

**HOUSING, PLANNING AND REGENERATION, AND REGULATORY SERVICES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
3RD MARCH 2020**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Grimley)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Ranson)
Councillors S. Bradshaw, Capleton, Needham and
Gerrard

Councillors Mercer (Cabinet Lead Member for
Housing), Smidowicz (Cabinet Lead Member for
Regulatory Services, Enforcement and Licensing)
and Morgan (Leader of the Council, Interim Lead
Member for Planning, Inward Investment &
Tourism Strategy)

Strategic Director of Housing, Planning,
Regeneration and Regulatory Services
Head of Landlord Services
Head of Planning and Regeneration
Head of Regulatory Services
Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing
Democratic Services Officer (NA)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Brennan

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. He also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

24. APOLOGIES

25. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2019 were approved.

26. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

27. DECLARATIONS - THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

28. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 11.16

No questions were submitted.

29. WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support was submitted to enable the Committee to review and agree its work programme (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Strategic Director for Housing, Planning and Regeneration and Regulatory Services and the Democratic Services Officer assisted the Committee with its consideration of the report.

The Committee was advised that the agenda for the next meeting in June was almost finalised but there was space on the September meeting for Committee members to add items, as long as they met the criteria for scrutiny.

RESOLVED that the current position with the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

Reason

To enable the Council's new scrutiny arrangements to operate efficiently and effectively.

30. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

A report of the Strategic Director providing performance information for the third quarter of 2019 -20, in respect of the Corporate Plan objectives and key performance indicators was submitted (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

At the invitation of the Committee the relevant Cabinet Lead Members and Officers attended to assist the Committee with the consideration of the item.

Under the Corporate Plan four indicators had been identified as not being met. These indicators were part of the Creating a Strong and Lasting Economy:

Indicator SLE1 – PR(2) covered creating new jobs in the Borough through the Science Park and Enterprise Zone. The Leader of the Council and the Head of Planning and Regeneration advised the Committee that there had been a delay in the progress of the project due to a lack of agreement between the four parties involved. The project had also been transferred over to the Chief Executive as it was felt he was better placed to lead the project going forward.

Indicators SLE4 – PR (1) and SLE4 – PR (2) were directed at promoting the Borough to increase tourism. The Leader and the Head of Planning and Regeneration advised the Committee that there had been delays with both of the projects due to the County Council withdrawing support for design and feasibility work and a procurement process had to be put in place to secure an alternative supplier for this element of the project. This had created a delay of five months in each programme. An update report for Cabinet is planned in May this year seeking authority to appoint contractors for the Bedford Square scheme.

Indicator SLE4 – RS (2) covered improvements to the Beehive Lane car park to help increase tourism to the Borough. The Lead Member for Regulatory Services, Enforcement and Licensing and the Head of Regulatory Services advised the Committee that there had been a delay in procuring the right company to carry out the work and the contract had been re-tendered with an updated specification. The improvements were due to be completed by April this year to a high quality and as part of a more cost-effective scheme.

RESOLVED that the performance results, associated commentary and the explanations provided be noted.

Reason

To record the information contained in the 2019-20 Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring Information report.

31. FIVE YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY UPDATE

A report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration updating the Committee on the current status of the Council's five-year housing land supply was submitted (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Leader and the Head of Planning and Regeneration assisted with consideration of the item.

The Committee was advised that a review of the land supply would take place in April this year and it was expected that the Council would retain a five year housing land supply but that it was likely to be reduced.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Committee's consideration of the item.

32. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

A report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration presenting the revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) was submitted (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Leader and the Head of Planning and Regeneration assisted with consideration of the item.

The Committee was advised that the LDS was a statutory requirement to assist with the development of the Council's new Local Plan. The LDS set out the challenges with designing a new Local Plan and covered the government legislation that fed into the plan, as well as presenting the programme of work.

There had been some delays in progressing the new Local Plan due to staff turnover within the Local Plan Team which had caused some work pressures and other factors which were outside the control of the Council. The recruitment for the team had now finished and the team was fully staffed again.

The consultation for the new Local Plan had generated a lot of interest from local residents and there had been a number of questions raised that had been addressed.

Overall there had been a delay of 3 months in the programme of delivery for the Local Plan but the Team were still working to the request for the delivery of an accelerated programme.

The Committee thanked the officers for their work.

RESOLVED that the revised Local Development Scheme be noted by the Committee.

Reason

To acknowledge the Committee's consideration of the item.

33. UPDATE ON UNIVERSAL CREDIT IMPLEMENTATION

A report of the Head of Landlord Services updating the Committee on the progress of the implementation of Universal Credit for the Council and its tenants was submitted (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Housing and the Head of Landlord Services assisted with consideration of the item.

The Committee was advised that there had been a steady increase in rent arrears once tenants had moved over to Universal Credit, which had been expected. The increase in tenants receiving Universal Credit and potential issues had been mitigated by increasing staffing resources, including the appointment of a Universal Credit Officer, and the addition of a further Tenancy Support Officer who could support tenants struggling to pay their rent and deal with the changeover to Universal Credit.

The Committee noted that the percentage of tenants in rent arrears had increased for those tenants who were not in receipt of Universal Credit. It was explained that this may be due to the increased efforts and resources into managing tenants on Universal Credit and shifting the focus of rent collection onto them, and that year on year snapshot comparisons are often affected by factors including direct debit payment dates. It was expected that the new RentSense software would identify tenants who needed support and the expectation was that the system would have a positive effect.

RESOLVED that the comments of the Committee be taken into account.

Reason

To acknowledge the Committee's consideration of the item.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 27th April 2020 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Housing, Planning and Regeneration, and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee.