

Housing & Community Safety Advisory Committee

11 February 2014

Portfolio Holders Report

Housing Strategy/Policy and Housing needs

The council already has the Empty Homes initiative that gives grants to people buying dilapidated homes to do up in addition to grants (from external funding) to repair and return empty homes into use, helping people step onto the housing ladder. The Council successfully obtains KCC 'No use empty' funding. Returning empty homes into use provides more housing and improves the condition of private sector stock and enables more Council tax to be paid and adds to New Homes bonus.

We also have our shared ownership scheme with Moat Housing Association, Do it yourself home ownership scheme (DIYSO) which enables those who cannot afford to buy their own home to purchase with assistance a property anywhere of their choice as long as it is in suitable repair and an appropriate price. This scheme is offered to social housing tenants which helps to free up under occupied accommodation again to help people step onto the housing ladder; but we are now working on the third angle of our housing ladder triangle, which the committee will discuss tonight, that will loan people money to help with certain housing costs (solicitor and surveyor fees).

Looking at the viability of the proposed development for the old Birchwood school site in Swanley made up of 24 executive homes and 42 social two bed bungalows. One of the largest proposed developments of bungalows in the country.

Arguing a case to Central government to allow us to be able to alter our rural exception site maps.

Community Safety

Attended the Police & Crime Panel meetings on Tuesday 8 October 2013, Tuesday 5 November 2013 and 4 February 2014, on behalf of the Leader of the council. I am interested in the development of the new Youth Police & Crime Commissioner and the way the Commissioner manages budget cuts across the force.

Internet safety – Looking at everything that KCC, the Police and we do to keep our young people as safe as possible from cyber bullying, access too young to online pornography, webcams and 'sexting' and the opportunities the internet brings for online grooming. To look for gaps, such as educating parents and grandparents of these dangers, and helping to plug those gaps. To help elderly people and vulnerable adults keep safe on the internet.

Attended a workshop for parents on 14 January to find out how parents would like SDC to support them. Met with KCC's E-Safety Advisor, Rebecca Avery, who also advises the Prime Minister on how we can support KCC and the Police keep the District's children safe from online dangers.

Looking at ways to work with the Town and Parish councils, as well as the Stag, to find new ways to educate young people and their parents of these dangers. To find better ways to present important

information to young people using local role models such as Silly Billy, who has agreed to endorse our primary school campaign.

Attended the Substance Misuse conference on 20 November and Chaired the Domestic Violence Conference on 28 November.

Scrutiny Committee

Attended scrutiny committee on 18 July where I gave an overview of the portfolio and on 5 February where I highlighted some of the portfolio's main challenges over the next few years which were:

- Further harmonisation of licensing policies between the 3 Partner Authorities
- Internet safety
- HERO service and benefit update

Challenges until the next Housing & Community Safety meeting on 29 April

- How we can further support the middle income group of people (£33,000 to £60,000) to step onto the housing ladder
- How we can better work with planning to provide the District's housing needs
- Securing HERO
- Changes to DFG funding: challenges and opportunities
- Further consolidation and shared working in environmental health
- Continue with internet safety improvements
- Troubled families – exploring the links between housing and community safety as well as better joint working with KCC