

**Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and
Community held on 26 November 2014 from
7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**

Present: Jacqui Landriani (Chairman)
Dick Sweatman* (Vice Chairman)

Richard Bates	Cherry Catharine	David Dorking
Margaret Belsey*	Rod Clarke*	Sue Hatton*
Liz Bennett	Phillip Coote*	Anne Jones, MBE*
Pete Bradbury	Mims Davies*	Natalie March
		Mandy Thomas-Atkin

* Absent

Also Present (as an appointed substitute): Councillor Forbes

Also Present: Councillor Snowling.

13. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Committee agreed to appoint Councillor Thomas-Atkin as the Vice-Chairman for the duration of the meeting in place of Councillor Sweatman.

**14. SUBSTITUTES AT MEETINGS OF COMMITTEE – COUNCIL PROCEDURE
RULE 4**

The Committee noted that Councillor Forbes had replaced Councillor Clarke for the duration of the meeting.

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Belsey, Clarke, Davies, Hatton and Sweatman.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bradbury declared a personal interest in item 6 as a Trustee of an organisation that worked in this field. Councillor Forbes declared a personal interest in item 9 as a resident of a Mobile Home Park.

17. MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 October were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

19. WORK ENABLEMENT

Judy Holmes the Assistant Chief Executive introduced a report updating progress on the commissioned Work Enablement projects in 2013/14 and 2014/15. The Council

had developed in partnership with West Sussex County Council a scheme to support people back into work, associated with the introduction of the Council Tax Support Scheme. Progress with the three types of commissioned services currently provided was outlined, comprising Work Enablement; Training and Learning; and Financial Capability. The report provided progress against performance measures for each of the projects, including the numbers of participants. Proposals for 2015/16 are to continue with the Work Enablement and Training and Learning projects, jointly funded by this Council and West Sussex County Council.

In response to a Member's questions on the demand for the schemes, the Assistant Chief Executive acknowledged that the projects were targeting comparatively small numbers of people who were often difficult to reach and were long term unemployed. Assistance was designed to get people into work and to improve the prospects of those in low paid employment.

In reply to a Member's question on the source of referrals to the schemes, Elizabeth Carter the Council's Wellbeing Manager stated that these included Children and Family Centres, the CAB, Job Centre Plus and the Council's Think Family Team. Examples were provided of the type of training provided and the assistance tailored to women seeking to get back into work.

A Member mentioned his involvement as a Trustee in a project called the Building Heroes Education Foundation based at Cuckfield. This had some overlaps with the Work Enablement programme and included the targeting of ex-service personnel and young people not in employment, education or training. He offered to arrange a visit for Members and Officers to view the scheme. This would be discussed further with the Chairman of the Committee.

As there were no other questions, the Chairman took Members to the report's recommendation, which was agreed.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Health and Community be requested to extend the work enablement and training and learning project in 2015/16.

20. REVIEW OF THE HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME

Lynne Standing, the Head of Housing, Environmental Health and Building Control introduced a report setting out proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme from January 2015. A revised Allocation Scheme had been implemented from 1 May 2014, which had introduced some significant amendments. Since then, the need for a number of further revisions had come to light. Most of these were minor changes and concerned clarifications to the amendments made in May. The main proposed new changes to the scheme concerned the first lettings of larger new developments and applicants who have applied as homeless, but do not have a local connection to the District.

In response to a Member's question, the Head of Housing, Environmental Health and Building Control updated on the position with Affinity Sutton tenants. It was confirmed that their removal from the Register is likely to take place in January 2015, when they will be moved on to their own system called Home Choice

Replying to a further Member question regarding people from other areas such as London wishing to join our Register, the Head of Housing, Environmental Health and

Building Control, acknowledged that there can be some displacement from other district and boroughs as a result of their local connection requirements, but reminded Members that people needed to have a local connection with Mid Sussex to join our register. In practice, most displacement from London tended to be to areas with a cheaper property market.

As there were no further questions, the Chairman took Members to the report's recommendations, which were agreed.

RESOLVED

Council be recommended to endorse the revised Housing Allocation Scheme, to take effect from January 2015.

21. CHARGING FOR ENFORCEMENT ACTION UNDER THE HOUSING ACT 2004

Yvonne Leddy, Business Unit Leader – Environmental Health and Building Control, introduced a report setting out the Council's powers to charge for enforcement action under Section 49 of the Housing Act 2004. The Council has a duty to address sub-standard housing conditions and it was sometimes necessary to take enforcement action for improvements through the serving of statutory notices to landlords. The report set out proposals for the introduction of such charges and a charging structure based upon an hourly rate to cover the Council's enforcement costs. It was emphasised that the Council generally has good relationships with landlords and enforcement action was only necessary in a small number of cases. The main intended benefit of the proposal was to reduce the time that less responsive landlords take to do necessary repairs.

A number of Members spoke to welcome the principle of charging as a way of speeding up repairs and the time that tenants have to live in sub-standard accommodation.

In response to a Member question regarding the types of problems reported, the Business Unit Leader – Environmental Health and Building Control stated that the Council dealt with about 200 complaints last year, mainly involving condensation, damp, excess cold and falls on stairs. It was confirmed that letting agents and absent landlords can be subject to enforcement.

In response to a Member's question, the Business Unit Leader – Environmental Health and Building Control explained the rationale for an hourly rate, rather than incremental charges. It was emphasised that the Council could not seek to make a profit from enforcement and could only seek to recover the cost of administration and compliance.

The Committee agreed that it might be a good idea to review the charges for enforcement action after a year of operation, although the work programme at this time would be a matter for the new Council Committee.

As there were no further questions, the Chairman took Members to the report's recommendations, which were agreed.

RESOLVED

That:

- (1) charging for enforcement action taken under the Housing Act 2004 be endorsed for approval by Council on 17 December; and
- (2) the principle be endorsed that the Head of Housing, Environmental Health and Building Control, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Community, should be authorised to make minor amendments to the charging structure, once adopted, to reflect changes in legislation or guidance and codes of practice where a full review of the policy is not warranted.

22. PROPOSED FEES POLICY FOR “RELEVANT PROTECTED SITES” UNDER THE MOBILE HOMES ACT 2013

Yvonne Leddy, the Business Unit Leader - Environmental Health and Building Control, introduced a report setting out proposals for the introduction of fees for the Council's licensing functions under the Mobile Homes Act 2013. The legislation being enacted now places a duty on the Council to inspect relevant protected sites. The proposed fees set out in the report were set at a level to recover the cost of administration and compliance checks. It was pointed out that the recommendation should refer to approval by Council on 17 December, rather than the meeting of 28 January referred to in the report.

A Member commented that this was a fair and good report, but queried some of the information contained in appendix B in relation to site location name and number of pitches. The Business Unit Leader - Environmental Health and Building Control stated that the site location name had to be based upon the registration information, but the number of pitches would be amended.

In response to a Member question on the sites in Mid Sussex that are required to be licensed, the Business Unit Leader - Environmental Health and Building Control confirmed that this does not apply to family sites, Gypsy and Traveller sites or those for holiday use.

As there were no further questions, the Chairman took Members to the report's recommendations, which were agreed.

RESOLVED

That:

- (1) Council, on 17 December 2014 be recommended to endorse the proposed fees policy in respect of “Relevant Protected Sites” set out within Appendix A attached to the report; and
- (2) the principle be endorsed that the Head of Housing, Environmental Health and Building Control, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Community, should be authorised to make minor amendments to the Policy, once adopted, to reflect changes in legislation or guidance and codes of practice where a full review of the policy is not warranted.

23. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR LEISURE AND COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Chairman introduced the report setting out the proposed programme for the rest of the year. It was noted that the agenda for 14 January contained a large number of items and there may be some scope for moving some reports to the meeting on 24

March. It was suggested that these might be the Health and Wellbeing Update and Equality and Diversity Progress Report. The Chairman agreed to discuss this further with relevant officers.

As there were no questions, the Chairman took Members to the report's recommendation, which was agreed.

RESOLVED

That the Committee's Work Programme for the remainder of 2014/15 be noted.

Chairman