

Scrutiny Standing Panel Agenda



Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel Tuesday, 11th January, 2011

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 6.00 pm

Democratic Services Officer: Mark Jenkins (The Office of the Chief Executive)
Tel: 01992 564607 Email: mjenkins@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Members:

Councillors S Murray (Chairman), Mrs R Gadsby (Vice-Chairman), R Barrett, D Dodeja, Mrs A Grigg, Ms J Hart, Ms J Hedges, Mrs S Jones, Mrs J Lea, L Leonard, A Lion and Mrs J H Whitehouse

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

(Assistant to the Chief Executive) To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(Assistant to the Chief Executive). To declare interests in any items on the agenda.

In considering whether to declare a personal or a prejudicial interest under the Code of Conduct, Overview & Scrutiny members are asked pay particular attention to paragraph 11 of the Code in addition to the more familiar requirements.

This requires the declaration of a personal and prejudicial interest in any matter before an OS Committee which relates to a decision of or action by another Committee or Sub Committee of the Council, a Joint Committee or Joint Sub Committee in which the Council is involved and of which the Councillor is also a member.

Paragraph 11 does not refer to Cabinet decisions or attendance at an OS meeting purely for the purpose of answering questions or providing information on such a matter.

4. NOTES OF THE 29 JULY 2010 LAST MEETING (Pages 5 - 14)

To agree the notes of the Panel meeting of 29 July 2010 which were not submitted to the last Panel meeting

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 15 - 22)

(Chairman/Lead Officer) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed the Terms of Reference of this Panel and associated Work Programme. This is attached. The Panel are asked at each meeting to review both documents.

6. PRESENTATION - PROPOSED NEW NATIONAL HOUSING POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

1. (Director of Housing) Following the Comprehensive Spending Review, publication of the new Localism Bill and the consultation paper "*Local decisions: a fairer future for social housing*", and other ministerial announcements, the Government proposes a number of changes in national housing policy, which will have a significant effect on the Council, its tenants and housing applicants.

2. The Director of Housing will therefore be giving a presentation on "*Proposed New National Housing Policies and Legislation*".

3. All Members of Council and all members of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation have been invited to attend the Presentation.

7. CLG CONSULTATION PAPER - "LOCAL DECISIONS: A FAIRER FUTURE FOR SOCIAL HOUSING"

1. On the 22nd November 2010, the CLG published a consultation paper entitled "*Local decisions: a fairer future for social housing*". The closing date for comments is the 17th January 2011.

2. The Consultation Paper sets out the Government's proposals to reform social housing by:

- Creating a new local authority flexible tenancy with a minimum fixed term of two years. This will be in addition to, rather than replacing, secure and introductory tenancies;
- Requiring housing associations to charge new "affordable rents" for all newly built affordable properties, and a proportion of re-lets from April 2011, of up to 80% of private rents;
- Investing £100m to bring empty homes into use as affordable housing;
- Giving local authorities the powers to manage their housing waiting lists;
- Introducing a nationwide Social Home Swap Programme for social housing tenants;
- Enabling local authorities to fully discharge a duty to secure accommodation by arranging an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector, without requiring the applicant's agreement;

- Seeking views on the reforms needed to enable local authorities and landlords to tackle overcrowding;
- Reforming social housing regulation in line with the recommendations of the review of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and the Social Housing Regulation Framework; and
- Introducing legislation to replace the Housing Revenue Account subsidy system with “a transparent, self-financing arrangement” from April 2012, instead of the previous Government’s proposal to introduce self-financing on a voluntary basis.

3. In view of its importance, it is felt that the Council should respond to the Consultation Paper. More information on each of the above proposals will be explained in detail within the presentation given by the Director of Housing immediately before this agenda item.

4. The Director of Housing is currently drafting a proposed response to the Consultation Paper for consideration by the Scrutiny Panel. It is hoped that the draft response can be circulated to members in advance of the meeting, otherwise it will be tabled at the meeting.

5. Although proposed responses will be drafted by the Director of Housing on the technical aspects of the proposals, the Scrutiny Panel will need to decide at the meeting whether or not it wishes to support or disagree with the principles of the key proposals, since this is seen as a political issue.

6. Members of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation have been invited to attend the meeting and take part in the debate. It has been agreed that Federation members will decide at the meeting whether or not they can agree to the Council’s proposed response, in which case it is suggested that a joint response is sent to the CLG. If the Federation members are unable to agree with the Council’s response, the Federation will agree its own, separate, response at its next scheduled meeting to be held on the evening following the Scrutiny Panel meeting.

8. APPOINTMENT OF PRIVATE REPAIRS MANAGEMENT CONTRACTOR

1. A key component of the Council’s Repairs Refresh Programme – the strategy to further improve the Council’s Housing Repairs Service – is the appointment of a private contractor to manage the Housing Repairs Service.

2. The approach taken to this issue is very innovative and unique, and is seen as a low risk approach for both the Council and contractor, since the Council’s repairs staff will remain with the Council.

3. Following the formulation of a bespoke specification and Invitation to Tender by the Council’s consultants, which was signed off by the Housing Repairs Advisory Group, tenders were invited on the 26th November 2010, with a closing date of 17th January 2011. The anticipated commencement date for the contract is the 2nd May 2011. The contract period is for 3 years, with the possibility of two extensions of 3 years each. Potentially, the contractor could be appointed for 9 years.

4. The Pricing Framework for the contract has three components:

- Contract Management For the provision of an on-site Repairs Manager and back office support (e.g. IT, procurement etc) to run and improve the Repairs Service on a day-to-day basis
- Key Deliverables For the implementation of specific projects, including: the introduction of a full appointments system for all repairs; the provision of an improved supply chain; and the implementation of a new IT system, that allows mobile working for tradesmen
- Incentivised Payments Received by the contractor if they achieve all 5 Key Indicators in a quarter. All the indicators are much more challenging than current targets and performance.

5. Once tenders have been received, an Assessment Centre will be undertaken to assess each contractor's proposals. The final appointment will be made on a combination of price and quality, in accordance with a detailed Evaluation Methodology that has been developed.

6. The Housing Portfolio Holder, who chairs the Repairs Advisory Group which is overseeing the appointment, has suggested that the Housing Scrutiny Panel may like to receive a presentation from the Assistant Director of Housing (Property) at its next meeting in March 2010, on the main elements of the new contract. Since the contractor should have been selected by the date of the next meeting (even if the contract has not been signed), it is hoped that a representative from the contractor will also be able to explain how they intend to take the appointment forward.

7. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider whether or not it would like to receive a presentation at its next meeting. If this is agreed, it is suggested that all Members of Council are invited to the presentation, as well as all members of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation.

9. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

To consider which reports are ready to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting.

10. FUTURE MEETINGS

To consider the forward programme of meeting dates for the Panel. The next scheduled meeting of the Panel is on 27 January 2011 at 5.30p.m. and then on:

24 March 2011