

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 21st January 2014 at Retford Town Hall

Present:

Councillor J C Shephard (Chairman)

Councillors: B Barker, H Burton, R Carrington-Wilde, D Challinor, G Freeman, J W Ogle, R Leigh, D G Pidwell, D R Pressley and T Taylor.

Officers: G Blenkinsop, J Hamilton and M Hill.
D Allan, C Holt and M Ladyman (for Agenda Item No. 6 only – Empty Homes Initiative).

Also present: Councillor J Evans - Cabinet Member for Finance
Councillor S May – Cabinet Member for Customer and Support Services

(Meeting commenced at 6.30pm.)

(The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and read out the Fire Alarm/Evacuation Procedure).

118. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Rafferty, J Sanger and A Simpson.

119. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

(a) Members

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

(b) Officers

There were no declarations of interest by officers.

120. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17TH DECEMBER 2013

With regard to Minute No. 104, the Corporate Development and Policy Manager reported that the information on Homelessness had been circulated to Members and that the information on Planning Applications had been prepared but was waiting to be signed off by the Planning Manager and would be circulated as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th December 2013 be approved.

121. MINUTES FOR ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

RESOLVED that the Minutes for Action and Implementation be received.

122. OUTSTANDING MINUTES LIST

RESOLVED that the Outstanding Minutes List be received.

(Councillor D G Pidwell joined the meeting at this point.)

123. PRESENTATION: EMPTY HOMES INITIATIVE

C Holt, Housing Strategy and Renewal Manager, and D Allan, Empty Homes Officer, gave a presentation on the Council's Empty Homes Initiative. A copy of the presentation had been included in the Agenda and outlined:

- the Empty Homes Officer's role;
- his successes;
- procedure;
- support for owners;
- the work of Liberata;
- enforcement powers;
- challenges;
- integration of the initiative;
- and case studies.

Maps showing empty properties in Harworth/Bircotes, Retford and Worksop were tabled for Members' information, together with a copy of the New Homes Bonus calculation for the Authority, which shows that, for the 29 properties brought back into use, the Council will receive £159,146 over the next six years.

Elected Members raised issues/asked questions on: Liberata's work; the completion of Council Tax forms; any media strategy; liaison with the Council Tax department; the impact of work to date on other potentially empty property owners; prioritisation; and any future plans after the current 12-month contract terminates.

RESOLVED that:

1. Thanks be recorded to D Allan and C Holt for the informative presentation.
2. Thanks be recorded to the Empty Homes Officer for his successful work to date.
3. The Empty Homes Officer works with the Communications Team to publicise the successful work to date and to make owners aware of what assistance is available.
4. Information on progress of empty homes be given to Ward Members through the monthly Members' Information Bulletin.
5. An update be given to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on further work, towards the end of the Empty Homes Officer's 12-month contract.

Key Decisions

124. KEY DECISIONS OF EXTRAORDINARY CABINET - 7TH JANUARY 2014

(a) The Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2014 (Key Decision No. 388)

The Cabinet Member for Customer and Support Services answered Members' questions on: the current collection rate for Council Tax; measures in place for vulnerable people; and the impact on tenants in rent arrears.

RESOLVED that Minute No. 113(a) of the Extraordinary Cabinet Meeting held on 7th January 2014 be endorsed.

(b) Department for Work and Pensions Co-location (Key Decision No. 418)

RESOLVED that Minute No. 114(a) of the Extraordinary Cabinet Meeting held on 7th January 2014 be endorsed.

(c) Calculation of Council Tax Base 2014/15 (Key Decision No. 397)

RESOLVED that Minute No. 114(b) of the Extraordinary Cabinet Meeting held on 7th January 2014 be endorsed.

(d) Business Rates Budget 2014/15 (Key Decision No. 398)

RESOLVED that Minute No. 114(c) of the Extraordinary Cabinet Meeting held on 7th January 2014 be endorsed.

Other Decisions

125. WAIVE OF CALL-IN/DECISION TAKEN WITHOUT SUFFICIENT NOTICE

None.

126. REFERRAL(S) FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

None.

127. POSSIBLE CALL-IN OF DECISIONS MADE BY CABINET OR BY CABINET MEMBERS

None.

128. REPORT(S) OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

(a) Overview and Scrutiny Committee Programme 2013/14

Members were presented with an overview of the Committee Meeting Programme which was appended to the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

SECTION B – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PRIVATE

Key Decisions

129. KEY DECISIONS OF EXTRAORDINARY CABINET – 7TH JANUARY 2014

None.

Other Decisions

130. WAIVE OF CALL IN/DECISION TAKEN WITHOUT SUFFICIENT NOTICE

None.

131. POSSIBLE CALL IN OF DECISIONS MADE BY CABINET OR BY CABINET MEMBERS

None.

132. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

As there was no other business to be discussed, the Chairman closed the meeting.

(Meeting closed at 7.20pm).