

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday 27 June 2023, 7.00 pm - 9.15 pm

Council Chamber - Civic Offices

Members Present:	Councillors A Patel (Chairman), R Brookes (Vice-Chairman), M Markham, C McCann, S Murray, J Parsons, R Sharif and D Wixley
Other Councillors:	Councillors R Balcombe, H Kane, S Kane, A Lion, J Philip, C Whitbread and H Whitbread
Other Councillors (Virtually):	Councillors K Williamson
Apologies:	Councillor(s) J Lucas, J Jogia, Caroline Pond and S Yerrell
Officers In Attendance:	Georgina Blakemore (Chief Executive), Surjit Balu (Interim Director of Housing and Property), Jennifer Gould (Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer), Andrew Small (Strategic Director, Corporate and Section 151 Officer), Christopher Walsh (Service Manager (Housing Needs and Management)), Natalie Cole (Corporate Communications Officer) and Vivienne Messenger (Democratic Services Officer)
Officers In Attendance (Virtually):	Pat Seager (Chairman's Officer)

[A RECORDING OF THIS MEETING IS AVAILABLE FOR REPEATED VIEWING](#)

1 WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that this meeting would be recorded and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

2 SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted that Councillor J Parsons had been appointed as substitute for Councillor J Lucas and Councillor D Wixley had been appointed as substitute for Councillor C P Pond.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct.

4 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor S Murray stated that at the last Stronger Communities Select Committee meeting, he had thanked Councillor J Lea for her chairmanship of the Select Committee over the previous year and wanted this included in the minutes, which was agreed.

Following the approval of a new scrutiny committee structure on 4 April 2023, the Committee agreed the notes of the last meeting of the Stronger Communities Select Committee held on 21 March 2023.

5 TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME

Terms of Reference (draft)

Agreed:

- (1) That the draft Terms of Reference be agreed, subject to approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 July 2023; and
- (2) That in respect of the Proposed Portfolio Holder Responsibilities, it would be useful to have a written brief from the Service lead officers about what the Council did under these headings to help understand what/how to scrutinise future work programme items.

Work Programme (draft)

Agreed:

- (3) That the Lead Scrutiny Democratic Services Officer organise a virtual briefing the week commencing 11 September for Committee members to discuss what/how to scrutinise proposed work programme items this municipal year and if promoted in the Bulletin, non-members could also make suggestions or raise questions;
- (4) That an extra meeting would be scheduled towards the end of March 2024 for items (11) and (12).; and
- (5) That the draft work programme be agreed, subject to approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 July 2023.

6 RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

Introduced by C Walsh (Housing Needs and Management Service Manager) and S Balu (Housing and Property Interim Service Director), the report detailed a variety of involvement opportunities the Council offered residents across the breadth of its business. The overall aim of the draft resident involvement strategy was to set out the approach of the Property and Housing Service towards resident involvement and how it would be delivered, supported and resourced. Whilst developed to ensure compliance with the current and future regulatory requirements of social housing providers, its primary focus was to recognise the positive role that our residents would play in the design and improvement of our Property and Housing Service, whilst supporting our wider commitment towards the empowerment of residents and communities.

A detailed discussion was held, and it was agreed the Service Director would include the Committee's scrutiny comments in the report to the Cabinet on 10 July 2023.

Resolved:

That the Committee recommended that the draft Property and Housing Services Resident Involvement Strategy be agreed at Cabinet, as set out at Appendix Three of this report.

7 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the next meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee would be held at 7.00pm on 26 September 2023.

8 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Committee agreed to exclude under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press from the meeting for the item of business set out below on grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) or are confidential under Section 100(A)(2):

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Information Paragraph Number
10	Housing Repairs Value for Money	3

9 HOUSING REPAIRS VALUE FOR MONEY

A Small (Strategic Director and 151 Officer) addressed the Committee about the conclusions of the review into the value for money following the transfer of the Housing Repairs function to the Council's own arms-length trading company, Qualis, in 2020. This had represented a major shift in the delivery model, in the management of delivery and in the relationship between former colleagues.

A Small, Councillor J Philip (Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder) and J Gould (Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer) answered the Committee's questions on this review.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Committee noted the conclusions of the review into the Value for Money delivered by the Housing Repairs offered by Qualis;
- (2) That further work would be undertaken to understand and resolve the issues, considered to have contributed to concerns being raised, with the results to be reported back to this Committee;
- (3) That an annual benchmarking review of the Housing Repairs arrangements be commissioned and reported to this Committee; and
- (4) That the Strategic Director and 151 Officer update the Committee at the next meeting on how the recommendations would be dealt with.

CHAIRMAN