

Public Document Pack

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 19 March 2009

Present: Councillor A Taylor (Chair)

Councillors C Blakeley B Kenny
F Doyle AR McLachlan
L Fraser

Deputies: Councillors T Anderson (in place of T Pritchard)

46 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in any matters to be considered at the meeting and, if so, to declare them and state what they were. Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any matter to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

Councillor McLachlan declared her prejudicial interest in item 4 (Presentation – HMRI Progress in North Birkenhead and Tranmere) (minute 49 post) by virtue of the fact that some of the initiatives were focused within the Bidston and St James ward.

Councillor Kenny declared his prejudicial interest in item 4 (Presentation – HMRI Progress in North Birkenhead and Tranmere) (minute 49 post) by virtue of the fact that some of the initiatives were focused within the Birkenhead and Tranmere ward.

47 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January, 2009 be approved.

48 PROPOSED ADJOURNMENT

Councillor Blakeley expressed disappointment that neither the Director of Regeneration nor the Cabinet Member were present at the Committee due to the Cabinet meeting on the same night. The clash was occurring because the Council calendar had been changed by Cabinet during the year so that Cabinet met every three weeks rather than every two.

It was moved by Councillor Blakeley and seconded by Councillor Fraser –

‘That the meeting be adjourned.’

The motion was put and lost (3:4).

The Chair read out a statement from Councillor G Davies in which he informed the Committee of his regret that he couldn't, for a second time this year, be present at the Committee meeting. He did take his responsibilities to the Committee very seriously.

Councillor Kenny stated that it was unfair to make a personal attack on Councillor Davies and Councillor McLachlan suggested as a scrutiny committee there was a need to work together.

Councillor Blakeley welcomed the statement from the Cabinet Member but stated that as a member of the Cabinet he was partly responsible for the decision to change to 3 weekly cycles, though he was not attacking him personally.

The Chair stated that it was unfortunate that the Cabinet Member could not be present but there was also no requirement that he should be.

49 **PRESENTATION - ROUGH SLEEPERS AND STREET DRINKERS**

Catherine Green, Rehousing Services Manager, in the Regeneration Department, gave a presentation to the Committee on rough sleepers and street drinkers. She outlined the background, national picture and strategy, the situation in Wirral and future plans, including the work of the Town Centre Outreach Project, YMCA cold weather provision and partnership working.

She gave details of initiatives which needed to be built on, such as:

- Improvements to Charles Thompson Mission
- Housing Options Approach
- Hostels as Places of Change
- Enhanced drug and alcohol provision
- Housing Priority Panel
- Move-on Support
- Multi Agency Monitoring

Responding to members' comments both she and the Head of Housing and Regeneration explained the definition of a rough sleeper and the overlap with and differences to those persons regarded as homeless. Intervention measures meant that more people were being dealt with and that the statistics did not always show the real picture. Most victims of domestic violence would be picked up under statutory homeless legislation.

Members expressed a view that with the economic downturn there would perhaps be a need for more investment in provision for rough sleepers. They suggested that the target of zero rough sleepers by 2012 would not be achievable as there would always be a hardcore. A member suggested that the idea of a 'wet-house' where street drinkers could go during the day and where drinking could be controlled could be looked into. More resources were needed to address the problems of alcoholism.

Resolved –

(1) That the thanks of the Committee be accorded to Catherine Green for her very informative presentation.

(2) That the Committee receive a further report on the issue in 12 months time.

50 PRESENTATION - HMRI PROGRESS IN NORTH BIRKENHEAD AND TRANMERE

Chris Bowen, Housing Market Renewal Initiative Manager, Regeneration Department, gave a presentation to the Committee on the progress of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative in North Birkenhead and Tranmere and provided members with an update on each scheme in the two areas.

Responding to comments from members, Chris Bowen stated that with the closure of the Cavendish Enterprise Centre there was a rent support scheme to bridge the gap in any increase in rents, 100% in the first year, 80% in the second and so on for a five year period, for businesses having to move premises. He also referred to the national issue of confidence in the housing market and the scarcity of funds for new build schemes.

A member referred to the success of the Triangle Group Repair Scheme and offered congratulations to the whole team for this regeneration and also for the Ilchester Park scheme.

Resolved – That the presentation and comments be noted.

51 QUARTER 3 SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Regeneration provided an overview of progress against performance indicators and key projects during the third quarter which were relevant to the Housing and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He set out progress of key projects, provided a direction of travel and target summary and highlighted those performance indicators that had either deteriorated, were not on target, were over-performing or were awaiting data.

Responding to comments from members, the Head of Housing and Regeneration reported that the absence figures were for the period December, 2007 to November, 2008, prior to agreement on the Strategic Asset Review, although there had not been any discernible rise in the figures following agreement to the review. It was possible to break the sickness figures down and he would look into this, however, there was a corporate way in which they were recorded.

In respect of the anti-dog fouling measures and 'reward cards' for dog owners, the Director stated that he would circulate to Committee members more information on the reward card scheme.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

52 **REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received an update on its work programme, which indicated the reports considered or to be considered by the Committee over the current municipal year.

The Chair thanked the Committee for their support in that they had managed to get through their programme of work for the year.

Members made comment on a possible future work programme, although until the situation was clearer as to which Committees there would be and their membership, it was felt that the best time to programme work would be at the start of the new municipal year.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

53 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR**

A member raised the issue of the housing waiting list and the statistics which were provided to Central Government.

The Director responded that he would be happy to provide a full written response on the compilation of these statistics.