

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING)

THURSDAY, 20TH APRIL, 2017

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors J Bentley, A Blackburn,
K Bruce, D Collins, A Gabriel,
A Garthwaite, P Grahame, A Khan,
M Lyons and K Ritchie

87 Late Items

There were no late items.

88 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting, however the following matter was brought to the attention of the Scrutiny Board for information:

- In relation to minute no. 91 'Private rented sector housing – update' Councillor A Khan advised that he was a private rented sector housing landlord.

Councillor A Khan remained present during consideration of the above item.

89 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor G Wilkinson.

90 Minutes - 23rd March 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2017 be approved as a correct record.

91 Private rented sector housing - update

The Director of Resources and Housing submitted a report which provided a detailed update on the issues surrounding Private Rented Sector housing.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Neil Evans, Director of Resources and Housing
- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing Management
- Rob McCartney, Head of Housing Support
- Mark Ireland, Service Manager, Private Sector Housing
- Michael Brook, Service Manager, Private Sector Housing
- Steve Rowley, Leeds Property Association.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Concern about the poor quality of some private rented sector housing and an update on the advice and support provided to tenants, particularly in terms of tackling rogue landlords.
- The provisions set out within the Housing and Planning Act and ensuring that landlords and tenants were aware of their obligations.
- The challenges identifying rogue landlords. The Board was advised that there was no requirement for private rented sector landlords to register.
- Clarification sought regarding banning orders. The Board was advised that further details were anticipated later in the year.
- Positive development of the Rogue Landlord Unit and the importance of utilising intelligence from partners and communities.
- Concern about an increase in microflats and development of a co-ordinated response. The Board discussed the need for greater engagement with elected members regarding this issue.
- The need to ensure a fair and consistent approach to Civil Penalties.
- Concern about a potential increase in appeals arising from the introduction of Civil Penalties. The Board was advised that further information and guidance was anticipated from the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG).
- Clarification regarding the work of the Empty Homes Doctor.
- Concern that more work was needed in terms of identifying rogue letting agents.
- The types of support available to families at risk of homelessness and in need of alternative housing.
- The importance of engagement with private sector landlords, particularly in terms of raising standards.
- Development of the 'Rate Your Landlord' website for students.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board notes the update on Private Rented Sector housing.
- (b) That the Chair of the Scrutiny Board writes to the Chief Planning Officer highlighting the Board's concerns regarding issues associated with the development of microflats.

(Councillor K Bruce joined the meeting at 10.05am and Councillor A Blackburn at 10.20am, during the consideration of this item.)

92 Housing related matters

The Director of Resources and Housing submitted a report covering particular areas of housing policy / activity as requested by the Scrutiny Board.

The following information was appended to the report:

- List of blocks / streets part of variable lettings standard.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Neil Evans, Director of Resources and Housing
- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing Management
- Rob McCartney, Head of Housing Support
- Julie Staton, Head of Commissioning, Adults and Health.

The key areas of discussion were:

- The need to ensure value for money when undertaking repairs and the processes in place to address issues.
- A request that the Board be kept updated regarding changes to the Housing Related Support accommodation service. The Board was advised that further information was to be presented to all elected members to provide overall context.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the update on housing related themes be noted.
- (b) That the request for information be provided to all elected members.

(Councillor A Khan left the meeting at 12 noon and Councillor K Bruce at 12.15pm, during the consideration of this item.)

93 Work Schedule

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2016/17 municipal year.

The Board was advised that a working group meeting had been arranged to take place on Tuesday, 25 April 2017 (10am-12noon) to review the role of wider tenant involvement groups. It was noted that the final Board meeting of the 2016/17 municipal year was scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 23 May 2017 at 1.00pm (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 12.30pm) to consider any outstanding issues and sign off reports.

RESOLVED – That the Board's work schedule be approved.

94 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 23rd May, 2017 at 1.00 pm (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 12.30pm).

(The meeting concluded at 12.20pm)