

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON

14 February 2023

7.30 - 8.21 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Tony Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Ash Malik (as substitute for Councillor Stacy Seales)
Councillor Kay Morrison
Councillor Matthew Saggars
Councillor Lanie Shears

Also Present

Councillor James Griggs
Councillor Alastair Gunn, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Officers

Hannah Marriott, Governance Support Officer
Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services
Wendy Makepeace, Assistant Director - Housing and Property
Andrew Murray, Director of Housing
Nicole Parker, Admin Assistant
Natasha Terrell, Assistant Director - Governance, HR and Legal

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Carter and Colleen Morrison.

Councillor Ash Malik was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Stacy Seales who had recently been made a Portfolio Holder so could no longer be a committee member.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Matthew Saggars raised a non-pecuniary interest in Item 8 as a leaseholder in Harlow.

40. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2022 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

41. MATTERS ARISING

None.

42. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

43. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

44. **RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services, noted that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which had been pre-scrutinised by the Committee, was approved at Cabinet on 1 December 2022.

45. **ROOFING AND MAJOR REPAIRS TO COUNCIL HOUSES - QUESTION AND ANSWER WITH DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

The Committee received a report on roofing and major repairs to council housing from officers and an update report from HTS on housing repairs. The Committee also received a supplementary report which contained the Asset Management Strategy and document on repair priorities, scope of repair and timescales.

Andrew Murray, Director of Housing, noted that whilst the Asset Management Strategy that had been circulated was for 2014 – 2019, the HRA Business Plan for 2023 – 2053, which would be going to Cabinet for approval later that week, included updates.

Wendy Makepeace, Assistant Director Housing and Property, confirmed that in November 2022 there was 60 roofing repairs outstanding. Wendy Makepeace confirmed that, as of today's date, 47 roofing repairs were outstanding (26 repairs in the work in progress stage and 21 repairs in the design and building process stage).

Andrew Murray noted that the report identified challenges which the Council had faced including; the slight delay in achieving decent homes standards, the asset stock aging, extra pressures on the HRA and budget, the external works programme being paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic and challenges with HTS.

Wendy Makepeace confirmed that the Council had worked with HTS to make the referral process more robust and streamlined to ensure that referrals were quicker. Wendy Makepeace also noted that HTS had had some staff capacity issues in the past.

Councillor Tony Edwards noted that both members and residents needed to be better informed of the overall repairs process and also be kept up to date during the repairs process.

The Committee noted that there weren't any officers from HTS in attendance. The Committee also felt that it didn't have enough information at the meeting to fully inform the question and answer session.

RESOLVED that Councillor Tony Edwards would meet with Andrew Murray, Wendy Makepeace and Councillor Alastair Gunn, Portfolio Holder for Housing, to discuss what information was needed before the subject could come back to committee.

46. **IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY - REPORT**

The Committee received a report on the implementation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity report.

The Committee suggested that the Equality Impact Assessment training, which had been arranged for officers, also be sent to members for completion.

Councillor Matthew Siggers asked for the Council's progress on making the website audible. Natasha Terrell, Assistant Director for Governance, HR and Legal, advised that she would look into this and report back to the committee.

RESOLVED that:

- A The progress of the Council against its own and LGA frameworks were noted.
- B A further update report be brought back to committee in the future.

47. **POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY ANNUAL REVIEW - AGREEMENT OF QUESTIONS**

Councillor Tony Edwards noted that the Safer Harlow Partnership would be attending the July committee meeting to discuss its work on domestic abuse and sexual harassment. Councillor Tony Edwards suggested that it would be beneficial for the Police to also attend the July meeting, rather than attending the March meeting, to focus on those specific issues.

Councillor Matthew Siggers expressed concerns on the apparent recent increase in youth crime and cyber crime via social media. Councillor Tony Edwards suggested that Councillor Matthew Siggers met with Essex Police to raise these concerns.

48. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee received a report summarising its work plan for 2022/23.

As agreed, the Police would be invited to attend the Committee's meeting in July.

RESOLVED that the work plan be noted.

49. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

50. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE