

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Review Committee held on
Thursday, 22 January 2015 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Ben Shelton – Chairman
Councillor James Hockney – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: David Bard Janet Lockwood
Tony Orgee Bunty Waters

Councillor Kevin Cuffley was in attendance, by invitation.

Officers: Stephen Hills Director of Housing
Pat Strachan Home Improvement Agency Manager
Marianne Upton Sub Regional Homelink Manager
Victoria Wallace Democratic Services Officer
Graham Watts Democratic Services Team Leader

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Fraser, Jose Hales, Roger Hall and Neil Scarr. Councillor Bunty Waters was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Fraser.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2014, were **AGREED** as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions from the public had been received.

5. HOUSING UPDATE

Stephen Hills, Director of Housing, presented an update on the Council's housing services and key areas of partnership working. Marianne Upton, Sub Regional Homelink Manager and Pat Strachan, Home Improvement Agency Manager, were also in attendance. An action plan from the Sub-Regional Housing Board was included in the agenda pack, which the Director of Housing offered to discuss with members individually if requested.

The committee was informed that due to procurement rules, the Homelink partnership was obliged to re-tender its IT service. Members were informed that the contract with the current IT provider Locata, had been well managed through constant engagement with the provider.

A review of the Mears contract started in 2014 and was ongoing. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel had been involved in this in order to examine tenant experience. This was a five year contract up to March 2017, with an option to extend for a further five years. The

review would be reported on at the Housing Portfolio Holder meeting in March 2015, which any members of the Partnerships Review committee could attend.

Members were updated on the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (Cambs HIA) and were informed that for works of less than £10,000 the target timescale from referral to completion was 26 weeks. Current performance was 28 weeks. Members were informed that customer satisfaction levels with the service were 100% in South Cambridgeshire. The possibility of East Cambridgeshire District Council joining the partnership was being investigated and a full business case was being prepared for Cabinet decision in July 2015. This was highlighted as an area where the Partnerships Review Committee may be able to add value before Cabinet made the final decision in July 2015.

Discussion and questions:

- Members requested a glossary of acronyms in the Sub-Regional Housing Board action plan.
- Concern was raised over the flexibility of the Homelink service. The Homelink Manager assured members that the service was flexible enough to deal with cases on an individual basis whilst adhering to policy.
- The Homelink Manager would add members to the distribution list for the Homelink electronic newsletter.
- Access to services by those without internet access was raised. Members were assured that it was not assumed that all those needing to access the service could do so via the internet. Other forms of access were in place such as paper versions of forms being made available by the Council and could also be accessed by the telephone. Processes were also in place for people with sensory impairments to access the service. The service also kept a list of vulnerable people on whose behalf nominated individuals could bid for properties.
- Members were informed that the Cambs HIA was dealing with many older people and it was anticipated that demand would increase. Customers' needs were assessed in order to ensure they were provided with the equipment to meet their need. In addition to this, checks were carried out on home ownership status and the means to pay for home adaptations.
- In addition to older people, members were informed that the Home Improvement Agency dealt with people of all ages through all stages of life from birth to end of life. The committee was informed that the most expensive home adaptations tended to be for children.
- Members queried what happened to adapted properties once residents passed on from these homes. It was clarified that Cambs HIA dealt with private properties, the majority of which were owner occupied. Cambs HIA did not cover council tenants which were dealt with internally through the Council's HRA budget.
- Members were informed that there was a system to prioritise HIA works and that Occupational Therapists carried out this prioritisation.
- The choice of contractors to carry out the work was queried. The committee was informed that clients were able to choose the contractor to carry out the works, from a list of approved contractors.
- Members were informed that the time between reallocation of council properties to new tenants was approximately 15-19 days for South Cambridgeshire.

The Committee **NOTED** the update and thanked the Director of Housing and colleagues for attending and contributing to the meeting.

6. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The committee **NOTED** the update reports that had been received from members appointed to represent the Council on outside bodies, and thanked members for their contributions to this report.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Democratic Services Team Leader would discuss with the Housing Director whether the committee could add value and contribute to the work on the business case regarding the possibility of East Cambridgeshire District Council joining the Cambs HIA partnership, before it was presented to Cabinet for decision.

The committee noted the suggestions the Executive Management Team had made regarding items for potential future consideration. Items were the 'Making Assets Count' project and the review of joint procurement of a Cambridgeshire Handy Person Scheme. Members felt that any work being undertaken by the Health and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder on the Handy Person Scheme should be looked at first, to ensure there was no duplication if the committee were to look at this in future.

The committee felt that it was important to engage with the City Deal and that this should be a focus of the next committee meeting. Monitoring of the City Deal was discussed and Councillor David Bard was appointed as monitor on behalf of the committee. Councillor Bard would attend the City Deal Assembly and Executive Board meetings and report back to the committee on a regular basis.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting would take place on 19 March 2015 at 2pm. The May 2015 meeting would be rescheduled for June.

The Meeting ended at 3.15 p.m.
