

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 14 November 2019

Present:

Members: Councillor N Akhtar (Chair)

Councillor F Abbott
Councillor M Ali
Councillor R Ali
Councillor R Bailey
Councillor J Clifford (substitute for Councillor C Miks)
Councillor S Walsh

Other Members: Councillor D Welsh (Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities)

Employees (by Directorate):

People: D Ashmore, J Crawshaw, S Hall, G Tate

Place: S Bennett, V Castree

Apologies: Councillors C Miks, T Mayer and T Khan (Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities)

Public Business

15. Declarations of Interest

Councillor F Abbott declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in matters discussed as part of MInute 17 below relating to “Adoption of Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024”. Councillor Abbott left the meeting for that part of the discussions.

16. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

17. Adoption of Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note which provided information on the draft Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24, which is required by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to be published by December, 2019. Following engagement with key stakeholders, a draft Strategy and Action Plan 2019-24 was widely consulted on from 16 September to 30 October, 2019.

The draft Strategy will be considered by Cabinet on 10 December, 2019. Work was still being undertaken to analyse the consultation responses and the draft Cabinet report, together with the draft Strategy, were appended to the Briefing Note.

The Rough Sleeping Strategy focused on the following three main principles:-

1. To prevent new people from starting to sleep rough
2. To intervene rapidly when people start to sleep rough to help them off the street
3. To promote a person's recovery once they are off the street to build positive lives and so they do not return to rough sleeping.

In addition to the Briefing Note, the Scrutiny Board received a presentation at the meeting which provided up to date information in relation to the consultation responses.

The Scrutiny Board questioned officers on aspects of the Briefing Note including:-

- Grant funding available to tackle rough sleeping and the likelihood of continuing funding for this issue
- Powers available to the Local Authority to move rough sleepers on and how possessions are dealt with in such circumstances
- Work undertaken at locations outside of the City Centre
- The Framework and different pathways available to deal with rough sleepers to ensure each case is dealt with appropriately
- Information relating to known rough sleepers in the City and how information is shared with partners via case management systems and other Local Authorities
- The membership of and work undertaken by the Homeless Forum
- *Work being undertaken to develop a scheme to enable people to donate to, for the purpose of assisting rough sleepers
- Work being undertaken with local businesses outside of the City Centre to ensure they are provided with appropriate information in relation to rough sleepers outside their premises

The Scrutiny Board commended the officers for all of the work carried out in this regard.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board note, support and welcome the Draft Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024.

(*Note: Councillor F Abbott declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in matters relating to this part of the discussions and left the room for this part of the meeting.)

18. **Coventry Homefinder Review**

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note detailing the Coventry Homefinder Review, which began in June 2019 and which had involved significant consultation activity with Registered Providers and which had concluded that a review needed to be undertaken.

A Steering Group had been set up involving Council Officers, nominated Registered Providers and a representative of the Welfare Forum Working Together. As part of the continued consultation process, a public consultation survey had been published on 11 November, 2019 until 3 January, 2020 to seek wider feedback on proposals for change. Participants will be able to respond online using the Coventry Let's Talk website and using the paper survey in libraries and by request.

Four workshops have been held with six Registered Providers involved to review the current policy and develop a set of proposals for change. Other feedback on the current policy has been received from the Homelessness Forum, the Frontline network and from the general public via the Let's Talk Engagement site. The revised Coventry Homefinder Policy will be presented to the Cabinet in early 2020 for approval.

The Scrutiny Board also considered a comprehensive presentation at the meeting which provided information on:-

- The Coventry Context
- The Legal and Local Context – Coventry Homefinder Policy
- Consultation activities so far and outcomes
- The current Housing Register position
- The following proposed new objectives for revised Coventry Homefinder Policy:-
 - Operate within the legal framework
 - Be realistic, simple and transparent
 - Make best use of housing stock
 - Letting properties quickly
 - Create balanced and sustainable communities
- Details of the proposals for change
- Pre consultation Equalities Analysis
- A proposed timeline with a revised Policy being implemented in Autumn (with a possible staggered implementation depending on the outcome of consultation and IT requirements)

The Scrutiny Board questioned officers on aspects of the Briefing Note and presentation, particularly in relation to:-

- The proposed changes and the reasons for those changes
- The bidding system
- The reason for the higher proportion of females on the Homefinder list
- Mutual exchanges
- Work being undertaken with key providers

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board note, welcome and support the proposed changes to Coventry Homefinder and the consultation being undertaken in this regard.

19. Report Back from Conference - The Role of Cities in the Integration of Refugees and Migrants

The Scrutiny Board considered a report which outlined attendance by the Programme Manager for Migration and the Programme Officer from the MiFriendly Cities Project at the “Role of Cities in the Integration of Refugees and Migrants” conference held in Antwerp on 12 and 13 June, 2019.

In particular, the Scrutiny Board noted that learning from the conference would be used to influence the future direction of the MiFriendly Cities Project.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

20. Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2019/20

The Scrutiny Board noted their Work Programme for 2019/20.

21. Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.30 am)