

MINUTE of MEETING of the SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 26 MAY 2015.

Present – Councillors George Paul (Chair), Harry Cartmill, Frank Anderson, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, John McGinty, John Muir

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

Apologies – Alison Kerr (Tenants Panel Representative)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 21 April 2015. The minute was then signed by the Chair.

3. SCRUTINY OF SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Construction and Building Service providing performance information for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

The report contained information on the SFRS prevention, protection and operational response activities within the West Lothian area during 2014/15. The seven objectives for the local Fire and Rescue Service to work towards were identified in the report and Area Manager Gary Laing amplified aspects of the information contained in the report.

It was noted that during the reporting period, SFRS had delivered a 'Targeted Schools Programme', which focussed on deliberate fire setting and reducing fire related anti-social behaviour. This programme had been delivered to P6 and S1 pupils from the targeted schools. The service had also delivered a Cooldown Crew course for pupils of Bathgate Academy and St Margaret's High School.

The Panel then heard details of the Home Fire Safety Programme visits completed to date. SFRS continued to work with multi-agency partners including social work, housing, NHS and West Lothian Telecare providers in order to target those most vulnerable within West Lothian communities. The service also continued to focus on preventative approaches with partners and continued to improve on the quality and quantity of Home Fire Safety Visits requested and conducted.

Finally, SFRS officers responded to questions raised by Panel members.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

4. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2019

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services providing the Panel with an overview of the Strategic Plan 2016-2019.

The report explained that SFRS was seeking views of others on the priorities of the Strategic Plan and a letter had been drafted that SFRS intended to circulate to relevant key partners, stakeholders and service users. The letter was attached as Appendix 2 to the report. A copy of the Strategic Plan 2013-2016 was also attached as an appendix to the report.

The four key questions posed to assist in the engagement process were:-

1. What are the key strengths of the SFRS?
2. As a local partner what are our shared challenges and opportunities?
3. What do you think SFRS can do to help improve matters at local partnership level or nationally?
4. What really matters to our local communities?

The report provided a draft Council response to each of these four questions.

It was noted that it was the intention to release a draft Strategic Plan for formal consultation between October and December 2015 when stakeholders would be given the opportunity to engage with shaping the work of the SFRS at a local level.

It was recommended that Panel Members note the content of the report and that section D.2 formed the proposed council response to the FRS consultation questions. Members were asked to recommend that the comments be passed for consideration and approval at Council Executive.

The Chair invited comments from Panel members and it was noted that the following comments would be included in the report to the Council Executive:-

Response to Question 4 – Councillor McGinty considered that any reduction in services would be unacceptable to the Council.

Response to Question 3 – Councillor Anderson considered that the Council should explore opportunities to work jointly and in co-operation with SFRS.

Finally, it was noted that the Local Senior Officer (SFRS) would provide a response to a question raised by the Chair concerning the figure of 745,922 (which represented the number of households considered to be 'at risk') as noted on page 10, Appendix 2.

Decision

1. To note the report and the proposed council response to the FRS consultation questions.
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to the Council Executive for approval and that the report should include a note of comments made by Panel members.

5. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT BETWEEN WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL AND POLICE SCOTLAND

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services providing a Service Level Agreement between West Lothian Council and Police Scotland for the Panel's consideration.

The report informed the Panel that the Council provided £785,976 of funding to Police Scotland for the provision of locally based Safer Neighbourhood Police Officers. These officers played a key role to deliver the local agreed priorities and to support local communities.

It was now considered timely and relevant that the Council and Police Scotland develop and agree a revised Service Level Agreement to meet current requirements, specifically around the work to be carried out by the funded police officers.

The revised SLA closely defined the role of the funded police officers, their availability and resourcing. It defined the expectations of the council in relation to partnership working the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team officers, including joint briefing, patrolling, regular sharing of information and it considered community expectations. The SLA outlined the roles of a number of support posts such as the Partnership Analysts, the School Link Officers and Voluntary Sector support.

It was recommended that the Panel consider the contents of the report and agree that the paper be sent to the Council Executive for approval.

Decision

1. To note the report enclosing a Service Level Agreement between WLC and Police Scotland.
2. To agree that, prior to forwarding the report to Council Executive for approval, Panel members be provided with clarification of the terms of the 12 month notice period (paragraph 13.2, SLA page 11).

6. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

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

that were the responsibility of the Services for the Community Development and Scrutiny.

The Panel was informed that, of the nine performance indicators reported, eight were categorised as green and one was red. This was an improved position from the previous report when there were six green and three amber indicators. Each indicator in Appendix 1 displayed the latest note which offered an explanation from the service on current performance levels.

The Panel was asked to note the current performance on Housing, Construction and Building Services key performance indicators and determine if further action or enquiry was necessary.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

7. 2014/15 ANNUAL RETURN ON THE CHARTER

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services advising the Panel on the service's performance against The Annual Return on the Charter, prior to submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator on 31 May 2015.

The Panel was informed that the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) was the vehicle which landlords used to submit the requisite performance information to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The standard Charter indicators allowed effective benchmarking amongst registered social landlords across Scotland. There were eight Charter themes with multiple indicators and contextual indicators and the SHR provided detailed technical guidance to support landlords in calculating these.

The first ARC had been submitted by 31 May 2014 and reported information for the financial year 2013/14. Officers had been collating information in preparation for the submission and Appendix 1 provided the 2014/15 results that would form part of the submission to the SHR. The appendix also provided detail on the comparative results for 2013/14 as well as indication on whether performance had improved, dipped, or remained the same.

The Panel noted that, of the 48 indicators in Appendix 1, 29 had improved from the previous year, 11 had dipped, with some only slightly, six had remained the same and the service was awaiting information to complete two indicators but these would be complete by the 31 May 2015 deadline. For the 11 that had dipped, the service would implement improvement plans during the course of 2015/16. In addition to improvement plans, the service would be in a position to benchmark its 2014/15 results once the SHR published all landlord datasets in August 2015.

The Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services recommended that the Panel note the performance that would form part of the return to

the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. To agree that the Annual Return on the Charter be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator by end May 2015, but subject to a minor amendment as follows:- Court Actions Resulting in Eviction – remove arrow as Panel members did not consider this to be an improvement.
3. To note that two indicators required to be updated as advised by the Performance and Change Manager.

8. PROPERTY TURNOVER JANUARY TO MARCH 2015

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services informing the Panel of the property turnover for the quarter January to March 2015.

Details of all lets and property numbers for the quarter were provided in Appendix 1 and Council Stock figures by Ward were detailed in Appendix 3. Appendix 2 provided details of Assisted Move lets.

The report provided a table showing fifteen communities that had no properties becoming available.

It was recommended that the Panel note the current levels of activity relating to property turnover for the fourth quarter of 2014/15 and in particular:-

- 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, 7 had only 1 mainstream property to let and 15 had none.
- That 58% of lets had been allocated to people who were homeless or potentially homeless.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. WORKPLAN

A copy of the Workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the Workplan.

