

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

28th August 2014

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillors Hewlett (Chairman), and Councillors Ford, Mrs Hall, Harrison, Mrs Hood, Murray, Mrs Watson

Labour Group

Councillors Dunn, Frost, Rhind, Richards, Shepherd, Southerd

In attendance

Mr Bob Ledger and Mr Martin Guest

HCS/12 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Smith (Vice Chairman) - substituted by Councillor Mrs Hall, Councillor Mulgrew – substituted by Councillor Southerd and Cllr Lemmon – substituted by Councillor Mrs Watson

HCS/13 **Minutes**

The Committee considered the open minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2014

RESOLVED:-

To approve as a true record the open minutes of the meeting held on 12th June.

HCS/14 **Declarations of Interest**

None have been received.

HCS/15 **Questions raised by members of the public pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 10**

None have been raised.

HCS/16 **Questions raised by members of the public pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 10**

None have been raised.

HCS/17 **Reports of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

None to Report.

HCS/18 **Presentation by Active Nation on the Leisure Management Contract**

With the agreement of the Chairman this has been postponed until the next meeting on the 9th October.

HCS/19 **Setting of Garage Rents at Chatsworth Road, Newhall**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Housing & Environmental Services in the setting of the Garage rents at Chatsworth Road, Newhall. A couple of members questioned why that Council Tenants would not be charged VAT but Non-Council Tenants are charged VAT at 20%.

It was explained that letting to Council house residents were deemed to be in-house and non VAT chargeable, whereas non tenants were deemed to be VAT chargeable. The Committee was informed that a more in-depth explanation if required could be provided by the Director of Finance, Kevin Stackhouse.

RESOLVED:-

Members approve the report and agree a rental value of £9.75 per week for each of the Chatsworth Road garages.

HCS/20 **Experian Rental Exchange Scheme Phase 1**

The Committee then considered a report from the Director of Housing & Environmental Services regarding the Rental Exchange Scheme with Experian and Big Issue Invest.

A brief presentation was given on Phase 1 of the Scheme. This scheme would help provide people who are Social Housing Tenants to improve their Credit Score, as at present rental payment history is not currently included in the credit score process.

Members were informed that if the Council does sign up to Phase 1 of the Scheme it could be established how many of our Tenants could improve their Credit Score. Also through this scheme the Council could identify tenants who are financially vulnerable and help them to get back on track through the Tenancy Sustainment Service.

During the discussion a few queries were aired about whether those people who chose to withhold information might find that this was detrimental to their Credit History. There were also questions about whether Credit History is based on the Postcode and not the individual. Assurances were given that the Credit History is based on the individual, so for instance if the siblings go away to University and get into debt and gaining a bad credit rating. This would not adversely affect the parents.

Overall it was felt that Phase 1 could be a positive move for our tenants and help the vulnerable tenants towards Credit Unions instead of Loan Sharks.

Resolved:-

- To approve that we should engage with the Rental Exchange scheme in its first phase to analyse data on our tenant portfolio.
- To authorise the Director of Finance & Corporate Services to sign the Data Processing Agreement as attached in Appendix 1.
- To note that any proposal to move forward into the scheme's second phase would come before Members in a subsequent Committee report for approval.

HCS/21 **Corporate Plan 2009-15: Performance Management Report**

Members considered a report by the Director of Housing & Environmental Services and Director of Community & Planning Services on the progress and achievements during the period of 1st April to 30th June 2014. in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan 2009/15.

It was reported that performance on property re-let times was improving and would be back on target by the end of the second quarter.

On Table 4 of the report Councillor Dunn questioned the turnover times of the properties as he knew someone who had been allocated a property and did not get the keys until 63 days later. In addition there was a health and safety issue with the heating installation which had not been picked up on the inspection. Councillor Dunn questioned if we have the skills and staff to do inspections efficiently of re-let properties.

It was confirmed that we do have the correct skills and staff and that properties are left in various states and the Council has a fit to let Standard to adhere to. The Director of Housing and Environmental Services gave a commitment to look into the case raised by Councillor Dunn.

RESOLVED:-

To note the progress and achievements during the period 1st April to 30th June 2014, in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan 2009/15.

HCS/22 **Work Programme Report**

Members of the Committee received a report from the Director of Community & Planning Services and Director of Housing & Environmental Services setting out the updated work programme.

RESOLVED:-

To note the updated work programme for the year.

Exempt Items

HCS/23 **Any Exempt questions received by Members of the Council pursuant to Council procedure Rule No 11.**

No questions were received.

HCS/24 **Exempt Minutes**

The Committee considered the exempt minutes of the meeting held on the 12th June.

RESOLVED:-

To approve as a true record the exempt minutes of the meeting held on the 12th June 2014.

Cllr Hewlett
CHAIRMAN

The meeting terminated at 6.40 p.m.