

Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 1 March 2017

Time: 7.00 - 9.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor R Gaffney (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs S Adoh, K Ahmed, Miss S Brown, A D Collingwood, C Etholen, G C Hall, M Harris, A E Hill, M E Knight, D Knights, R Newman, Ms C J Oliver, R Raja and L Wood,

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: H Bull, Mrs L M Clarke OBE and J A Savage

* Denotes Standing Deputy

LOCAL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

APPLICATION

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement and Review Commission held on 11 January 2017, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

35. CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING - UPDATE ON HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

The Cabinet Member for Housing; Councillor Mrs Langley and the Housing Service Manager, Brian Daly were welcomed to the meeting.

It was noted that the recommendations of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Task and Finish Group had been submitted to Cabinet in February 2015. It was reported that since that time the Chairman of the Commission and the Cabinet Member had maintained contact on the work being undertaken on the recommendations. The Cabinet Member confirmed that following the HMO Task and Finish Group recommendations the Government issued a technical discussion paper on extending the mandatory of licensing of houses in multiple occupation. The Governments proposed legislation following the consultation was expected in 2017 however no information had been released.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that a decision had been taken to delay going ahead with the recommendations of the HMO Task and Finish Group until the outcome of the Government legislation was known. There was concern at the

financial impact of any proposed legislation and it was through no fault of the officers or Members that any recommendations had not yet been implemented. The Cabinet Member went on to give her thanks again to all who had taken part in the HMO Task and Finish Group.

Brian Daly then provided an update on any work that had been undertaken regarding the recommendations. He noted the following:

- A Housing Condition Survey would need to be completed when the mandatory licensing of HMO's comes into force in 2017 to enforce the new licensing regime.
- The recommendation for additional licensing may need to be reviewed once the impact of the extension to include all HMOs with 5 persons or more regardless of the number of storeys has been evaluated.
- Due to the Government's proposed mandatory licensing the recommendation regarding a Supplementary Planning Policy would no longer be applicable.
- The Council has considered the potential for additional resources required regarding the extension of the mandatory licence scheme during the budget setting and cost would be met from the Corporate Contingency.
- The requested work up of the detailed scheme regarding the recommendations from Cabinet Members has been superseded by the Governments response to the HMO consultation.

It was noted that no information had been released from the Government regarding the HMO legislation since October 2016. It was expected that the legislation would be confirmed in 2017 but as yet nothing had been received.

Members received clarification on a number of points and noted the following:

- A 'desktop' survey of properties would initially be undertaken using information already held on file by the Council. Then a 'door knocking' exercise could be required to obtain detailed information. Ward Members would also be encouraged to share any information known regarding HMOs in their areas.
- Currently HMOs were considered as 5 or more households in 3 stories or more. It was estimated that there were currently 2,000 HMOs in the district. The Government were expected to change the legislation to include properties less than 3 stories and would also include premises above shops.
- It was suggested that a pilot scheme could be undertaken before the Government released its new legislation however there was uncertainty regarding much a survey would cost with regards to resources.

- Properties with elderly relatives living with families would not be considered as a HMO as figures were based on households rather than individuals.
- Regulations would need to be considered regarding HMO enforcement. It was noted that sub-letting was an issue; however the Council did prosecute landlords if they were found to be sub-letting Council properties. Work would be undertaken with registered providers to meet standards required. Members were encouraged to share any information regarding suspected sub-letting in their areas.
- The Portfolio Advisory Group had considered the questionnaire sent by the Government which had been returned in 2016. Legislation had not yet been received.
- Enforcement was undertaken under the current HMO regulations and action was taken against a landlord if they do not hold a required HMO. Under the proposed Government mandatory licensing regime additional resources may be required.
- It was noted that any funds received from fines regarding licensing enforcement must only be used for licensing/enforcement.
- Landlords would be expected to know any legislation regarding HMOs and guidelines were available. A recent survey had been sent to landlords to make them aware of the legislation changes. However some landlords choose not to be involved. It was noted that if there were any issues regarding homeless households arising from the new legislation then the Council had procedures in place to deal with this matter

The Chairman thanked the Councillor Mrs Langley and Brian Daly for attending the meeting.

It was noted that the Council was waiting for Government legislation to be released however it was suggested that work could begin on a register of HMOs compiled using any 'desktop' information currently on the Council's system. The Cabinet Member for Housing agreed that this course of action would be investigated. Also it was requested that information from Members be fed through to officers on any known HMOs in their areas.

RESOLVED: That the Improvement and Review Commission note the update and actions being taken in relation to the recommendations made by the HMO Task & Finish Group.

36. CABINET MEMBER FOR ICT - UPDATE ON TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet Member for HR, ICT & Customer Services; Councillor D Shakespeare and the Head of HT, ICT & Customer Services: John McMillan were welcomed to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member updated the Commission on projects due for completion in 2017/18 which included:

- Laptop refresh – It was noted that some laptops were over 7 years old and new laptops were expected to be issued to staff during April/May/June with the end date of July 2017.
- Replacement of VDI servers and software – The hardware had been procured and would be installed at the weekend following the meeting. This was earlier than scheduled.
- Replace the Uniform server and application upgrade – It was noted that the Uniform server ran the planning system and the upgrade had been completed in December 2016.
- Upgrade the telephony and introduce Skype for Business – This was on track for completion in July 2017.
- Implementation Office 365 - Members email was scheduled for April/May 2017 and officers scheduled for July 2017. The MS Office upgrade to Office 13 was scheduled for April 2017.
- Upgrade internet capacity - There had been a slight delay regarding pricing however the upgrade was expected within the next few days.

Regarding Members ICT it was reported that some Members wished to work differently and preferred devices dependent on the way they worked. It was reported that a trial was being undertaken providing access to network accounts using iPads using the Horizon View Client and this would provide Members with access to application network drives, outlook etc. It was noted that a joint meeting between the ICT Task and Finish Group and the Portfolio Advisory Group was due to take place on 15 March 2017 to consider recommendations.

Regarding the Council Chamber ICT equipment it was reported that a decision would not be made until consideration of the broader future use of the Chamber was determined.

Mr McMillan confirmed that the lifetime of laptops were able to be lengthened as they were used as 'thin technology', (e.g. the processing power of the laptop was not required), however it was now difficult to obtain spare parts for some of the laptops and were now being replaced.

Members asked a number of questions and received responses from Mr McMillan, which included the following:

- It was noted that iPads had been introduced to Members in 2015 and at the time this seemed the best option. These did need to be connected wirelessly to be able to access the network. Also if required iPads could be used with a Bluetooth keyboard.

- Training had been provided for Members on iPad usage however only six members had attended at the time. Individual training was now offered on a request basis if required. The suggestion regarding offering training sessions in advance of the full Council meeting would be investigated.
- There had been an issue with planning information being accessed. It was reported that the Cabinet Member for Planning had trialled the VRM View Client access on iPad and in his opinion the application had been successful.
- The Uniform server was the most used across councils and providers had been contacted regarding compatibility.
- The Windows 10 platform was a relatively immature product and software products were being developed.
- Three reoccurring problems that had been recorded were dynamic and were fixed at the time the problems occurred.
- Email accessibility on personal devices was possible however PSN security would need to be considered.
- An ICT Strategy had not yet been undertaken however this was planned for the future.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Shakespeare and John McMillian for the update.

It was identified that the Task and Finish Group had finished its work and had come to an end and therefore would need to be reinstated if a further piece of work was required. It was suggested that Councillor Wood chair an ICT Strategy Task and Finish Group to consider the future of ICT over the next 2 to 4 years.

RESOLVED:

- i) That a Task and Finish Group be established under the Chairmanship of Councillor L Wood in respect of ICT Strategy over the next 2 to 4 years with the same membership as the previous task and finish group.
- ii) That the necessary paperwork would be completed to enable this to go onto the Committee's work programme.
- iii) That Councillor Wood arranges a meeting of the new task and finish group and report back to the next meeting.

37. COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME AND CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The status of the current task and finish groups was considered and discussed.

It was noted that training would be taking place in London on 7 March and a space was available if anyone wished to attend.

The **Rural Issues Task and Finish Group** recommendations had been presented to Cabinet and these had been well received.

The **Budget Task and finish Group** recommendations had been accepted almost without exception by Cabinet on 6 February 2017.

A letter had been received from the Cabinet Member for Transport at Bucks County Council regarding the **Handy Cross Traffic Management Task and Finish Group** partnership. It was noted that the offer to undertake a joint scrutiny review had been refused and the Commission would discuss this further at the next meeting in June 2017.

The **Local Plan Task and Finish Group** was due to meet in May 2017 to review the final proposal for the Plan, however it was noted that a further meeting may be required.

It was noted that the **Budget Task and Finish Group** was due to be established in September 2017 to consider the Budget for 2018/19.

Members were encouraged to complete the Work Programme Suggestion Form appended to the agenda (Appendix C) in respect of items they wished to suggest for consideration by the Commission or a Task and Finish Group.

No topics were identified on the attached Cabinet Forward Plan for review by the Commission.

RESOLVED: That the update on the Work Programme and current task and finish groups be noted.

38. INFORMATION SHEETS

The Commission noted the submission of following information sheet:

- 1/2017 ICT Update - Briefing

39. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

There were no Councillor Calls for Action.

40. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman thanked all the Members, especially his Vice Chairman (Cllr Collingwood) and the officers, for their invaluable support and contribution during the Council year. He confirmed that he and Cllr Collingwood would be standing for election as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Commission respectively, next month for another term of office.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Jemma Durkan	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Ian Hunt	- Democratic Services Manager
Catherine Whitehead	- Head of Democratic, Legal & Policy.