



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

26 November 2014

-: Present :-

Councillor Thomas (J) (Chairman)

Councillors Bent, Darling (Vice-Chair), Davies, Hytche, Kingscote, Pountney, Stockman and Tyerman

(Also in attendance: The Mayor and Councillors Cowell, Excell, Lewis, McPhail and Thomas (D))

29. Apologies

It was reported that in accordance with the wishes of the Liberal Democrat group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillor Pountney in place of Councillor Pentney.

30. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Board held on 16 and 22 November 2014 and the adjourned meeting of the Board also held on 22 November 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

31. Homelessness and Housing in Torbay

The Chairman welcomed Nick Pannell, John Hamblin and Rachel Sanders to the meeting. Mr Pannell, Mr Hamblin and Ms Sanders each addressed the Board on the current situation in relation to the Leonard Stocks Centre at Factory Row, Torquay.

The Board was reminded that the Council had agreed to reduce its funding to the Centre from 1 April 2014 with transitional funding made available for the 2014/2015 financial year. Whilst funding was available until the end of the current financial year, the Board heard that redundancy notices would need to be issued to the staff within the next three weeks. The Board heard of the potential impact on other Council services and other agencies within Torbay, in particular the police and hospital.

The Board was told how the Centre was more than a hostel as it provided a range of opportunities including employment training. The Centre worked with other organisations to assist people getting to a stable state when they were in crisis. Whilst the Centre had been seeking alternative solutions and were working with Council officers, it would take time to identify creative solutions.

The Executive Member with responsibility for housing also attended the meeting and explained that the numbers of rough sleepers in Torbay was on the increase. He explained that the Leonard Stocks Centre currently carried out the Council's legal duty in relation to bad weather. The Executive Members for Adult Social Care and for Health and Wellbeing were also present and explained how housing issues crossed into their portfolios as well.

The Board questioned the development of the Council's Housing Strategy and it was noted that it was envisaged that the Strategy would be made up of a suite of documents including the Local Plan, the Allocations Policy and Homelessness Strategy. The document that had currently been prepared and was before the Board for consideration would form the basis of a conversation with a range of agencies about preventing people from entering acute services.

The Mayor attended the meeting along with the Executive Director of Operations and Finance who both responded to the points being made in relation to the Leonard Stocks Centre, the decommissioning of Supporting People Services and the proposed Housing Strategy.

Resolved: (i) that a report be prepared for the Mayor capturing the Board's findings including:

- Redundancy notices are due to be issued to staff at the Leonard Stocks Centre if an immediate solution was not found
- A long term, sustainable solution for the future of the Centre is required – a further year of transitional funding is not an option
- Closure of the Leonard Stocks Centre is not an option
- The social and financial consequences of closing the Centre are unimaginable
- The Council must be able to make a rough estimate of the cost of losing the service especially in terms of homelessness

(ii) that the Board notes with concern the Mayor's disparaging comments in relation to social housing but believes that the Housing Strategy should be more robust in this respect.

(Note 1: Prior to consideration of the item in Minute 31, the Chairman declared a personal interest as a director of Shekinah.)

(Note 2: During consideration of the item in Minute 31, the press and public were formally excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the item involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).)

32. Revenue Budget Monitoring Quarter 2

The Board considered the revenue budget monitoring report which showed, as at Quarter 2, a projected overspend of £1.6 million. The Board asked questions in relation to the Children's Services budget, the reasoning behind the apparent slippage in collection Business Rates and the projected overspend in Adult Social Care.

33. Capital Investment Plan Update 2014/15 Quarter 2

The Board considered the Capital Plan Monitoring Report for Quarter 2 of the 2014/2015 financial year. Questions were raised about the velodrome project and the re-phasing of £900,000 of affordable housing schemes.

34. Corporate Plan - Update

Consideration of this item was deferred to a future date.

Chairman
