

## HOUSING & SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel held on Friday, 23 September 2016 at 9.00 am at the Civic Offices, Portsmouth.

### Present

Councillor Darren Sanders (in the Chair)

Councillors Gemma New  
Alicia Denny  
Frank Jonas  
Leo Madden  
David Tompkins (Standing deputy)

#### **44. Apologies for absence (AI 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jennie Brent. Standing deputy Councillor David Tompkins was in attendance.

#### **45. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

Councillors Sanders and Gemma New declared that they are both private tenants.

#### **46. Minutes of the previous meeting - 4 July 2016 (AI 3)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Housing and Social Care Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 24 March 2016 be approved as a correct record.

Councillor Sanders reported that the review report into 'Support services for people aged 16-25 living in isolation' had been noted at the Cabinet meeting on 22 September. The Cabinet had noted the comments in relation to the scrutiny panel's recommendations at section 4 of the response report. The Leader also undertook to circulate the panel's findings and the Chief Executive's response report to the appropriate Cabinet members and Directors. The Chair also reported that the Cabinet had agreed to look at the criteria of the Voluntary Sector Transition Fund. It was agreed that the response report be circulated to the panel - Lucy to action.

#### **47. New Review: Housing Need and Empty Properties in Portsmouth and the impact of Government Policy on them (AI 4)**

##### Scoping document

Members considered the draft scoping document which had been circulated to members for comment and was included in the papers for the meeting. Members were happy with the proposed objectives and list of witnesses.

RESOLVED that the draft scoping document be approved, subject to amendment during the course of the review.

Steve Macer, Housing Options Area Manager, Bruce Lomax, Private Sector Housing Manager and Nick Haverley, Finance Manager introduced the new housing policies and responded to questions from the panel. The following points were raised during the discussion.

Benefit cap:

- Goes live in November 2016.
- Depending on where you live the benefit cap will drop to £20,000 a year outside Greater London, £23,000 inside Greater London.
- The Department of Work and Pensions have written to everyone in Portsmouth who they feel will be affected.
- Proactive work is taking place but can only theorise at this stage as to whether the council will have residents coming forward to say that they can no longer afford properties.

Pay To Stay:

- Due to come into effect April 2017.
- The amount of rent council tenants pay will be decided by their household income.
- The extra rent has to be paid by Portsmouth Council to central government.
- Likely to impact upon 10% of social housing tenants.
- Will make private renting more attractive.
- Council tenants earning more than £30,000 (£40,000 in London) will have to pay the market rent.
- People's circumstances change all the time.
- Regulations are late and have not been seen.
- Residents will be informed by the Government.
- Central Government will contribute to local authorities to administer this policy.
- Market rent for the average 3-bedroomed property is £750-800 a month.
- Current council monthly rent for a 3-bedroomed property is £380-£400 a month.
- Tenants will have to declare their earnings annually to Portsmouth City Council.
- Council will have to sell its higher value properties.
- Council will have to spend money on replacement housing but are limited as to how much the council can borrow to build.
- The council would have to sell approximately 150 properties a year to raise £18m. This will mean the council will end up with fewer properties to let to people.
- The council does procure some properties from poor landlords or from empty properties.
- The council has to balance the Housing Revenue Account. This may mean having to review the maintenance programme in order to implement this policy.

**48. Date of next meeting (AI 5)**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Friday 21 October, at the later time of 10am if the room booking allows, to continue to receive further evidence as part of the review.

The meeting concluded at 10.45 am.

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Councillor Darren Sanders  
Chair