

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

10 June 2024

-: Present :-

Councillors Atiya-Alla, Brook, Carter, Fellows, Fox, Long, Barbara Lewis, Twelves and Virdee

(Also in attendance: Councillors Tyerman, Bye, Chris Lewis, David Thomas and Jacqueline Thomas)

1. Election of Chairman/woman

Councillor Carter was elected as Chairwoman for the meeting.

2. Apologies

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Independent Group and the Conservative Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillors Atiya-Alla and Barbara Lewis in place of Councillors Cowell and Strang respectively.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 8 May 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairwoman.

4. Call-In of Cabinet's Decision on Next Steps Properties at Ryan Place

The Board had before it details of a call-in by five Members of the Council of the decision of the Cabinet regarding Next Steps properties at Ryan Place. The Call-in Promoter, Councillor Long explained his reasons for the call-in as set out in the submitted call-in notice. Councillor Long advised the Board that he was supportive of the Next Steps scheme, which had been mainly successful and in which he had been involved as a Cabinet Member at the time the decision was made in 2020. However, he outlined specific concerns raised about the lack of recording of incidents with the Police and unclear communications between the Registered Landlord, the tenants and the Police. Councillor Long and the call-in Supporters sought assurance that similar issues would not occur when the new properties were purchased following the sale of the two properties at Ryan Place. The call-in also sought assurance that relationships with Homes England had not been impacted for future housing projects.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance, Councillor Tyerman, reminded the Board that he was not a Councillor in 2020/2021 and was not involved in the original decision-making process or any informal meetings that may have taken place

between the previous Administration and Councillor Officers. However from what he was aware there had been frictions between the Next Steps residents at Ryan Place and existing residents as soon as the properties were occupied and accepted that there had been some challenges between the Registered Landlord, tenants and the Police. Councillor Tyerman assured Members that the purchase and management of replacement properties would be conducted in a different manner taking into account the location of the properties and the impact on the community using the wider experience of Senior Officers from the Council working with the Cabinet Member to ensure that he was able to raise any concerns which may not otherwise be identified.

The Chief Executive, Anne-Marie Bond, highlighted the importance of the context of the time the original decision was made towards the end of 2020 when the country was in the middle of Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns took place during that period. The Government expected the Council to identify properties quickly in order to allocate the money awarded to specific properties. Mrs Bond advised that it was clear now that whilst Ryan Place was not formally a retirement block the demographics were of a more mature cohort of individuals and that the mix of tenants in the block should have been a greater consideration. A Sensitive Letting Policy was adopted for Ryan Place following issues identified, however in retrospect, this should have been in place from the very beginning.

Resolved:

That no further action be taken in respect of the call-in of the Cabinet's decision on Next Steps Properties at Ryan Place.

Chairwoman