

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Thursday, 4th July, 2019

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), Councillor Debbie Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joanne Beecham, Michael Chalk, Andrew Fry, Anthony Lovell, Nyear Nazir, Mark Shurmer and Jennifer Wheeler

### Officers:

Jayne Baylis, Sue Hanley, Guy Revans and Judith Willis

### Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and F Mughal

#### 17. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - TENANCY CONDITIONS FOR COUNCIL HOUSING TENANTS AND TENANTS HANDBOOK**

Members considered a report providing an update in respect of proposed changes to the Council's Housing Tenancy Agreement and Conditions. The Housing Services Manager and Head of Community Services highlighted the key areas in the report.

The Conditions of Tenancy detailed the tenant's rights and responsibilities as well as the Council's rights and responsibilities as a landlord. The Committee was informed that the Tenants' Handbook was also being revised which contained more detailed information on managing a tenancy.

The revised agreement and conditions would go out for consultation with tenants and a final report would be presented to the Executive Committee at a later date.

During consideration of this matter the following points were noted:

- The draft document proposed that the landlord would replace any faulty toilet seats. However, Members noted that at Birmingham City Council this was the responsibility of the tenant and it was suggested that this could be a requirement in Redditch too.

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Chair

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- The handbook would provide information to enable tenants to understand the difference between damp and condensation. Members noted that they often received complaints about damp but sometimes this was due to condensation that could be managed before it caused any problems.
- With regards to dealing with tenants who suffered from mental health issues, the Council's Housing Officers worked with Mental Health teams to provide support. The Council's Housing Allocations Policy also took the needs of those with mental health illnesses into account.
- Concerns were raised that it was important for tenants to be informed not just about their rights but also of the need to take their responsibility as tenants seriously and with this in mind Members suggested that the 'Your Rights' section should be renamed 'your rights and responsibilities' Officers explained that the agreement and handbook both stressed both the rights and the responsibilities of the tenant.
- Members expressed the view that it was important for the Council's housing Officers to participate in more community engagement as this would enable them to identify problems in the wards.
- Questions were raised about how the Council would enforce compliance with the conditions detailed in the agreement and handbook. Officers advised that training had recently been received on the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act which provided landlords with a range of enforcement tools and powers.
- Members noted that they had observed untidy gardens and rubbish in gardens whilst in their wards and concerns were raised about the extent to which the Council currently undertook effective enforcement action to resolve these types of issue.
- The proposed agreement stipulated that the tenant had no right to sub-let their property, or rooms in their property, without prior permission from the Council.
- Members suggested that when circulated the handbook should include information about waste and recycling services.
- The Committee thanked officers for their hard work and noted that Officers in the Locality Teams were working hard to support local communities.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

- a) **the tenancy agreement should be amended at paragraph 9.20, to read "park vehicles in areas set aside for emergency vehicles and allocated disable bays";**

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- b) **the Council be more pro-active with enforcement, in particular, with regard to rubbish deposited in gardens, to ensure that gardens are kept tidy; and**
- c) **the 'your rights' section be retitled 'your rights and responsibilities'.**

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm  
and closed at 8.07 pm