

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

held at

The Council Chamber

Symington Building, Adam & Eve Street, Market Harborough, LE16 7AG

on

17th March 2022

Commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Rickman, Chairman

Councillors: Bannister, Knowles, Mahal, Mrs Page (ex-Officio), Mrs Simpson and Mrs Wood

Mrs Robinson and Mrs Simpson.

Officers present: T. Day, L. Elliott, S. Green, S. Hamilton and R. Patel

Remotely: C. Bland, J. Evans, S. Taylor

Guests: Purnima Wilkinson & Alison Kreamer – EMH Group (remote)

Jaqueline Messenger – Futures HA (remote)

Phillipa McKenna – Midlands Rural Housing (remote)

Marion Duffy & Judith Wise – Platform Housing

Leigh Anne Francis – Sage HA (remote)

Nicky Mason – Stonewater HA (remote)

Matthew Hopkin & Dan Hicks – SLM (Everyone Active)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATIONS OF SUBSTITUTION

Apologies were received from Councillor Graves who was substituted by Councillor Mrs Simpson.

DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL

RESOLVED that: The Minutes of the Meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Panel held on the 27th January 2022 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

REPORT 1: REGISTERED PROVIDERS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN HARBOROUGH DISTRICT

The report was presented by the Strategic Housing and Enabling Officer, Raj Patel, to enable the Panel to receive updates from Registered Providers delivering affordable housing in the District by receiving information on their role and priorities in partnership with Harborough District Council.

The Chairman asked that the gratitude and thanks expressed by Raj to Catherine Hewitt and Bob Rushton from Nottingham Community Housing Association (NCHA) on their retirement after 20 years of helping the Council deliver on many affordable housing projects be noted.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from those present and the following were recorded:

Question/ Comment	Response
Report	
<p><u>Inactive RPs</u> Is a dialogue still being maintained with the Council's inactive housing providers namely Derwent Living, Paragon HA and Orbit Group?</p>	<p>It has been difficult in the current situation due to mergers in the organisations, and their focus changing from a local to a national approach. Officers within the organisations have changed. In respect of these three organisations, continued effort is ongoing to try and work with them as best as we can to keep them in the core circle of registered providers.</p>
<p><u>Afghan relocation scheme</u> – can an update be provided ? Also serious concerns were raised that HDC has had properties available for Afghan families for some considerable time and the relevant processes have not yet been completed by the government.</p> <p>The Panel RECOMMENDED that a letter be sent to the local MP and appropriate Minister regarding suitable vacant properties in the Harborough District for Afghan refugees.</p>	<p>In the summer of 2021, the Council worked with RPs to identify properties to support the Afghan relocation scheme. The Council was able to work with its partners to identify three properties and one by a private landlord which were put forward to the Home Office via the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership. One family has moved into the District. The Council is still waiting for families for the other three properties. It appears that the Home Office has found it difficult to manage the process. HDC has identified three families who are at various stages of the process and is currently working with Home Office in confirm the support needs for those families and hopefully the families will be in situ in the three properties shortly.</p> <p>[Post meeting note: The appropriate process is that the recommendation will go to the April Cabinet meeting, for this body to authorise the interim Chief Executive to send a letter on behalf of the Council].</p>
<p><u>Report section 2.10 Seeking land acquisitions:</u> could an update be provided in relation to Naseby Square and the associated properties ?</p>	<p>Platform Housing will be completing the legal purchase of the land imminently. There is a pending legal matter about a small piece of unregistered land in the Square, which needs to be processed by the Land Registry. The process of collation of tender packs and estimates for the build has commenced.</p>
<p><u>Report section 2.22 Statement of intent - RP Partner Protocol</u> : What is the different between a statement of intent and a legal binding agreement and clarification is needed.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p><u>RP Partner Protocol</u> - Response time on repairs</p>	<p>To be dealt with by RPs</p>
<p><u>Carbon Footprint</u> - A reference to carbon footprint should be included under the section titled "objective of the protocol"</p>	<p>NOTED</p>

<p><u>Report section 2.11 Annual affordable delivery and projection</u> - in paragraph 2.11 on page 4, the table goes up to 2031. There is a flatline assumption of 179 units and was consideration given to changing the demographics ? Should there have been an adjustment ?</p>	<p>The flat line is in line with the Local Plan and consideration may be needed to consider the trajectory of the graph.</p>
<p><u>First Home Initiative</u> – Has consideration been given to the 'last home initiative' ? Are we building enough 'last homes' such as bungalows etc ?</p>	<p>The Council is collaborating with partners to deliver specific schemes such as the Extra Care facility. Efforts have been made to negotiate bungalow provision within S106 agreements, but developers are reluctant to give up land space as it affects their profits. The Council has a two for one scheme to encourage developers to provide bungalows. This cannot be done across all sites as it will significantly reduce the council's ability to achieve its target of 40 percent affordable housing provision.</p>
<p><u>First Homes:</u> Are First Homes held at £250,000 in perpetuity?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><u>Percentage of Affordable Housing Provision:</u> As developers usually return to ask for a reduction in the amount of affordable housing being built, how achievable is the council's target of 40% affordable housing provision on all new development sites? Should this be reviewed?</p>	<p>The affordable housing provision rate was set in accordance with the Local Plan period. It will be considered during the review of the local plan and might change accordingly.</p>
<p><u>Definition of Affordable Housing:</u> Does this just relate to the number of bedrooms or a reflection in the price ? What is the difference between affordable and social housing ? Can the process of how affordable housing operates be provided ?</p>	<p>Affordable housing is social rented housing or affordable rented housing, or intermediate housing for sale. ACTION: A comprehensive briefing note on this matter to be circulated.</p>
<p><u>Housing Providers contact list:</u> A contact list for all of the active Housing Providers was requested.</p>	<p>It was AGREED that a list would be circulated.</p>
<p><u>Derwent Housing:</u> Building apartment blocks accommodates more people and is more affordable</p>	<p>This is not currently a favoured route, as a result of the Grenfell tragedy. Funding has been obtained to explore how one bedroom accommodation can be delivered which is not within blocks of flats, and it is hoped that the project will be completed by August / September 2022.</p>
<p><u>Four and five bedroom affordable homes:</u> What is the current situation with these type of houses ? Does the Council have a funding to levy into building larger houses ?</p>	<p>This issue is a target on the agenda of the Strategic Housing and Enabling Officer who is working closely with partners on this matter. On some of the larger sites, a number of four and five bedroom units have been negotiated. The Council does take commuted sums, and this could be used to provide more four and five bedroom units.</p>
<p><u>RP Partnering Protocol:</u> It was suggested that a reference should be included to treat all clients</p>	<p>NOTED, and put forward to the RP's to consider.</p>

and partners with courtesy and respect in order to instigate a positive culture change.	
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Following the discussion on the report, the Panel received the following update from registered providers of social housing in attendance about their provision of accommodation in the District. The Chairman asked that updates should cover the following areas: areas of cover, location, ease of contact for repairs, customer service and the Ukrainian situation.

Platform Housing

Marion Duffy, the Chief Operating Officer of Platform Housing Group, gave the following update to the Panel:

Areas of Cover

Platform Housing has around 46,000 properties with 2,700 located in Harborough. It provides a mix of properties and has a robust housing programme in partnership with Harborough Council.

Customer Satisfaction

On a recent survey customer satisfaction was 72%.

The Chairman thanked Marion for her report invited questions and comments from those present and the following were recorded:

Question/ Comment	Response
<u>Customer satisfaction</u> How do you benchmark your service?	With other organisations and use of customer satisfaction surveys. The customer satisfaction rating related to unresolved issues
<u>Customer Service</u> Do you have any emergency service – out of hours contact?	ACTION: Yes, the number will be added to the contact list.
<u>Repairs</u> Can you provide details of who to contact to deal with issues and organise repairs?	ACTION: Details will be provided on the contact list.
<u>Antisocial Behaviour</u> How do you deal with antisocial behaviour?	A prevention and engagement approach is used. A legal notice is served which is the first step of legal action, and engagement is made with the customer, and the housing team at HDC is contacted to see if there is other support that can be provided, in order to help ensure the property is not left in disrepair, or that there are rent arrears and to try wherever possible to ensure that the customer does not return to the homelessness list. Eviction is the last resort.
<u>Repairs</u> How about your workforce and repairs?	The Platform Housing Group (PHG) property care team is now an in-house team. Complete oversight is in place and regular performance checks are carried out and the PHG has a culture of treating its customers with respect.
<u>The Ukraine Situation</u>	Guidance has been given to residents wishing to take in refugees who will not lose their benefits, and will be treated as if they are taking in lodgers.

Stonewater Housing

Nicky Mason, the Head of Partnerships Customer Experience at Stonewater Housing, gave the following update to the Panel:

Areas of Cover

Stonewater has about 38,000 properties across various local authorities. In Harborough District there are a total of 114 properties, 18 in Great Bowden, 38 in Kibworth, 58 in Market Harborough, 26 due for completion in August 2022 in Farndon Fields.

Customer Service

In a recent survey, Stonewater's customer satisfaction was 84%

Repairs

- Completion on repairs is at 86.65%
- The association has a dedicated repairs reporting contact centre open from 8am-8pm on Monday-Friday and 9am-1pm on Saturday
- Repairs can be reported online 24hrs.
- Chat box process and emails available to use and report repairs

The Chairman thanked Nicky Mason for her report and invited questions and comments from those present and the following were recorded:

Questions

Question / Comment	Response
<u>Emergency Service and out of hours contact</u> ? Is this information publicised?	Yes – this is contactable via their contact centre and also via the out of hour numbers. Stonewater Housing have on-call housing and maintenance officers who will categorise and arrange a response within 4 hours.

East Midlands Housing

Peninnah Wilkinson and Allison Kreamer, Director of Communities and Customer Service gave the following update to the Panel:

Areas of Cover

East Midlands Housing Association (EMHA) has 20,000 homes across the Midlands region with about 50 local authorities and has secured funding to provide homes through to 2026. The funding means they can look for opportunities to provide affordable homes to different communities in Harborough.

114 affordable homes were delivered last year and another 100 homes are in the pipeline for delivery this year. EMHA is able to access S106 funds but finding land has proved particularly difficult. The competitive housing market and other factors have caused land values to go up significantly and impacting on construction. Recent changes include virtual viewing, more time to customers to make their minds up and safe distance working for health and safety purposes.

EMHA has 450 properties in the Harborough District Area. About 153 of those properties are in rent arrears. The rent owed is about 3.35% which is good considering the challenging year. Only a small

number of residents owe over £2000, and EMHA we their Financial Inclusion Services have worked with 36 of them to ensure that the tenants are claiming all the benefits accrued to them.

Antisocial Behaviour

EMHA has seven cases of antisocial behaviour, and is working with those identified to be the cause of the problems to help them modify their behaviour.

Repairs

Customers can contact EMHA for repairs through the following ways:

- Online portal - My home
- Call directly on the 0330 number from 8am and 6pm, plus overnight calls.
- Website and emails

Ukraine Situation

Residents wishing to take in refugees will not lose their benefits. The refugees will be treated as lodgers. Residents are advised not to overcrowd their homes.

The Chairman thanked Peninnah Wilkinson and Allison Kreamer for their report and invited questions and comments from those present and the following were recorded:

Questions

Question / Comment	Response
<u>Location of EMHA houses, contact details and management of antisocial behaviour and repairs?</u>	<p>ACTION A list of houses and contact details will be provided.</p> <p>EMHA has a policy for the management of antisocial behaviour to work with people to keep them in their home and to modify their problematic behaviour.</p> <p>From recent transactions, customer satisfaction – 92%, Satisfaction, with planned repairs 98%, Call handling 98%, 82% of repairs completed within target.</p>
<u>Sustainability: Please provide details of EMHA's sustainability policy. Are the modular pods being built in the UK or abroad ?</u>	<p>EMHA is developing a sustainability policy and is investing in modern methods of construction such as modular homes, which will determine how best to approach future home standards. EMHA is trying to make improvements across the sector.</p> <p>The modular pods are being built in the UK by Delco homes.</p>

Futures Housing Association

Jacqueline Messenger, Business Manager from futures Housing Association (FHA) gave the following update to the Panel:

Futures Housing Association has 3500 properties in the Amber Valley.

Repairs

FHA has a Customer service centre number and out of hours number for repairs.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer service is at 78%

Repairs

- Repairs - 88%
- Money issues – 98%

Ukraine Situation

Is of the understanding that this would be same as other RP's.

Antisocial Behaviour

FHA will work with anyone identified to modify their behaviour.

The Panel asked no questions and the chairman thanked Jacqueline Messages for her update.

Midlands Rural Housing

Phillipa Mckenna project delivery Manager at Midlands Rural Housing (MRH) gave the following update to the committee:

Midlands Rural Housing provides an enabling service to Harborough District council and Leicester Rural Housing Partnership. Housing need surveys methodology has changed as focus has shifted to site finding. The aim is to provide suitable sites in every borough. Land is difficult to find and land agents are pushing up the prices on behalf of landowners.

There are two opportunities for MRH to purchase land. Affordable housing on rural exception sites is ring fenced to people with connections with the local area identified through the housing need survey we operate on behalf of Harborough Council. A cascading agreement is in place.

Question / Comment	Response
<u>Housing Needs Surveys</u> : Can the surveys be modified as residents are not always clear as to who the forms are from and the questions also require more clarity.	Noted

The Panel NOTED the updates from the Registered Providers of Affordable Housing working in partnership with the Council in the District.

REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (2000) RIPA

The Interim Chief Executive informed the Panel that the Council has not to date had the need to invoke its RIPA powers.

The Panel NOTED the report and that the Council had not to date had the need to invoke RIPA powers.

COUNCIL'S WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND OPEN BOOK ACCOUNTING WITH SLM AND LEISURE PERFORMANCE.

Matthew Hopkin, Dan Hicks of SLM and Steve Taylor, the Health and Well-Being Manager, presented the report detailing the Council's working arrangements with SLM and leisure performance.

The Chairman thanked the presenters for an excellent report and invited questions and comments from those present and the following were recorded:

Question / Comment	Response
<u>Marketing and Engagement</u> – Can emails and texts be used to inform residents regarding what is taking place at the Leisure Centres ?	SLM is in the process of developing our social media presence.
<u>Free passes:</u> What has been the uptake with the free passes ? On social media, with groups, do they book weeks ahead?	ACTION: The information will be provided after the meeting.
<u>Re-booking of classes:</u> Do people book weeks ahead in advance and are non-users of social media disadvantaged ?	The Leisure Centres only operate a seven day booking in advance policy, so everyone has the same opportunity to book onto a class.
<u>Badminton Club:</u> A Badminton Club in Lutterworth previously had a 2 hour session pre Covid-19 and post covid, they are only allowed one hour. Could clarification be provided ?	SLM is aware of the situation. Slots have been offered on alternative nights, plus an earlier start time for the 2 hours which the badminton members are not able to take. SLM is currently working with the club to resolve the matter. .
<u>Proposal to lease a building to be used gym in Market Harborough:</u> Could more information be provided ?	Harborough District Commercial Services was involved in that issue, which is a separate legal entity to HDC.
<u>Financial support:</u> How much financial support was given to SLM for the Leisure Centres ?	This is better discussed during consideration of the open book report.

Tom Day, the Service Manager, presented the report detailing the Council's working arrangements SLM and Open Book Accounting.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

As per the provisions of the Council's Constitution Part 4, Section 1, Paragraph 4.2 (Duration of Meetings), it was proposed by Councillor Wood, seconded by Councillor Mahal and voted on that the meeting should continue beyond the three hour time limit to allow the remaining items to be determined.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was lost.

RESOLVED that the meeting be adjourned at 9.30pm and an additional Panel meeting date identified.

The Chairman thanked Tom Day for his report and invited questions and comments from those present and the following were recorded:

Question / Comment	Response
Financial support: How much financial support was given to SLM for the Leisure Centres ?	<p>HDC was successful in securing a National Leisure Recovery Fund (NLRF) grant from Sport England. The total grant for the Council was circa. £160k, a proportion of which supported Broughton Astley Leisure Centre.</p> <p>£140k supported Harborough and Lutterworth Leisure Centres to re-open. In table 1 to the report, deficits have occurred which have been covered by NLRF grants and the Council is in much better position than originally anticipated.</p> <p>There was a management fee in the original contract whereby the Leisure Centres paid HDC £120k per year, however that has been unaffordable and has not been collected during the pandemic. The table now shows that the Council is almost at a breakeven position, with £15k remaining of the NLRF grant, and the Council is working with SLM on this, which will be dependent on the position over the last three months up to December 2021. As a lot of good work has been occurring it is hoped that the final financial position will be very positive.</p>
Financial Information – Is £484k the exact figure required to support SLM.	The Council did all due diligence to ensure the figures were accurate.
Broughton Astley Leisure Centre: How much was the financial assistance to Broughton Astley Leisure Centre ?	£20,000

The Panel NOTED the report.

The Meeting was adjourned at 9.21pm

COMMENCEMENT OF THE ADJOURNED MEETING

MINUTES OF THE ADJOURNED MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

12th April 2022

Commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Rickman (Chairman)

Councillors: Bannister, Knowles, Frenchman and Mahal

Apologies:

Councillors Graves

Absent:

Councillor Mrs Wood

Remotely: Councillor Page

Officers present: Ed. O'Neil, C. Bland, R. Ellis, S. Green, S. Hamilton and C. Mason

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATIONS OF SUBSTITUTION

Apologies were received from Councillor Graves.

DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillors requested the contact list for the registered Housing Providers as agreed at the adjourned meeting of the Panel held on the 17th March.

Councillor Knowles advised that he has not yet received notice that the letter to the Home Office enquiring about the delay in allocating Afghan families to homes already provided in the Harborough District has been sent.

The Chairman agreed to look into these matters.

Post meeting note: The contact details for all registered Providers of Affordable Housing in the Harborough District was sent out to all Councillors on the 13th April 2022.

The letter sent to central Government regarding the Afghan resettlement scheme was provided to Cllr Knowles on 14th April and Members will also be notified via the Members newsletter that this letter has been sent.

2021/22 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING – QUARTER THREE

Carolyn Bland, the Finance Services Manager presented the Scrutiny Panel with the revenue and capital budget monitoring report up to 31st December 2021 for consideration.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from those present and the following were recorded:

Question / Comment	Response
<u>5.2 Underspend</u> Can clarity be provided on the £163,000 underspend. What happens to the money when the three named grants have finished?	The underspend is related to Covid-19 expenditure and any money not used is returned to the government. Table 4.1 to the report covers the details relating to the underspend.
<u>3.2 Leisure Services Contract</u> What was the initial support to SLM and how much did HDC provide during 21/22 ? Did the Council receive any income to offset this spend?	SLM was going to contribute £100k, however due to Covid, an Open Book arrangement was entered into, whereby the Council would fund SLM's costs and SLM would not be able to make any profit. In April 2021, the worst case scenario was £245k cost to the Council however due to an improved position of people using the leisure centres etc the cost to the Council is £10k, s combined with the £100k as detailed above, the total cost to the Council is £110k.
<u>Car parking income:</u> What is the trajectory on the car parking income.	The car parking income went down.
<u>Pay Rise:</u> Can clarification be provided and is the extra National Insurance in the budget?	In the 21/22 budget, the Chancellor announced that there will be zero pay increase for the public sector. The national employer announced that there would be a pay rise, so the Council has funded it. The extra national insurance is covered in the budget.

The Panel NOTED the report.

REPORT 4: PERFORMANCE: QUARTER 3, 2021/22 YEAR

The report was presented to the Panel by Ed O'Neil, the Business Services Manager.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from those present and the following were recorded:

Question / Comment	Response
<u>Empty properties:</u> how many empty properties are there in the Harborough district and what is the strategy for which properties to target and how to target, given the importance of this issue ?	ACTION: The information is available and will be circulated to the Panel. The Council has an empty property strategy which details the relevant processes and interventions to be taken. ACTION: to circulate the briefing provided to the Communities Scrutiny Panel on Empty Property Strategies. ACTION: Comments to be provided to Officers on the briefing.
<u>Interventions relating to the Empty Strategy policy:</u> What is an intervention ?	An intervention is writing a letter, visiting a property. ACTION: Details to be circulated to all Councillors.

Following the discussion, it was;

The report was NOTED.

MATTERS OF SPECIAL URGENCY

None were reported.

The Meeting ended at 7.07pm