

HOUSING & SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel held virtually on Wednesday 11 November 2020 at 2.30 pm

Present

Councillor Luke Stubbs (in the Chair)
Cal Corkery
Leo Madden
Will Purvis
Steve Wemyss

1. **Apologies (AI 1)**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jason Fazackarley.
2. **Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**
There were no declarations of interests.
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 September 2019 (AI 3)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **Review of the experiences gathered after the decant of residents from tower blocks (AI 4)**
Paul Fielding, Assistant Director of Housing, Housing, Neighbourhood & Building Services, introduced the review of experiences gathered after the decant of residents from tower blocks. Members agreed to sign off the review.

Members suggested topics for the panel's next review. Although a social care topic had been suggested as the last two reviews had covered housing topics, and a review could examine how services have performed during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was felt to be inappropriate for the time being. The current priority for health and social care organisations is dealing with Covid-19 whilst with reduced staff. Aspects such as the transfer of residents to care homes were national issues where lessons may be learnt as a whole. In addition, organisations may be defensive discussing sensitive matters such as deaths in care homes.

The need for mental health support is expected to increase greatly because of Covid-19. In particular, more support may be needed for those with lower level needs to prevent them escalating. However, members felt that as with social care topics this theme could be considered once Covid-19 subsides to see what could be done better or differently. Some aspects of scrutinising mental health may come under different bodies.

Another suggestion was repairs and maintenance services provided by housing associations which members thought was more appropriate. Members were aware of residents who have had problems with housing associations and a review could consider how associations manage their properties compared with the council. The advantages and disadvantages of

different practices amongst associations or between associations and the council could be considered. A review could help improve standards.

With regard to the council having the authority to scrutinise housing associations Mr Fielding said that it could ask them to engage but was unsure of the council's legal powers. Housing has a regulatory role in housing standards but this mainly applies to the private sector; however, Housing can investigate housing associations. It would be more beneficial to scrutinise several associations rather than just one. Complaints about associations usually go through their own complaints process and then to the Housing Ombudsman. However, members said the process could be very slow and bureaucratic.

Members agreed that the topic of their next review would be:

"To review the procedures and performance of housing associations in relation to repairs and maintenance."

RESOLVED that the report be signed off and submitted to the Cabinet for consideration.

The meeting concluded at 14.57 pm.

Councillor Luke Stubbs
Chair