

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER, 2015 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT:
Councillors

Foley, D. (Chairman)
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M. (Vice-Chairman)

Bernard, Mrs. A.F.	Johnson, J.P.
Burnett, G.	Preece, J.T.
Cooper, Miss. J.	Stretton, Mrs. P.Z. (Substitute)
Grice, Mrs. D.	Witton, P.T.
Hardman, B,	

Also Present (Observers) –

Councillor F.W.C. Allen, (Housing Portfolio Leader)
Councillor Mrs. M.A. Davis, (Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader – for matters related to Social Alarms)

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Senior Committee Officer distributed revised sections of the Priority Delivery Plan attached to the Quarters 1 and 2 Performance Report.

The Chairman invited all Officers and Members to introduce themselves.

5. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J.T. Kraujalis

Councillor Mrs. P.Z. Stretton was in attendance as substitute for Councillor J.T. Kraujalis.

6. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
Preece, J.T.	Council tenant	Personal

No further declarations were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members Interests.

7. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September, 2015 be approved as a correct record.

8. Timed Agenda – Discussion Item

The Chairman was keen to seek Members views on whether or not Agenda items should be timed.

Members of the Committee discussed this item and it was agreed that the Agenda would not have timed items.

(At this point the Chairman agreed to change the order of the Agenda).

9. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

Consideration was given to the Briefing Note of the Head of Economic Development (Item 4.1 – 4.4).

Sarah Jones, Principal Planning Officer and Clare Eggington, Planning Policy Manager presented the Briefing Note to Members.

A Member was keen to know whether or not the 20% buffer as required by National Planning Policy for persistent under delivery of housing was applied with regard to meeting the required housing land supply target.

The Principal Planning Officer referred to the 5 year housing land supply target and based upon the most recent rates of delivery of past housing completions, she indicated that the Council considered that a 5% buffer was applicable (and was factored into the calculations) as there had been no persistent under delivery (in line with national planning policy requirements). This meant that a 20% buffer was presented in the document for completeness.

In response to a question concerning major and minor sites and the length of time before development commenced, the Principal Planning Officer indicated to Members that the main document separated the sites and provided statistical information on 0-5 year, 6-15 year and greenbelt restricted sites. She also commented that there were approximately 1900 greenfield, 1600 brownfield and 300 mixed green/brownfield sites.

In response to a question regarding the bringing forward of “stalled” development sites, it was reported that the Council was able to try and assist delivery via the renegotiation of Section 106 planning obligation agreements in some cases. It was also reported that through the Local Enterprise Partnership the Council had been asked to identify locally any sites (primarily Brownfield sites with delivery issues) that could benefit from funding through the growth deal.

With regard to the windfall allowance, it was reported that further information was contained within the SHLAA document. This was applied to the 5 year supply calculations in line with national planning policy.

RESOLVED:

That the Briefing Note be noted.

10. Void Review – “The Life of an Empty Property”

Nirmal Samraj, Head of Housing and Waste Management together with Officers from the Housing department gave a presentation.

A slide was shown which provided information on why people terminated their tenancy agreement which could include death, eviction, someone going into residential care, moving into the private rented sector which had doubled over the last 10 years and other reasons.

The termination process was explained and where tenants would be transferring, home inspections would be carried out, any works required would be agreed, inspections to specify works and checklists completed.

At this point Roy Jones, Principal Housing Maintenance Officer and Richard Mason, Principal Housing Maintenance Officer discussed other aspects including void inspections.

They reported on void inspections, condition of the property, evictions, abandonments, storage and order works.

In response to a question raised by a Member concerning the inspection process, the Officers confirmed that a thorough inspection of every property was carried out to check for problems.

It was reported that certain items could be “gifted” such as disability equipment which could be used again. All equipment was tested, although any equipment more than 5/6 years old would be removed. The Council would also try to ensure that a property where such adaptations were fitted would be re-housed to a tenant with those needs.

The Head of Housing and Waste Management discussed the challenges with void properties which included arranging utility suppliers. The Council was exploring the option of partnering with a utility supplier in order that all services could be changed prior to new tenants moving in.

A slide was then shown which provided information on decoration for void properties and it was reported that a decoration allowance/voucher was available to new tenants, all one bedroom bungalows were decorated and decoration would take place where it would be unreasonable to let a property. A list was available of all suppliers where vouchers could be used and new suppliers were interested in being added. However, due to procurement rules a process needed to be followed.

Information was provided on the cost of voids over the past 5 years which had shown an increase from £1,990 in 2010-11 to £3,706 in 2014-15.

Sheena Stuart, Housing Tenancy Services Team Leader and Catherine Owen, Housing Maintenance Manager discussed this with Members and advised that in 2010, type 2 asbestos surveys were carried out, in 2012 rewiring of all void properties was carried out and in 2012-13 the decision was made to replace all existing floor tiles in void properties.

Members also discussed the new housing system and programmed works to void properties.

A slide was then shown which provided Members with voids performance information with the number of voids decreasing and the number of days to re-let increasing.

Members asked questions and were keen to know why the re-let for void properties was currently 29 days.

The Principal Housing Maintenance Officer advised that waiting for asbestos results would have an impact on the re-let time as properties were required to be safe before any tenant could occupy them. He also advised that if a property required the removal of asbestos, there were peaks at certain times during the year particularly around school holidays when contractors were busy.

In response to a question raised by the Chairman, the Head of Housing and Waste Management indicated that she would circulate to Members information on the loss of income in between a property being vacated and becoming a void and a new tenant acquiring it.

11. Quarters 1 and 2 Performance Report

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance (Item 3.1 – 3.4).

(At this point Councillor P.T. Witton left the meeting 5.02 p.m.).

Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing

A Member referred to the Moss Road Estate Redevelopment Scheme and asked how the Council had apportioned the scheme.

Janet Baldasera, Strategic Housing Manager advised that information was taken from housing needs surveys and in-house applications.

In response to a question raised concerning the redevelopment of the garage sites, the Strategic Housing Manager advised that the start date would depend on the build programme.

A Member referred to the Moss Road Estate Redevelopment Scheme and discussed the design of new homes with Members of the Committee. He

commented on the adoption of a design guide within the City of London and whether this would work for Cannock.

The Strategic Housing Manager responded and advised that designs would generally be included as part of submissions, and although guidance had been given as part of the tender, a full build specification had not been given.

The Cabinet Housing Portfolio Leader explained that the 1% rent reduction had impacted upon both the planned housing maintenance and housing programme meaning the deletion of 55 Council houses and with savings an estimated 25 houses could be provided. He explained that this had also impacted upon social housing providers and indicated that the planned maintenance works would need to be moved from 7 year to 10 year.

With regard to the design of new homes, the Cabinet Housing Portfolio Leader commented on the quality of Council homes and referred to the Parker Morris standard for social housing.

Planning for the Housing needs of the District

Members discussed the Section 106, Community Infrastructure Levy and other planning issues and it was agreed that regular updates be received with regard to housing land supply.

(At this point Councillor Mrs. D. Grice left the meeting 5.23 p.m.).

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the performance information relating to Better Health Outcomes Priority Delivery Plan In Quarters 1 and 2 as detailed at Appendix 1, be noted.
- (B) That the actions and indicators which are rated Yellow, Orange or Red and the associated commentary/remedial action proposed by the Lead Officer, be noted.

12. Work Programme

The Head of Housing and Waste Management reported on the proposed Work Programme items and indicated that as part of the Void Review a dvd would be shown at the next meeting.

Members agreed the following Work Programme:

March, 2016:

- PDP Quarter 3 Performance Report
- Supporting People Update – Briefing Paper
- Void Review – Potential Feedback from Working Group – Video and Process Documentation

April, 2016:

- Void Review – Proposed Changes and Recommendations
- Select Topic – Next Scrutiny Review

(The meeting concluded at 5.33 p.m.).

CHAIRMAN