

HOUSING TASK GROUP UPDATE

Executive Summary

Councillor Ian Johnson, Chairman of the Housing Task Group, provided an update from the last meeting of the Task Group that was held on 24 July 2019:

“The task group met in July, with the new Director of Housing, Louise Strongitharm attending. She drew attention to a significant number of policies which required updating. The Allocations Policy and the Homeless Review Strategy were priorities which were to be addressed first with a view to be considered by Council before the end of 2019. Members were concerned by the rigid implementation of the Parking Standards Policy on some applications, in particular on sites where by definition they would have fewer visitors. It was agreed that Thamesway be asked to ensure that determinations in Planning Committee on affordable housing sites gave clarity on parking needs.

In relation to the Let’s Rent Annual Report presented to the task group it was noted that two bed homes were in greatest demand but with the average Woking rent being 22% higher than the Local Housing Allowance, it proved finding landlords challenging.

The Housing Needs overview indicated a trend for people in temporary accommodation being reluctant to move into the private sector as they had aspirations for Council houses.

Following review it was estimated that 1,500 households required suitable accommodation, unfortunately the requirements of the Core Strategy target of building 292 properties each year, (of which 102 would be affordable) did not cater for demand. This target was not being met.

It was suggested to raise the following concerns to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- That developers were not delivering the policy requirement for affordable housing due to viability arguments. The Task Group suggested the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could look into the planning policies and guidance for affordable housing, locally and nationally, including off-site delivery;
- 1,500 households had been identified as requiring suitable housing and emphasised the importance of the Housing Strategy, it was suggested to implement a forum for tenants to raise any issues.

Members were informed that Breyers Group were replacing PiLON at the end of September 2019 in respect of repairs and maintenance for Council properties.”

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTMBER 2019

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the update be noted

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above.
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Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Councillor Ian Johnson, Chairman of the Housing Task Group
Email: cilrian.johnson@woking.gov.uk

Contact Person: Councillor Ian Johnson, Chairman of the Housing Task Group
Email: cilrian.johnson@woking.gov.uk

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