with the Cabinet Member's permission, Committee receive a report back with the options;
- Members were told that in order to take a city-wide approach we have to evidence why we need it;

- In response to a question relating to what is happening in other areas and what we can learn from other Local Authorities, Members heard that the Cabinet Member and Acting AD, Housing, had visited Liverpool who have adopted a city-wide approach and they have been invited to come and talk to BCC about their approach;
- The Acting AD, Housing, undertook to circulate to Members a briefing note on Enforcement, with the offer of an informal briefing session afterwards if Members felt this would be useful;
- Planning are consulting on a design development guide with new HMOs and family housing; the consultation is open for another couple of weeks and is looking at a 10% threshold city-wide and two new ideas – that a family dwelling should not be between HMOs and there should not be a continuous frontage of 3 or more non-family residential uses;
- Officers will also be bringing forward a new student accommodation policy;
- A request was made that Planning and the PRS team provide numbers around how often enforcement powers are being used;
- Members were told about the Council's successful Access Fund bid to MHCLG which had secured £371,000 to deliver 150 PRS properties for either homeless prevention, relief or discharge of duty;
- The Chair said that she would meet with officers over the next month or so to develop a draft report for Committee's consideration.

RESOLVED:

- Committee to be kept informed with regard to procurement and legal issues with regard to the IT system procured not being fit for purpose;
- Selective Licensing report to Cabinet to be brought to Committee;
- Briefing note on Enforcement to be provided to Members and an informal session to be held if required;
- Members to be provided with figures from Planning and PRS showing how often enforcement powers are being used;

8. UPDATE ON CT SCANNER FOR BIRMINGHAM CORONER

(See document no 5)

Chris Neville, Acting Director, Regulation and Enforcement, attended for this item.

The following were among the main points raised:

- Meetings had been held with the Black Country Authorities to discuss the scope for a new regional coroner's court and mortuary;
- It has been agreed to commission a feasibility study to look at cost savings and where that facility could be built;
- With regard to digital autopsies, the stumbling block remains the cost, with few, if any, savings to be attached;

- A meeting had taken place the previous week with a presentation from iGene, who were asked to consider what the cost would be if Birmingham sent every case to the scanner;
- The council has not, however, as yet identified a budget and there is also the need to take into account that post mortems would take longer;
- One option would be for people to be invited to pay for a digital autopsy, which is the case at the moment if families do not want an invasive post mortem;
- Members asked for the facts and figures discussed at the meeting to be circulated once the Cabinet Member had been briefed and the Chair undertook to request this information from the Cabinet Member.

RESOLVED:

- Chair to request from the Cabinet Member the facts and figures discussed at the meeting with the Black Country Authorities and iGene.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document no 6)

The work programme was discussed and the following items were agreed for the April meeting:

- Update on Universal Credit;
- Option to Return Cabinet Report;
- Commonwealth Games Village – housing development.

The Chair confirmed that she will meet with officers to develop a draft PRS report and offered an open invitation to Members if they wish to be part of drafting the report.

RESOLVED:

- The work programme was noted.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted.

11. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

12. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair advised Committee that she had given her agreement to a report on the waste industrial dispute going to Cabinet on 15 March.

13. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

RESOLVED:

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 1614 hours.