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Housing and Public Protection Policy Development Advisory Group 11 JULY 2016

Present: Councillors: Philip Circus (Chairman), Toni Bradnum, Alan Britten, Matthew French, Nigel Jupp, Paul Marshall, Mike Morgan and Jim Sanson

Apologies: Councillors: Andrew Baldwin, David Skipp and Ben Staines

Also Present: Councillor Crosbie

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Baldwin, Skipp and Staines. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Protection, in attendance, explained that he had asked Councillor Sanson to act as Chairman for the meeting.

2 TO AGREE THE TIME OF THE MEETINGS OF THE GROUP FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR

The group agreed that the start time of forthcoming meetings of the group would be 17:30.

3 EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager presented the draft Empty Homes Strategy to the group. The strategy was scheduled for Cabinet decision on 21 July 2016. The Council's Empty Homes Strategy had been reviewed on 26th April 2016 by the now dissolved Private Sector Housing Policy Group to ensure that the strategy continued to deliver its objectives, reflected current best practice and was in line with legislation and national policy. It was considered that the existing policy met those objectives and only minor amendments were required to the strategy to take account that delivery of parts of the strategy, previously undertaken by Brighton and Hove City Council, had been brought in-house. The aims of the strategy were:

- to encourage homeowners and landlords to bring vacant homes back into use
- to consider all the options available for tackling the problems and make every effort to bring the home back to a good standard and into use as a dwelling
- to remove the negative impact empty homes in poor condition are having on their neighbourhood

The Chairman sought the views of the group, which were provided as follows:

- Clarification of the status of specific empty properties
- The need to understand how the empty homes register was formed
- Whether compulsory purchased orders (CPO) were considered

Officers responded to each issue in turn

- That the specific empty properties mentioned were subject to an action plan, and that the Empty Homes Enforcement Group had been consulted
- Data from council tax was a primary source for populating the register
- CPO was covered in Appendix 1 to the strategy

At the conclusion of its discussion, the group advised the Cabinet Member that it supported the draft Empty Homes Strategy 2016-2020.

4 **LICENSING UPDATE**

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager provided an update to the group on Licensing event LIS/2 of 4 April 2016, which had been cancelled by the applicant.

5 **HOUSING UPDATE**

The Housing Services Manager explained that items 5 and 7 were interlinked and provided an overview of the Housing function. The group heard that the number of households on the waiting list was at a three year high, possibly due to the introduction of households being able to apply online. In response to questions from Members, the group heard:

- that 'working households in priority need' formed the top band of the waiting list
- that ex-servicemen did not go on the waiting list, and were prioritised
- temporary accommodation figures could be skewed by individuals or a household staying for prolonged periods.

6 **HOUSING AND PLANNING ACT 2016**

The Housing Services Manager informed the group that the consequences of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 were now being understood across the housing sector. There was a need for more clarity from the government on starter homes particularly and it was noted that government policy may still be subject to change.

7 **NEW KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR HOUSING**

The Housing Service Manager summarised the performance indicators included with the agenda papers. Members requested further information at the next meeting of the group on:

- 'Sofa surfers'
- Trend information for the five indicators.

Members noted that performance indicator information was reported to the Finance and Performance Sub-Committee.

8 **SYRIAN REFUGEES RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME**

The Housing Services Manager explained to the group that West Sussex County Council had joined with borough and district councils, health and emergency services, faith groups, charities, and voluntary and community groups, to formally agree to help house and support 240 refugees over the next 4 years. Horsham District would support 2 families per year and suitable properties were being brought up to standard. The group heard that West Sussex County Council offered a support network, including language skills to those involved in the countywide programme.

The meeting closed at 18:45

CHAIRMAN

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