

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**PERRY BARR DISTRICT
COMMITTEE THURSDAY,
17 MARCH, 2016**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PERRY BARR
DISTRICT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 17
MARCH, 2016 AT 1500 HOURS, IN COMMITTEE
ROOM 6, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM, B1 1BB**

PRESENT: - Councillor Mahmood Hussain in the Chair;

Councillors Tristan Chatfield, Barbara Dring, Jon Hunt, Narinder Kooner, Keith Linnecor, Hendrina Quinnen and Waseem Zaffar

ALSO PRESENT: -

Neil De-Costa – Perry Barr Lead Officer
Kate Foley – Acting Senior Service Manager (Central West)
Dave Hodgetts – West Midlands Fire Service
Louisa Nisbett – Committee Manager

NOTICE OF RECORDING

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

The whole of the meeting will be filmed except where there are confidential or exempt items.

APOLOGIES

993 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Gurdial Singh Atwal, Paulette Hamilton, Ray Hassall and Karen Trench for their inability to attend the meeting.

MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

- Page 7, Corporate Parenting - Councillor Dring said there was lack of information about Corporate Parenting and the meetings etc. Neil De-Costa was waiting for a response from the Assistant Director. Councillor Linnecor suggested that any related training or meetings be arranged to take place prior to the District Committee meeting rather than on a separate day.

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- Councillor Waseem Zaffar asked that it be noted that he had left the meeting before the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust item had been discussed at the last meeting and he had therefore not been present to declare an interest.

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RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the last meeting on 28 January, 2016 having been previously circulated be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

CODE OF CONDUCT

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The Code of Conduct related to District Committees was received and noted:

(See document no. 1)

FLEET AND WASTE

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Apologies were received from Lisa Trickett, Cabinet Member who was unable to attend the meeting owing to a bereavement.

LANDLORD SERVICES ANNUAL VISITS

The following report of the Head of Landlord Services was received and noted:-

(See document no. 2)

During the discussion that ensued the following points were made:-

- This was the first time that an annual visiting programme of this type had been carried out. The programme provided meaningful and proactive engagement with tenants.
- 52,269 properties had been visited representing 82% of the properties. The questions asked had changed during the process.
- A number of vulnerable tenants had been identified and issues including tenants with no utilities, hoarding and self-neglect. Support had been given to those tenants.
- Although there had been some concerns about Social Housing Fraud no enforcement action had been taken. The suspected fraud was of a low level and some were an error on behalf of the tenant which the local team were assisting to resolve.
- The team ensured that tenants were able to recognise anti-social behaviour and how to report it.

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- 2,019 tenancy breaches identified ranged from minor breaches eg. Installing a satellite dish and where permission would have been granted if it had been requested to serious breaches such as overgrown gardens and unauthorised alterations to the home.
- The process had been well received by tenants. A handful said the process was intrusive. A number of tenants had been identified who wanted to get involved with the activities of the Council.
- Some gardens that were below standard had been referred to the vulnerable garden scheme.
- A large number of tenants had benefitted from advice and referrals for advice about their rents and the rent officer was working with them.
- Some tenants had reported outstanding repairs.
- 5,200 Fire and Safety checks had been raised as a result of the programme enabling the Fire Service to visit their homes.
- By the end of March 100% of properties should have been visited.
- There were 3 key areas for Landlord Services, Street Scene, Welfare Reform and Estates Management.
- Councillor Chatfield was concerned about the move away from annual visits in the future. He welcomed the emphasis on Street Scene but pointed out that the cause of the problem was not necessarily caused by council tenants. He was advised that as many properties as possible would be visited, however there would be a targeted approach to visits to properties of concern. They also hoped to work closely with other parts of the service. Councillor Linnecor preferred unplanned visits to properties.
- In cases of ASB the victim was encouraged to report the offence. Links were made between BCC the police etc. Officers had been trained to understand the problems and advise the victim on the steps to take.
- Councillor Kooner requested that a training session on the allocation of housing be arranged for Councillors.
- Councillor Dring was concerned about the tenancy breaches and was interested to receive more information about the vulnerable tenants Garden Scheme as there were a lot of vulnerable people in the Oscott Ward. She was informed that the programme was a relatively restricted scheme. Some trainee support had been accessed. The scheme was a one off and not an ongoing service.
- Councillor Zaffar commended officers for the report. The Chairman of Corporate Resources Committee was looking at whether the service was fit for purpose.

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- Tenant involvement could be encouraged through eg. Joining walkabouts etc.
- Dave Hodgetts informed that they had supported housing as much as they could by working in partnership with them without duplicating services. Hoarders were at risk from fire hazards. It was recognised that the key to success was a multi-agency approach.
- Permission for a satellite dish depended on the nature of the building. Kate Foley invited Councillor Hussain to refer a particular case to her. For rent arrears a process of escalation was used and they worked with the customer to put an arrangement in place. Failures or breaches on behalf of the Landlord were looked at.
- In reply to a query from Councillor Quinnen, BCC provided a free service to dispose of unwanted items at the recycling centre. There was a service available that a fee was payable for. There were some charitable organisations that collected unwanted furniture etc free of charge.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

HOUSING TRANSFORMATION BOARD PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 2 2015-2016

The following report was received and noted:-

(See document no. 3)

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- Anti-Social Behaviour had been managed well and they had responded to all the cases on time.
- 100% of high and low blocks were rated good or better.
- There were 4 cases in Perry Barr where there were lodgers in occupation for more than 12 weeks.
- Estate assessments were average at 26.8.
- Excluding the sheltered properties, the average days turnaround to let a property was good at 30.3 days which was the city average.
- Waites had been appointed as the new repairs contractor. Key performance Indicators would be used.

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- A new allocation scheme had been agreed and a training programme for all the Councillors. The implementation date was in September and all Councillors will be briefed.
- In reply to Councillor Kooner there was a City-wide planned programme of improvement to properties. If a tenant's personal situation changed whilst they were in a property an assessment by Occupational Health was arranged. There was not a vulnerable person's decorating service however Kate Foley undertook to check with the Older people support service.
- Councillor Dring noted that there were no cases of hate crime reported, however a number of firearms offences in the District had been highlighted in the media, but not reflected in the figures. Kate Foley answered that this crime was reflected in the crime figures.
- Councillor Dring questioned what happened where survivors of a former tenant were left in the property. Kate Foley said that there could be a statutory right of succession. The figures only included cases that had been disputed.
- Councillor Dring stated that repairs took longer than 30 days depending on whether gas was being used. A tenant would not be left without cooking or heating facilities. Kate Foley advised Councillors to refer complaints about delays with repairs to her team.
- Councillor Chatfield referred to the amount of tenants in temporary accommodation and was informed that this was separately managed. She suggested that the Committee might want to invite a representative from the Homeless team to a future meeting.
- In reply to Councillor Linnecor, Kate Foley undertook to look into a direct contact for Councillors.
- Councillor Hunt referred to the large number of private housing in Perry Barr Ward and homeless prevention.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

APPOINTMENT OF A CYCLE REVOLUTION CHAMPION

It was proposed by Councillor Waseem Zaffar, seconded by Councillor Narinder Kooner and

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RESOLVED:-

That Councillor Linnecor be appointed as Cycle Revolution Champion for the District.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

1000 The dates and times of meeting were to be arranged at a later date.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1001 No future agenda items were suggested.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

1002 In response to comments from Councillor Dring that the agenda in the past included an item for an update from the District Director and Chairman on what had taken place in between meetings. Neil De-Costa responded that Governance arrangements had changed however he was happy to take the suggestion on board and would discuss it with the Chairman. Members were reminded that a Councillors briefing was taking place on 7 April, at 1400 hours. Councillor Jon Hunt gave his apologies for the meeting.

AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

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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 1634 hours.

CHAIRMAN