

## **Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2019.**

**Present:-** Councillors Plenty (Chair), Wright (Vice-Chair), Gahir, Hulme, Matloob, Minhas and S Parmar

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillors

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillor Ajaib

### **PART 1**

#### **1. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Gahir declared his employment as a taxi driver.

#### **2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 24 June 2019**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2019 be approved as a correct record, subject to it being noted that Councillor Matloob was in attendance.

#### **3. Member Questions**

Members noted the tabled response to Members questions regarding disabled parking bays and car clubs. Responses were given to a number of supplementary questions from Members.

Members discussed the provision of disabled car parking bays and whether a report on the subject was required. Following discussion, it was agreed that as those councillors who had raised the matter, and therefore were aware of the details, had the opportunity to call it in, a report was not required.

In addition, a response was provided on questions raised at the last meeting on how Japanese knotweed was dealt with and how Bucks CC presented recycling statistics at Langley HRC:

##### Japanese knotweed

'We offer advice on our website, with many links to other sites including DEFRA. The short answer is use herbicides, bury it or indeed burn it, or arrange for disposal at an authorised landfill that accepts controlled wastes. It is only an offence if you allow it to grow into another person's land  
<http://www.slough.gov.uk/pests-pollution-and-food-hygiene/invasive-plants.aspx>

##### Recycling statistics at Langley HRC

Bucks include rubble in their calculations and by doing so report 70% recycling. If they exclude rubble it would average 49% Recycling. Their boards also state that they recover 100%. Recovery includes both recycling

and incineration with energy recovery. Sometimes people get confused between recycling and recovery.

Our Chalvey recycling rate currently excludes rubble and we are currently having difficulty recycling wood. Like Bucks we have a 100% Recovery Rate since we also send residual waste to incineration with energy recovery. Moving forward we will adopt the same assumptions as Bucks so that we are comparable.'

**Resolved:** That

1. the responses to the Members' questions as circulated and the follow up information on Japanese knotwood and recycling statistics at Langley HRC be noted;
2. an agenda item on car clubs, with particular reference to S106 contributions, be submitted to a future meeting;
3. that the response to the supplementary question as to whether wood recycling was available at both recycling centres be circulated.

#### **4. Key Worker Housing**

The Panel received an update on key worker housing and progress made via a pilot scheme which was currently underway. The Service Lead – Housing (People) Services introduced the report and outlined the rationale for a Key Worker Scheme and the background to the setting up of the pilot scheme of six new build properties at Stoke Road which were owned and managed by James Elliman Homes. It was noted that to date only two confirmed allocations had been made but this was due in the main to the development being delayed for almost a year coupled with some administrative issues with schools which it was believed had been resolved. The Panel noted that a site visit was due to be held the following week subsequent to which it would be evaluated to consider whether to proceed with the scheme.

In response to questions from Members, it was noted that:

- James Elliman Homes offered only short term assured tenancies. A key worker with a tenancy under the scheme would not lose the tenancy if they ceased to be a key worker. As the tenancies were for two years there was the opportunity to review the situation after that time;
- the homes which James Elliman Homes had purchased were of a quite high specification. No cost benefit analysis had been undertaken so success was not measured by how many had been allocated for key workers;
- the plan was to allocate 30 properties to key workers. Due to no offers to undertake the scheme administration the Service Lead – Housing (People) Services circulated property details to the education service to market. Under the current arrangements, the Council marketed the properties, received applications and undertook basic checks. A waiting list was not maintained;

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- teachers and social workers had been identified for the scheme as they were council employees whereas NHS workers and the police were not;
- intermediate rent was approximately 70% of market rent. The Intermediate Rent Scheme for key workers at Regional House was full. The Council had had 100% nomination rights until the properties were let;
- a further phase of key worker properties at Stoke Road was due to be available at the beginning of October. They were funded by section 106 contributions and had 12 car parking spaces for 15 units, less than if it had been known that they were for key workers;
- properties identified for key workers but not allocated to them would return to the regular housing allocation.

### **Resolved:** That

1. the report and ongoing work be noted;
2. information be circulated to the Panel on an analysis of the scheme to enable measurement of its success;
3. an update be submitted to the Panel early next year on letting progress;
4. the Chair be consulted as to the possible submission of a short report on the emerging themes in the housing strategy review with attendance by consultants and whether a separate meeting on the subject was required.

## **5. Maintenance and Investment (RMI) Update**

The Panel received a presentation on year 2 of the repairs, maintenance and investment partnership from the Osborne Account Director and Compliance Director. It was highlighted that whilst the target of 5% for calls lost had not been met during April and May and penalties had been incurred, an improvement plan and subsequent action had succeeded in turning it round.

Arising from a Member query, the Accounts Director stated that the information given for Voids Performance in the report had been corrected in the presentation.

Particular attention was drawn to:

- the 100% gas service compliance for 17 consecutive months put Slough in the top quartile in the country;
- the 15 service delivery plans were constantly reviewed;
- it was recognised that the engagement plan required review and to this end Osborne had attended the first tranche of neighbourhood forums in August. The first tranche of estate days in August had also been attended and repairs were offered on the day.

In response to questions regarding asbestos, the Panel was informed that there was a high level of asbestos within the stock which reflected the age and construction types. The use of asbestos in building had been allowed up

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to 2000. Prior to the Osborne contract the incidence of asbestos had been unknown and surveys had not taken place. As a result the survey in the communal blocks took 5 months and had to be repeated annually. There was now a register in compliance with the regulations and alpha tracker software collected data and identified hotspots. Work had commenced on the low rise blocks, as an intrusive inspection the survey would take 18 months to 2 years. Information in regard to individual properties was based either on void properties or if asbestos was suspected during intrusive responsive repairs in which case work would not proceed until the property was surveyed. Once sufficient information was obtained cloning for similar properties would take place. Asbestos was either removed or encapsulated, the latter required recurring inspections.

In response to questions from the Panel it was noted that:

- the 100% customer satisfaction was based on those customers who had responded to the questionnaire;
- the de-designated schemes for fire assessments comprised the sheltered housing schemes for which fire stopping was complete. The orders for doors were subject to 7-10 weeks for manufacturing due to demand. A fire system responding to heat in addition to smoke had been ordered. A fire alarm system was being designed and would go out to tender, with a potential start at the end of the fire door programme;
- the capital programme focussed on compliance;
- monthly meetings were held with the Berkshire Fire Service;
- routine appointments had not been included in the presentation as not part of the contractual reporting and had no performance targets. They were however reported monthly and the information would be shared with the Panel;
- data on the average time for the refurbishment of voids was not available. The contractual time for Osborne ran from when the keys were handed over whereas for SBC it was when it became vacant. Responsibility for refurbishing voids transferred to the Housing (People) Services on 1 April 2019 and had reduced from approximately 91 days at the end of the financial year to about 80 which was recognised as too high;
- the list of tenant responsibilities would be circulated to the Panel. It was noted that Interserve had undertaken more than Osborne's contractual responsibilities such as replacing light bulbs. Recharges took place for items such as DIY, fencing and misuse.

### **Resolved: That**

1. the report be noted;

2. a report be submitted on the length of voids;
3. Osborne to
  1. include missed appointments by residents in the report back on performance with regard to missed performance;
  2. report back on the number of properties where asbestos had been removed;
  3. report on non contractual routine repairs ;
  4. provide a list of rechargeable repairs;
  5. demonstrate the % target for appointments kept (emergency and urgent) in a different visual to being based on volume as at present.

**6. Strong Healthy and Attractive Neighbourhoods**

The Panel received a report and presentation on the Strong, Healthy and Attractive Neighbourhoods initiative. The Panel was informed that the initiative had been developed on the back of good practice in Manor Park through which the local community had been engaged with, enabled and empowered to take on a range of community development and prevention based initiatives. The approach had moved from a position where the expectation was one that the Council should respond to all need, to one where the community took on responsibility for a range of community activity.

In response to a question as to interaction with residents, it was reported that instead of a number of voluntary groups and forums working in isolation the intention was to bring them together with one collective plan.

The Panel was informed that:

- Trelawney Avenue had been chosen as significant work was taking place in the area including proposals regarding a community asset at the old Merrymakers site. Discussions were being held with clubs with a view to their taking over and running a changing facility at Kedermister Park;
- as reference was made to the Manor Park initiative but no detail provided, information would be circulated to the Panel;
- it was emphasised that the emphasis was to get the wider community involved and not those who shouted loudest. In order to reach out to those not actively involved, a needs analysis consultation was posted through doors, circulated by primary schools, health partners and council colleagues.

**Resolved:** That

1. the report be noted;
2. details of the Manor Park initiative be circulated to the Panel.

## 7. Slough Town Centre Update

The Panel received an update on the Clean Safe Vibrant Programme and information on the emerging Joint Framework Masterplan between SBC and British Land for the centre of Slough. Members were informed that the Council and partners had been successful in establishing a BID (Business Improvement District).

It was noted that British Land had undertaken development management functions for the Queensmere and Observatory sites in the town centre. Discussion had begun to establish the most appropriate ways to bring forward the development of key sites and improvement of the public realm in the centre of Slough. Development options for the TVU site included office space, retail and residential units. Due to the impact of online shopping it would be a reduced retail offer with the emphasis on leisure, food and beverage. The cinema footprint would also be reduced. Work was taking place investigating core key growth sectors and comparing Slough with other similar towns. A report would be submitted to Cabinet on 16 September on the wider programme and by March 2020 on the updated masterplan and, subject to approval, a planning application would be made in early 2021.

In response to questions, it was noted that:

- in-depth consultation with residents had not taken place at this stage as consideration was being given to technical evidence. A Slough Town Resident Association had been established. There was some input from businesses but this was not conclusive without more extensive consultation;
- a Town Leaders Team headed by the Chief Executive, which included communication representatives, had been established;
- discussions would be mindful of maintaining the character of Slough and avoiding gentrification.

### **Resolved – That**

1. the activities taking place in Slough Town Centre to improve the public realm and resident/visitor experience be noted;
2. that the joint statement agreed by British Land and Slough Borough Council regarding ongoing work on the emerging Town Centre Masterplan be noted;
3. an information item with any updates be submitted as appropriate.

## 8. Forward Work Programme

The Panel reviewed its work programme and

**RESOLVED:** That the work programme be updated to include the following:

31 October 2019– High Street Redevelopment Update (Information only)  
Voids Update (Information only)

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14 January 2020- Car Clubs  
Osborne – missed appointments

27 March 2020 - Key Worker Housing Update (Information only)

### 9. **Members' Attendance Record**

The Members received the Members' attendance records and

**RESOLVED:** That the Members' Attendance Record be amended to note that Councillor Matloob was present at the meeting on 24 June 2019 and not Councillor Ali who was no longer a member of the Panel.

### 10. **Date of Next Meeting - 31 October 2019**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 31 October 2019.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.35pm and closed at 9.00pm)