MINUTES OF HOUSING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY TASK GROUP

22 FEBRUARY 2011

PRESENT:

Councillors Mahoney (Chairman), Cranham, Lewis, Mrs New, Mrs O’Rourke, Srivastava and Miss Watts.

Liz Dunlop (Operational Housing Manager), Paul Ansell (Scrutiny Officer) and Claire Waleczek (Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer (Team Leader)).

7. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2011 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs New declared a general personal interest by virtue of being an employee of Warwickshire County Council.

9. FEEDBACK ON THE DRAFT HOUSING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY FROM TENANTS READERS’ PANEL AND ESTATES MANAGEMENTS SERVICE USER GROUP

The Task Group considered feedback from the Tenants Readers’ Panel (agenda item 4) with regard to the draft Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Task Group.

Five members of the Panel had submitted responses. The Task Group was concerned at the low response from the Panel and the lack of diversity in the religious and ethnic breakdown of the respondents. The Operational Housing Manager informed the Task Group that there were approximately 70 representatives on the Tenants Readers’ Panel. The representation was a ‘best fit’ of the tenant profile, including disability, age, race, religion and sexual orientation. The Housing team had worked hard to secure this representation. However, it was unfortunate if representatives did not return responses to the draft Policy.

The Task Group agreed that it could not draw any conclusions from such a small number of responses. The Operational Housing Manager would investigate the number of representatives consulted, together with the breakdown of tenant profile match and inform members of the Task Group by e-mail.

10. ASSESSMENT OF THE DRAFT HOUSING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY AGAINST THE RESPECT STANDARD

The Task Group considered a table showing the self assessment against the Respect Standard (agenda item 5).
The Operational Housing Manager briefed the Task Group on the actions and self assessment evidence in the table. The following additional points were made.

**Commitment 1**

- Value for money was difficult to demonstrate with regard to anti-social behaviour as it was subjective.
- Links would be maintained with the Chartered Institute of Housing ASB team to continue to promote best practice and consider new approaches where appropriate.
- Details of the Local Offers scheme would be circulated to members of the Task Group for information.
- More robust tenancy conditions had been implemented in July 2010 which had given tenants clearer expectations.
- The Council had strong working relationships and links with other agencies involved in anti-social behaviour cases.

**Commitment 2**

- The Council was continuing to improve links with young tenants and young people. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to engage younger people although the Community Safety Wardens had good links with them through their work.
- Any tenant evictions secured as a result of anti-social behaviour were publicised in Tenants Times to give a clear message of what constituted unacceptable behaviour in Council housing stock. Tenants Times was currently published quarterly although this might change as a result of outcomes from an end-to-end service review.
- Many young people involved in anti-social behaviour enrolled on the Council’s Positive Futures programme. This focused them in a more appropriate manner and there had been positive outcomes for some young people.
- Overslade had in the past been the worst area for anti-social behaviour. However, partnership working with Overslade Residents’ Association had seen the area improved and a large reduction in ASB cases.

**Commitment 3**

- It was emphasised that the mediation service used by the Council was currently free of charge.
- It was noted that there were different procedures for fly tipping for Council owned land and private land.

**Commitment 4**

- It was acknowledged that attendance at court for complainants of anti-social behaviour cases could be intimidating. Any complainants attending court were automatically offered advice on procedure at court and were also offered the services of Victim Support. If necessary, housing officers would attend and support the complainant too. The Task Group requested that this information be included in the self assessment document.
Commitment 5

- Further training had been given to staff on the Council's case management system. The Task Group queried if there was a policy on the retention of personal data and minutes of meetings detailing anti-social behaviour cases. The storage and retention of information was a council-wide issue which the Communications team was currently dealing with. The Operational Housing Manager would discuss this issue with officers and e-mail members of the Task Group accordingly.

The Task Group had general concerns regarding potential funding cuts to key services which could have implications for anti-social behaviour case procedures. It was requested that if any subsequent reductions in funding (for example in community policing) had a significant impact on services, the Council's Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy be reviewed immediately.

11. BUSINESS FOR NEXT MEETING

The Task Group considered that, subject to minor amendments and proposals discussed at previous meetings, the draft Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy was a robust document.

The Scrutiny Officer informed the Task Group that, procedurally, its review report should be submitted to the Crime and Disorder Committee. However, the Committee was not scheduled to meet until June 2011. He suggested that, in order to avoid excessive delay, he could seek the agreement of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the report to be submitted direct to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Board instead. The review report would then be submitted to Cabinet as part of the review of the policy. The Operational Housing Manager reported that there was no particular urgency, and the review of the policy was not yet in the Council's Forward Plan. It was therefore agreed to submit the report of the review to the Crime and Disorder Committee on 22 June after all.

It was agreed that the format of the report need not necessarily be in the usual review report format and could be a simple report to the committee.

It was agreed that no further meetings of the Task Group would be required. The draft review report would be circulated to all members of the Task Group for their comments.

CHAIRMAN