

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

MONDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Councillor A Banks (Chair)
Councillors B A Hughes, M M Lovatt, L A Malyon, T McNicol,
C Pearce, T Riley and P Wood.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor M Bowen (Cabinet Support Member)
Councillor A Forrester (Portfolio Holder for Environment)
Councillor B Johnson
Councillor D Ogden (Cabinet Support Member)

APOLOGIES: Councillors K J Jackson and L D Lea.

70 **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

DECIDED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Panel held on the 11th
September 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the
Chair.

71 **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS.**

There were none.

72 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:**

There were none.

73 **QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS.**

There were none.

74 **YOUR HOUSING GROUP - 6 MONTHLY UPDATE & REVIEW.**

The Panel considered a legacy agreement update report and presentation introduced by John Cogbill, Chief Operating Officer and Sharon Wheeler, Operations Manager Moorlands.

In 2017, Moorlands Housing Association transferred its engagements to Arena Housing Group. This meant that governance was undertaken by those members of the YHG Common Board who govern Arena and would now also have a specific oversight and responsibility for the Moorlands.

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A legacy agreement was developed by and for:

- Moorlands Housing Association
- Your Housing Group (YHG)
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC)

The Legacy Agreement was a goodwill agreement between Moorlands Housing Association, YHG and SMDC and sets out the conditions for change to the legal structure.

The report provided a performance and development update on the YHG business areas identified in the legacy agreement.

The presentation covered the follow subject areas:-

- Increase in customers who were economically active due to engagement with YHG activities
- Increase in appeal of local neighbourhoods
- Increase in local services within priority neighbourhoods
- Group procurement purchase power to seek social value returns on all new contracts.

Discussion took place around the tenancy harmonisation project, delays in operational issues and redundancy. The YHG officers gave assurance that existing tenants would not be disadvantaged by the new standardised agreement. A copy of the new tenancy agreement would be distributed to members after the meeting. A procurement exercise had been carried out and an external contractor had been employed to assist with the asset investment programme. In relation to redundancies in the direct labour organisation, the company had received two requests for voluntary retirement.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending the meeting and providing the update.

75 CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU ANNUAL UPDATE.

Individual reports and presentations for Biddulph, Cheadle and Leek Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) were considered by the Panel. Each report contained statistical information and case studies.

Karen Holden, General Advice Services Manager, introduced the update report on behalf of the Biddulph CAB.

During the 2016/17 financial year the bureau dealt with 1,095 enquiries for 1,039 unique clients (clients were only counted once no matter how often they used the bureau system). For clients this was an increase of 20% on the previous year.

The area of welfare benefits (51%) remained by far the highest category of problem in Biddulph. This had probably remained so this year due to the number of housing benefit (HB) applications which they had assisted clients with since SMDC required all claims to be made on line. In Biddulph both the library and the Town Hall gave access to a computer but neither provided any assistance in completing the form. For many who were not IT literate this was not something they could complete on their own. From Jan 2017- March 2017 15 people were assisted to complete HB forms. This was normally not a one off process as clients didn't have all the

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information or proof they needed on the first visit and had to return with those documents to have them added to the application. Completing this form and asking clients questions actually allowed the advisors to find other areas that they may be able to assist the client.

Volunteers contributed approximately 3,948 hours of work for the Biddulph service office during the year. The estimated value of this help was £80,348 in respect of last year (2016/2017).

The second update was provided as a presentation, introduced by Julie Billingham, Chief Officer at the Cheadle CAB which covered the following:-

- Overview
- Case Studies
- Their impact
- Why fixing problems mattered
- Value to society
- How financial value was calculated
- Value to the community
- Volunteers
- The future for CAB

Phil Haddock, Chair of the Leek CAB, introduced the final presentation which included the following subject areas:-

- Who are we?
- Numbers of clients
- Demand for services
- Value for money
- Breakdown of Advice provided
- Training
- Trends
- Case Study

The Chair thanked the officers from the Bureaux for their informative updates.

DECIDED: That the updates be **NOTED**.

76

WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Work Programme for the remainder of 2017/18 and agreed the items listed, subject to an item being added in relation to the potential joint governance of the Police and Fire Service.

DECIDED: That the Panel's Work Programme for 2017/18 be agreed.

The meeting closed at 3.27 am

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_____ Chairman _____ Date