

MINUTE of MEETING of the SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 22 AUGUST 2017.

Present – Councillors George Paul (Chair), Andrew McGuire, Alison Adamson, Frank Anderson, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Peter Heggie, John McGinty

In Attendance – Jessie Duncan, Alison Kerr and Danny Mullen (Tenants Panel Representatives)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 6 June 2017. The minute was then signed by the Chair.

3. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE LOCAL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an update on the Local Plan Performance for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Services in West Lothian for the period 1 April 2017 to 30 June 2017.

The Panel was informed that SFRS had attended 47 Accidental Dwelling Fires in West Lothian in the reporting period, compared to 31 in the same period in the previous year. An analysis of the types of property and the age group of those involved was contained in the report.

There had been 9 fire casualties in Q1 in 2017/18. The figure was slightly lower than the comparable period in 2016/17.

In relation to 'False Alarms', the Local Senior Officer for Falkirk and West Lothian reported that during Q1, SFRS had attended 448 false alarms compared to 518 in the same quarter in the previous year.

In response to a question raised by a Panel member, SFRS Officers undertook to provide Panel members with the number of incidents in West Lothian (if any) involving 'white goods', together with other relevant information held by the service.

Finally, the Chair informed the Panel of the retirement of Gary Laing, Local Senior Officer for Falkirk and West Lothian. On behalf of the Panel, the Chair recorded his appreciation of the work undertaken by Gary Laing.

The Panel was informed that David Lockhart would replace Gary Laing as the Local Senior Officer for Falkirk and West Lothian.

Decision

To note the terms of the report and to record the Panel's appreciation of the work undertaken by Gary Laing.

4. SCRUTINY OF POLICE SCOTLAND PERFORMANCE IN WEST LOTHIAN

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an update on the performance of Police Scotland in West Lothian for the period 1 April 2017 to 30 June 2017.

The report was presented by Superintendent Craig Smith and Chief Inspector Barry Blair (Local Area Commander for West Lothian).

The report provided statics relating to West Lothian priorities, which were:-

- Priority 1 – Domestic Abuse
- Priority 2 – Anti-social Behaviour
- Priority 3 – Violent Crime
- Priority 4 – Tackling Substance Misuse
- Priority 5 - Making Our Roads Safer
- Priority 6 – Tackling Serious and Organised Crime
- Priority 7 – Drug Supply
- Priority 8 – Tackling Acquisitive Crime

It was noted that, overall, there had been a 4% increase in anti-social behaviour compared to the previous year. The wards experiencing an increase were Bathgate, East Livingston and East Calder, Linlithgow, Livingston North, Fauldhouse & Breich Valley, and Whitburn and Blackburn. There had been 128 more incidents than in the previous year.

In relation to Priority 5, the Panel was informed that there had been one fatality on West Lothian road in the year to date. This was the same level as quarter 1 in the previous year.

The report provided commentary relating to all priority area. In addition, question from Panel members were dealt with by the Local Area Commander.

The Panel was asked to note the contents of the report covering the period 1 April 2017 to 30 June 2017.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

5. REVIEW OF WEST LOTHIAN LOCAL POLICING PLAN 2014-2017

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an update on the review of West Lothian Policing Plan 2014-2017.

The Panel was informed that it was intended that the review would inform the forthcoming local policing plan which was being developed and consulted on.

The report contained an overview of performance in relation to the eight priority areas over the three year period 2014-2017. A baseline figure for data from the 2013/14 year was provided as with each year-end total for years 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 to show the overall impact of the activities undertaken as part of the overall plan.

The Area Commander informed the Panel that it was intended that the forthcoming Policing Plan would mark a decisive shift towards prevention and tackling inequalities with contextual reporting against longer term outcomes.

In response to a question raised, the Local Area Commander undertook to consider how best to bring forward an evaluation of West Lothian Council's funding of additional police officers.

Finally, it was noted that the Draft Policing Plan for 2017-2020 would be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

6. SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD PERFORMANCE AND UPDATE

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services informing the Panel of the quarterly performance information from the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) for the period April 2017 to June 2017.

Appendix 1 to the report contained tables analysing performance under the following headings:

Table 1.1 – New Open Cases Per Ward

Table 1.2 – Current Cases Open

Table 1.3 – Cases Close

Table 1.4 – Noise Nuisance Incidents

Table 1.5 – Number of ASBO's Current in Each Ward to end June 2017

The Panel noted a comment that the number of noise complaints requiring response under Parts II and V of the ASB Act was low in comparison to the number of noise complaints received. Officers undertook to provide Panel members with further details of these figures.

The Panel was asked to note the performance information detailed for the Safer Neighbourhood Team.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

7. TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2017-2021

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services attaching a copy of the Tenant Participation Strategy 2017 – 2021.

The Strategy outlined the different ways tenants could be involved and play an active role in improving services provided by Housing, Customer and Building Services and their partners. Tenant scrutiny was vital to the effective development of services and the council benefitted hugely by using the ideas and opinions of tenants who used the council's services. The Strategy was supported by an annual development plan, agreed in conjunction with tenant representatives.

The Panel was informed that following a review of the 2012-2016 Strategy, a number of amendments and additions for 2017 to 2021 had been considered. A key change in focus related to the way in which tenant participation would aim to engage tenants via digital platforms going forward. The Strategy would also focus on continuing to support existing methods of engagement, while opening new opportunities to increase both the volume and diversity of tenant participation. One-off specific engagements on particular subjects or issues would be a further priority in implementation of the Strategy.

It was recommended that the Panel note and make comment on the draft Tenant Participation Strategy 2017-2021 which was intended to be referred to the Council Executive for approval.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report and that it would be forwarded to the Council Executive for approval.
2. To congratulate West Lothian Council Tenant Participation Team on winning an award at the recent TIS National Excellence Awards 2017 ceremony.
3. To congratulate Danny Mullen on being presented an award for 'Outstanding Contribution to Tenant Participation' at a recent event

held by West Lothian Council.

8. DECORATION SCHEME FOR TENANTS

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services informing Panel members that the current Decoration Scheme was no longer compliant with the Council's procurement framework and that an alternative solution was being proposed to resolve the position.

The report set out a proposal concerning the provision of a Painting Pack as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. The Service would provide new tenants with a paint accessory pack and painting material instead of a monetary voucher.

It was noted that the principle to support a tenant with decorating their tenancy was unchanged. The paint pack provided the tenant with the essential material to assist them. The supplier of the contents of the Painting Pack was compliant with the procurement framework.

The Panel was informed that the average annual budget to administer the current Decoration Scheme was £95,000 which included the production of the monetary voucher by Inprint. There was also housing staff time to administer the scheme checking and processing invoices via Pecos. The report also provided details of the estimated annual budget provision for the Paint Pack.

The benefit to new tenants would mean the painting material would be available immediately for the new tenant at the commencement of the tenancy and tenants would not have to organise/travel to outlets to redeem vouchers. The Paint Pack solution also reduced risk of monetary vouchers being lost/replaced/abused and the Service would be fully compliant with Council standing orders.

The report provided details of research undertaken to establish an alternative approach.

Finally, it was noted that consultation with members of the Tenants Panel, Tenants Working Group, Housing Networks, focus group of new tenants and staff from Housing Management and Building Service had been completed, with members of these groups positively responding to the proposed change from the monetary voucher scheme to the Paint Pack solution.

During discussion, the Panel noted a comment by a Tenants Panel Representative that the Tenants Panel had recommended implementation of such a scheme a number of years earlier.

It was recommended that the Panel:-

Review the report and consider the following recommendations which were intended to be submitted to Council Executive for approval:-

1. To replace the current tenant decoration scheme with a paint pack with effect from October 2017.
2. To report back to a future meeting of the Services for the Community PDSP on the first years operation of the paint pack.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. To note that the report would be forwarded to Council Executive for approval of the recommendations.

9. PROPERTY TURNOVER APRIL TO JUNE 2017

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services informing the Panel of the property turnover for the quarter April to June 2017.

The panel was informed that the number of permanent lets for the period 1 April to 30 June was 267 compared to the same quarter in the previous year when 190 properties were let.

The report provided the following appendices:-

Appendix 1 – Details of All Lets Excluding Assisted Moves

Appendix 2 – Assisted Move Lets

Appendix 3 – Total Housing Stock Per Area

It was recommended that the Panel note the current levels of activity relating to property turnover for the first quarter of 2017/18 and in particular to note:-

- That there had been an increase in property lets compared to the same period in the previous year.
- That of the 47 communities in West Lothian, 8 had only 1 mainstream property to let and 14 had none.
- That 65% of lets had been allocated to people who were homeless or potentially homeless.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

10. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services examining current levels of performance for Housing,

Customer and Building Services indicators that were the responsibility of the Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

The Panel was informed that, of the eight performance indicators, five were categorised as green and 3 were amber. Each indicator displayed the latest note offering an explanation from the service on current performance levels.

Questions raised by Panel members were dealt with by the Performance & Change Manager and the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services. In particular, information was provided concerning the delays in relation to the new build homes at Redhouse site.

It was recommended that the Panel note the current performance on Housing Customer and Building Services key performance indicators and determine if further action or enquiry was necessary.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

11. WORK PLAN 2017

A copy of the Workplan 2017 had been circulated for information.

The Panel was informed that a paper on Homelessness would be scheduled for October 2017. This was as a result of a motion agreed by Full Council on 15 August 2017. The report would be an enhancement of the routine report presented by the Service and would cover the points raised in the motion.

Decision

To note the Workplan.