

Minutes

Meeting name	Scrutiny Committee
Date	Tuesday, 3 November 2020
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	This meeting will be held remotely - details below

Present:

Chair Councillor P. Cumbers (Chair)

Councillors

R. Bindloss (Vice-Chair)	R. Browne
R. Child	J. Douglas
C. Fisher	E. Holmes
J. Wilkinson	A. Pearson
J. Orson	

Observers K. Stockley

Officers

- Director for Housing and Communities
- Director for Governance and Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer
- Democratic Services Officer (HA)
- Tenancy Services Manager (Interim)
- Housing Asset Manager

Minute No.	Minute
68	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies were received from Councillors Evans and Smedley.</p>
69	<p>MINUTES The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2020 were approved and authorised to be signed by the Chair.</p>
70	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no Declarations of Interest.</p>
71	<p>REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN 2020-21 AND THE ANNUAL FORWARD PLAN Councillor Cumbers advised that there had been some changes to the dates on the Workplan since the last meeting and these had been updated on the version recently sent out. Members had also been provided a with a copy of the Cabinet forward plan which lists the key decisions awaiting approval.</p> <p>During the discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gaddesby Neighbourhood Plan had been approved, recorded online and awaiting a referendum. • Cllr Cumbers would contact the Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement to request monthly updates on the Lottery to get an indication of income and interest. • Members would contact the Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement to request further information in regard to the Lottery and the viability. • Members were reminded that the Forward Plan is published every two weeks with a link sent to all Members at the time of publishing. Following a Cabinet meeting any Key Decisions that are made are published within two working days of the meeting with a link sent to all Members at the time of publishing. Members were also reminded that they can attend Cabinet meetings to gain further information. <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>The Committee APPROVED the draft Workplan.</p>
72	<p>EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY PROTOCOL Councillor Cumbers advised Members that the purpose of the protocol was to clarify the role of Scrutiny to provide a framework with the Executive and Senior Leadership team and define the functions and remit of the Committee. It was not a statutory requirement but had been identified in the Governments Statutory Guidance as a matter of good practice. Cllr Cumbers had worked with the Leader</p>

and officers of the Council to develop a document that has hoped to provide a framework for a collaborative, constructive and pro-active approach to the Scrutiny and the Executive relationship.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- The Leader, Cllr Orson, thanked Cllr Cumbers for her work on the Protocol and confirmed the importance of Cabinet and Scrutiny working together and fully supported the objectives of Scrutiny as shown in the report.
- The Director for Governance and Regulatory Services (Monitoring Officer), Mrs Wylie advised of a few changes that are needed to the protocol making reference to:
 - Paragraph 7 - Call in of Cabinet Decision – in discussion with the Chair and the Leader this would be amended to reflect the current Call In Procedure rules of the Constitution to read that ‘6 non executive members can call-in a Cabinet key decision’.
- Members were reminded that if they cannot attend any meetings or task groups but have information or questions they would like to share they can circulate this to all members for comments at any time.

Councillor Holmes left the meeting at this point.

- Members welcomed the Protocol stating that is good to have protocols and policies in place and that it showed the progress made by the Council since the Cabinet system was formed and the relationships between the different committees.

RESOLVED

The Committee:

- 1) **PROVIDED** feedback on the Draft Protocol
- 2) **AGREED** the final amendments would be agreed in consultation with the Scrutiny Chairman and the Leader of the Council before being presented to Council for approval.

Councillor Orson left the meeting at this point.

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HOUSING LANDLORD POLICIES FOR CONSULTATION

The Director for Housing and Communities, Andrew Cotton, gave a brief summary of the report the purpose of which is to provide Members with an effective policy framework to address areas of weakness for the Council Housing Revenue Account services and highlighted the following:

- Five policies had been drafted in recognition of the weaknesses identified in the policy framework for housing, they are in draft form and had been subject to an equality impact assessment; and were awaiting feedback from legal and finance

and TFEC.

- The reports would be going to Cabinet in January 2021 along with the new tenancy agreements and handbook.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

Domestic Abuse Policy

- The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities, Cllr Pearson advised that the Community Safety Partnership had been discussing domestic violence and is currently working with County in respect of a programme being trialled in Birmingham called the Perpetrator Programme. The cost to the council would be approximately £4k per person and offers support for a minimum of a year.
- Cllr Pearson will forward details of the programme to Members for further information.
- The council would team up with domestic abuse charities who offer excellent training to enforce officer skill sets to deal with issues appropriately.

Tenancy Management Policy

Mr Cotton agreed to look at the following:

- Making reference to the Equalities Act 2010 part 4 to support vulnerable people.
- Making reference to exclusion orders in the Injunctions
- Making reference to behavioural contracts
- Make clear that tenants can seek their own legal advice when at risk of eviction.
- Ensure that social services would be contacted when vulnerable people are at risk of eviction.

Voids Policy

Mr Cotton agreed:

- Make clearer the number of days a property is void
- There would be a clause included in the new tenancy agreements that former tenants debts would be added as a condition of the new tenancy to help recover rechargeable works.
- TFEC are discussing the 'goodbye' agreement and it is expected the amount would be approximately £200.

Right to Buy Policy

- Mr Cotton advised that in section 4, Right to buy Sales and business Planning he is still awaiting finance input and the outcome of the remodelling of the housing revenue account business plan.
- Mr Cotton agreed to update the policies with shorter review dates.
- Mr Cotton advised that there is a commitment to leave existing adaptations in place when a property becomes void due to the costs and there more demand for properties with adaptations than properties that are available as tenants do not tend to move out of adapted properties.
- Cllr Pearson advised that when the council commences building its own properties, as a tenant's needs change then properties will be able to be

	<p>adapted to allow the tenants to stay longer in their home ie converting downstairs store cupboards into wet rooms etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Northgate project is work in progress to allow the three different teams involved in the void process to work from the same programme along the same workflows. <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Committee NOTED the content of the report 2) The Committee COMMENTED on the Council’s draft Void Policy and Tenancy Management (Legal Admin) Policy 3) The Committee AGREED TO PROVIDE any additional comment on the Right to Buy; Aids and Adaptation; and Domestic Abuse Policies
74	<p>UPDATES ON THE RESPONSE AND RECOVERY TASK AND FINISH GROUPS</p> <p>The Chairmen of the Task and Finish Groups provided a verbal update on the work of the groups up to date.</p> <p>During the discussion the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is in a good position and ready for the New Year when there will be an increase in homelessness once landlords can serve notice on tenants and jobs are lost as a result of the end of the furlough scheme. • There had not been much information gained from the DWP in regard to the number of jobs that had been lost locally and whether this had affected mainly men or women or full or part time work. • The Task and Finish group had conducted a business survey in the town and hope to soon follow this up with a second survey. The results of the survey would provide the Council with the means to offer constructive support and suggestions for businesses going forward. • Ideas to be shared with BID.
75	<p>URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>There was no urgent business to discuss.</p>

The meeting closed at: 8.09 pm

Chair