

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting - 28 February 2019

Present: P Hogan (Chairman)
Dr W Matthews and D Pepler

Apologies absence: for D Anthony, P Bastiman and M Bezzant

91. MINUTES

The minutes of the Healthy Communities PAG held on 21 November 2018 were approved.

92. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

93. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

There were no reports from Members.

94. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES UPDATE REPORT

The PAG received an update report from the Head of Healthy Communities, which was delivered on his behalf by the Housing Manager, which covered the ongoing work within the service. In particular the following points were noted:-

- Housing allocations – there had been an even spread of lettings over 2018. The extra 40 housing units at Taplow had meant that waiting time performance had improved.
- Homelessness – there were 43 people in temporary accommodation in January 2019. The number of clients specifically in nightly booked accommodation was a 57% reduction on the equivalent number in temporary accommodation 12 months before. This reduction had been achieved despite the decommissioning of the eight former Gerrards Cross Police Houses which were fully vacated in December 2019.
- Housing standards – the extension to the HMO Licensing came into effect from October 2018. To date 15 new licences have been issued for previously unlicensed HMOs that now fell within the new extended HMO definition. Reference was also made to the new pilot for Handy Helpers Scheme to help deliver minor repairs, adaptations and help with day to day tasks to elderly and vulnerable residents in partnership with other District Councils. The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act would come into force from 20 March 2019 which would require all social and private landlords in England to ensure that a property was fit for human habitation at the beginning and through the

duration of the tenancy. If a home does not meet the standard tenants would have the right to take legal action.

Members passed on their congratulations to staff for their work on homelessness and reducing nightly accommodation costs. A Member asked a question about how this Council compared to other Councils. The Housing Manager reported that the direction of travel on the private sector leasing scheme was good but that it was difficult to compare benchmarking information at the moment because of the introduction of the new Homelessness Reduction Act. Some Council's had seen an upturn in applications but it was still too early to say whether this would lead to an increase in the use of temporary accommodation. A review of the impact of the new Act would be undertaken after 12 months.

Members then asked about the impact of the changes in relation to Universal Credit. This had currently not directly impacted on homelessness although some clients in nightly booked temporary accommodation had faced problems with meeting day to day living costs due to reduced Universal Credit awards. L&Q were providing advice to people about how to claim for Universal Credit and to ensure that they get the money they should be due. Information could also be obtained from the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Officers would monitor the situation as it could take some time to see any impact from the legislative changes.

The Housing Manager reported that L&Q had development projects for small plots of land, however this had been impacted by the slow down in the property market. A Member referred to a possible development in her area and the Housing Manager reported that he would discuss this with L&Q.

In answer to a question it was noted that the extension to HMO Licensing related to all social and private landlords. The property would have to meet the standard of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. If the landlord refused to fix any hazards in the property then enforcement action could be taken. However, hazards would not cover issues such as the property being damp, but this was also covered by the Act. Further clarity was being sought over the procedures under this legislation in terms of who carried out assessments. A further question was asked about support to tenants who wanted to take legal action. Advice could be obtained through the normal channels such as Citizen Advice Bureau and also some legal firms were offering advice on a no win no fee basis.

Members referred to the Bath Road Depot and noted that this project had been slightly delayed but was now scheduled for April/May. Regular liaison meetings were taking place with both the builder and the Registered Provider who would be leasing the units from the Council.

There were 40 flats for affordable rent and 20 for shared ownership at Mill Lane Taplow. A Member asked how many units had gone to people over 55 and the Housing Manager reported that he would investigate this.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

95. **BUCKS HOME CHOICE ALLOCATION POLICY**

The PAG received a report on the revised Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy which sought authority from Cabinet and Council on its adoption. The PAG had received a previous report in October 2018 and since then a consultation had taken place on the proposed revisions. The majority of respondents to the consultation were in favour of the proposed revisions with the exception of the proposal that same sex siblings should be expected to share a bedroom until the older child reached the age of 21. Legal advice was also being sought on people with a record of anti-social behaviour and how this should be approached.

Following a question Members noted that as some housing providers did not allow siblings to share rooms at this age the draft policy had been lowered to 18. The policy would be reviewed after six months by a Practitioner's Group. However, if there were any urgent issues relating to the Policy these would be addressed quickly.

Having considered the advice of the PAG the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that the revised Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy be approved and that the Head of Healthy Communities be delegated authority to make any final amendments and to agree and adopt the final version of the revised Policy in consultation with the Healthy Communities Portfolio Holder (subject to Aylesbury Vale Chiltern and Wycombe District Councils also adopting the revised policy).

96. **AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONTRIBUTIONS UPDATE**

The PAG received an update on the position of the Affordable Housing Contributions received by the Council and how they had been utilised. The funds spent to date (£7,976,324) have delivered affordable housing via a range of schemes since 2011 which were listed in the report. Further committed funds of £1,322,122 were currently delivering new temporary accommodation initiatives. Of the total funding, £797 remained uncommitted as these funds were insufficient to support any further initiatives at this time. Members congratulated officers on the use of these funds to help secure affordable housing for residents.

A Member referred to the downsizing scheme and the Housing Manager reported that this scheme had now been brought to a close as there had not been much demand.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

97. **IVER AIR QUALITY ACTION PLANNING - UPDATE**

The PAG was provided with a brief update on the way in which the Air Quality Action Plan for Iver was being developed, the initial source apportionment work that had now been completed and the impact of the new National Clean Air Strategy 2019. Members noted that before opening out the process to other parties, an officer group was looking at existing procedures relating to the new action plan. One of the key steps in developing an action plan was to undertake work on the source apportionment assessment. The two main issues were:-

- The main source of nitrogen dioxide on both Thorney Mill Lane North and South were HGVs
- The main local sources of nitrogen dioxide on Iver High Street were HGVs and Diesel Cars.

A project plan was attached to the report and work was being undertaken with Public Health on this area. There were also opportunities to engage with local schools and residents and working with other partners to try and improve the flow of traffic, consider available options for limiting polluting vehicles, the routing of freight, associated signage improvements, the influence of parking enforcement and the promotion of green travel plans. The Environmental Health Manager also reported on other work on air quality including national and regional projects and the Clean Air Strategy 2019, where there was a focus on the reduction of national emission of pollutants that would in turn reduce background levels e.g cleaner vehicles and smoke control.

A Member asked whether there was an ability to influence plans at regional or national level and whether data sources could be broken down further. It was noted that there was significant Government data available on regional and national issues.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

98. **WORLD WAR ONE COMMEMORATION GRANTS SCHEME**

The PAG was given an overview of the World War One small grants scheme and the projects awarded funding to commemorate this landmark year from the Active Communities Officer. There were seven local projects across the District where £1,250 funding was given. In accordance with the Council's Community and Wellbeing Plan projects were evaluated against a range of criteria including facilitating community participation, linking with young people and working in partnership with others. Members noted that the funding for this project was sourced internally from within the existing Community and Leisure team budget.

Members thanked officers for their work on the Scheme and reported that it had been well received.

The meeting terminated at 7.00 pm