

**POLICY SCRUTINY GROUP
7TH FEBRUARY 2017**

PRESENT: Councillor Sharp (Vice-chair)
Councillors Brookes, K. Harris, Jones, Murphy, Page, Paling,
Parton and Smith

Peter Davey - The Bridge Housing Advice Centre
Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing
Head of Neighbourhood Services
Neighbourhoods and Partnerships Manager
Head of Strategic Support
Learning and Organisational Development Coordinator
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer (NA)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Seaton and Shergill.
Councillor Bokor (Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Panel)
also gave her apologies for item 1.

31. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2016 were confirmed and signed as a correct record of the meeting.

32. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures of interest were made.

33. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations of the existence of the Party Whip were made.

34. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.17

No questions had been submitted.

35. HOMELESSNESS

A report of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing to provide an update on matters relating to homelessness was considered (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes). The Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing stated that part of the report had been omitted in error and a copy of the missing information was provided.

The Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing and Peter Davey from The Bridge assisted with consideration of the item and provided the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) The reduction in the number of people on the housing waiting list in 2014 was the result of the re-registration. The Council owned approximately 5,000 properties and there were 500-600 lets during the course of a year. The number of properties owned by Housing Associations could be provided to the Group.
- (ii) There were risks to the Charnwood Connect Group due to the ending of its external funding. Group members would have to consider whether further funding for Charnwood Connect was a priority because of the benefits that resulted from partnership working.

Peter Davey stated that he felt that the Council was doing a good job in respect of homelessness and that partnership working was improving. There was a good relationship between The Bridge and Council officers and there had always been an interest in homelessness by councillors.

The Group noted that although there had been a rise in homelessness across the country this was not the case in Charnwood and that was to be welcomed.

RESOLVED

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the number of properties in the Borough owned by Housing Associations be provided to members of the Group;
3. that a further report on homelessness be submitted to the Group to provide an update, particularly in relation to the Continuous Improvement Plan and the current Homelessness Strategy Action Plan and that this be scheduled for the Group's meeting on 26th September 2017, alongside scrutiny of the review of the Homelessness Strategy.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the information received.
2. To provide the Group with additional information.
3. To allow timely scrutiny of the matter and to identify any areas of concern.

36. PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE

The Head of Strategic Support provided a verbal update on the current position with the work of the Performance Scrutiny Panel.

The update was provided on behalf of the Chair of the Panel Councillor Bokor, who made the point of saying she was happy for anyone to approach her regarding the work of the Panel. She advised that the Panel worked very hard and it had a full work programme, not just consisting of standard items. Examples of some of the items in the Panel's work programme included the renovation of the Riversdale Housing Scheme and planning enforcement.

The Head of Strategic Support provided the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) In relation to measuring the success of new policies it was the role of the Scrutiny Management Board to decide which items to concentrate on as the Performance Scrutiny Panel only had a limited amount of space in its work programme.
- (ii) Indicators were only included in the regular performance monitoring report if they featured in the Corporate Plan or the Business Plan.

RESOLVED that the update and responses be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the current position with the work of the Panel.

37. CHARNWOOD GRANTS

A report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services outlining the assessment criteria for Charnwood Grants was considered (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Neighbourhood Services and the Neighbourhoods and Partnerships Manager assisted with consideration of the item and provided the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) Information was provided about the different types of grants that were available, what the criteria for them were and where people could find that information.
- (ii) There were a significant number of new organisations which had applied for grants which was encouraging.
- (iii) Not all applications were successful. Groups were encouraged to contact the team if they were not sure about anything.
- (iv) One of the benefits of having the grants panel was that information from a number of different officers could be shared to minimise duplication.

- (v) The Group was advised there was still funding available for smaller projects under the Loughborough Community Grants scheme for the current financial year and if councillors knew of any interested groups they could advise them to apply.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the information received.

38. DRAFT PEOPLE STRATEGY 2017 TO 2020

A report of the Strategic Director of Corporate Services presenting a draft People Strategy was considered (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Learning and Organisational Development Co-ordinator assisted with the consideration of the item and provided the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) It was acknowledged that there was a low number of staff under 19 years old. The Council's current recruitment policy focused on the criteria and skills needed for the role which could be difficult for young people to meet. Potentially apprenticeships would change the situation as they would tend to result in recruiting younger people although they were open to people of all ages.
- (ii) There had not been a noticeable change in the age profile of employees but generally there was an aging workforce. Younger people may have different expectations, for example regarding flexible working and these issues were being considered.
- (iii) Performance management was an important issue and a range of actions would support development in this area, and build upon previous improvements. Some of the developments required IT improvements to support them.
- (iv) Although the proportion of women employed in senior positions did not fully reflect the workplace as a whole, the number of women working in senior management had increased in recent years.

RESOLVED

1. that the draft People Strategy be noted;
2. that information regarding the number of people leaving the authority, data collected from exit interviews and the outcomes of probationary periods for new staff be provided to members of the Group.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the information received.
2. To provide the Group with additional information.

39. PROGRESS WITH PANEL WORK

A report of the Head of Strategic Support providing an update on the current position with scrutiny panels was considered (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with consideration of the item.

RESOLVED that the current position with scrutiny panels be noted.

Reason

To ensure that the Group is aware of the current position with scrutiny panels.

40. WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support enabling the Group to consider its Work Programme and propose to the Scrutiny Management Board any additions, deletions and amendments as appropriate was considered (item 11 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with consideration of the item.

RESOLVED

1. that the review of the Homelessness Strategy be scheduled for the Group's meeting on 26th September 2017 alongside a further update on homelessness;
2. that the items relating to Changes to Mandatory Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation and New Homes Bonus be scheduled for the Group's meeting on 11th July 2017;
3. **that it be recommended to the Scrutiny Management Board** that the Group review the Council's current policies and procedures in relation to its methods of conducting surveys and consultation and that it is included in the Group's Work Programme for 11th July 2017;
4. **that it be recommended to the Scrutiny Management Board** that the Group consider the draft Empty Homes Strategy and that this is added to the Group's work programme for 25th April 2017;

5. that the current position with the Group's Work Programme be noted.

Reasons

1. To allow the Group to undertake scrutiny of the review of the strategy at an appropriate time and to undertake further scrutiny of the matter.
2. To allow the Group to scrutinise the matter.
3. To allow the Group a final opportunity to comment and agree the report before it goes to Cabinet.
4. To enable the Group to scrutinise the draft strategy before it is submitted to the Cabinet.
5. To make the Group aware of the current position with its Work Programme.

NOTE:

These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next ordinary meeting of the Group.