

## **HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Ms. Lowe (Chairman)

Cllr. Mrs. Clark (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Ayres, Mrs. Ayres, Eyre, Firth, Mrs. George, Raikes and Towell

Cllr. Fittock was also present.

### 31. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 February 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 32. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

### 33. Actions from Previous Meeting

A further report on the monitoring and management of air quality would be submitted to the Committee's October 2014 meeting (Minute 41 refers).

### 34. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder's update was noted. Referring to the Slavery and Human Trafficking conference the Chief Housing Officer reported that the possibility of establishing a Kent-wide stakeholder group was being pursued, including a training programme for Local Authority Officers and Members. The Chairman suggested that the subject should feature within the next Community Safety Plan for the District. She also requested that, if the matter had been sufficiently progressed at county level, a related item be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

### 35. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

### 36. Affordable Housing

The Housing Projects Manager gave a [presentation](#) on the provision of affordable housing in the District, within the context of limited development opportunities and the fact that local property prices were among the highest in the UK. The presentation covered s.106 Planning Agreements contributions in line with the Core Strategy; measures to enhance the effectiveness of existing affordable stock; maximisation of opportunities for meeting housing needs, including the highly commended 'Home of Your Own' Scheme; on-going efforts to bring empty homes back into use; the potential for

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Housing Associations to offer housing for private rent / sale in order to cross subsidise affordable elements; and an analysis of local affordable housing delivery throughout the District since 2001/02, including the fact that 81 units were planned for 2014/15.

In response to a Member's question, the Housing Projects Manager commented on the Government's proposal to introduce a blanket restriction on the use of s.106 planning obligations associated with developments of ten units or less. He confirmed that the Council was opposing this on the basis that the economic viability of smaller developments in the District should not be compromised. This argument was supported by a recent development viability study.

Responding to further questions the Housing Projects Manager stated that over 380 residential properties throughout the District had remained empty for a lengthy period. He explained that the circumstances behind their non-occupation varied greatly and that the task of encouraging owners to take positive action required a range of different approaches. Regarding brown field sites in public ownership, he considered that the pressures on authorities to secure best value for any disposals limited the prospect of social housing solutions coming forward. With regards to housing need in the District the Housing Projects Manager explained that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identified an annual Affordable Housing shortfall of 646 units per annum for the District, although delivery on this scale was accepted as being idealistic. He advised that a further SHMA was planned for the end of the year. The Chief Housing Officer also referred to initiatives undertaken with the private sector to provide accommodation and prevent homelessness, which had contributed to the Housing Register being reduced from its previous peak of over 2000.

### 37. Housing Energy Retraining Options (HERO) Scheme Update

The Chief Housing Officer reported that the popular scheme provided free, tailored advisory services on a range of issues including: housing problems; saving money on fuel bills; debt or mortgage advice; welfare benefits; retraining and further education options; and getting back to work. She confirmed that regular HERO surgeries were being conducted at Children's Centres and MOAT Housing offices throughout the District and emphasised that the Scheme was entirely reliant upon funding from non-SDC sources. The Chief Housing Officer had spoken at a recent CAPITA Housing Conference promoting the HERO service and as a result of this Other authorities had been asked to consider buying into the scheme on the basis of the potential for preventing homelessness and helping to offset bed & breakfast and other temporary accommodation costs. The Chief Housing Officer also highlighted the potential for adapting the scope of the service in response to emerging issues.

### 38. Update on Policing Model

Councillor Ayres gave a [presentation](#) which covered: the objectives of the forthcoming Kent Police re-organisation effective from 24 June 2014, including more visible community policing and measures to ensure compliance with the Police & Crime Plan for the county; the impact of the re-organisation upon the structure of the team serving the Sevenoaks District, including a more focused chain of command for Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) and the intention to have a PCSO working in each of the

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District's 26 Wards; along with clarification on the distinct objectives of the 999 (for urgent assistance requirements) and 101 (for other police enquiries) phone line services.

### **39. Sevenoaks District Community Safety Strategy & Action Plan 2014/15**

The Chief Officer for Communities and Business presented a report which sought approval for the adoption of the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Strategy & Action Plan 2014-15, which took into account the Strategic Assessment undertaken during September 2012 and October 2013 as well as more recent data where available. Members' attention was brought to the replacement Plan which contained updated information and had been circulated after the agenda, and it was noted that this version was the version being submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting on 8 May 2014.

In response to a question about the links between unemployment and re-offending, Officers confirmed that one of the initiatives within the Action Plan focused on providing positive incentives for younger people serving short custodial sentences. Officers also referred to targeted projects to prevent younger people entering the youth justice system.

A Member questioned why the eight priorities referred to were not ranked. The Chief Officer for Communities and Business explained that the priorities were, inevitably, weighted differently by the various agencies. However, she advised that each of the priorities had emerged from a systematic impact assessment process which had involved scoring the various issues against specific criteria details of which were contained within the Strategic Assessment which could be accessed via the Council's [website](#).

The Chairman invited Mr. John Morrison to address the Committee. Mr. Morrison co-ordinated a Speed Watch Group in Sevenoaks and welcomed the support received from SDC, urging Councillors to become involved in their local Speed Watch schemes. Maintaining the enthusiasm of trained volunteers and lack of response to warning letters sent by the Police were some of the issues facing the Group. Mr Morrison called upon the Police to address the 'enforcement gap' by deploying Neighbourhood Police teams to apprehend offenders. He commented that the adverse impact of speeding vehicles on local communities was not properly reflected by casualty and crash statistics. The Chairman thanked him for his comments and confirmed that the matter would be looked into by the Road Safety Working Group.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Action Plan be adopted.

### **40. Safeguarding Policy For the Protection Of Children And Vulnerable Adults**

The Chief Officer for Communities and Business presented a report which contained an updated and refreshed Safeguarding Policy which would enable the Council to more effectively meet its responsibilities to safeguard children and vulnerable adults under s.11 of the Children's Act 2004 and guidance published by the Department of Health and Kent County Council in relation to vulnerable adults. Members' attention was

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brought to the replacement Appendix 1 and updated Policy which had been circulated after the agenda was despatched - reflecting legislation brought into effect this month. It was noted that this version was the version being submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting on 8 May 2014.

### Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the updated Safeguarding Policy for the protection of children and vulnerable adults be adopted.

### 41. Work Plan

The work plan was noted with the following amendments: an 'Update on measures to combat slavery and human trafficking' to be added to the June meeting; the update on affordable housing and feedback from the Road Safety working group to be moved to the October meeting; and the report from the Joint Working Group with the Local Planning & Environment Advisory Committee along the invitation to the Area Commander to attend, be moved to the meeting in February 2015.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.10 PM

CHAIRMAN