

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in Chamber Suites 1 and 2, The Arc, Clowne on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2015 at 1000 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor R. Bowler in the Chair

Councillors R. Heffer, A. Joesbury, D. McGregor, J.E. Smith, E. Stevenson and R. Turner

Also in attendance was Councillor M.J. Ritchie, Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT.

Officers:-

D. Bonsor (Housing Needs Manager), P. Coogan (Housing Innovation Officer), C. Millington (Scrutiny Officer) and A. Brownsword (Governance Officer)

### **0352. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.M. Bowmer, M.G. Crane and C.P. Cooper

### **0353. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business

### **0354. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

### **0355. MINUTES – 27<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2015**

Moved by Councillor R.A. Heffer and seconded by Councillor R. Turner

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of a meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2015 be approved as a true and correct record.

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### **0356. LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE**

Members considered the List of Key Decisions document.

Moved by Councillor J.E. Smith and seconded by Councillor R. Turner

**RESOLVED** that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be considered in Private document be noted.

### **0357. CALL IN OF EXECUTIVE MINUTE NO. 0193 – CHOICE BASED LETTINGS 2015 REVIEW**

The Chair explained that Minute No. 0193 of the Executive held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015, Choice Based Lettings 2015 Review had been Called In by Councillors M.G. Crane and R. Turner who were Members of the Committee.

Councillor Crane was not present at the meeting, but had sent in a statement which was read out by the Chair. It was noted that the item had been Called In due to a procedural error, as the revision of the Allocations Policy included within the report had not been seen by Scrutiny, prior to approval by the Executive. Councillor Turner made no further comment.

The Chair then gave an opportunity for the Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT and Officers to comment. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT noted that the changes made had been based on a previous Scrutiny Review and as such, it had not been felt necessary to re-consult Scrutiny Members. The Housing Needs Manager also explained that the changes had been through the Housing Working Group.

It was noted that the previous Scrutiny Review had been carried out in 2012 and that the Housing Working Group had worked with the Assistant Director of Community Safety and Head of Housing in February and March 2015 to progress the amendments to the Allocations Policy. It was noted that the Housing Working Group was not a formal meeting of the Council.

The Chair then asked if Members of the Committee had any questions.

A question was asked regarding whether three years was too long to bar people from applying for Council housing following surrender of a tenancy and whether there were measures in place to ensure that vulnerable people could access housing.

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The Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT noted that the change was designed to stop those tenants who moved frequently, as this created costs to the Council. Those with genuine need would be referred to the Housing Allocation Review Panel (HARP) which would provide a safety net. The Housing Needs Manager explained that the measure was designed to stop perpetual transfers, but client need would always be taken into account. There was also the option of mutual exchange.

It was noted that there were a range of housing related support programmes which were used to help support Council tenants.

Members noted that the recommendations of the Executive had not been implemented due to the Call In, and had been formulated at the newly formed Housing Working Group, which had been established to look at Hard to Let properties.

Members asked why the telephone and text bidding was not better utilised by clients and the Housing Innovation Officer explained that both options had not been used by applicants as the process was long winded to use and it was felt that it was more cost effective to withdraw the options.

A discussion took place regarding whether the Council should enquire about the amount of savings a prospective tenant had and Members expressed their reservations. The Housing Needs Manager noted that it would be discussed by the newly formed Housing Working Group.

Moved by Councillor J.E. Smith and seconded by Councillor R.A. Heffer

**RESOLVED** that (1) no further action be taken and the recommendations of the Executive be endorsed. The decisions may be implemented immediately,

(2) a reminder be issued to all officers that any new policies or policy alterations/reviews (with the exception of HR policies) must be seen by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee(s) for comment prior to submission to the Executive.

(Housing Needs Manager/Scrutiny Officer)

### 0358. WORK PLAN

The Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee Work Plan was circulated for Members' information.

Moved by Councillor J.E. Smith and seconded by Councillor R. Turner

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

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The formal meeting concluded at 1050 hours and members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 1210 hours.