

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS
22nd April, 2013

Present:- Councillor McNeely (in the Chair); Councillors Goulty and Kaye (Policy Advisors).

J73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

J74. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services reported that, as part of the implementation of the Homelessness Act 2002, Rotherham had produced its first Homelessness Strategy 2003-08. Its refresh in 2008 had had a stronger emphasis on homelessness prevention and partnership working and was now due for a further refresh.

As part of the Homelessness Strategy review process, the Improving Places Select Commission had requested that a bespoke Scrutiny review be undertaken to commence in June, 2013.

The scope of the review would be to determine which were the most successful prevention strategies to help people remain in their current home and what methods were available to obtain alternative accommodation. Performance issues would also be considered such as assessment timescales, accessibility and interview techniques. The Communities and Local Government had recently published a Self-Diagnostic toolkit which the Scrutiny Review may wish to utilise to complete the review.

The Scrutiny Review would also consider how:-

- Homeless applicants could be encouraged to consider the opportunities that the private rented sector had to offer
- The Council could plug gaps in the provision of temporary supported accommodation for single non-priority need homeless applicants over the age of 25
- To raise awareness of the National Rough Sleeping reporting line and how the Authority could improve Rotherham's Out of Hours Service for homeless households

Resolved:- (1) That the scope of the Scrutiny Review, to be undertaken by the Improving Places Select Commission, to start in June, 2013, be noted.

(2) That once the Scrutiny Review had been completed, a report be submitted to the Cabinet Member detailing a proposed revised Homelessness Strategy 2013-18.

J75. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved: - That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in those paragraphs indicated below of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended 2006 – information relates to finance and business affairs).

J76. INTRODUCTORY REVIEW APPEAL PANEL

It was noted that an Introductory Tenancy Review Panel had been held on 9th April, 2013, comprising Councillors Read (in the Chair), Ellis and Falvey to review a decision to terminate an Introductory Tenancy.

The decision made by the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer to serve a Notice of Proceedings of Possession on 12th March, 2013 had been confirmed by the Panel.

Resolved:- That the Panel's decision be noted.

(Exempt under Paragraph 2 of the Act - information likely to reveal the identity of an individual

J77. NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES REVIEW

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services presented the Neighbourhood Centres Review findings to date and proposals for the way forward.

A recent review of communal facility charges had identified that the current charging system was fair and equitable and should be retained. However, a number of tenants were paying for a Centre that they did not utilise. Based on the issues outlined in the report, a further review and appraisal had been initiated on a Centre by Centre basis to determine options for future use.

Discussion ensued on the report with the following issues raised:-

- Impact of the Universal Credit and “bedroom tax” on tenants’ ability to pay
- Use of the Centres by staff
- Encouraged usage by third sector organisations
- Possibility of third sector organisations being able to access grant funding
- Geographical split

Resolved:- (1) That the initial findings of the review to date be noted.

(2) That further customer consultation take place with regard to all Centres to determine the final recommendations relating to future use.

(3) That comments/suggestions be sought from all affected Ward Members with regard to their individual Centres.

(4) That approaches be made to Age UK and other third sector organisations (including TARAs and Area Housing Panels) to ascertain their interest in using the Centres.

(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act – information relating to the financial/business affairs of any person (including the Council))

J78. PAYMENT OF COMPENSATION

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services reported on a complaint regarding service and advice provided by the Council's Homelessness Service which had been upheld at Stage 2 of the Council's Complaints Procedure.

Details of the complaint were set out in the report submitted.

Resolved:- That the complainant be awarded £690 in settlement of her complaint.

(Exempt under Paragraph 2 of the Act – information likely to reveal the identity of an individual)