

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING AND HOMES O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1400 hours on Tuesday 17 October 2017, Committee Rooms 3&4

Present:

Councillor Victoria Quinn

Councillors Gurdial Singh Atwal, Andy Cartwright, Matthew Gregson, Roger Harmer, Des Hughes, Mohammed Idrees, Mary Locke, Gary Sambrook and Ron Storer

Also Present:

Matt Green, Director of Skylight Birmingham and Coventry, Crisis

Rob James, Service Director, Housing

Sukvinder Kalsi, AD, Finance, Place

Kalvinder Kohli, Service Lead, Commissioning Centre of Excellence

Michael Walsh, Service Lead, Commissioning Centre of Excellence

Jayne Power, Research & Policy Officer, Scrutiny Office

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chairman advised the meeting to note that this meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Penny Holbrook and Margaret Waddington.

3. ACTION NOTES – 20 SEPTEMBER 2017

(See document No 1)

Members requested that the following issues with regard to waste collections be followed up with Jacqui Kennedy, Corporate Director, Place:

- The quality of information being given to residents;
- The return to normal collections did not appear to have gone smoothly.

RESOLVED:-

- Responses to the above issues to be requested from Jacqui Kennedy and a deadline of one week to be given for these to be provided.

4. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

(See document No 2)

Rob James, Service Director, Housing and Sukvinder Kalsi, AD, Finance, attended for this item.

The following were among the main points raised:

- The briefing note provided an overview and introduction to the key principles around the HRA;
- The business plan is updated annually to take into account new risks and will have to be adjusted to accommodate other pressures;
- The business plan had to be re-modelled to save £42m over the next 4 years due to the 1% rent reduction policy but from 2021 the rent policy will revert back to CPI plus 1%;
- There will need to be further amendment to the business plan to meet the £31m cost for the retro-fit of sprinkler systems in tower blocks, although the Cabinet Member and Leader are still lobbying for Government funding;
- With regard to the accuracy of the £31m figure for sprinklers, early indications are that this figure is fairly accurate, although as demand goes up this may increase;
- In terms of other works which might be identified, the priority is fire safety. Any refurbishment works will be done from money set aside in the capital programme but the intention is if possible to carry out these works at the same time as the fitting of sprinkler systems, so it will be a lengthy programme of works;
- In terms of numbers of different housing types across the city, there are currently 62,000 council houses, 40,000 housing association properties, 78,000 private rented and the rest privately owned.
- That provision is insufficient to meet demand and it is estimated that there could be up to 20,000 people at risk of becoming homeless at any one time. It is therefore important to get prevention right and get the building rate right and the Housing Birmingham Partnership was set up to address this.

RESOLVED:-

- Clarification to be sought from the Cabinet Member, either in writing or in person, on the position with regard to the retro fit of sprinklers in tower blocks.

5. ALLOCATIONS UPDATE

(See document No 3)

Rob James, Service Director, Housing, and Mike Walsh, Service Lead, Commissioning Centre of Excellence, attended for this item.

The following were among the main points raised:

- The Chair referred to the ward by ward breakdown of people who had not re-registered, which had previously been circulated to Members, and tabled two sheets showing these figures as percentages sorted by (i) rate and (ii) numbers;
- Members expressed concern with regard to the 46% who have not re-registered and officers agreed that some analysis needed to be done and that once completed this would be brought back to Committee;
- In response to a question around turnaround time for applications to be assessed, Members were advised that the service standard is 6 weeks. That is not being met and is currently around 7 weeks, however more applications are being assessed than are being received and it is hoped that the standard will be met by mid to end November;
- Officers told Members that they would look at the process of changing an area on an application form without having to re-start the application;
- With regard to Jim Crawshaw's secondment to DCLG, Members were advised that Julie Griffin had been appointed to replace him and would be starting on 20th November. In the meantime, Jim's email account has been kept open and is being monitored, and queries re-directed, by Andrew Brocklehurst. Jim will also be spending one day a month in Birmingham during his secondment;
- Councillor Atwal raised the issue of the omission of a category for the Sikh community in the ethnic monitoring and officers undertook to look into this and provide a response.

RESOLVED:-

- Response to be provided on the issue raised by Cllr Atwal with regard to ethnic monitoring and the omission of a category for the Sikh community;
- Results of the analysis of the 46% of people who had not re-registered to be brought back to Committee once completed;
- Note to be provided for Members on what they can do to help in their advice surgeries with regard to managing expectations.

6. HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

(See document No 4)

Kalvinder Kohli, Service Lead, Commissioning Centre of Excellence, and Matt Green, Director of Skylight Birmingham and Coventry, Crisis, attended for this item.

The following were among the main points raised:

- The development of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy is progressing and feedback from the recent consultation is currently being analysed;
- There has been good feedback on the approach being taken and Crisis are leading on some work around engaging with people with lived experience of homelessness;

- The Positive Pathway Task & Finish groups are being led by partners and will be wrapped up at the end of November, with the Strategy due to go to Cabinet in December and City Council in January;
- There was a suggestion that Andy Street be invited to a future committee meeting to talk to Members about the West Midlands Homelessness Task Force;
- With regard to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the financial implications for local authorities, Members were advised of the recent announcement from Government with regard to £72m new burdens funding, of which Birmingham will be allocated £1.7m.

RESOLVED:-

- The update was noted.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2017-18

(See document No 5)

- The Chair suggested inviting the Cabinet Member to attend the November meeting to give a political steer on the items covered at the last couple of sessions.

RESOLVED:-

- Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes to be invited to attend the November meeting.
- The Work Programme was noted.

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

None.

9. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted.

11. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

Agreed.

The meeting ended at 1645 hours.