

# Minutes

of the Meeting of the

## Adult Services & Housing Policy & Scrutiny Panel

**Thursday, 27th June 2019**

held at the Town Hall, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.

Meeting Commenced: 10.30 am Meeting Concluded: 12:30 pm

### Councillors:

P Mark Crosby (Chairman)

P Caroline Cherry

P Gill Bute

P Paul Gardner

P Karin Haverson

P Huw James

P Ian Parker

P John Cato

P Ann Harley

P Sandra Hearne

P Patrick Keating

P Roz Willis

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

**Officers in attendance:** Sheila Smith, Sarah Shaw, Mark Hughes, Gerald Hunt, Kathryn Needham. Lisa Osbourne, Mark Jarvis (People and Communities); Leo Taylor, Brent Cross (Corporate Services).

### ASH Election of the Vice-Chairman for the 2019/20 Municipal Year

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**Resolved:** that Caroline Cherry be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel for the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

### ASH Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Agenda Item 4)

2

None

### ASH Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 March 2019 (Agenda Item 5)

3

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record.

### ASH Private rented sector conditions update (Agenda Item 10)

4

A change to the agenda order was agreed by the Chairman to consider Agenda Item 10.

The Head of Housing and Strategy and Private Sector Housing Team Manager presented an update report on Private Rented Sector Conditions providing the background to the Council's decision to commence and Area Action Approach in respect of the regulation of private rented sector in a specific area within Weston-super-Mare. This included:

- an outline of recent legislative and guidance changes introduced to support Local Authorities in their regulation of the private rented sector
- an outline of the Council's subsequent Review of Housing Conditions in the Private Rented Sector completed in 2017, including a summary of the tenure breakdown and stock conditions in the area, and
- outcomes and next steps following commencement of the scheme.

The Head of Housing and Strategy responded to Members questions as follows:

(1) *How long would the pilot scheme be tested?* - Regular reports to the Panel would be made at each stage of the programme to evaluate ongoing progress.

(2) *How robust were the systems in place for identifying rogue landlords?* – Rogue landlords were typically those who had chosen not to engage with the accreditation process. Some may already have had outstanding complaints against their properties or had otherwise come to the attention of the Council. Member's noted that, if under review, the system did not appear to be working effectively, consideration would be given to alternative approaches including licencing.

(3) *What proportion of rented accommodation in North Somerset did the pilot area cover?* - Roughly 25%. The scheme's area was scoped to minimise to risk that problems would be displaced into other areas of the town.

(4) *Other neighbouring Councils were introducing and/or expanding licencing schemes, so why not North Somerset?* - This goes back to the rationale for the original Executive Member decision made in March 2018. Licencing tended to be resource intensive, requiring the inspection of all rented properties within in a specified area including those which already met standards together with the risk that these costs could lead to increased rents. Furthermore, with a significant proportion of income generated from a licencing scheme tied up in the administration of the scheme, there was a risk that ongoing enforcement would be constrained. By contrast, the Council's Area Action Approach allowed resources to be targeted where they were most needed, using intelligence from the associated sector-led accreditation scheme. Without the higher costs associated with a licencing scheme, income from civil penalties could be ringfenced for enforcement.

(5) *There was talk of rogue landlords but what about rogue tenants? What actions were being taken in respect of these?* The best advice was for landlords to use references. The tenancy team support landlords to help them deal with any problems with tenants.

(6) *With only 26 referrals by tenants, and only 3 penalties, did this scheme need reconsidering?* – The on-line reporting tool had recently been introduced and inspections had only just commenced.

(7) *How effective was the part of the scheme that monitored property compliance with energy efficiency ratings (Energy Performance Certificates)?* - There were grants available that could help landlords with this however the

works that could be required of landlords who own F and G rated homes were capped nationally.

(8) *What indicators and targets were used for measuring the scheme's performance and outcomes and how could Members access these metrics?*  
- a range of targets and outcome indicators were used and regularly reported. Some indicators were picked up in the quarterly performance reports provided to the Members (see agenda item 11) and additional metrics would also be provided in future update reports to the panel.

**Concluded:**

1. that the background information in relation to the private rented sector be noted;
2. that progress made to improve housing conditions in the sector and specific actions to target rogue landlords be noted;
3. that further regular reports on the progress of the Area Action project be provided to the Panel; and
4. that, in the meantime, Panel Members meet with Officers to further explore this topic.

**ASH 5 Blue Badges (disabled parking) scheme (Agenda Item 7)**

The Service Leader Adult's Support and Safeguarding presented the report which informed the Panel of the change in national guidance to expand the Blue Badge scheme to include those with hidden disabilities. This may have resource implications going forward but more work was needed to more fully assess the potential impacts. The purpose of bringing it to the Panel now was to highlight the issues at the earliest opportunity and to discuss how Members might engage with officers as work on the implications of the new guidance progressed.

Members sought and received clarification on the following matters:-

- possible impact on number of bays currently available; and
- current restrictions on blue badge use at Town and District off-street car parks

There was discussion around a proposal to establish a working group to engage with officers on the work being undertaken to consider the impacts of the new Blue Badge guidance. It was noted that, as the blue badge scheme cut across the remits of several Scrutiny Panels, any such working group would need to involve Members from those panels.

**Concluded:**

1. that the report be noted and the Members' comments forwarded to Officers in the form of minutes.
2. that, prior to the establishment of a joint (cross-panel) working group as proposed above, a meeting with officers be arranged to further consider scope and terms of reference.

## **ASH 6 Update on the transformation of Adult's Support and Safeguarding (Agenda item 8)**

The Adult's Support and Safeguarding Service Leader presented a report outlining progress against the Council's programme for the transformation of Adults' Support and Safeguarding services in North Somerset.

In discussion Members raise a number of issues about the Shared Lives service, relating to:

- the role of the Care Quality Commission (CQC - the Government appointed independent regulator of Health and Social Care services) in monitoring the service – noting that there had been a number of high profile issues recently where CQC inspections had failed to identify significant issues;
- potential risks around the vetting process for families involved in the service; and
- opportunities for the Panel to engage with officers in scrutinising the effectiveness of the systems in place for safeguarding service users

In response, the Service Leader emphasised that they saw the CQC's involvement as a positive, having built up a constructive relationship with the regulator over previous years. With respect to risks associated with the service, she explained that families wishing to get involved were required to go through an accreditation process, similar to that used with the Foster Car service. Mandatory training and appropriate supervision were provided, and risk assessments undertaken.

**Concluded:** that the report be noted and the Members' comments forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

## **ASH 7 Update on the transformation of Commissioning (Agenda Item 9)**

The Head of Commissioning presented the report outlining progress on the commissioning opportunities relating to the transformation of Adult services, particularly in relation to the challenging demographic pressures and use of joint funding opportunities.

In discussion, Members commented that they would, in due course, appreciate a further, more in depth, briefing from officers on the issues covered in the report

**Concluded:** that the report be noted and the Members' comments forwarded to Officers in the form of minutes.

## **ASH 8 Performance Monitoring Q4 2018-19 (Agenda Item 11)**

The Panel considered the report of the Head of Housing and Strategy informing the panel of the performance position as at 31 March 2019 (Q4) and contains the following information:

- An overview of Key Corporate Performance Indicators (KCPIs), Key Service Measures (KSMs) and volume measures as at 31 March 2019 (Q4).
- Details of achievements against KCPIs and KSMs relevant to the remit of the panel.

**Concluded:** that the report be noted and the Members' comments forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

## **ASH 9** Month 12 Adult Care and Housing Budget Monitor (Agenda Item 12)

The Panel received the report from the Finance Business Partner on the Month 12 Adult Care and Housing Budget Monitor.

The report summarised and discussed the current forecast spend against budget for adult services, highlighting key variances and contextual information. It also made reference to the principles and processes associated with the setting of the 2019/20 budget. The budget monitoring information built on the information presented at the Executive on 5 February 2019 and a further update based on the position at month 10 was due to be presented to the Executive on 19 March 2019.

**Concluded:** that the report be noted.

## **ASH 10** The Panel's Work Plan (Agenda Item 13)

In considering the work plan, the Panel reiterated the proposal that a cross-Panel scrutiny task-and-finish working group be set up to examine issues around Blue Badge parking.

It was noted that the resilience of the Domiciliary care service would be on the agenda for the next meeting and that the scope of the item would be widened to include some of the issues discussed under the items considered above. It was also suggested that this might include a review of the Council's plans for commissioned services such as Domiciliary Care in the event of a "no deal" Brexit.

There was also discussion about the Government's delayed Social Care Green Paper. Members noted that the former ASH panel had contributed to the Local Government Association's "the lives we want to lead" alternative green paper, setting out 14 recommendations to the Government setting out the current challenges and what is needed to make progress. It was agreed that a copy of the LGA "green paper" be provided to Members for information.

**Concluded:** That the Work Plan be updated, picking up actions and discussion outcomes from the present meeting.

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Chairman

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