

Minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory and Support Services Committee
held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Monday
14th September 2015 at 4:30pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor Anna Bailey (Chairman)
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith
Councillor David Ambrose Smith
Councillor Mike Bradley
Councillor Peter Cresswell
Councillor Julia Huffer
Councillor James Palmer (Substitute for Councillor Vince Campbell)
Councillor Carol Sennitt
Councillor Jo Webber

OTHERS PRESENT

Councillor Mike Rouse
Jo Brooks – Director (Regulatory Services)
Liz Knox – Environmental Services Manager
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer
Emmanuel Orekogbe – Accountant (Treasury Management)
Angela Parmenter – Housing Options Manager
Nicole Pema – Senior HR Officer
Richard Quayle – Director (Support Services)
Jenny Winslet – Senior Environmental Health Officer

21. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions received from members of the public.

22. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sue Austen, Hamish Ross and Vince Campbell.

Councillor James Palmer substituted for Councillor Vince Campbell for this meeting.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24. **MINUTES**

Further to Minute No. 18 (Chairman's Announcements), the Chairman pointed out a typographical error; the word "the" should be deleted from the sentence. Further to Minute No. 19 (Performance Management), page 2, third paragraph, the Chairman clarified that what she had meant was that the term "Service Delivery Champion" should be consistently used.

Further to Minute No.19, page 5, sixth line of the second paragraph, the Chairman highlighted a typographical error; the word "response" should be amended to "respond". Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That subject to the amendment of the typographical errors on pages 2 and 5, and clarification of the Chairman's comment in relation to Performance Management, the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- Members were reminded that they had been issued with two additional papers for today's meeting, both of which had been sent to them by email last week and were in front of them in hard copy. The first paper provided information regarding Agenda Item 11, the Care & Repair Review. The second paper was a correction to the Budget Monitoring Report at Agenda Item No.14.
- East Cambs District Council has been asked by the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) to host a regional post to help local authorities improve their homelessness services.

The Gold Standard initiative sets the bar for local homelessness services, protecting the country's most vulnerable people faced with losing their home. The scheme is funded by the DCLG and delivered by a team of national practitioners who are situated throughout the country.

Steve Tong will be joining ECDC as the Practitioner for the East of England and Kent. He will be based in our Housing Options Team for 3 days a week, where he will support all authorities in the region to deliver good practice and to work towards the Gold Standard. This is at no cost to this Council and Steve will be assisting us to reach Gold Standard status by September 2016; this status is currently held by only two local authorities in the country.

In selecting East Cambridgeshire as the host authority, central Government has recognised the excellent service that our Housing Team here has delivered in helping people to avoid the truly desperate situation of becoming homeless. I would like to offer my personal congratulations and the

congratulations of this Committee to Angela Parmenter and the whole Housing Team – it is a fantastic recognition of the hard work you have put in and the difference that you make to people's lives.

Thank you for all that you do and really well done.

26. **HOUSING SURVEY – PRESENTATION BY BUILDING RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Ian Watson, Principal Consultant, Building Research Establishment (BRE) Housing & Energy Group, gave a presentation on a quantitative prospective Health Impact Assessment for Private Sector Housing in East Cambridgeshire.

Mr Watson's presentation focused on the following aspects of private sector housing in East Cambridgeshire:

- Defining the measure and quantity of poor housing in East Cambridgeshire;
- Estimating the effect on health;
- The cost of improving these poor dwellings;
- The health costs to the NHS and wider society from people living in these poor homes; and
- Policy implications and the Health & Wellbeing agenda.

A diagram summarised the links between housing and health, and illustrated the wider impacts of poor housing in terms of healthcare costs, community stability, crime disorder costs, environmental targets (CO₂), and environmental clean-up costs.

Members noted that the measure and quantity of poor housing was defined by means of the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This was a tool used by environmental health practitioners for enforcement and the number of Category 1 hazards was modelled for East Cambs as part of the Housing Stock Model delivered in May 2015. Referring to the evaluation tool, Mr Watson said that applying the formula gave a numerical hazard rating; a score of 1000 or more equated to a Category 1 Hazard.

With regard to East Cambridgeshire private stock, it was noted that this District had lower levels of energy efficiency which resulted in higher rates of excess cold hazards than the regional and national averages. A number of the slides showed a breakdown of the District by Ward in relation to HHSRS Category 1 hazards, excess cold, and falls hazards. Mr Watson then spoke of the potential health benefits from improving poor housing. He highlighted the number of hazards by category, the estimated number of medical interventions that would be avoided by mitigating each hazard, and the cost of repairs.

The Committee noted that there were 8,122 Category 1 hazards in East Cambridgeshire's private sector stock, of which over 1,700 were within the privately rented sector. It was estimated that poor housing conditions were responsible for over 283 harmful events requiring medical treatment every year.

The estimated total cost of mitigating all these hazards was £23.3 million with £4.9 million in the private rented sector. If these hazards were mitigated, the total annual savings to society was estimated to be £3 million, including £1.3 million of savings to the NHS.

Mr Watson concluded his presentation by saying that the HIA information in East Cambridgeshire would be used to feed into the Health & Wellbeing Strategy, Policies and Strategies. He then responded to comments and questions from Members.

The Chairman asked how the figures in the Assessment had been arrived at, how robust they were, and how much variance there was. Mr Watson explained that data was provided by Experian and a number of other sources. An engine had been developed which required fewer inputs in respect of energy efficiency, and any blanks were filled by computed data taken from the Ely Housing Survey; this was then reviewed by analysts and statisticians. The information was taken from the Census output area or above, and it was better than at the dwelling level.

Councillor Bradley made a comment about how much money was being spent on heating when the thermal efficiency of a property was not apparent. Mr Watson replied that in assessing a property, if its thermal protection was poor it would not take much time to see that the residents would have poor health. Councillor Palmer interjected to add that he believed there were moves to increase the specification of insulation in private housing. Mr Watson said he was correct; such properties had to have an energy certificate and those which fell into the bottom two bands would not be allowed to be rented out beyond 2018.

There being no further comments or questions, the Chairman asked that the presentation slides be made available to the Members of the Committee. She then concluded by thanking Mr Watson for his attendance.

It was resolved:

That the presentation and the comments made thereon, be noted.

27. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS**

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the items no 8 & 9 because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 1 & 3 Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as Amended).

28. **APPOINTMENTS, TRANSFERS AND RESIGNATIONS**

The Committee received a report (Q67, previously circulated) which provided details of staff appointments, transfers and resignations for the period 1st June to 31st August 2015. The report also gave a summary of the main responses given by staff for leaving the Council's employment and feedback received during exit interviews.

During the course of discussion, Councillor Cresswell highlighted some specific comments and he asked what action was currently being undertaken to address them. The Director, Regulatory Services replied that she did not agree with the comments. She was conducting an in-depth review and would bring a paper to December's meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor Huffer, the Senior HR Officer confirmed that exit interviews were looked at very carefully.

The Director, Support Services added that Management Team had made a number of changes following the staff communication survey previously carried out. It would be repeating the survey in the following months in order to review the effectiveness of the changes.

It was resolved:

That the Committee note the content of the information report.

29. **JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee held on 22nd June 2015, be received.

At this point, the Exempt session was adjourned and the meeting was reconvened to continue in public session.

30. **ADOPTION OF THE EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S FOOD AND HEALTH AND SAFETY ENFORCEMENT POLICIES**

The Committee received a report (Q68, previously circulated) from which Members were asked to consider the formal responses from the Food and Health and Safety Enforcement policies consultation, held between 13th April and 31st July 2015.

The Food Safety Enforcement Policy 2015, and the Health & Safety Enforcement Policy 2015 were attached as appendices to the report.

Members were reminded that following the Committee's decision on 13th April 2015, Officers undertook a thorough 12 week consultation exercise ending on 31st July 2015. Those consulted included Parish Councils, community groups and persons on the register of interests, and comment was invited from food business operators following food hygiene inspections. The consultation was advertised on-line and hard copies were made available for members of the public.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer said that only one response had been received; Witcham Parish Council thanked the Council for the correspondence and said that it did not have any comments to make.

Councillor Cresswell declared that he was impressed with the document and, there being no other comments or questions,

It was resolved unanimously:

That the East Cambridgeshire District Council Food and Health and Safety Enforcement Policies be adopted, and that they should come into effect immediately.

31. **REVIEW OF CARE AND REPAIR SERVICES**

The Committee received a report (Q69, previously circulated) from which Members were asked to determine the future of the Care & Repair Service and note its performance.

The Chairman reminded Members that the tabled additional information was divided into three sections. The first was a comparison of overall activity during 2014/15 for ECDC, which related to the information provided within the Business case on page 22 of the report. The second was a cost comparison of options for 2015/16, and the third related to the ECDC budget.

In summarising the main points of her report, the Environmental Services Manager drew attention to paragraph 3.2, which gave details of Care & Repair's performance since being transferred in house in April 2013. It was noted that there was a good working relationship with Sanctuary Housing, the fee income had increased by £12,500 in 2014/15, and the Handyperson service was to be renewed.

She highlighted the two options put forward for the future of the Service:

- Option 1 – to join the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) shared service. The current agreement between Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire, and Huntingdonshire District Councils would terminate at the end of 2016. The Partner Authorities were reviewing the existing contract and considering whether to invite East Cambridgeshire District Council to join. The SWOT analysis showed that being part of a larger organisation would afford more resilience and an ability to expand business to take advantage of new opportunities. However, there would be a financial implication for the Council as the CHIA operated a different

IT system. The initial ICT set up cost to this Council would be up to £18,786 and there would be an annual charge of £5,084.

- Option 2 – to remain in house. The current in house Care & Repair Service worked closely with local builders, providing responsive services to residents of East Cambridgeshire. An improved working relationship had been forged with Sanctuary Housing ensuring that access to home adaptations was more equitable across all tenures. By remaining in house a more streamlined service could be provided for clients, with improved joined up working between Care & Repair and the Council's Private Sector Housing Team. In terms of the financial implications, keeping the service in house would mean that the Council would have a surplus rather than a deficit, and it was anticipated that this would continue.

The Environmental Services Manager reiterated that the demand for Care & Repair services had increased and would continue to do so with an ageing population. The demand for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) was reflected in the figures set out in paragraph 3.16 of the report which related to the number of referrals the Council was receiving from the Occupational Health Service.

The Environmental Services Manager advised the Committee of an identified funding gap. There are a number of cases where DFG's do not progress; the client will either not be entitled to a DFG or have a contribution to make towards the work. In most cases the client can access external funding to ensure the work goes ahead. This is not always the case. To enable clients to get the essential works required to enable them to remain in their own homes, Members are requested to agree to a capital pot of £20,000 that can be available to clients on a loans basis. It is suggested that this capital funding can be transferred from the discretionary grant pot.

The Local Health & Wellbeing Strategy was being developed and would demonstrate how the Service impacted on residents and improved the quality of their lives by enabling them to remain in their own homes, with increased independence.

Whether or not the Council joined the CHIA, the risk regarding resilience remained the same and at present there was no financial incentive in joining. However, by continuing to provide the service in house, the Authority could remain flexible to any changing circumstances and would ensure that the needs of East Cambridgeshire customers and service delivery would be maintained at the highest level.

The Chairman, having asked the Environmental Services Manager if there was a robust way to deal with the loan "pot", was informed that the money would come back into the system.

Councillor Sennitt asked if the opinion or agreement of the three partner authorities had been sought. The Environmental Services Manager replied that Cambridge City Council was the only one to have gone through the Member process and their reaction was favourable. Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire were awaiting the outcome of this meeting.

In response to a point raised by Councillor David Ambrose Smith, the Environmental Services Manager explained that when DFG's were agreed, if the client had to make a contribution, it came to the Council in its budget to pay the builder. If Members were so minded, there would be a capital pot of £20k that could be made available to clients on an interest free loan basis.

Referring to the SWOT analysis on page 6 of the report, Councillor David Ambrose Smith said he did not see loss of local control as being a threat if the Care & Repair remained in house. However, it would be a threat if the Service went over to the CHIA.

Councillor Sennitt, speaking as the Service Delivery Champion for Environmental Services, said she had spent time with Care & Repair and felt that if the Service went over to the CHIA it would lose some of the staff. The case workers were fantastic; they were all experienced and had "got it off to a tee" in dealing with the clients. They worked with local builders, and as well as this keeping money in the area, it was reassuring for the elderly, who liked to know who they were dealing with. Should Care & Repair go over to the CHIA, that personal touch would be lost.

The Chairman said she had looked at the reasons for joining the CHIA, and she did not believe that a case had been made. The financial implications were not favourable to the Authority, and whilst joining could give more resilience, it had to be balanced against the argument for keeping the Service in house. She thought that steps should be taken to see what could be done to mitigate any risks and there should be discussion with Customer Services about an increase in their role.

In proposing the recommendation contained within the report, Councillor Palmer said that the Chairman had summed up his thoughts. Councillor Sennitt's comments had filled him with confidence and any doubts would be addressed by Councillor Webber in her capacity as the Service Delivery Champion for Customer Services.

Councillor Webber seconded the motion, saying that local knowledge could not be replaced and the Customer Services Manager had already indicated that she was keen to help.

It was resolved unanimously:

- 1) To note the performance for 2014/15;
- 2) To agree to the Care and Repair service remaining in house;
- 3) To agree that the vacant post for Technical Officer be appointed to; and
- 4) That a capital loan pot of £20k, for residents who cannot access funding/commercial loan to pay for essential adaptations, be approved.

32. **DRAFT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

The Committee received a report (Q70, previously circulated) from which Members were asked to review the strategy, reflect on previous actions and introduce a new strategy for the next 3 years.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Mike Rouse, Service Delivery Champion for Housing, addressed the Committee. He said it was very important to have a Member perspective on the work of the team and he was encouraged by what he saw. Housing Services worked very closely with Care & Repair, and their offices had been moved closer together to take advantage of this. The recent Private Landlord Forum had received the full support of all departments, and the One Stop Shop approach was an illustration of working together. Councils had to be prepared for anything central Government threw at them because they would have to pick up the pieces.

Councillor Rouse concluded by declaring that he was proud of the Housing Team, and he commended the “robust” draft Homelessness Strategy to the Committee.

In summarising the main points of the Strategy, the Housing Options Manager reminded Members that a new Homelessness Strategy was required to introduce new homelessness prevention initiatives and to ensure that suitable accommodation was available where appropriate. It also identified solutions for the challenges which the Housing Options Team would face in the future; these were set out on pages 13 – 15 of the Strategy document.

During the course of discussion, Councillor Bradley said he thought the Housing Team was doing a brilliant job and he asked the Housing Options Manager if improved IT would enable them to provide a better service. She replied that it would and they had already asked for tablets. The Chairman wondered whether having tablets would improve targets, or they were just “nice to have”. The Housing Options Manager replied that, as much work was carried out in the field, they would be an improvement; having tablets could make a real difference. Councillor Huffer asked what was causing the delay; the Director, Support Services responded that the Planning Department had trialled tablets and experienced problems with bad mobile coverage. A potential solution was being investigated and the results would come back to Committee in this calendar year.

Councillor Cresswell said he too wished to endorse the Housing Team’s excellent performance. At one time the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation was considerable whereas now, the number of applicants placed was zero.

The Chairman congratulated the Team on the clarity and conciseness of the draft Homelessness Strategy, saying that it made it easy to read and this filled her with confidence. Whereupon,

It was resolved unanimously;

- 1) That the performance of the Housing Options Team since 2013 be noted; and

- 2) That the recommendations, as set out in the draft Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018, be approved.

33. **GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

The Committee received a report (Q71, previously circulated), which presented the draft Governance document and proposed reporting and decision making processes for the Council's Transformation Programme.

The Director, Support Services, drew Members' attention to the diagram on page 7 of the document, which showed the structure of the reporting processes within the Transformation Programme.

It was proposed to establish a Transformation Programme Sub Committee to manage and run the Programme; the membership of the Sub Committee would comprise 5 Conservatives and 1 Liberal Democrat Member as follows:

- Chair of Regulatory & Support Services Committee – Cllr Anna Bailey;
- Service Delivery Champion, Performance Management – Cllr Dan Schumann;
- Service Delivery Champion, ICT – Cllr Mike Bradley;
- Service Delivery Champion, Human Resources – Cllr Lisa Stubbs;
- Service Delivery Champion, Customer Services – Cllr Jo Webber, and
- Representative for the Liberal Democrats – Cllr Sue Austen.

It was noted that the Performance Management Officer would act as Programme Manager for the Project Steering Group and she would provide Officer support to the Sub Committee. Meetings of the Sub Committee would be held every 6 – 8 weeks and it would report back to the Regulatory & Support Services Committee.

Councillor David Ambrose Smith was concerned that the one Liberal Democrat Member of the Sub Committee was a token Opposition member, and he believed that there would be better participation from other Members. The Chairman replied that when discussing delivery, it did not feel right that the Sub Committee should consist only of those Service Delivery Champions who were potentially affected. It was felt there should be an Opposition Member, and besides which, there was a requirement for membership to be proportionate. Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith added that it was important to have a Liberal Democrat voice so that the Sub Committee could be seen to be representative.

Councillor Bradley expressed his thanks to the Director, Support Services and the Performance Management Officer for all they had done. He said the Transformation Programme was about project management controls; it followed the principles of Prince 2 and had to be done properly.

It was resolved unanimously:

- 1) That the Governance Document for the Council's Transformation Programme, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved;
- 2) That the proposed Transformation Programme Sub-Committee will be established as a Sub-Committee of the Regulatory & Support Services Committee, with Terms of Reference as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report;
- 3) That the following Members be appointed to the Transformation Programme Sub-Committee (5 Conservative, 1 Liberal Democrat):
Chair of Regulatory & Support Services Committee (Cllr Anna Bailey)
Service Delivery Champion, Performance Management (Cllr Dan Schumann)
Service Delivery Champion, ICT (Cllr Mike Bradley)
Service Delivery Champion, Human Resources (Cllr Lisa Stubbs)
Service Delivery Champion, Customer Services (Cllr Jo Webber)
Representative for the Liberal Democrats (Cllr Sue Austen).

34. **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received a revised paper (Q72), which updated Members on the Regulatory & Support Services Committee's financial position for 2015/16, based on current projections for both revenue and capital expenditure.

The Accountant (Treasury Management) stated that the revised position showed a projected overspend of £34,832 compared to the Committee's approved budget, and the projected capital budget was £735,000 including slippage from the 2014/15 programme.

Noting the variance in the revenue budget for Land Charges, the Chairman asked for an explanation as to how this had happened. The Director, Support Services responded, saying that Councils had been charging for publically available information, and following a Court ruling, they were no longer permitted to do this. The Council was therefore obliged to reimburse fees charged.

The Chairman asked the Director to check with Audit that there were no other similar situations. He replied that he would do so; this particular one had been a grey area for most councils until tested.

It was resolved:

- 1) To note that this Committee has a projected overspend of £34,832 compared to its approved revenue budget of £6,254,899;
- 2) To note that this Committee has a projected capital budget of £735,000 including slippage from the 2014/15 programme.

35. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee received the Forward Plan and noted that it would be updated to include the following reports:

12th October 2015 – ARP Trading Company;

7th December 2015 – Unauthorised Encampment Policy;
- Transformation Programme Update.

It was resolved:

That the Forward Agenda Plan be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.06pm