

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 3rd July, 2014.

Present:- Councillors Coad, N Holledge, Malik, Mansoor, Plenty, Shah, Sohal and Wright

Non-voting Co-opted Vivianne Royal

Member:

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Sidhu

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Election of Chair

The nomination of Councillor Plenty was moved and seconded. There being no other nominations it was:-

Resolved - That Councillor Plenty be appointed Chair of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2014 – 15.

3. Election of Vice Chair

The nomination of Councillor Wright was moved and seconded. There being no other nominations it was:-

Resolved - That Councillor Wright be appointed Vice Chair of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2014 – 15.

4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 2 April 2014

Resolved – that the minutes of the last meeting held on 2 April 2014 be approved as a correct record.

5. Co-option to the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Resolved – that Vivianne Royal be appointed as a co-opted member of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel.

The Panel also noted that the Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents (referred to in section 5.3 of the report) was now obsolete.

6. Member Questions

Written answers to members' questions were circulated to the members. Members made the following requests for future answers:

- Answers need to be sent to members at least one day prior to the meeting.
- Contact details for the officers responding to questions were required.
- Questions should relate to the work of officers who would attend the next meeting, so that any further questions could be asked directly to them.

7. Voids Contract Performance

Roger Parkin (Director, Customer and Community Services), Julie Pickering (Assistant Director, Commissioning and Procurement) and Paul Blizzard (Interserve) presented the item. Interserve gave a presentation on the work they provide nationally and locally, whilst the report presented to the group as part of the agenda papers investigated the issue of managing vacated properties. This matter ('voids') had been raised by the Panel in January 2014 as an area of particular concern.

The Panel raised the following matters in discussion:

- The Director, Customer and Community Services had recently taken on responsibility for the Interserve contract. Previously this had been held by Housing Regeneration and Resources. The Assistant Director, Commissioning and Procurement had responsibility for challenging any aspects of Interserve provision which required further inspection.
- As part of this, the Assistant Director was investigating best practice at a number of authorities. These were drawn from a range of geographical areas and administrative arrangements (e.g. single tier authorities, County Councils, Town / Parish Councils). Members would be involved in any dialogue arising from the findings, with value for money from contracts and service provision to be a particular focus.
- A campaign to reduce the length of time for which properties were vacated ('Project 20') had been launched in 2014.

(At this point in the meeting, Cllr Sohal left).

- SBC had taken a decision to review contract management of the Interserve contract in September 2013. Pricing was to be a central part of this work, with the Assistant Director to work with Interserve on improving value for money, quality and performance. The contract was historic and included cumulative profit share as part of its arrangements; given this, previous losses still had an impact.
- The threshold for voids work also included an arrangement whereby, as soon as it was exceeded, SBC was liable for the full amount. Interserve are aware of SBC's concerns on this and are reviewing

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ways of mitigating and reducing the councils liability (e.g. earlier voids inspection processes).

- Baseline data would be monitored and shared with the Panel on an ongoing basis.
- The policy on allocations on the councils properties is currently under review. Trevor Costello (Service Charge Manager) is responsible for this matter.
- Performance returns had been received by Interserve on 6 January 2014. These had used for benchmarking, using the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) performance networks which has been established for several years.. Cleaning had been found to be a high performing area, but with a high associated cost. The second benchmarking exercise would start on 1 August 2014, with the information to be shared with the Panel.
- A significant proportion of the work undertaken by Interserve is covered under a fixed fee (rather than payment per task) basis. As a result, duplication should be avoided. Interserve's preference is to repair jobs given the nature of the contract service but could also offer replacements for fixtures and fittings should this be deemed appropriate.
- The next contract (due in April 2016) could feature some significant differences to the current arrangement. Tenants would be involved in the process, and the SBC Procurement Team and Contract Managers may also receive training and support to help them improve their skills in contract management. The input of members would also be sought throughout.
- The awarding of the new contract would feature scoring on customer satisfaction levels as part of the process.
- The Customer and Community Services Team had built the Scrutiny Panel into their Programme Delivery Structure for the new contract.

Resolved:

- 1) That a further update is provided to the panel after the next Voids workshop which is scheduled for mid September 2014.
- 2) That the results of the second benchmarking exercise be shared with the Panel.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer informed the meeting that the item on neighbourhood policing was being planned with Thames Valley Police.

Resolved – that an item on garages be added to agenda for 29 October 2014. The Scrutiny Officer would work with members on the specific focus of this item.

9. Date of Next Meeting - 4 September 2014

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 4 September 2014.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.32 pm and closed at 7.56 pm)