

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 12 JANUARY 2016
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 5.30 - 7.10 PM**

Members Present: A Mitchell (Vice-Chairman), K Chana, L Girling, S Kane, J Lea (Vice Chairman), C Roberts, B Rolfe, G Shiell, J H Whitehouse and W Marshall (Tenants and Leaseholders Federation)

Other members present:

Apologies for Absence: S Murray and R Gadsby

Officers Present A Hall (Director of Communities) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Officer)

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was advised that the Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor D Stallan, had tendered his apologies.

27. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chairman, who had tendered his apologies, the Vice-Chairman became the Chairman and requested nominations for the role of Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That, in the absence of Vice-Chairman, Councillor G Shiell be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

28. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (MINUTE ITEM 39 - 23.7.02)

There were no substitutions made at the meeting.

29. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the last meeting of the Select Committee held on 10 November 2015 be agreed.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

31. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME

(a) Terms of Reference

The Select Committee's Terms of Reference were noted.

(b) Work Programme

The Director of Communities advised that in regard to Item 11 Proposed Housing Service Improvements and Service Enhancements 2016/17, the Finance and Performance Cabinet Committee had placed a moratorium on this fund until a further review of options for the HRA was undertaken in 2016. This situation was due to the requirement to reduce rents by 1% per annum for 4 years and sell high value void properties.

32. HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGIES

The Select Committee received a report from the Director of Communities regarding Housing Service Strategies. At its meeting on 10 November 2015, the Select Committee considered a report regarding the future use of Housing Service Strategies noting that over many years, the Housing Service had formulated a suite of 16 separate strategies which set out the detailed approach taken by the Council and its officers to various housing activities.

All Housing Service Strategies were produced to a common format and were currently reviewed and updated by officers every three years and then reported to this Select Committee. Around the same time, the strategies relating to landlord services were also reported to the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation for their views as well. Final versions were then formally reported to the Housing Portfolio Holder for adoption.

The Select Committee, at its last meeting, noted that the suite of Housing Service Strategies were originally introduced at the time of the former Housing Inspectorate being set up and in anticipation of a formal Housing Inspection being undertaken. In addition it was noted that each Service Strategy took some time to update with further officer time required for reporting to and attending the Select Committee and Tenants and Leaseholders Federation meetings. Therefore officers had drafted a new approach to covering the strategies most needed by the Council, including a reduction the number of strategies from 16 to 7, which the Select Committee supported.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That, the coverage of Housing Service Strategies be reduced to the following headings:
 - (a) Introduction;
 - (b) Aims and Objectives;
 - (c) Approach to service Delivery; and
 - (d) Review of the Strategy.
- (2) That the proposed retention, discontinuation and amalgamation of existing Housing Service Strategies be noted and that the future suite of strategies comprise 7 service strategies, as listed at recommendation (4) below;
- (3) That the new service strategies be reviewed every five years from the date of their last review, with the exception of the Anti-Social Behaviour and

Harassment Service Strategy, which, in accordance with legislation, must be reviewed every three years;

- (4) That, as referred to above, the new suite of Service Strategies next be reviewed at the Housing Select Committee meetings in the months shown below:
 - (a) Empty Properties – March 2016;
 - (b) Home Ownership and leasehold Services – January 2018;
 - (c) Anti-Social Behaviour and harassment – April 2018;
 - (d) Tenant Participation – March 2019;
 - (e) Rent Arrears and Administration – November 2019;
 - (f) Older People's Housing – September 2020; and
 - (g) Housing and Neighbourhood Management – September 2020.
- (5) That the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation be invited to consider whether or not they would like to be consulted on all, some or none of the Housing Service Strategies prior to consideration by the Housing Select Committee; and
- (6) That the Housing Service Strategies be no longer reported to the Housing Portfolio Holder for approval through formal Portfolio Holder Decisions.

33. HOUSING STRATEGY KEY ACTION PLAN 2015 - 2016

The Select Committee received a report from the Director of Communities regarding the Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2015 – 12 Month's Progress Report and the New Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2016.

In September 2009 the Council's Cabinet adopted its current Housing Strategy which assessed the district's current and future housing needs, setting out the Council's approach to meeting those needs. The strategy included a Key Action Plan which set out the proposed actions that would be taken by the Council towards achieving the housing objectives. It was agreed that these Key Action Plans should be produced and updated on an annual basis with progress monitored twice a year by the former Housing Scrutiny Panel and its successor, this Select Committee.

Although it was originally anticipated that the Housing Strategy would cover a three year period and would be updated during 2012 to cover the following three years, much of the Housing Strategy related to the provisions within the Local Plan and a new Local Plan was currently under consideration by the Council. Therefore, the Housing Portfolio Holder had previously agreed that the Housing Strategy should not be updated until the Draft Local Plan (Preferred Approach) had been published but that, in the meantime, an Annual Housing Strategy Key Action Plan should be produced with progress monitored.

The last Key Action Plan was adopted in February 2015 and the last 6 Month Progress Report for the current Key Action Plan was considered by the Select

Committee in June 2015. The 12 month progress report had been submitted to this meeting for consideration.

RECOMMENDED:

- (1) That the 12 Month Progress Report on the Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2015 be noted; and
- (2) That the Housing Portfolio Holder be recommended to adopt the proposed Housing Strategy Key Action Plan for 2016 and that progress with the Key Action Plan be monitored on a six monthly basis.

34. PROPOSED COUNCIL RENT INCREASE 2016/17

The Select Committee received a report from the Director of Communities regarding the Proposed Council Rent Increase 2016/17.

At its meeting scheduled for 21 January 2016, the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee would be considering the HRA Budget 2016/17 and an associated recommendation on Council rent reduction for 2016/17. Members of the Resources Select Committee would also be invited to attend and take part in the discussion on all of the Council's budgets for 2016/17. Following this the Committee's recommendations would then be considered by the Cabinet on 4 February 2016 making its recommendations to the Full Council.

It was customary for this Select Committee to be briefed each year by the Director of Communities on the key issues relating to the HRA Budget and, in particular, the proposed Council rent increase. The Director of Communities advised that the authority would be reducing Council rents, as indicated under Minute Item 31 above, by 1% per annum for the next 4 years.

RESOLVED:

That the Proposed Council Rent Reduction by 1% per annum for 2016/17 be noted.

35. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Select Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 8 March 2016 at 5.30p.m. in Committee Room 1.