

Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 23 July 2015

Attendance

Members of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Ian Angus (Chair)
Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Philip Bateman
Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal
Cllr Christopher Haynes
Cllr Keith Inston
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr John Rowley
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz
Cllr Andrew Wynne

Employees

Deborah Breedon	Scrutiny Officer
Christine Cole	Waste performance and minimilisation officer
Nick Edwards	Service Director - City Assets
Chris Huddart	Head of Commerce Services
Lesley Williams	Service Manager - Private Sector Housing

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies**
Apologies were submitted on behalf of Cllr Malcolm Gwinnett
- 2 Declarations of interest**
Cllr Ian Angus declared a discloseable pecuniary interest in item 6 on the agenda relating to 'Private Rented Sector Housing' in his capacity of a private rented sector landlord.
- 3 Election of Vice Chair**
Cllr Christopher Hayne was nominated by the Chair and duly seconded by Cllr Andrew Wynne to be Vice-Chair of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel for municipal year 2015-16.

Resolved

That Cllr Christopher Hayne be elected Vice-Chair of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel for municipal year 2015-16

4 **Minutes of the previous meeting (18.3.15)**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18.03.2015 be approved by Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel subject to an amendment on page three (paragraph six) of the draft minutes relating to the number of empty properties across the City. Delete the figure recorded and replace with an accurate number of empty properties.

5 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising

6 **'Rent with confidence' campaign**

Lesley Williams, Service Manager Private Sector Housing and Nick Edwards, Service Director City Assets were in attendance to provide a report and an update on the progress on 'Rent with Confidence' (RwC) proposals to date and to seek the Panels views on the proposals for progressing and implementing the initiative across the City.

Cllr Keith Inston indicated that this was an excellent idea. In response to questions from Cllr Caroline Siarkewicz relating to the star rating, the Service Manager advised that the star rating is about a benchmarking and accreditation process. She advised that the scheme incentivises maintenance of standards and by doing so a high star rating. Good landlords would not be penalised but must maintain standards to keep the higher star rating.

In response to Cllr Lynne Moran the Service Manager advised that there were currently approximately 18,000 lets in Wolverhampton, all private rented, which is about 13% of the total stock. She clarified that Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) need a licence if there are three or more storeys and there are five or more people in occupancy.

Cllr John Rowley indicated there are probably a substantial number of landlords in Blakenhall that are not interested in accreditation, he referred to a recent surge in fly tipping in areas of rented accommodation and some areas are in an appalling state. He indicated many landlords are disinterested in the tenants and he could not see how RwC would relate to these types of landlords. The Service Director assured the Panel that RwC is part of a number of measures relating to the private rented sector (PRS) landlords to work with them to 'educate, encourage and enforce'. The Service Director also advised it gives good landlords recognition which is not something that is currently possible.

Cllr Phil Bateman welcomed the approach; in particular that Wolverhampton will be the first Authority to do this. There were some concerns voiced about the resources ring fenced for this programme, some councillors questioned if these monies could be better utilised in public health services and wanted to know more about the detail of costs relating to RwC scheme. The Service manager explained the Public Health

(PH) funding would fund a range of initiatives to improve PRS including 'Additional Licensing' of all HMOs, RWC scheme and an enforcement review, the aim of the overall package will be to improve health outcomes of residents living in PRS accommodation across the city.

In response to further questions the Service Manager advised all funding sources, existing provision, the PH and that from 'Additional Licensing' will be utilised to address standards on the PR sector including the RWC scheme. Councillors requested further clarification on the resourcing and implementation proposals for the RWC be circulated to the Panel. Cllr Andrew Wynne suggested an element of caution should be observed when taking on a large sphere of activity.

The Service Director clarified that the Public Health funding has been identified to help in part introduce the package of initiatives to improve the standard of the PRS, the environment and the health and wellbeing of residents in Wolverhampton. Cllr Ian Angus, the Chair of the Panel, requested a briefing paper relating to the cost against impact be prepared to be shared with the Panel.

The Chair of the Panel questioned whether 'letting agents' would be included in the RWC scheme and was informed that as of March 2015 letting agents must display their fees and some of the better letting agents would be participating. Cllr Phil Bateman supported the RWC proposals and especially the way Wolverhampton is taking the initiative and being the first to implement this scheme for landlords and letting agents, he said the scheme needs to be progressed as quickly as possible.

The Chair of the Panel thanked the witnesses and agreed the following recommendations:

Resolved

1. That Panel recognise the existing and potential future role of the private rented sector (PRS) in delivering on the housing offer in the City
2. That Panel note the rent with confidence (RWC) proposals and timescales to develop and deliver the resulting strategies and progress made to date
3. That Panel endorse a cross Council approach to the development, support and use of Private Rented Sector (PRS) accommodation
4. That Panel note the public health outcomes and wider impact that a vibrant and appropriately managed Private Rented Sector (PRS) can bring to the City
5. That Panel receive a briefing paper relating to the cost against impact of the rent with confidence (RWC) proposals and other initiatives to improve the City's housing offer

7 **Waste management and minimisation**

Chris Huddart, Head of Service and Christine Cole, Service Manager Waste Management and Minimisation, provided a report and presentation to the Panel detailing the objectives, service configuration, legislative requirements, waste hierarchy, communications and feedback.

In response to questions relating to the problem of contaminated waste the Head of Service advised that between 8 and 10% of recycle waste is contaminated. He outlined the arrangements for the collection crews to record on in cab devices bins that have not been emptied because of contamination. He advised that if contaminated waste is identified the bin will be left at the roadside with a note stating why it has not been emptied. Collection rounds that have high levels of bins that are not collected are visited by an outreach team working to visit households and advise them on the correct use of the bins.

In response to further questions he advised that once a full load is returned to the transport station in Crown Street, some low level contamination can be sorted by tipping the load onto the floor in the loading bay and litter picking takes place by operatives, taking out the obvious contamination. The load can then be reloaded onto larger transport to make its way to the recycling plant. Once the load reaches the plant further decontamination processes are used to pull out contaminated waste. Cllr John Rowley gave credit to Wolverhampton Council for initiating recycling 18 years faster than Birmingham and other neighbouring authorities but questioned the value of the food waste process. The Head of Service advised that the food waste service is currently under review with a team going to Bury Council to see its practice of residual and food waste collection recently introduced. He informed the Panel that the current fleet used for the collection of residual waste and food waste is scheduled to be replaced in 15-18 months' time; consequently a decision on the future collection arrangements for households will need to be confirmed before a new fleet is procured.

The Service Manager advised that the food waste collections are compulsory in Scotland and Wales and that there may be further legislative change to require all Councils to collect food waste, the detail is not yet known.

Cllr Phil Bateman and other Councillors praised the level of service from Amey and response time to queries. Cllr Phil Bateman questioned how many householders were actually participating in the food waste collections and the value of continuing with a service that is currently non-essential. Cllr Haynes voiced some concern that there needs to be certainty that the requirement to collect food waste is not going to become compulsory.

The Head of Service agreed to bring further information back to the Panel in September relating to the food waste process.

The Head of Service acknowledged Cllr John Rowley's concerns about potentially losing the green waste collections, which currently operate for six months of the year and noted the suggestions of Panel to consider other forms of waste collections such as kerbside collections for batteries and electrical waste.

The Panel focused on the leaflets shared as part of the presentation and made the following comments:

- The leaflet could show more recycling matter, it is not showing the full story and could encourage residents to increase resourcefulness
- The leaflets should be pasted to the bin as a visual reminder when emptying waste
- Needs clarity on disposal of cat litter in the leaflet
- Assisted collections for people who cannot manage the bins should be highlighted

The Chair welcomed the opportunity to comment on the draft literature and thanked witnesses for their attendance.

Resolved

1. That the comments of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel on the draft literature are referred to the Head of Waste Management and Minimisation to consider for inclusion in the leaflet
2. That Panel note the current collection arrangements for waste and recycling and the cost disposing household waste generated within the City
3. That a report be included on the work programme for the Panel at its next meeting relating to food waste process

8 **Relocation of Wolverhampton Indoor and Outdoor Market**

Chris Huddart, Head of Service provided a report and presentation to the Panel relating to the proposals for relocation of Wolverhampton indoor and outdoor market to support the delivery strategy for the Westside regeneration project. He explained the current market provision, outlined the options for relocation and provided feedback on the preferred proposed design process and proposed design. He explained that the Panels comments would inform the final proposal in preparation for submission of the planning application on the 18 August 2015 and to commence the tender documents preparation.

The Head of Service advised the Panel that his team were working closely with market traders, indoor and outdoor, to develop one market area and in doing so retain their trade, develop a market website and work on the branding. He highlighted the importance of identifying and meeting the specific needs of market traders, specifically the meat and fish, fruit and vegetable traders and the need to retain the cloth and material traders.

Cllr John Rowley referred to previous market relocation when the plans were to have activity led events in the Market Square which has never really taken off, he asked how the plan for a central space for events in these new proposals would work. The Head of Service advised that the aim would be to look to Public Health and other such organisations to put on displays and information relating to healthy eating with local goods sourced at the market. Cllr Ian Angus, Chair, welcomed the plan plugging in Public Health to healthy ingredients and good value menus.

Cllr John Rowley suggested that the farmers market held in Dudley Street was quite successful and could be made part of the markets offer and looked upon as an opportunity to bring them both together. The Head of Service advised that there was some resistance from traders to merge with the farmers market but that this could be an option to consult with the traders about.

Cllr Bhupinder Ghakal welcomed the cabin design for markets which he has seen in Camden market but asked what measures would be put in place to prevent graffiti and vandalism. The Head of Service advised that it is proposed for CCTV to be linked in to cover the market area and that undercover police operate in the area that are linked by radio to market traders.

Cllr Phil Bateman asked what was proposed to encourage footfall from other more popular markets such as Wednesfield and Bilston. The Head of Service acknowledged the need to increase footfall to the market but clarified the intention is not to pull footfall from other area markets but to make the market in the city centre more vibrant and attractive. He highlighted some of the specialist trade on the

central market such as multicultural spices, fish and materials; he indicated that the customer base is quite distinctive. He added that the markets website can interlink all three markets to highlight where specialist items can be found across Wolverhampton.

In response to questions from the Chair the Head of Service advised that the traders have been mostly satisfied through the consultation and he shared one issue that has now been resolved, relating to the length of the proposed meat stall serving counters. He assured the Panel that the traders individual needs have been addressed in the design planning stage to meet existing needs.

The Head of service clarified that public consultation commenced on the 20 July and advised that on the 22 July 2015 traders and residents of London Place, next to the market square would be invited into the market to see the designs and invite comments.

Resolved

1. That the Panel receive the report and presentation and note the timelines for consultation
2. That the Panel comments and feedback relating to the proposed layout and branding for Wolverhampton Market be included in the consultation feedback

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Termination of meeting

The meeting terminated at 19:21