Housing and Public Health Policy Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing and Public Health Policy Committee of South Norfolk Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 9 June 2014 at 9.30am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors L Neal (Chairman), N Legg (for part of the meeting), T Palmer, K Smith and G Walden

Apologies: Councillors S Thomson and N Ward

Substitutes: Councillor D Bills (for part of the meeting) for N Ward

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Y Bendle

Officers in Attendance: The Housing & Public Health Manager (M Swann), the Housing Standards Manager (T Cooke), the Housing Enabling & Strategy Officer (K Mitchell) and the Housing & Public Health Partnerships Officer (K Gallagher)

Others in attendance: Tig Armstrong (Project Manager - Green Deal) and one politics student attending to observe the meeting.

36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following member declared an ‘other’ interest in the matter listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minute No.</th>
<th>Councillor</th>
<th>Reason for Declaration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39 &amp; 41</td>
<td>T Palmer</td>
<td>Board Member of Saffron</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 20 January 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising from Minute no 27, members were advised that an extension until 30 April 2014 had been made to the deadline for bids for funding from the Homes and Communities Agency and an announcement of the outcome was expected in mid-July 2014.

Arising from Minute no 31, members were advised that the Better Care Plan had been submitted to the Government and officers were awaiting feedback. It was suggested that
there were concerns nationally that the aims and outcomes of the Plan would not be met if some of the funding was being used to underpin other services.

38 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman distributed copies of the Heath & Wellbeing Strategy 2014-17, advising members that the document encompassed comments from the Housing and Public Health Policy Committee. The Housing and Public Health Manager stated that the Strategy had been considered and accepted by Cabinet and was also available on the website.

39 POSITIVE OUTCOMES

a. Affordable Housing
The Housing Enabling and Strategy Officer advised members that 174 affordable homes had been completed in South Norfolk during 2013/14, 119 of which had been through Section 106 Agreements. The Committee was informed that a target of 200 completed affordable homes had been set for 2014/15.

The Housing and Public Health Manager commented that statistically, 2.3 jobs were generated from each home built and the overall delivery so far of 592 affordable homes meant that 1360 jobs had been created. He added that there was a £97,000 investment for each home which meant an inward investment for the district of £55M which not only provided the community with affordable housing but also added value to the economy.

b. Empty Homes
The Housing Standards Manager advised members that the total number of known, long-term, empty homes brought back into use in 2013/14 was 77 – almost three times the set target. The engagement of the Policy Committee had been followed by improved performance. He informed members that a forced market sale of a property in the District had recently been completed following a lengthy legal process. The Committee was advised that the Council had received £1.15M in Empty Homes Bonus monies and £0.1M in additional Council Tax over a six-year period, half of which had been obtained since the involvement of the Housing and Public Health Policy Committee. Members agreed that the campaign had been successful and were pleased that the Council’s proactive approach had produced positive results.

c. Enforced Market Sale
The Housing Standards Manager gave details of a forced market sale (as detailed in 39b above) in Harleston which highlighted the range of measures the Council was prepared to implement to secure outcomes that benefit the local community.

d. Homelessness Prevention Figures
The Housing and Public Health Manager provided members with an update on the Homeless Prevention Figures, advising the Committee that since the Housing Options procedure had been reviewed to provide a more generic service, the service to customers had greatly improved and the number of homelessness cases had decreased due to an increased emphasis on tackling issues early to prevent homelessness situations arising. Members were advised that 304 homelessness cases had been prevented in the last year.
and that although there had been an increase in demand and pressure, there had not been 
an increase in homelessness and that repeat homelessness remained an issue of the past.

The Committee was advised that the Council’s success in decreasing the Homelessness 
figures in South Norfolk was due to ensuring there was a mixed supply of affordable 
housing in the district, managing the demand well, and taking early steps to help people to 
not lose their homes. Members were informed that the next challenge was to deliver 
outcomes for customers which extended ‘beyond housing’.

e. **Gypsy & Traveller Transit Site**
The Housing Standards Manager gave details of the gypsy and traveller transit site which 
had been opened in Bawburgh which had been well received by residents. Members 
commented that the site was attractive and spacious, and hoped it would be well used.

f. **Independent Living Targets/ Figures**
The Housing and Public Health Manager updated members on the targets and figures for 
Independent Living in the district. He was pleased to advise that the target for the year had 
been to help 1500 people to achieve independent living and that the actual figure met had 
been 1585. The Committee was informed that the figure set for the next year was 1800 
people. Members were pleased that early benefits were already arising from the Health and 
Wellbeing Strategy.

g. **Help to Buy**
The Housing Enabling & Strategy Officer provided members with a brief overview of the 
Government’s Help to Buy Scheme which had been introduced 15 months ago. He advised 
that the scheme had proven to be a great success in the District with 176 purchasers using 
the scheme in South Norfolk and added that the economic growth taking place in South 
Norfolk was helping to make this outcome possible.

The Committee agreed that many positive outcomes had been noted and that there had 
been a marked shift in performance due to the work of officers in close collaboration with 
the Housing and Public Health Policy Committee. Members commended officers for their 
hard work and proactive thinking, and a service which was helping to secure much broader 
outcomes.

**GREEN DEAL FUNDING**

Tig Armstrong, the Project Manager for Green Deal, advised members that South Norfolk 
Council, Broadland District Council and Norwich City Council had worked in partnership and 
successfully bid for almost £1.45M of Green Deal funding. One third of the funding would 
be utilised in the South Norfolk District to benefit local people.

The Committee was informed that an action plan would be produced followed by a 
communications plan (which would include the role of members) and an outcome of 200 
small scale heating improvements would be secured. It was advised that priority areas 
would be Wymondham, Diss, Costessey, Harleston and Earsham, based on issues such as 
fuel poverty and excess winter deaths, and that show houses would be developed in the 
district.
Mr Armstrong explained that there would be a further delivery of 133 solid wall insulations from the Home Improvement Fund (a separate funding stream).

Members were made aware of the key challenge to make links to wider agencies, for example: a total of £100,000 would be spent on Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) training to optimise benefits of the Green Deal to local businesses. In addition, the Early Help agenda would provide a valuable contribution to help those families most in need.

Tig Armstrong gave an overview of Green Deal Funding, explaining that the scheme nationally was not yet delivering the results which had originally been expected. The Committee was informed of how the Government was planning to incentivise the scheme, not just through funding but by completing projects locally to increase public awareness and understanding of the aims and objectives of Green Deal, which would enable the scheme to gain momentum. Mr Armstrong explained that work was being undertaken to simplify the scheme to enable more public understanding, with the intention to engage with local people and increase public awareness.

Concerns were raised that the public perception was one of apprehension nationally, and that people were naturally suspicious of something appearing to be ‘too good to be true’. It was agreed that in order to gain a more positive perception, it would be necessary for work to be completed as a demonstration of the authenticity of the scheme, for community groups to be consulted and engaged in the scheme, and for advertising to take place to increase public awareness.

41 HOME OPTIONS SCHEME UPDATE

The Housing & Public Health Manager advised the Committee that a meeting with Saffron Housing had taken place to address issues raised by Cllr Palmer at a previous meeting of the Housing & Public Health Policy Committee. He informed members that a ten point action plan had been produced to increase customer awareness, and that three more points had been added to advertise the scheme further to people who had previously been reluctant to join the housing register.

Cllr Palmer informed the Committee that he was pleased with the level of communication between the Council and Saffron Housing and the outcomes being secured.

42 THE GOLD STANDARD CHALLENGE

The Housing & Public Health Partnerships Officer provided members with an overview of the Communities and Local Government’s (CLG) Gold Standard Challenge for Homelessness. The Committee was advised of the ten steps that councils must take before they could be assessed against the ten challenges to achieve the Gold Standard, and that the Council had been successful in forming a Diagnostic Peer Review (DPR) Group with three other local authorities; Norwich City Council, Waveney District Council and Nottingham City Council. Officers advised that South Norfolk Council had been the first of the group to be reviewed and was currently awaiting feedback from the DPR.

The Housing & Public Health Manager informed the Committee that informal feedback received from partners at the CLG had been positive.
43. **FIT FOR BUSINESS, FIT FOR LIFE**

The Housing & Public Health Partnerships Officer gave a verbal presentation to members on Fit for Business, Fit for Life, a project which sought to engage 20 local businesses in using tools already in existence to help improve the health of their employees. She explained how the Council was working with other partners, including Active Norfolk, and local employers to tackle issues including exercise, health and non-smoking with the intention that dealing with such issues would improve productivity and work absenteeism.

The Committee was advised that officers were working closely with the three leisure centres and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and that returns from Active Norfolk had already shown a positive impact, the results of which would be made available on CORVU in the future.

Members noted that a key action on the Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy was being progressed and were interested in receiving further progress reports.

44. **UPDATE ON STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT**

The Housing Enabling & Strategy Officer provided members with a verbal update on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. He advised that all authorities in Norfolk and Suffolk had been approached for their interest in the assessment and that both Breckland District Council and North Norfolk Council had joined in April 2014, bringing the total to five authorities which would be used as a basis for research.

The Committee was informed that the projected population beyond 2030 was a vital factor in calculating future housing requirements. Officers advised that figures would be produced by the end of September 2014, signed off by Cabinet in October 2014 and published on each of the five websites.

45. **CURRENT HOUSING INTELLIGENCE**

The Housing Enabling & Strategy Officer presented the Committee with a Current Housing Intelligence document which sought to advise them of up to date key details about housing supply, provision and need in South Norfolk. She advised members that the document was in the public domain and that officers would continue to update the information.

Members agreed that it was useful to have a document which collated all of the key information in one document and showed how the different strands of work interlocked.

46. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Members noted the date of the next formal meeting to be held on 10 November 2014.

The meeting closed at 11.33am

-----------------------------------------------------------------------

Chairman