

**Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and
Community held on 6 July 2016 from
7:00 p.m. to 8:28 p.m.**

Present: Mandy Thomas-Atkin (Chairman)
Anne Boutrup (Vice Chairman)

Margaret Belsey	Colin Holden	Kirsty Page
Liz Bennett	Anne Jones MBE	Dick Sweatman
Pete Bradbury*	Chris King	Peter Reed
Cherry Catharine	Anthea Lea	
Sandy Ellis*	Howard Mundin*	

* Absent

Also Present (as an appointed substitute): Councillor Phillip Coote and Councillor Linda Stockwell.

Also Present: Councillors Jonathan Ash-Edwards, Councillor Edward Belsey, Councillor Pru Moore and Councillor Norman Webster.

**4. TO NOTE SUBSTITUTES IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE
RULE 4 – SUBSTITUTES AT MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES ETC.**

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor Phillip Coote had replaced Councillor Pete Bradbury and Councillor Linda Stockwell had replaced Councillor Sandy Ellis for the duration of the meeting.

5. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillor Howard Mundin.

**6. TO RECEIVE DECLARATION OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF
ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA.**

None.

**7. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON
2 MARCH AND 11 MAY 2016.**

The Minutes of the previous Annual meeting held on 11 May 2016 were amended to replace the attendance of Councillor Richard Cherry with Councillor Cherry Catharine and then agreed as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**8. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS
URGENT BUSINESS.**

None.

9. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2016 – 2021.

Tom Clark, the Interim Head of Housing introduced the report. The report's key focus was to actively try to prevent particular groups from becoming homeless, such as

members of the Armed Forces. He made clear the fact that the Council was continuing to engage with private landlords and minimise its use of temporary housing.

A Member referred to page 26, item 10, and asked whether the Council still took notice of the Armed Forces Covenant. The Housing Needs Manager, Julian Till confirmed that the Council is still signed up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant and that the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme reflected this by exempting members of the Armed Forces from a local connection requirement and gave additional priority to members of the Armed Forces in housing need when they bid for homes.

A Member gave thanks to the Housing Needs Manager and his team and said they should be proud of the progress they have achieved in difficult circumstances. The Chairman agreed that it was a very detailed report and gave her thanks.

A member queried whether the Council could make use of 'park homes', chalets, caravans, or pre-fabricated homes and that the Council had to come up with alternative accommodation to decrease the housing shortage. The Interim Head of Housing said that this suggestion would be taken into consideration.

A member was pleased that West Sussex care leavers had been integrated into the policy and wished to know whether an interim report would be available on the impact of this. The Housing Needs Manager replied saying that WSCC had commissioned a Task and Finish Group, on which Cllr King had sat, to look at the working of the new joint working protocol for care leavers and that this group had reported on its findings.

A member wished to know whether there would be a reduction in the Local Housing Allowance afforded to local tenants and whether Council Tax Benefit had been frozen. The Housing Needs Manager advised that from April 2018 Local Housing Allowance was to be extended to social rented tenants who commenced their tenancies after April 2016. This would predominately affect single people under the age of 35 whose housing benefit will be restricted to the Shared Accommodation Rate of Local Housing Allowance, which is less than the rent charged by housing associations for one bedroom accommodation. Local Housing Allowance rates have been frozen until March 2020 and as rents increase over time people who are dependent on housing benefit will find it increasingly difficult to afford their rents. The Housing Needs Manager added that he was not able to advise on the support available to those paying the Council Tax.

The Vice-Chairman asked how the Council's Rent in Advance and Deposit Guarantee Scheme was funded and whether the Council recuperated its money from these schemes. The Housing Needs Manager clarified that these schemes are funded by the Council, and there is generally a very high recovery rate for the loans. He stated that these schemes had been running since 1991 and on average had cost approximately £50 per household.

Another Member raised her concern with the age in which someone can be declared homeless, and the age in which the Council no longer has a duty to house them. The Housing Needs Manager clarified that anyone over 16 can be accepted as homeless and, depending on their individual situation, the Council may not have a statutory obligation to house them if they are fit and healthy and are not considered to be at risk. A Member said they were concerned that young people leaving care may be considered fit and healthy but be at an increased suicide risk and end up 'sofa

surfing'. The Housing Needs Manager explained that the Council works closely with West Sussex Leaving Care Team and there is a protocol in place to house people who become homeless on leaving care, but clarified that if a young person had never been in care then Mid Sussex Council had no obligation to house them, and considered all cases on an individual basis.

A Member raised their concern about the housing association Affinity Sutton, and stated some of their constituents had problems getting essential repairs done. The Member queried whether the Council could use a different social housing provider. The Housing Needs Manager clarified to members that the provision of social housing is outside his remit, and that there were other social housing providers other than Affinity Sutton. Affinity Sutton own approximately 60% of the social housing stock in Mid Sussex. He understood that Affinity Sutton had problems with contractors occasionally.

The Chairman moved on to discuss the Burgess Hill help point, and the concerns about the need to offer transport to those who were in need of urgent advice about homelessness to the Mid Sussex District Council offices in Haywards Heath. In response to this, the Housing Needs Manager assured members that people can be issued travel warrants, and in extreme cases can have a taxi booked for them to get them to Haywards Heath to speak to the housing team.

The Interim Head of Housing explained to Members that there were other services that people could use such as Sussex Homeless Outreach Reconnection and Engagement (SHORE) which provides an outreach service for people sleeping rough. A Member also highlighted that they had worked with churches that own properties and provide services such as clothes and showers to homeless people, they enquired whether the Housing Team had a central list of all these churches and charities. The Housing Needs Manager confirmed that his team are aware of the various groups that offer other services.

A Member wished to clarify what happens to someone who has been evicted from private or social housing, and whether there were instances where people can be evicted from social housing provided by Affinity Sutton. The Housing Needs Manager reiterated that both social tenants and private sector tenants can be evicted for various reasons, and there are circumstances in which the Council will not house someone after eviction.

The portfolio holder for Health and Community wished to give his thanks for the detailed report supplied by the Housing Needs Manager and wished him to pass on his congratulations to the housing team for working in such testing times. He reminded Members that the housing team often had to deal with the other underlying issues that affected homelessness. He thanked Councillor King for his contribution to the WSCC task and finish group that looked at how the recently introduced Joint Working Protocol for Care Leavers had been working in West Sussex.

The Chairman moved the Committee to the recommendations on page 9 which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the Committee endorse the Homelessness Strategy for 2016 – 2021.

10. REVIEW OF WASTE MANAGEMENT AT MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL – UPDATE REPORT.

The report was introduced by David Harper, the Business Unit Leader for Waste and Outdoor Services, who provided an overview of the waste partnership road map options and the partnership between West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex District Council and other district and borough councils in West Sussex. He reminded Members that the mid-point for the contract with Serco was in 2018 and the contract would be reviewed shortly. Regarding the result of the EU Referendum, he stated that it will not affect the immediate future of waste management as the 2020 targets are enshrined in English Law. He continued to say that the Council was achieving a 39% recycling rate and is still working towards its 50% target. He explained that targets for 65% for 2030 are not enshrined in English Law so cannot be clarified until the government has made clear whether to embrace additional EU environmental legislation. He reiterated that the Council were looking at collecting food waste and have looked at neighbouring districts and how they do it. He clarified a typographical error in item 5 on page 38 in which there should not be an added “by 2020”.

A Member was disappointed with the recycling rate of 39%, and said that it used to be higher in previous years at around 44%. The Business Unit Leader replied that the drop in the recycling rate was outlined in the February and March reports. He reminded Members that this report explained that a lot of products that were previously recycled in high numbers, such as newspapers, were less common and manufacturers had made their glass and cardboard packaging lighter. Recently the Council has been able to recycle some plastics which are lighter and more bulky, but do not weigh as much as previous years. The amount of road sweeping arisings had dropped last year following a number of road improvements schemes implemented last year. However, there were some positive trends such as the increase in cardboard due to the prevalence of online shopping.

The Chair suggested to the Committee that residents needed further education about recycling. This was echoed by other Members who asked whether the cleanliness of items being recycled had dropped and what was being done to educate people about what items can be recycled.

The Business Unit Leader told Members that the Council is funding a project which is rolling out gradually. In its first 15 months quality levels have improved and there has been a significant reduction in rejections at the transfer stations. He went on to say that in the past, targeted communications had been effective in educating residents on what they should be recycling, and door stepping staff could be used again. He told members that 20% of black bin waste could be recycled, and 6% of waste put into recycling could not, if this could be remedied it would save the West Sussex residents approximately £4 ½ Million in unnecessary waste processing and landfill tax.

A Member suggested that presentations in primary level education were important, as children could instruct their parents how to recycle if they are not doing it correctly. The Business Unit Leader agreed with this and stated that Waste Prevention Advisors go into schools. He discussed whether the contract could be modified to include more feedback from teenagers.

A member queried whether the Council still gave out educational material such as magnets and posters, to which the Business Unit Leader replied that this was generally in the remit of the Communications Team and reassured Members that any communications that are proven to be successful will be rolled out. He also reassured members that if recycling was not collected because it was contaminated,

there were opportunities for the residents to amend this and arrange for an alternative collection day.

The Vice-Chairman queried whether there had been a downturn in the number of plastic carrier bags recycled since the introduction of the mandatory 5p bag charge, the Business Unit Leader replied saying there had not been a drop. Another Member stated that people still purchase them for bin liners and to give to charity. Members suggested whether we could work closely with supermarkets to recycle plastic bags and to make labelling on food clearer. The Chairman advised Members that recycling information was already printed on most supermarket packaging.

To conclude, The portfolio holder for Leisure and Sustainability reminded the Committee that there had been a huge drive to increase recycling rates 5 years ago, and that the programme 'waste busters' had been successful.. The Member suggested an alternative approach by warning residents that they will have to indirectly pay for the fine if recycling targets are not met.

The Chairman took Members to the recommendation on page 39 of the report, which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted and approved the Waste Management at Mid Sussex District Council – Update Report.

11. UPDATED POLICY ON LICENSING OF SEX ESTABLISHMENTS.

The Senior Licensing Officer introduced the report explaining that it was adopted in 2010 when there was a tightening of the rules regarding sex cinemas and shops, and it was a policy used by many districts. The report outlined how the Council dealt with applications, and set a limit of zero sex establishments in Mid Sussex. However, applications can still be made and considered by the Licensing Committee. He explained to Members that there had been no legislative changes in the past 6 years and therefore the policy had not changed.

The Vice-Chairman asked how this policy applied to pubs and clubs in the district. The Senior Licensing Officer explained that there is an exemption in the policy for pubs and clubs, in which they can hold a maximum of 11 events a year, with a 1 month gap between each event, the event is also limited to a running time of 24 hours. A Member raised concerns over the protection of staff operating in an event such as this, to which he replied that as part of the application process an operator has to show how they will protect their staff.

The Chairman moved the Committee to the recommendations on page 44 which were agreed unanimously.

Resolved

That the Committee endorse to Council the Statement of Policy for Sex Establishment Venues at Appendix 1.

**12. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR LEISURE AND COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME
2016/17**

The Business Unit Leader for Waste and Outdoor Services clarified that there would be further items added to the October, November and February Work Programmes on waste.

As there were no further questions, the Chairman took Members to the recommendation which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the Committee's Work Programme as set out in the report.

**10. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10 DUE NOTICE OF
WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN**

None.