

## **ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, 6th February, 2020**

Present:-

Councillor Catt (Chair)

Councillors D Collins  
Dyke  
Coy

Councillors Hollingworth  
Snowdon

\*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

33 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS  
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

No declarations of interest were received.

34 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

35 **CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH & WELLBEING - PRIVATE  
SECTOR HOUSING**

The Private Sector Housing Manager attended the committee meeting and presented a report on the impact of the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy that was launched in March 2019.

The Private Sector Housing team receive complaints from tenants and other agencies concerning private landlords. They set out timetables for repairs and issue fines where appropriate. Four landlords had been prosecuted since the introduction of the policy and a further two were in progress.

The committee heard that there had also been a change in legislation in 2018 regarding Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) requiring landlords to have a license in order to operate an HMO and demand for these had been increasing. The team was receiving increased numbers of enquiries asking for advice on converting existing properties into HMOs.

The team aimed to take a proactive approach to their work, but due to their successes they had received more referrals than ever before. The team responsible for complaint investigation consists of two officers plus the manager and as a result this does mean that there can be a significant waiting time for non-urgent investigations to take place.

The Council has a statutory duty to enforce the legislation and the team had made significant progress, however, the section does need additional resource to support this essential function. Further legislation was expected soon, such as a requirement for landlords to have electrical certificates for their properties.

The Assistant Director for Health and Wellbeing acknowledged that the Private Sector Housing area was growing, in addition to its enforcement duties increasing. There was an awareness of the need to grow and increase capacity and the new policy had provided a very clear approach. A review of the team was underway, to consider possible options and to ensure that the right skills set would be acquired and not just additional personnel.

The Private Sector Housing Manager reinforced the view that the new policy provided a useful framework and was beneficial to the team. It was noted that qualified Environmental Health officers with a housing specialism were particularly difficult to recruit. Discussion took place around whether it was feasible for other housing officers to carry out initial inspections/visits. It was explained that in order to carry out a successful prosecution, should a case reach that stage, then a strict process must be followed from the outset. Any deviation from the necessary protocol could impact the outcome of any legal action. For this reason, the ideal scenario involved qualified environmental health officers being involved at every stage.

The officers were thanked for their information and left the meeting. The committee then discussed the issues that had been raised and the main points are summarised below;

- The committee was acutely aware of the rising number of private landlords, with some residents living in atrocious conditions. Concern was expressed that the council is the first point of call and the service was under-resourced.

- The committee considered whether the outcome of the staffing review should be established before any further recommendations were made.
- The committee agreed that it would strongly recommend an increase in resource as a matter of urgency. The impending additional legislation was highlighted, which would only add to the pressures the team was facing and this would impact on the health and wellbeing of the existing staff.
- The members emphasised that their duty of care was to all residents of the Borough and therefore it was important that this situation be addressed in a timely manner.

### 36 **MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on 5 December, 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 37 **SCRUTINY MONITORING**

The Committee considered the Scrutiny recommendations monitoring schedule.

#### **RESOLVED -**

That the Scrutiny monitoring schedule be noted.

### 38 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan for the four month period 1 February, 2020 to 31 May, 2020 was presented for information.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

### 39 **WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The 2019/20 Work Programme for the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee was reported for information.

**RESOLVED –**

That the work programme be noted and updated to include the decisions of the current meeting.