

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 24 July 2017

Present:

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| Cllr I Johnson (Chairman) | |
| Cllr K M Davis (Vice-Chairman) | |
| Cllr Mrs H J Addison | Cllr J Kingsbury |
| Cllr A-M Barker | Cllr R Mohammed |
| Cllr J E Bond | Cllr M I Raja |
| Cllr G G Chrystie | Cllr C Rana |

Also Present: Councillor C S Kemp

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 27 March and 22 May 2017 be approved and signed as true and correct records.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor J Kingsbury declared a non-pecuniary interest in any items under which the Thamesway Group of Companies was discussed, arising from his position as a Director of the Thamesway Group of Companies. The interest was such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor C S Kemp declared a non-pecuniary interest in any items under which the Thamesway Group of Companies was discussed, arising from his position as a Director of the Thamesway Group of Companies. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with the Officer Procedure Rules, Strategic Director, Sue Barham declared an interest in any items under which the Thamesway Group of Companies was discussed, arising from her position as a Director of the Thamesway Group of Companies. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

3. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman introduced the Work Programme for the coming year, drawing attention to the items to be brought to the forthcoming meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Energy innovation and the new rail franchise were to be reviewed in September. In November, the Committee would consider the six monthly report on the overview of complaints received, including those received by New Vision Homes, a review of Celebrate Woking 2017, health and wellbeing and the County Council's consultation on home support. It was noted that the consultation on home support would run to 13 August and that reference to the consultation had been included in a report presented to the Executive on 13 July.

It was noted that a Health and Wellbeing Task Group had been established through the Joint Committee and that it would be more appropriate for the minutes of the Task Group to be reported to the Committee than for a separate discussion to be held.

In terms of complaints, Councillor Raja referred to a recent article in the Woking Advertiser in which it was reported that a resident had submitted multiple complaints in regard to their housing but had not received any responses. Councillor Kemp advised that the criticism referred to in the newspaper had been levelled against Thames Water and Social Services rather than Woking Borough Council. Any complaints received by the Council, however, would be reported to the Committee in November.

In 2018 the Committee would scrutinise Woking 2050 and the climate change agenda, air quality monitoring, online transactions and preparations for Brexit. Councillor Kingsbury proposed that the Committee should review the protocols for the Thamesway Group of Companies, adopted over six years earlier. Any changes proposed would be recommended to the Executive. It was agreed that the protocols would be reviewed by the Chairman and Councillor Kingsbury before being brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The intention to review the protocols would be reported to the forthcoming Thamesway Limited meeting.

It was agreed that a report would be requested in March 2018 on the first six months of the new waste collection contract, due to start in September 2017. OSC17-014

RESOLVED

That (i) the report be noted;

(ii) the protocols of the Thamesway Group of Companies be reviewed by the Chairman and Councillor Kingsbury, with a report to be brought to the Committee; and

(iii) a report on the first six months' performance of the new waste collection contract to be submitted to the Committee at its meeting in March 2018.

4. REVIEW OF NEW VISION HOMES BOILER MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT POLICY

Councillor Kemp introduced a report on the review of the New Vision Homes boiler maintenance and replacement policy, making clear that there were outstanding issues which needed to be addressed. The key areas of improvement were highlighted in the report. The report outlined the measures proposed to address the outstanding issues, though it was noted that significant improvements had already been achieved.

Improvements would include authorising Thamesway and New Vision Homes to undertake repairs without first seeking authorisation for the expenditure from the Council. It was acknowledged that residents had not always been kept fully informed, stemming in part from the involvement of the three different agencies, and efforts would be made to ensure communications were improved.

The Members welcomed the report and attention was drawn to the positive comments and actions proposed. The replacement of boilers was discussed and it was noted that the engineers assessed the costs and viability of repairs in each case and determined whether a replacement boiler would be more economical.

The attention of Members was drawn to the conclusions of the report and it was OSC17-016

RESOLVED

That the following be noted:

- (i) the existing arrangements in place for repairs, maintenance and replacement of boilers across the council's housing stock;
- (ii) that within New Vision Homes Asset Management Strategy 2018-2022 consideration was being given to reducing the boiler lifecycle to 12 years;
- (iii) that all domestic boilers older than 15 years of age would be prioritised for replacement prior to March 2019; and
- (iv) that the Council's Policy in respect of Compensation for Heating and Hot Water Breakdowns was currently under review and that subject to appropriate approval processes would be implemented by the end of October 2017.

5. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE RAYNES CLOSE DEVELOPMENT

The Chairman welcomed Ian Lelliot from Thamesway Housing Limited and Ms Alexa Crampton and Mr Gavin Huggins, residents of the Raynes Close development, to the meeting. Mr Lelliot gave a detailed presentation which set out the background to the Raynes Close development and outlined the issues that had faced the residents in respect of the pioneering energy efficient technology installed, including a heat exchanger, rain water harvester and the heating. A report had been prepared to support the presentation.

Ms Crampton was invited to outline the main issues faced by the residents since the development had been completed in 2011, in particular the poor communication between Thamesway and the residents. Whilst it was clear that some of the equipment was not fit for purpose, little had been done by Thamesway to address the issues. Servicing was sporadic, often limited to a cursory inspection and only ever reactive rather than proactive, despite significant charges being raised with the residents. In the case of the property occupied by Ms Crampton, both toilet mechanisms had been replaced five times, and a mains bypass had been installed because of problems with the rain water harvester.

Thamesway was aware of the issues but the service undertaken a week before had again been limited to a fifteen minute inspection. The water in the rain water harvester had now been stagnating for 18 months. Ms Crampton reported that, at a meeting in April 2017, Thamesway Housing Limited had offered to 'gift' the energy efficient technology to the residents. However, the residents did not consider the offer to be adequate in view of the problems faced by each property, and would result in the residents becoming responsible for any repairs. In advising the Committee of the issues, Ms Crampton referred to a list of problems which had been drawn up by the residents. It was agreed that the list would be circulated to the Members of the Committee.

The Members of the Committee were concerned with the issues raised and thanked both Ian Lelliot and Ms Crampton for the information they had provided. However, it was felt that, in view of the years of problems experienced by the residents, steps had to be taken to seek a resolution.

Councillor Davis moved and Councillor Chrystie seconded a proposal to request that a full investigation should be undertaken by Thamesway Housing Limited into the issues at Raynes Close, including poor communication with residents, and for the Company to bring a report to a future meeting of the Committee setting out proposals to address all the outstanding issues at Raynes Close. Such proposals were to include the replacement or removal of equipment where such equipment had been shown to be inefficient, unserviceable or broken. The proposal was welcomed by the Members of the Committee and it was

OSC17-017

RESOLVED

That Thamesway Housing Limited be requested to fully investigate the measures necessary to resolve the issues at Raynes Close, including poor communication with residents, and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with proposals setting out how all the outstanding issues could be resolved, including where necessary the replacement or removal of inefficient, unserviceable or broken equipment.

6. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

No matters were raised in respect of the April/May 2017 Green Book.

The meeting commenced at 7.00pm
and ended at 8.47 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____