

**Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and
Community held on 11 October 2016 from
7:00 p.m. to 7:47 p.m.**

Present: Anne Boutrup (Chairman)
Margaret Belsey (Vice Chairman)

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

* Absent

Also Present (as an appointed substitute): Councillor Peter Wyan.

Also Present: Councillors Jonathan Ash-Edwards, John Belsey, MacNaughton, Mainstone, Thomas-Atkin and Webster.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN.

Councillor Anne Boutrup gave thanks to the previous Chairman of the Committee Councillor Mandy Thomas-Atkin and it was agreed she as the Committee Vice Chairman act as Chairman for the duration of the meeting, with Councillor Margaret Belsey acting as Vice-Chairman.

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

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor Peter Wyan had replaced Councillor Colin Holden for the duration of the meeting

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillors Colin Holden, Anthea Lea and Peter Martin.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Councillors Bradbury and Jones both declared a prejudicial interest in item 6 as West Sussex County Councillors.

5. MINUTES .

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 July 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. URGENT BUSINESS.

None.

**7. WEST SUSSEX JOINT SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP – HOUSING
PROVISION FOR CARE LEAVERS SCRUTINY REVIEW.**

Councillor King, Mid Sussex District Council's Member of the West Sussex Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group introduced the report.

He stated that the overall aim of the report is to end the repetitive cycles that young people experience whilst in care. The costs to society when young people do not receive adequate care cannot be overstated, and any investment to aid the transition for care leavers to independent living is the most appropriate, humane and correct thing to do.

He noted that the aim of the policy was to be pro-active rather than reactive; he used the example of a young person going to university and then finding themselves homeless during holiday time to demonstrate how long term provisions must be put in place.

He continued to explain that the main recommendation in the report was to allocate a wider geographic region for care leavers to be housed.

He concluded by stating that there needed to be more safeguards in place for care leavers. He stated that teenagers in an ordinary home environment often get more than one chance but young people in care are often left by themselves if they make mistakes. He stated that in this sense, the Council should act more like a "good parent".

The Chairman thanked Councillor King for presenting the report and praised the quality of the report.

A Member stated that he was aware of the difficulties that care leavers face in West Sussex and the difficult transition between childhood and adulthood. He directed the Committee's attention to item 5.9 on page 16 of the report, which stated that the County Council should seek to amend its policy to provide support from 18 years old to 21. He reminded the committee that West Sussex County Council had to make savings of £100 million and wished to know where the extra £10 million to fund this extended service will come from.

Julian Till, Housing Needs Manager responded that there would be no cost to Mid Sussex District Council, and the financing would be agreed by West Sussex County Council.

The Assistant Chief Executive, Judy Holmes, clarified that this report originated from a task-force consisting of both County and District Council Members. From a District Council perspective, it can only be beneficial the cost will be a matter for the County Council to consider. She asked Councillor King to clarify that financing was considered in the original drafting of the report.

Councillor King advised the Committee that finance was considered heavily in the deliberations. It was the opinion of West Sussex County Council that any investment would be recuperated in the long run from savings from other services which would be alleviated by the extension of care to 21 years olds. He stated that the cost of these proposals should not be measured in monetary terms but on the impact it will have on care leavers. He asked Members of the Committee whether there was any situation in which the County Council could not afford to do it.

The Chairman agreed that there has to be an understanding on how these proposals are financed.

One Member stated that there are huge costs to society such as in ill health and drug taking when the care available to care leavers is not there, and that any costs incurred will benefit society overall.

The Member further stated that although there may be a small number of care leavers in West Sussex, the number is often not a true figure as many care leavers are often transient and move in with friends. She highlighted that mental health issues in young people is rising and believed the vulnerability of care leavers was of particular concern.

She noted positive features of the report that would be beneficial including secure and communal living areas and the opportunity for work experience for care leavers. She believed the proposals should be supported regardless of costings.

A Member of the Committee asked how many care leavers were consulted with by the Task Group. She also wished to know whether it was possible to extend the age that care leavers receive support to 25 or 30 years old. She highlighted that many care leavers may need extra support in early-adulthood. Furthermore, she agreed that care leavers should have one designated case worker and this should be kept the same if possible, and gave the example of one 19 year-old who had six different caseworkers in a two year period, which demonstrated the flaws of the current system.

Councillor King stated that the Task Group heard from key workers and officers in the field, and three care leavers were also involved in the process. He stated that the Task and Finish Group asked them what they believed would have helped them the most. They reported three issues care leavers raised as important, being placed in a suitable geographic area, keeping the same key worker, and having a nominated officer at each council.

He explained that the Task and Finish Group wrote to all councils regarding the draft policy and stated that Mid Sussex District Council officers were very supportive of the proposals. He reiterated that the Group believed the policy would save money in the long run. He also stated that care leavers receiving support up to the ages of 21-25 is something the County Council will consider.

The Cabinet Member for Community, Councillor Norman Webster, informed the Committee that housing was no longer part of his portfolio, but that over the years this report outlines an aspiration of West Sussex County Council to prevent duplication of services and save money over time.

A Member informed the Committee that a business case should be provided to support these proposals.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning, Councillor Andrew MacNaughton stated that this was an ongoing issue for which he did not wish to see good proposals slowed down.

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

The Head of Regulatory Services and Solicitor to the Council, Tom Clark, clarified that recommendations could not be added to the report, and therefore if a business case was to be put forward, this should be requested in a covering letter.

As there were no further questions, the Chairman moved the Committee to endorse recommendations 1 – 12 as set out in the report, with the addition of a covering letter asking for a business case to support the recommendations. This was agreed unanimously by Members.

RESOLVED

That the Committee endorse the West Sussex Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Housing Provision for Cares Leavers Scrutiny Review, with the addition of a covering letter requesting a business case for the recommendations be provided.

8. TAXI LICENSING PENALTY POINTS SCHEME.

Tom Clark, Solicitor to the Council, introduced the report and summarised that the reasoning behind introducing a penalty points scheme is to address people who have a history of infringements over a long period of time.

He informed the Committee that on page 23 of the report there were some amendments that had been agreed by the Licensing Committee. These were that the failure to undergo the 6 monthly Fitness Test on time should receive a penalty of 6 – 12 points and the penalty for not having a current Mot Test Certificate should be increased to 12 points.

He told Members that the Council was not expecting a lot of feedback on the scheme, but if feedback is received during the public consultation the item would return to this Committee.

Jon Bryant, Licensing Officer informed Members that if the scheme was agreed it would become a useful tool for the Taxi Licensing department. It was not aimed at penalising drivers who committed major transgressions as these drivers would go to the Licensing Sub-A Committee. The proposals were aimed at drivers who commit relatively minor transgressions over a longer period of time.

In response to a question from a Member, the Taxi Licensing Officer confirmed that Wealden District had introduced a penalty points scheme and Crawley was also considering adopting one.

A Member asked whether the Licensing department always knows who is driving a vehicle at any given time, and whether it was possible to take action against other taxi drivers from neighbouring districts that commit infringements.

The Licensing Officer replied that he was able to identify drivers through the vehicle registration number even if a driver is driving on behalf of another driver in a different vehicle. He stated that the Deregulation Act of 2015 allowed cross-border operation and many companies now have multiple licenses in different districts. However, if a vehicle licensed to a different district committed an infringement in Mid Sussex, he would pass the details of the vehicle on to the relevant licensing department for them to enforce.

The Chairman directed the Committee's attention to point 17 on page 21 of the report and sought clarification.

The Licensing Officer said that it had not been phrased very well, and explained that any driver who commits an offence and was subject to prosecution, would not receive

penalty points as this would be a case of double jeopardy.

As there were no further questions the Chairman moved the Committee to endorse the recommendation as set out in the report which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the Committee endorse the proposed Penalty Point Scheme set out in the report as an amendment to the Taxi Licensing Policy.

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

The Head of Regulatory Services and Solicitor to the Council, Tom Clark informed the Committee that due to changes to Cabinet Member responsibilities and Cabinet membership there is a high likelihood that any items after 21 March 2017 will change.

As there were no 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.

Chairman.