

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 21 January 2010

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr D. Stallan

Subject: Review of the Scope of the Housing Appeals and Review Panel

Officer contact for further information:

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Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Scrutiny Panel considers whether or not it wishes to be consulted on proposals to reduce the scope of coverage of the Housing Appeals and Review Panel (HARP), prior to the proposals being considered by the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel in late-March 2010.

Report:

1. Following the formal business of a meeting of the Housing Appeals and Review Panel (HARP) on 20 August 2009, members of the Panel had an informal discussion with the Director of Housing and the Assistant Director (Democratic Services) about whether the scope of the housing appeals and reviews undertaken by the Panel, in accordance with its Terms of Reference, were too wide. Concern was expressed by members about the cost and the member and officer time involved (both before and at meetings) with housing appeals about some relatively minor matters.
2. The HARP noted that no other Directorate has any appeals of officer decisions considered in the same way as officers of the Housing Directorate. It was therefore agreed that the Director of Housing would produce a report on this issue.
3. The members and substitute members of the HARP, and the members of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, are currently being consulted on a draft report by the Director of Housing..
4. The draft report proposes that the HARP should only consider housing appeals and homelessness reviews for specific types of cases, that it is felt merit the officer and member resources involved (based on the experience of past cases), and where the outcome of a decision has a significant effect on the applicant/appellant. The draft report proposes a list of specific types of cases that the HARP would consider in future.
5. Following consultation with members of the HARP and the Federation, and any changes being made to the report as a result, the (updated) report will be considered by the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel (CMSSP) at a special meeting (due to the amount of business to be considered) to be held at the end of March 2010. It is proposed that the CMSSP will then report on to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 15th April 2010. If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees the proposals in principle, it will then make its recommendations to the Council Meeting on the 20 April 2010.

6. As can be seen, in addition to detailed consideration being given to the proposals by the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, three scrutiny groups of members will also be considering the proposals, in addition to the full Council, which will take the final decisions.

7. The Chairman of the HARP has suggested that the Housing Scrutiny Panel may also like to consider the proposals, at its meeting to be held on the 25th March 2010 - which is likely to be held a few days before the special meeting of the CMSSP.

8. The Housing Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider whether or not it would like to consider the proposals, as well as the CMSSP and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.