

HOUSING & SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel held on Friday, 21 October 2016 at 9.00 am at the Civic Offices, Portsmouth.

Present

Councillor Darren Sanders (in the Chair)

Councillors Gemma New
Jennie Brent
Frank Jonas
Leo Madden

49. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Carole Damper MBE, the Chief Executive of the EC Roberts Centre who unfortunately was stuck in traffic following an accident. It was agreed that Carole be invited to attend the November meeting of the panel.

50. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations.

51. Minutes of the previous meeting - 23 September 2016 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Housing and Social Care Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 23 September 2016 be approved as a correct record.

52. Current review: Housing Need and Empty Properties in Portsmouth and the impact of Government Policy on them (AI 4)

Mark Sage, Tackling Poverty Co-ordinator explained how the new housing policies could impact on tenants. The information had been gathered from the 2015 Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

- 2 out of 5 people cannot afford market housing without some subsidy.
- Portsmouth rent 2014-2016 assistance is often not enough to cover private sector rent, so around two thirds have to pay a top up (now £22.68 a week on average).
- Local Housing Allowance is no longer linked to the cost of private sector rents in the area. So people will have to find more money to top up their rent.
- Private sector and Social housing rents have both been increasing above inflation and income rises, but as social rents are much lower, the amount of increase is less. Council tenancies will year have a 1% cut to rents announced in last autumn budget statement.

- 2001-2011 social housing stable at around 18% of households in Portsmouth - council or housing association rented.
- Significant drop in owner occupied properties and rise in private sector renting.
- New households are more likely to be in private rented sector than in social housing.
- This also means that some of the more vulnerable are living in private rented sector but do not have the same support as council properties or housing associations.
- The Council are having to make more use of the private rented sector.
- One third who were receiving homeless support from PCC 2009-2014 were losing a private rented sector home (1,367 households).
- Hidden homeless - sofa surfing and staying with friends or family on a temporary basis.
- The provision of more affordable homes would assist the situation.
- Pay To Stay will encourage some households to buy their properties - choice between paying the market rent or buying the property at a discount.
- Household income combined parents and adult children could push the rent up and encourage eviction of adult children, leading to increase in sofa surfing.
- In Paulsgrove the number of social rented households has reduced by 155 which is probably due to the Right To Buy scheme.
- The Pay To Stay policy may also push more people to claim housing benefit if their income is not enough to cover the increased rent.
- Levels of overcrowding in 2011 in social and private rented sector were very similar, around 20% compared with 3.5% among owner occupiers.
- With the 'capping' of benefits, landlords will be wary of renting to large families and may opt for an HMO (eg six individual people).
- Between now and 2021 there are a significant number of further welfare reforms, which will reduce incomes among people in deprivation in Portsmouth, and make it harder for them to be able to access or afford housing.
- The council can only provide support and give advice to our tenants and residents with these national policies, to help them to respond to the changes.

53. Date of next meeting (AI 5)

It was noted that the next meeting of the panel would be held on Thursday 17th November at 3.30pm in conference room C, floor 2 of the Civic Offices and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Director of Property and Housing Services would be in attendance.

Members also confirmed the date of the December meeting as Thursday 15th December at 10am when the panel would hear from the Assistant Housing Manager and some private landlords.

The meeting concluded at 10.10 am.

Councillor Darren Sanders
Chair