

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.30 am on**  
**Wednesday, 14 November 2018**

Present:

Members: Councillor T Khan (Chair)  
Councillor N Akhtar  
Councillor A Andrews  
Councillor J Clifford (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor J McNicholas  
Councillor M Mutton  
Councillor G Ridley  
Councillor R Singh

Other Members: Councillor P Akhtar, Deputy Cabinet Member

Employees:

V Castree, Place Directorate  
A Chowns, Place Directorate  
L Knight, Place Directorate  
T Miller, Place Directorate

Apologies: Councillor A S Khan, Cabinet Member

## **Public Business**

### **26. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Naeem Akhtar declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute 28 below headed 'Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2018'. He left the meeting during the consideration of this item.

### **27. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2018 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

### **28. Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2018**

The Board considered a briefing note of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator concerning the new Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, a copy of which was set out at an appendix to the briefing note. The Board also received a presentation from the Property Licensing Manager concerning the policy. Councillor P Akhtar, Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities attended the meeting for the consideration of this item.

The briefing note indicated that at their meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2018 Cabinet approved the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2018. The report at that meeting stated that the provision of good quality housing for Coventry residents

was a priority for the Council. Over the last two years, Government had legislated to provide local authorities with additional powers to tackle poor quality homes in the private rented sector (PRS). The new policy encompassed all powers available to the City Council from a variety of different pieces of legislation and would act as a framework for all future housing enforcement activities.

The policy provided guidance for officers, businesses and members of the public on the principles and processes which would apply when enforcement action was considered or taken in cases being investigated in the private sector. It also provided a background to the legislation and guidance on which it was based. The aim was to raise standards in private sector housing throughout the city working with owners, landlords, lettings agents and tenants to achieve this. However if the law was broken then enforcement action could be necessary.

The policy set out in detail the powers provided by the Housing Act 2004 and the Housing and Planning Act 2016 including notices and orders. Other legislation included The Deregulation Act 2015 and The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015. The impact of the Immigration Act 2014 was also detailed.

The presentation highlighted that the policy contributed to the Council's ambition to make Coventry 'A Top Ten City'. Since conditions in the private rented sector tended to be less satisfactory, the policy provided responsibility to deal with unsatisfactory housing and criminal landlords. It was acknowledged that the team worked hard to develop professional and constructive relationships with responsible landlords.

The policy adopted a firm but fair approach incorporating new powers of civil penalties, rent repayment orders and banning orders. It allowed for clear and transparent decision making, providing a framework for all housing enforcement activities. The Committee were informed that the policy supported other discretionary activities such as landlord accreditation and discretionary licensing. The Committee noted that there was a requirement to publish the policy before implementing.

Members questioned the officer on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- Support for the policy document
- A request for information about the number of empty properties in the city and the details about the number of Empty Dwelling Management Orders that had been issued
- The option derelict properties being renovated and used for social housing, in instances where owners couldn't be traced
- A concern about raising residents' expectations and then the powers not being used to deal with housing issues
- Further information about selective licensing and landlord accreditation
- Details about the funding opportunities to deal with empty homes
- What would happen if landlords didn't comply with civil penalties to pay back rent and the options for prosecution

- How could it be made easier for tenants to report their rogue landlords and what was being doing to make tenants aware of their rights
- Was there employee capacity to be able to deliver the policy and details about team structure and employee numbers including the options for recruiting additional staff
- Details about the funding for posts
- Further information on deposit/bonds when there were landlord/tenants disagreements
- The option of holding a public database of all landlords in the city
- A comparison with the policy adopted by Sheffield City Council
- Clarification as to whether the Council had a Management Order Management Scheme in place
- A request for selective licensing to be considered at a future meeting as soon as possible.

**RESOLVED that:**

**(1) The content of the presentation be noted.**

**(2) The new Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy be noted.**

**(3) Information on the number of empty properties in the city and details about the number of Empty Dwelling Management Orders issued to be circulated to the Committee.**

**(4) The Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities be requested to consider that, in relation to Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, he ensures that the Empty Dwellings Management Orders and Compulsory Purchase Orders are enforced in all identified cases.**

**(5) A report on Selective Licensing be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee at the earliest opportunity.**

**29. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2018/19**

The Board considered their work programme for the current municipal year.

**RESOLVED that the work programme for 2018/19 be noted and that the programme be updated to include Selective Licensing to allow for consideration at the earliest opportunity (Minute 28 above refers).**

**30. Any Other Items of Public Business**

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.40 am)