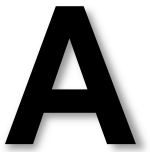


Crawley Borough Council



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission Monday 9 January 2017 at 7.00pm

Present:

Councillor B A Smith (Chair)
Councillor R G Burgess (Vice-Chair)
Councillors M L Ayling, T G Belben, Dr H S Bloom, C A Cheshire, I T Irvine, R A Lanzer,
T Rana, K Sudan and L Vitler

Also in Attendance:

Councillors S J Joyce and P C Smith

Apologies for Absence: None

Officers Present:

Karen Dodds Head of Crawley Homes
Heather Girling Democratic Services Officer
Jean McPherson Group Manager (Development Management)
Susan Mills Transformation Officer
Becky Pearce Sheltered Housing and Telecare Manager
Clem Smith Head of Economic and Environmental Services

65. Members' Disclosure of Interests and Whipping Declarations

The following disclosures of interests were made by Members:-

Member	Minute Number	Subject	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor R A Lanzer	69	Transformation Update – Sheltered Housing Redesign	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC

66. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on [28 November 2016](#) were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

67. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

68. Transformation Update – Planning Redesign

The Commission received an update from Jean McPherson, Group Manager (Development Management) on the Planning System Thinking Review.

The key conclusions from the 'check phase' were:

- There were multiple "hand offs" meaning that work was passed between several departments which caused delays and duplication.
- There was a lack of 'measures' and it was important to fully understand the current problems within the system.

As a result of the 'redesign' several changes had been made to the system:

- Experimentation had first taken place with the tree service and tree preservation orders and then progressed to site and planning applications.
- There were now individual officers allocated to customers, involved in the process "end to end" ensuring one contact for the entire process, resulting in a reduction in process time.
- Customer information was being enhanced as a result of improved technology.
- The team regularly reviewed ways of working in order to share knowledge and improve learning, ensuring the correct 'skill set' for dealing with applications.
- There was recognition that Systems Thinking had changed the team's thinking, behaviour and as a result improved performance.

During the discussion, the following points were expressed:

- There was recognition that assigning individual officers was helpful to customers and this had also increased staff morale and improved customer relations.
- It was considered beneficial that information and communication had been simplified.
- Acknowledgement that the Enforcement Service still needed to be reviewed and the need to continually review processes was of paramount importance.

RESOLVED

That the Chair thanked the Group Manager (Development Management) for their contribution and attendance at the Commission. The presentation had been very interesting and informative.

69. Transformation Update – Sheltered Housing Redesign

The Commission received an update from Becky Pearce, Sheltered Housing and Telecare Manager on the Sheltered Housing System Thinking Review.

The main conclusions from the 'check phase' were:

- There was an assumption that people in Sheltered Housing were vulnerable together with the perception of sheltered accommodation being for older people, when in fact many were able to manage well themselves and had little contact with the Scheme Manager.
- There was limited demand for the sheltered service but significant demand for accommodation. The most popular property type was 2 bed bungalows, but this was the property type with least availability. Similarly those wishing to downsize in some cases had very limited desire to move, and no requirement for sheltered housing.
- Some of the existing sheltered properties were not popular and were difficult to let as considered too small.

As a result of the 'redesign' several changes had been made to the system:

- The service would change from accommodation based support to a needs based service for all elderly tenants (including those in general needs accommodation).

- The team of scheme managers would provide a support service to tenants based on needs criteria working with individuals to ensure they had the correct support services in place.
- The scheme managers would work in a team from a hub and be less isolated in their working practices, based at the Integral Schemes providing a daily presence.
- In view of the lack of demand for sheltered properties there would be a de-designation of remaining schemes on a rolling programme. Where the property would be due to be de-designated the alarm system would be removed and a tenant given a lifeline if there was requirement. The community rooms in these schemes could be changed back to housing enabling a rental income to be provided.
- Restructure for the team was currently planned including the out of hours service. This incorporated the facility to deal with any emergency access and tenant lock outs.

During the discussion, the following points were expressed:

- Consultation with WSCC Adult Services was planned regarding providing care within the general needs stock.
- There was an acknowledgement that circumstances change and it was challenging to identify individual health needs. It would be necessary for partnership working and the need to maintain regular contact to ensure people were living well and accessing services.
- Questions were raised regarding right to buy if properties were re-designated.
- There would be a requirement to respond as a flexible, needs based service.

RESOLVED

That the Commission welcomed the presentation. The Chair thanked officers for their contribution and attendance at the Commission.

70. Cabinet Member Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing

The Commission noted the update given by Councillor Joyce on his portfolio and questioned him on a variety of other issues relating to his [portfolio](#).

The following topics were discussed:

- Homelessness was highlighted, with particular reference to the increase across the town and the potential cost incurred to the council. It was felt that whilst there was a duty of care to provide housing, there was a cost to the service. It was considered that the 'right to buy' scheme and the increasing private sector market had affected the current position.
- With reference to bed and breakfast accommodation provided by the council there was an aim to minimise the use of temporary accommodation where possible.
- Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) was discussed with reference to the potential option of councils having discretionary powers to extend licensing to other HMOs, which were not subject to mandatory licensing. It was commented that the council did not currently propose to introduce additional licensing. However there were approximately 40 HMOs registered and standards for HMOs of two floors and those of three floors or more that had to be met and assessed.
- Concern was expressed in relation to the changes to the New Homes Bonus.
- Clarity was sought on the numbers transferring between properties. It was confirmed that the Under Occupation Incentive Policy was still in place and it was felt the council was still working to fulfil the housing needs of the town. However it was acknowledged that there was a current housing gap.

- The Passivhaus development at Gales Place was felt to achieve energy efficiency and internal comfort for the occupants through good design. It may be considered for other developments providing costs and need could be justified.

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission thanked Councillor Joyce for attending and for the informative discussion that had ensued.

71. Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee (HASC)

The next meeting of the HASC would take place on 18 January 2017. An update would be provided at the next meeting of the Commission.

72. Forward Plan – February 2017 and Provisional List of Reports for the following meetings of the Commission

The Commission confirmed the following reports for its February meeting:

- Budget & Council Tax 2017-2018
- Treasury Management Strategy 2017-2018
- Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy
- Sheltered Housing Service Review
- Crawley Town Hall

73. Closure of Meeting

The meeting ended at 9.05pm.

B A Smith
Chair