

Regeneration and Housing Scrutiny Review Board

19 November 2019

Present: Councillor Evans (Chair)
Councillors Carr, Pearce, Russell and West

In Attendance: Greg Jennings – Director of Development and Growth
Alan Smith – Head of Economic Growth
Ian Fullagar – Head of Strategic Housing
Karen Brierley – Principal Housing Development Manager
David Enticott – Director and Company Secretary, Derby Homes
Jas Sanghera – Derby Homes
Matt Palmer – Single Point of Entry Manager
James Joyce – Social Housing Options Manager

09/19 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Hassall.

10/19 Late Items

There were no late items.

11/19 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

12/19 Minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

13/19 Impact of Brexit and Support to Business

The Board considered a report and presentation on the impacts on local businesses of the imminent departure of the UK from the European Union and the support on offer to held businesses in the transition period.

The presentation included what East Midlands businesses were saying about how confident they felt about their preparedness if the UK left with a deal or without a deal. It also included what the Council was doing, including, officer led readiness groups, collaboration with partners, prioritising and mitigating internal risks and impacts, signposting and reporting to government.

Members of the Board asked for more detail about what the Council was doing and how those decisions were being made and by whom? It was reported that there was an officer led Brexit Readiness Group and a partner Local Resilience Group.

Members of the Board asked about support to residents, the NHS and university. It was suggested that the relevant officer be requested to provide an update to Councillors at the earliest opportunity.

A Member of the Board asked about the World Trade Organisation terms applying immediately if there was a no deal and if consideration had been given to how the costs of additional tariffs for goods in transit would be covered.

Resolved to request an update to all Councillors at the earliest opportunity on what the Council was doing in readiness for Brexit, including, decision making, risks and mitigation.

14/19 Welfare Reform – Roll Out of Universal Credit Impact on Rent Collection and Rent Arrears

The Board received a presentation on the impact on rent collection and rent arrears due to the roll out of Universal Credit. The presentation included historic and current information in relation to rent arrears, work to avoid evictions, evictions, the welfare reform team and what the Council and Derby Homes were doing to help people.

Members of the Board asked about advice given during the 5 week transition to Universal Credit and if tenants were able to catch up arrears that occurred during that time. It was reported that the Council could apply for direct rent payment once the arrears reached 8 weeks. The DWP would decide the percentage of arrears that could be paid back from Universal Credit. Tenants could ask for rent to be paid direct but they had to request this.

Resolved to note the presentation.

15/19 Housing Issues

The Board received two presentations, one on affordable housing demand and one on affordable housing provision.

The presentation on Affordable Housing Demand included

- the scale of social housing in Derby
- right to buy and replacement homes
- availability of social housing through re-let
- turnover of HRA stock
- impact of rising demand for homeless services since the implementation of the Homeless Reductions Act 2017
- impact on the housing register, temporary accommodation, bed and breakfast
- initiatives to manage demand

- initiatives within Council owned stock
- demand v supply
- rough sleepers

Members of the Board asked if anything could be done to allow people to be accommodated in supported housing if there were vacancies and people were waiting and what the costs were for temporary accommodation. An explanation was given to explain who could be accommodated in which types of property. The cost of temporary accommodation was circa £200 per week.

A Members of the Board asked about the reduction in stock since 1981 and it was reported that Derby had a higher than average no of sales.

The presentation on new approach to affordable housing provision included

- opportunities
- financial viability
- how we do it
- how long it will take

Members of the Board commented that the new approach was welcome.

A Member of the Board asked about parcels of Council owned land which may be able to be used for housing. It was reported that regular meetings took place with the Estates team to identify any parcels of land which may be appropriate.

It was reported that Planning were undertaking a review of open spaces and any surplus would be considered for housing.

A Member of the Board suggested that consideration should be given to getting developers to look at solar panels, rain water capture and bus routes to make homes more affordable. It was reported that Derby Homes were investigating the use of air source heat pumps for new properties and the costs for retro fitting them in older properties.

It was noted the currently the gap between social rents and affordable rents was quite significant.

Resolved to note the presentations.

16/19 Regeneration and Housing Board Topic Review

The Board considered a scoping report for the topic review.

The scoping report and timetable were agreed. It was suggested that the following questions needed to be addressed

- how many homes do we need?
- how many empty homes do we have?
- how much does it cost to build homes?
- can treasury management be used to assist?

- is it possible to buy more homes and renovated them and then resell them to make money?
- can we change the requirements of local plan policy CP7?

Resolved to approve the report with the above questions to be addressed as part of the topic review.

17/19 Remit, Work Programme and Topic Reviews

The Board considered a report which allowed the Board to study its Terms of Reference and Remit for the forthcoming Municipal Year. The report also allowed officers to inform the Board of any key work areas, issues or potential topic review subjects within the service areas for discussion or inclusion in the work programme.

Resolved to approve the work programme for 2019/20.

18/19 Items Referred from the Executive Scrutiny Board

There were no items referred from the Executive Scrutiny Board.

MINUTES END