



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

19 February 2014

-: Present :-

Councillor Thomas (J) (Chairman)

Councillors Bent, Darling (Vice-Chair), Davies, Hytche, Kingscote, McPhail, Pentney and Stockman

(Also in attendance: The Mayor and Councillors Cowell, James and Thomas (D))

47. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Scouler, one of the Executive Leads who had been invited to attend the meeting.

48. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 29 January 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

49. Allocations Policy - Review and potential changes

The Board considered a report which set out details of a review of the Council's Allocations Policy which had been undertaken in light of the Localism Act 2011 which enabled local authorities to restrict access to their register for social housing. The review aimed to ensure that the Council was providing the best opportunities for local residents and making the most appropriate use of the social housing stock in Torbay.

It was proposed that:

- Band E applicants (those with no housing need) would be removed from the register.
- Applicants who had not bid for 12 months or who had turned down three reasonable offers would be removed from the register.
- A five year residency test (with certain exceptions) would be applied.
- The Council would prioritise working households in areas of high unemployed households.
- An Annual Lettings Plan would be introduced.

The Executive Lead for Spatial Planning, Housing and Energy together with the Director of Children's Services attended the meeting. Members of the Board questioned when the new Housing Strategy for Torbay would be prepared with the Board being informed that this work should start from 1 April 2014.

In considering the proposals, it was noted that, as of October 2013, there were 3101 households on the Torbay Housing Register, of which 1519 were on Band E. A further 554 households across Bands A to D had either never bid or not bid within the year. Therefore, the consequence of applying the proposed criteria would be that 2073 households would be removed with approximately one third of the original total remaining on the Register.

Questions were then raised about whether the Council had the appropriate information about the sizes of homes which were available and being built in Torbay compared with the size of home which was required to meet the needs of households on the Register. It was reported that the proposed Annual Lettings Plan would provide some of this information together with the new Housing Strategy.

Resolved: that Council be recommended to amend the proposed Housing Allocations Policy to include information about the size and type of housing which is required to meet the needs of the households within Torbay.

50. Strategic Agreement between Torbay and Southern Devon Health and Care NHS Trust and Torbay Council

The Director of Adult Services attended the meeting and presented the draft Annual Strategic Agreement between the Council and the Torbay and Southern Devon Health and Care NHS Trust for the delivery of adult social care. The Director explained how the Agreement fitted with the continuing developments with the health and care sector both nationally and locally, such as the emerging Integrated Care Organisation, the Better Care Fund and the Care Bill.

51. Revenue Budget Monitoring 2013/2014 (Quarter 3)

The Board considered a report setting out the projected outturn position of the Council's revenue budget for 2013/2014 as at the end of Quarter 3. It was noted that, whilst the position had improved since the Quarter 2 report, there was still a projected overspend of £1.65 million.

The Vice-chairman of the Board circulated a paper which had been considered at the Council Business Policy Development Group the previous day. It showed that the Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Payments budget was currently underspent by £48,000 and the Crisis Support budget was currently underspent by £360,000. It was confirmed that these underspends had not been taken into account in preparing the budget monitoring report as it was assumed that they would be carried forward into the next year's budget.

Resolved: that it be recommended to the Council that the underspends in the Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Payments and Crisis Support budgets be ringfenced and used to fund a more progressive approach to help the people in most need in our community.

52. Capital Plan Budget Monitoring 2013/2014 (Quarter 3)

The Board considered the Quarter 3 update report on the Council's Capital Investment Plan. It provided high level information on capital expenditure and funding for the year compared with the last budget position reported in December 2013.

Chairman
