

Service Plan Member Panel

5th December 2012

Present: Cllrs Mrs Arnold (Chair), Leytham, Salter and Mrs Tranter (part)

Apologies: Cllrs Mrs Allsopp, Mrs Bacon, Mrs Evans, Isaacs and Warfield

In attendance: Cllr Pritchard, Helen Spearey, Clive Gibbins and Tim Matthews

Housing Service Plan : key issues discussed

1. We are currently able to fulfil the Purpose of the Service as set out in the Service Plan but it is acknowledged that the Council's budget is likely to come under considerable pressure again and this may have an impact on capacity and performance.
2. Even when functions of the service are not statutory e.g. maintaining the UChoose Housing Register, they still support the statutory duties of the Council.
3. The health and wellbeing agenda is becoming more prominent owing to the transfer of public health to local government and the establishment of fund holding Clinical Commissioning Groups; GPs can be reluctant to share information but all partners have a common interest in identifying and supporting vulnerable people.
4. There is a 'moving feast' of standards and expectations e.g. depth of insulation. The District benefits from good housing stock but poor quality housing still exists
5. The quality of private sector housing can be problematic. Security of tenure is not assured and complaints made by tenants can result in a notice to quit. Housing standards are inspected by environmental health.
6. Service charges for rented accommodation can be very high.
7. Occupancy levels in the temporary accommodation have fallen in recent months and can lead to LDC being liable to pay Bromford for void loss. However, this is a better value for money option than paying for hotel accommodation. No homelessness had arisen as a result of the recent flooding incidents in the District but we have provided support in the past.
8. Future capital funding for disabled facilities grants is likely to be under increasing pressure and going forward there is greater risk of waiting lists. We will need to seek alternative sources of funding to augment our own resources, including from the health service and from registered housing providers.
9. More use is being made of private sector accommodation; a report will be taken to Cabinet to agree criteria for suitability when offering this type of accommodation or order to discharge our homelessness duties

Environmental Health : key issues discussed

1. Noted that activity on licensing has increased considerably with the introduction of Public Event Licenses; the fee doesn't cover the cost of issuing the license but this is a statutory duty so we are required to undertake the function
2. Dirty premises (e.g. linked to hoarding) have increased and can be very resource intensive to resolve.
3. The incidence of noise nuisance has increased; more pubs are holding events in marquees outside of the premises which can cause issues for neighbours.
4. Member involvement in major emergencies / civil contingencies was considered.
5. The approach of the environmental health team to regulating businesses was commended for being supportive rather than punitive
6. Despite the new charging regime for pest control services, satisfaction levels are still high (90%).
7. Kennelling is accessed at Stoke (owing to high demand on more local facility). We pay £8/night for kennelling cost which is recharged to owners if located.
8. A new risk is emerging in relation to charges; we cannot make a profit on the charges we levy and will be reviewing our current practice.