

**MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES, HOUSING AND GOVERNANCE
OVERVIEW WORKING GROUP
HELD ON**

18 March 2014

7.30 - 9.28 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Waida Forman (Chairman)
Councillor Jacqui Cross (Vice-Chair)
Councillor David Carter
Councillor Simon Carter
Councillor Mike Danvers
Councillor Manny Doku
Councillor Muriel Jolles
Councillor Dennis Palmer

Officers

John Cogbill, Asset Manager
Andrew Murray, Head of Housing
Simon Pipe, Customer and Media Services Manager
Jo Maskell, Governance Support Officer

36. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Nick Churchill and Daniella Pritchard.

37. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

38. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2014 are agreed as a correct record.

39. **REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S PROCUREMENT OF HOUSING WORKS**

The Overview Working Group received a report on the Council's Housing Work Packages, which had been structured to take advantage of the significant changes in the way the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was being financed.

The report outlined the allocation of the Housing Investment Programme (HIP), monitoring of the Housing Works Packages' performance and the next steps (all of which were demonstrated in a detailed presentation).

The Overview Working Group was impressed that the Council had been able to achieve more effective planning and procurement objectives due to self-financing of the HRA. Officers were congratulated for their hard work and commitment to enable this improvement.

Whilst the homes that had been improved to the Decent Homes Standard had been very well received on completion, Councillors expressed concern that the processes to achieve this had not run as smoothly as had been hoped. Some residents had not been prepared for the disruption caused by the works and this had been exacerbated by the unacceptable service delivery of certain contractors and communication problems with operatives whose English language skills were sometimes poor.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) The report is noted and copies of the presentation are sent to members of this Overview Working Group.
- (b) The Overview Working Group recognises the scale of transformation of individual estates through the Housing Works Packages and thanks the Head of Housing and his staff for their dedication and commitment which have enabled it.
- (c) It is **Recommended to Cabinet** that Officers write to all service providers to:
 - i. emphasise that the Council expects high standards of customer experience for tenants having work undertaken in their homes including clear channels of communication;
 - ii. ask them to resource and prioritise development opportunities for the establishment of local apprentices.

40. **TRANSLATION SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COUNCIL**

The Overview Working Group received a report reviewing the Council's translation services.

The current provision was considered the best option to meet the demand for translation services, which had significantly reduced since records began in 2005.

RESOLVED that it is **Recommended to Cabinet** that:

- (a) the Council's current service provider for translation services be maintained, with the same level of service;

- (b) all staff in Harlow Council be reminded about the translation service, via the Council's Infonet, to ensure that it continues to be used effectively;
- (c) the Council continues the current practice of not directly promoting a translation service for its leaflets and publications.

41. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Overview Working Group received a report summarising its work programme for the 2013/14 year.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Resources, Housing and Governance Overview Working Group work plan 2013/14 is noted;
- (b) it is **Recommended to Cabinet** that a review of empty properties in the Council's ownership is added to this Overview Working Group's work plan.

42. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIRMAN OF THE OVERVIEW
WORKING GROUP