LICENSING, APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing, Appeals and Complaints Committee of South Norfolk Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Wednesday 1 November 2017 at 2.30 pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors D Goldson (Chairman), V Bell, M Dewsbury, P Hardy and A Pond

Officers in Attendance: Mr L Parker – Solicitor nplaw, the Housing Options Senior Case Advisor (D Neville) and the Housing Options Officer (M Walker)

642 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended).

643 REVIEW OF HOUSING DECISION

(The appellant was not in attendance).

The Chairman welcomed the housing officers to the meeting. The Housing Options Senior Case Advisor advised the Panel that he had not heard from either the appellant or Shelter since papers had been dispatched so the reasons for neither attending the review were unknown. The Panel agreed that, because it had been made clear to all parties that the review would still proceed if the appellant did not attend, they would conduct the review in their absence.

The Housing Options Senior Case Adviser and the Housing Options Officer outlined the Council’s case and advised the Panel of the events leading to their decision that the appellant had intentionally made herself homeless.

Members considered the written submission from Shelter and noted the two key points raised as the basis of the review, as follows:

1. The support offered at the time by Solo was not sufficient for the appellant’s needs; and

2. The decision failed to make adequate enquiries and failed to consider relevant factors, namely the extent of the appellant’s diagnosis of borderline emotionally unstable personality disorder and the effect that the condition had on her ability to engage with the support offered by Solo.
In response to the first point, the Housing Options Senior Case Adviser advised the Panel that he felt that the level of help offered by Solo was sufficient but that Solo had reported that the appellant had chosen only to engage in the support available “on and off”. The appellant had reported that when she lived in Halesworth and then in Thetford, she had not been ready to engage with the support on offer to deal with her substance use issues. The appellant knew how to access support if she wanted to and she recognised that her use of drugs was what led to her eviction from her former address in Thetford.

In response to the second point, officers clarified that the written submission received from Shelter on 4 October 2017 had been sent before the Housing Options Senior Case Adviser’s report had been prepared and therefore did not take into account all of the evidence contained therein relating to the extent of the enquiries made into the appellant’s mental health issues and the impact of these on her ability to engage with the support offered by Solo. Officers stated that they were aware of the appellant’s diagnosis and had taken this into account when determining that she had priority need. The Housing Options Senior Case Adviser advised the Panel that he did not agree that officers had failed to make adequate inquiries and, if anything, he felt that they had gone beyond the levels of investigation required in such cases. In response to a question regarding whether the Council had paid for a report from the appellant’s GP, officers stated that, as the appellant was not receiving any medication, they considered that the evidence obtained from the mental health team, as contained in the report, was more relevant in assessing the appellant’s mental health issues.

After responding to a number of questions, officers left the meeting whilst the application was determined. They were then re-admitted and the Chairman announced the decision. It was then:

**RESOLVED:** that, considering the written correspondence from the appellant and the written submission from Shelter, together with evidence from the Council’s officers, the Panel concluded that the Council had reached the correct decision that the appellant had made herself intentionally homeless.

(The meeting closed at 3.10pm)

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Chairman