

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL



19 FEBRUARY 2018 - 2.30PM

PRESENT: Councillor F H Yeulett (Chairman), Councillor M Buckton, Councillor S Clark, Councillor D Mason.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor M Cornwall, Councillor P Murphy and Councillor D Oliver.

OBSERVING: Councillor K Owen

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs A Hay (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Mrs S Bligh, Councillor G G R Booth, Councillor S Count, Councillor D Hodgson, Councillor Mrs K F Mayor, Councillor A Pugh

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Richard Cassidy (Corporate Director), Anna Goodall (Head of Legal and Governance), Dan Horn (Head of Housing and Community Support), Izzi Hurst (Member Services and Governance) and Aarron Locks (Community Safety Manager)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Ian Lombardo (Police Inspector at Cambridgeshire Constabulary)

OSC29/17 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings 8 January 2018 and 15 January 2018 were confirmed and signed, subject to the following comments;

- Councillor Buckton believed that the meeting with Clarion Housing and Morgan Sindall on 8 January 2018 had been a success and thought Clarion and Morgan Sindall had been contrite and had answered questions in a satisfactory manner. He stated that he was disappointed with the local press's reporting of the meeting and felt that it was not a true reflection of the discussions that had taken place.
- Councillor Mason stated that whilst Morgan Sindall are no longer working with Clarion Housing, he believed that the meeting had been fair and both sides admitted the issues they were facing.
- Councillor Mrs Clark agreed with Councillor Buckton and Councillor Mason's comments.
- Councillor Yeulett stated that the new arrangements and provider in place at Clarion Housing would hopefully enhance the service for our residents.

OSC30/17 PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR HOUSING MEMBER TASK & FINISH GROUP FINDINGS

Councillor Yeulett praised the report and made the following statement to Members;

'Overview and Scrutiny welcome this report and are particularly impressed with the range of key stakeholders that engaged in the evidence gathering stage of the project. The recommendations and project plan are well-thought out and show the Council's determination to ensure conditions in the private rented accommodation sector can be improved in Fenland. The Committee are also impressed that the Council has secured funding through the Controlling Migration Fund to fund two Housing Enforcement posts to move the action plan forward over the next two years. The

Committee looks forward to these posts making a fundamental difference to residents and to reviewing the impact of these posts in two years' time.'

Councillor Cornwell presented the report to Members. He thanked Councillor Buckton, Councillor Boden, Councillor Bucknor, Councillor Owen and Councillor Tierney for their contribution to the group and help in the process. He stated that the project will enable Fenland District Council to improve the Private Housing Market.

Members asked question, made comments and received responses as follows;

- Councillor Yeulett asked what feedback had been given by the other Authorities and parties involved in the group. Councillor Cornwell explained that any issues raised were summarised in the report and none of the issues raised had hindered the process in any way.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if communication between the Council and these Authorities would continue during the two-year period of the project. Councillor Cornwell confirmed it would continue and an action plan in the report details this further.
- Councillor Yeulett suggested that the Fenland Community Safety Partnership (FCSP) could be involved in the project as both have similar objectives.
- Councillor Yeulett asked what additional costs would be incurred during the two-year period. Councillor Cornwell confirmed that the enforcement posts are funded and any remaining costs will be absorbed within the current team. Richard Cassidy explained that staff are already in place within the Private Sector Housing team to support this project. He explained that whilst the two enforcement posts are fully funded within the next two-years and the project should be cost neutral, this would need to be reviewed at the end of this period.
- Councillor Buckton praised the report and asked why Fenland District Council are responsible for so many actions in the report. Councillor Cornwell explained that the administration of the scheme is solely the responsibility of the Council operating their statutory powers however if information is discovered that involves other agencies, these other agencies will be informed.
- Councillor Buckton highlighted that other agencies will benefit a lot from the information we gain from this scheme and asked for confirmation that the Council would receive assistance and resources in return. Councillor Cornwell confirmed this is correct but the production of the Register will be the Council's responsibility. He explained that decent, adequate rental accommodation does affect all services and agencies and highlighted that health improvement, child protection and welfare should improve as a result of this scheme.
- Councillor Mason agreed that information should be shared between agencies in order to improve these areas. Councillor Cornwell explained that by being open with the Community, the Council should gain intelligence and information, such as new Houses-of-Multiple-Occupancy (HMO's), being reported by members of the public. Currently this information is not logged anywhere and having a register in place will benefit all agencies with access to it.
- Councillor Yeulett thanked everybody involved in the Task & Finish Group and wished them every success in the project.

(Councillor Mason declared that as Secretary of Whittlesey Conservative Group, he is responsible for the collection of rent for their premises, however does not benefit in any monetary way from this.)

OSC31/17 FENLAND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Dan Horn presented the report to Members. He highlighted actions taken by the Fenland Community Safety Partnership (FCSP) based on the feedback from Members previously.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows;

- Councillor Yeulett asked for clarification on the process of prioritising actions. Councillor Buckton asked for further information on how priorities are identified within the plan. Dan Horn explained that there is an annual cycle and process that is followed to identify priorities and FCSP considers new information and any changes that have taken place in Fenland during the year and add them to the plan accordingly. For example, last year, the Committee had highlighted Road Safety as a concern and as a result of this strategic assessments were set up. Cambridgeshire County Council carry out the strategic assessments based on research and share the research they have as well as information from the Police Crime Commissioners. All the information received is collated at the FCSP's annual meeting and these priorities are added to the action plan and strategic assessments are arranged in light of this.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if the public are involved with adding new priorities and concerns to the plan. Dan Horn explained that in partnership with the Police, Community Contact Points are set up to survey members of the public and this feeds into topics discussed within the FCSP. For example, in recent years the Wisbech Alcohol Partnership has been set up to tackle street drinking in the town centre and as a result of concern within the community, the Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) have been set up in Wisbech to deal with this issue also.
- Aarron Locks explained that an online community engagement survey has been set up for the public and data collected over a three month period, will be sent to Cambridgeshire County Council's research team to help them form their future strategic assessments. He highlighted that this will allow the community to have a voice and confirmed that the survey had gone live recently.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if they take national statistics and concerns into consideration when formulating their plans, for example the increase in knife crime and domestic violence. Ian Lombardo confirmed that domestic violence is a priority within the district and said discussions were in place to ensure information is readily available for victims of this crime. He added that national trends do get considered and added to the action plan as required.
- Councillor Buckton asked if there was an increase in cases of domestic violence or has an improvement in the reporting of it, meant the number of incidents has risen. Ian Lombardo confirmed that reported crime is on the increase which is positive and this is a reflection of the work carried out to make help and support available to the victims of this crime.
- Councillor Buckton asked if this increase in reporting has helped the FCSP. Dan Horn confirmed that there is a county-wide domestic abuse strategic group that has been set up and the FCSP takes information from them to support victims and get the message out to the public regarding this.
- Councillor Buckton asked if the Health & Wellbeing board is linked with FCSP in any projects. Dan Horn confirmed that they worked with the Health & Wellbeing board in regards to the Wisbech Alcohol Partnership as it was a shared priority across both partnerships.
- Councillor Mason discussed the Whittlesey Pub-Watch group and stated that the Police or Licensing Manager had not attended any of meetings which was disappointing. Dan Horn confirmed that the Licensing Manager at Fenland District Council is very keen to get involved in this group but had been unwell at the time of the last meeting however she had provided a written update for the group.
- Councillor Mrs Clark asked if there were any results from the PSPO that has been set up in Wisbech to tackle street-drinking. Councillor Oliver confirmed that early figures showed street-drinking had reduced, with 21 Fixed-Penalty-Notices being issued in relation to this. He highlighted that public perception of street-drinking had also improved and littering had reduced in the town as a result of this.
- Councillor Yeulett asked how Fenland compared with other districts in relation to tackling crime. Ian Lombardo confirmed that whilst crime is rising across Cambridgeshire, Fenland has seen an increase but is still lower than the rest of the regions average. He highlighted that there has been a reduction in anti-social behaviour across Fenland between 2016-17.

- Councillor Yeulett asked for further information on cyber-crime and online bullying within Fenland. Ian Lombardo stated that these sort of crimes link into several other areas and dedicated teams are in place to deal with them and added that these teams visit schools to educate youngsters on the risks of cyber-crime and online bullying.
- Councillor Yeulett asked what the main concerns and challenges are for school children within the area. Ian Lombardo highlighted that most children targeted by these sort of crimes are those that are in care and as a result, a lot of work has gone in to liaising with care homes to reduce this. He explained that there has been a reduction in children in care going missing as a result of dealing with repeat offenders and removing the peer-pressure for other children.
- Councillor Yeulett asked for further information on rehabilitation in the area. Ian Lombardo confirmed that the Police have partnerships in place with schools across the district and also seek advice from Social Services. He explained that by offering enforcement support, other agencies can assist and information can be shared between them.
- Councillor Yeulett asked for information on rough-sleepers. Ian Lombardo confirmed a head-count had been carried out by Fenland District Council and the Police had supported this. Dan Horn confirmed that rough-sleepers have increased in the last 12 months and stated that the new post within the Housing Team should help to reduce this figure. He promised to provide figures to Members on this after the meeting.
- Councillor Mason stated that following the head-count in November 2017, Councillor Sutton had commented on the number of rough-sleepers refusing to accept the solutions on offer. Dan Horn confirmed that there are a number of reasons rough-sleepers refuse assistance however the Council would be liaising with land-owners to ensure these individuals are moved on if they are not willing to engage with us.
- Councillor Buckton asked if a strategic assessment had been carried out in relation to online bullying. Ian Lombardo confirmed that whilst no assessment had taken place, work is taking place within schools to deal with online bullying. He explained that it is a very subjective form of bullying as victims are affected in many different ways and as a result of this, bespoke plans are put in place to deal with each individual scenario.
- Councillor Buckton asked for further information on the online community engagement survey. Aarron Locks confirmed that the survey had recently gone live and is available online and at our Community Contact Points. He said that it is being advertised and promoted via the Council's social media sites.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's) were still issued. Ian Lombardo stated that ASBO's no longer exist and there is now a scale of measures to deal with anti-social behaviour. He explained that there are now Criminal Behaviour Orders that can be issued in the most severe of cases but also Anti-Social Behavioural Contracts (that engage parents in assisting with their child's behaviour), Dispersal Orders and Warnings that are issued prior to Criminal Behaviour Orders.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if hare coursing was an issue within the area. Ian Lombardo confirmed that there is a Rural Community Action Team and specific units within Headquarters to deal with this.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if Parish and Town Councils are consulted about these issues. Ian Lombardo explained that reports are submitted and PCSO's pass these reports to Town and Parish Council's. He confirmed that in the next few months, he will attempt to visit the Town and Parish Council's in order to improve relations.
- Councillor Yeulett thanked Members and officers for the report and presentation.

MEMBERS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGREED TO NOTE THE REPORT.

OSC32/17 PROGRESS IN DELIVERING THE ENVIRONMENT CORPORATE OBJECTIVES 2017-2018

Members considered the report, asked the following questions and received responses as follows;

- Councillor Buckton asked for clarification on the recycling diversion rates on page 78 of the report. Councillor Murphy explained that since the introduction of the garden waste service, part of our recycling is now taken to waste recycling centres which are managed by Cambridgeshire County Council and therefore as part of our household waste is being diverted, we are now including data from Cambridgeshire County Council and not just Fenland.
- Councillor Buckton stated that recent press reports have suggested that China may start refusing some of the UK's plastic waste and asked if plans were in place to deal with this. Councillor Murphy explained that this was first discussed over a year ago and China are considering refusing 'dirty' plastic from the UK and other Countries. He confirmed that the Council have explored several options in regards to this, one of which is a company that turn 'dirty' plastic into pellets which China would accept. He added that the Council currently use local companies and companies across Europe, to recycle part of their plastic waste.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if any further work needs to be carried out in relation to plastic recycling at the moment. Councillor Murphy confirmed that at the moment there is nothing more that needs to be done in regards to this.

Councillor Buckton left the meeting at 4:00pm.

- Councillor Yeulett asked what the biggest challenge is going forward in relation to recycling. Richard Cassidy explained that the market price for recycling fluctuates constantly with 'clean' materials yielding the best income from recycling. He stated that improving the quality of recyclates would help greatly and the Council are continuing to educate the public on this. Councillor Murphy added that he had recently attended refuse collections in the district and said that advice leaflets had been attached to household's bins not complying with our recycling rules. He added that these households were re-visited at a later date and was pleased to see that the advice had been taken on-board.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if fly-tipping had increased in the district since the introduction of the garden waste service. Councillor Murphy said that whilst fly-tipping had increased, this was not as a result of the garden waste service and explained that the Council are tackling fly-tipping by prosecuting the individuals who commit this offence.
- Councillor Yeulett asked for an update on the re-generation works taking place in Wisbech. Councillor Oliver explained that several projects are now underway and planning applications have been submitted for others, including The Gap in Wisbech.
- Councillor Yeulett asked for an update on the Kingdom Pilot. Councillor Murphy stated that the Kingdom Pilot was going very well and litter had reduced in the targeted areas. He added that those prosecuted with littering offences had been fined a total of £7,310. Councillor Oliver added that Kingdom Officers are being used to enforce the PSPO's in Wisbech and are also producing good results.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if the reduction in scrap metal value had increased the amount of abandoned vehicles in the district. Councillor Murphy stated that there had been no increase in this.
- Councillor Oliver updated Members that the Council's CCTV had now been transferred to a Wireless-System, which would save the Council money as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review.
- Councillor Yeulett asked for an update on the Golden Age project. Councillor Cornwell explained that following careful consideration, they had decided not to make the project health related as previously discussed as the project does not have the resources to run health-fairs. Councillor Cornwell explained that attendance at Golden Age events had improved since reducing the meetings to quarterly and events were planned for Whittlesey

in March 2018.

- Councillor Yeulett asked if the Golden Age project supports food banks in the district. Councillor Cornwell explained that the demographic of those that require food banks do not generally link with the Golden Age participants.
- Councillor Cornwell updated Members that the Pride of Fenland awards are also taking place in the coming months.
- Councillor Yeulett asked what work is being carried out to reduce the amount of homeless people in the area. Richard Cassidy explained that homeless individuals require a wide range of bespoke solutions and there are a number of reasons why they have become homeless or may refuse help offered. He added that the Council is working with partners to provide a range of support services to help homeless people however there is no quick solution to solve the issue completely.
- Councillor Murphy informed Members that the subscriptions for the garden waste service had increased by 3,000 compared to this time last year.

Councillor Yeulett thanked Cabinet Members and officers for the report and updates provided.

OSC33/17 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Members agreed to the Future Work Programme 2017/18 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

- In light of recent events, Councillor Mason and Councillor Mrs Clark offered thanks to Councillor Yeulett for his Chairmanship of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the work he has carried out on behalf of the Panel.

4:19pm

Chairman