

## MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Board held on Monday, 25 July 2016 in the Council Chamber at Mendip District Council, Shepton Mallet commencing at 6.30 pm.

### COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Steve Henderson (Vice Chair) Eve Berry, Shane Collins, Roy Mackenzie, Graham Noel, John North and Dick Skidmore

### SUBSTITUTES:

Councillor Steve Henderson for Councillor Damon Hooton

### OTHER COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Councillors John Parham, Phillip Ham, Helen Sprawson-White, Peter Bradshaw and Lloyd Hughes.

### OFFICERS:

Stuart Cave

Lead Officer of the Scrutiny Board

Debbie Lambert

Caroline M<sup>c</sup>Cafferty

Jai Vick

Committee Officer

Group Manager Housing

### ALSO PRESENT:

Agenda Item	Subject	Actioned By
1	<b>Chair's Announcements</b>  The Chair explained the procedures in the case of an emergency and asked that all mobile devices be switched to silent. Hearing aid users were asked to switch their devices to position 'T'.	
2	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>  Councillor Damon Hooton was substituted by Councillor Steve Henderson. Councillor Terry Napper.	
3	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>  None.	
4	<b>Public Participation</b>  <b>Items on the agenda:</b>  None.  <b>Items not on the agenda:</b>	

	<p>Mr Neil Howlett had requested to speak on the topic of Local Searches. He said that though staff had worked hard, targets had not been met for 14 months. He added that the average time for a search had been 8 weeks, which had put the Council's performance at the second worst in the country behind Wiltshire Council. He explained that Wiltshire Council's performance had been highlighted in the local press and had improved as a result. He concluded by saying that changes had been promised and had not been forthcoming, and asked when these changes would occur.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mr Howlett for his contribution and said the topic would be considered in by the Scrutiny Board in October 2016.</p>	
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Previous Minutes</b></p> <p>The minutes of the Scrutiny Board meeting held on 16 May 2016 were accepted as an accurate record.</p>	<p><b>Caroline M<sup>c</sup>Cafferty</b></p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Proposed Changes Following Review of Homefinder Somerset Allocations Policy</b></p> <p>The Homefinder Somerset Monitoring Board had reviewed the Homefinder Common Allocations policy in the light of ongoing changes to welfare payments and also in changes to the way in which applicants expressed an interest on properties. The review had taken account of issues raised by Local Authorities and Landlord Partners when administering and applying the Policy. The updated draft policy had been reviewed in detail by Local Authority and Registered Providers (Housing Association and Council Landlords) and had been the subject of a consultation exercise with applicants and stakeholders.</p> <p>Over 1100 applicants responded to the consultation exercise with all proposed changes being supported.</p> <p>The summary of the proposed key policy changes and the reasoning behind each change was provided in the background papers.</p> <p>The Policy Consultation feedback report was provided in the background papers.</p> <p>The Homefinder Somerset Monitoring Board (of which Mendip District Council was a board member) had considered the consultation feedback in detail and had recommended that the proposed changes to the Homefinder Allocations policy be adopted by the five District and Borough Councils.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>The Homefinder Somerset Monitoring Board (of which Mendip District Council is a board member) considered the consultation feedback in detail and recommended that the proposed changes to</p>	<p><b>Jai Vick / Debbie Lambert</b></p>

	<p>the Homefinder Allocations policy be adopted by the five District and Borough Councils.</p>	
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>Performance Management Report Quarter 4 2015/16</b></p> <p>Members had previously been circulated a copy of the report due to the June meeting of Scrutiny being cancelled. Cabinet had considered the item at its meeting of 11 July.</p> <p>This performance report provided an overview of the Council's performance up to the end of Quarter 4 (31 March 2016) in the key areas of business relating to the Strategic Priorities and Delivery Enablers. This report represented the close out of the council's Corporate Plan 2012-2015, which had been superseded by the new Corporate Plan 2015-2019. A new performance management framework was being developed to support the delivery of the new Corporate Plan and the business of the council as a whole.</p> <p>Members were asked to;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider and comment on the information contained within this report, most specifically those areas highlighted as a potential concern under the "Key Messages" section</li> <li>2. Identify any issues or performance exceptions that the committee wished to highlight as a concern to Cabinet</li> <li>3. Where performance exceptions were identified consider whether the proposed actions were adequate to improve performance to the desired level and take actions to address concerns as appropriate.</li> <li>4. Note that this report represented the close out of the objectives which supported the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 2012 to 2015.</li> </ol> <p>It was explained that there were delays to parts of the Local Plan, as government guidance was awaited with regard to housing numbers and affordable housing.</p> <p>Members noted that membership had increased at Wells Leisure Centre, and queried the soundness of Fusion's Business Plan. It was clarified that Fusion had a very sound business plan and were very well financed. Fusion's access to finance provided significant capital investment to enable the delivery of an improvement and refurbishment programme which in turn had led to the increase in membership at Wells. Fusion had a 50 year lease which gave them adequate opportunity to see a return on the investment and there was a plan within the arrangements in the lease for the Council to take back the property in good order should the arrangements with the lease holder become unviable.</p> <p>In response to questions regarding the European Regional Development Fund, it was confirmed that there would be no change until Brexit was negotiated.</p>	<p><b>Lesley Fogerty</b></p>

	<p>In response to questions regarding the Mendip Hub in Wells, it was clarified that a dialogue had been held between them and Mendip District Council, and that as they (the Hub) were solely private sector, it was unlikely that there would be any involvement by the Council with this enterprise. The Lead Officer confirmed that Jenny Pitcher would respond to Members with regard to the discussions which had been held with the Mendip Hub.</p> <p>With regard to Starter Homes, it was clarified that the cap outside of London was £250000.</p> <p>Members discussed Housing for the local aging demographic, and queried the location of one bedroom properties. It was felt that these properties should not be in rural areas.</p> <p>In response to requests for an overview on the progress of the Five Council Procurement plan, it was clarified that as the process was now finalised, the reporting would take a different format. Members were informed that all negotiations had been successful, and that it would be possible to outsource some services sooner than anticipated.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>Members noted the report and its approval by Cabinet on 11 July.</p>	
8	<p><b>Aster Housing Update</b></p> <p>A verbal report was given by Stuart Cave on behalf of Tracy Aarons.</p> <p>Since the agreement by Cabinet to give up the Council's right to a place on the Aster Communities Board, negotiations have been on going with Aster to agree an appropriate legal framework for this to take place.</p> <p>Members will remember that the decision of Cabinet was that they were happy to give the right up as long as a senior member of Aster attended the Scrutiny Board to discuss the activities of Aster, every six months, and that they wished to have a condition inserted in any legal agreement that made clear that the release of the right to nominate would cease should Aster fail to attend Scrutiny.</p> <p>While the Aster director for Somerset is happy with this approach and willing to attend Scrutiny Board to build positive relationships, Aster's legal team have been considering the offer made by the District council and have raised some concerns around the attendance.</p> <p>The Council has advised Aster that this position is non-negotiable and that failure to agree to this means that the right to nominate to the Aster Board will stay in place.</p>	Tracy Aarons

	<p>The Aster Legal Team is currently considering their position and until we hear more from them there will be no change in our position.</p> <p>In response to concerns by Members, the Lead Officer confirmed that the Deputy Chief Executive would provide a further update and clarification to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board</p> <p>Councillor Dick Skidmore proposed that the Scrutiny Board ask that membership on the Aster Board be retained in the absence of an agreement by Aster. This was seconded by Councillor John North.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>That the Scrutiny Board:</p> <p>Ask that membership on the Aster Board be retained in the absence of an agreement by Aster.</p>	
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>Cabinet Minutes</b></p> <p>The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 July 2016 were accepted as an accurate record subject to the following change:</p> <p>Page 4, paragraph 1 – change “three children” to “two children”.</p>	<p><b>Caroline M<sup>c</sup>Cafferty</b></p>
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>Forward Plans</b></p> <p>The Council’s Forward Plan was noted.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Forward Plan was noted.</p> <p>Members requested an opportunity for a public debrief of the 2016 Glastonbury Festival due to the problems which occurred at the Festival including traffic, sewage and litter.</p> <p>The Lead Officer clarified that the annual debrief listed in the Scrutiny forward plan was the appropriate opportunity for Members to ask questions of the festival organisers in relation to relevant issues. Council officers would be undertaking an internal officer brief and liaising with other agencies. It was suggested that if Members had specific issues or had received complaints from residents then the relevant information should be passed on to the Group Manager for Community Health Services as soon as possible.</p> <p>It was clarified the annual Glastonbury debrief meeting would be attended by Directors of the festival.</p>	<p><b>Caroline M<sup>c</sup>Cafferty</b></p>

<b>11</b>	<b>Urgent Business</b>  Councillor Helen Sprawson-White informed Members of an error on the new voter registration forms, and raised concerns that there might be a cost implication for tax payers.  Councillor John North, Chair of the Audit Committee informed Members that this could be raised at the next meeting of the Audit Committee.	
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The meeting finished at approximately 7.25 pm.