

## **Housing Services Cabinet Committee**

**Wednesday, 3 July 2019**

**7.30 pm**

### **Present:**

Cllr Jenny Wallace (Chair)  
Cllr Christina Rolles (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:       Leslie Pearton  
                          Peter Scollard  
                          Dakota Dibben  
                          Colin Caller  
                          Lyn Milner  
                          Frank Wardle  
                          Aaron Elliott  
                          Gary Harding

**Note:** Councillor:       Baljit Hayre was also in attendance

Wale Adetoro           Assistant Director (Housing)  
Daniel Killian         Assistant Director (Operations)  
Roy Catling            Asset Manager (Operations)  
Lauren Wallis         Committee Services Officer (minutes)

### **1. Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Leslie Hoskins and Cllr Aaron Elliott attended as his substitute.

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Diane Marsh and Cllr Gary Harding attended as her substitute.

### **2. Introduction from the Chair**

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and inviting those present to introduced themselves, to name their ward and to explain their responsibilities.

### **3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Cabinet Committee held on Wednesday, 13 February 2019 were signed by the Chair.

### **4. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**5. To consider whether any items in Part A of the agenda should be considered in private or those (if any) in Part B in public.**

None.

**6. Reflection on Member Training on Housing - Verbal Update**

The Chair advised that the training document from the Introduction to Housing Training delivered to Members the previous evening had been made available to all Councillors.

The Assistant Director (Housing) gave a brief overview of the training which had been attended by most members of the Housing Services Cabinet Committee. The training had covered the work of the different teams that made up the Council's Housing Service. The Housing Operation Manager (Needs and Improvements) had talked about homelessness services and the impact of the change to the legislation on the Council which had taken place in the last financial year.

The Chair strongly recommended that Members read all the training documents and phone or email officers with any questions they may have.

**7. Overview of the Housing Repairs Service - Verbal Update**

At the training the Assistant Director (Operations) gave an overview of the housing responsive repairs service along with the asset management service. This included details repair and maintenance responsibilities of tenants and what the Council's responsibilities were as a landlord. Some detail was also given on the planned and major work programmes and the lifecycle of components that the Council will replace within a house / building. Members had also been informed of key contacts within DSO Building Management and some of the service improvements the team had achieved in the in the last few years.

Thanks were offered by Members for the quick responses of the repair teams involved to issues reported to them despite the huge workload.

Following a question on different forms of communication, the Committee was advised that the majority of reports receive regarding a repair were done so by telephone. However, the public could report repairs via an online form and it was proposed that this be expanded to involve a diagnostic tool, the ability to book and reschedule appointments and a self-help guide. Residents could also email the service. It was noted that the demographic of the Borough (and nationally) was getting older so communications needs would change and increase.

**8. Draft Asset Management Policies**

The Assistant Director (Operations) introduced the policies advising that the endorsement of the Housing Services Cabinet Committee was sought in relation to the draft Asset Management Policies listed below:

- Asbestos Policy & Management Plan
- Construction & Maintenance Safety Policy & Management Plan
- Fire Safety Policy & Management Plan
- Gas Safety Policy & Management Plan
- Lift Maintenance Policy & Management Plan
- Water Hygiene Policy and Scheme of Control for Legionella Bacteria

The policies had been created and developed in the last 18 months to ensure compliance with regulatory and legislative requirements.

The Asset Manager advised that there had been many changes at Brookvale over the last 2 to 3 years including the introduction of new policies, procedures and working practices primarily to ensure the health and safety of residents and Council staff.

Following a general question raised in relation to the Council's powers to police privately owned businesses and properties with regard to asbestos and fire safety etc, Members were advised that within the scope of this Committee, only Council-owned HRA stock was included. Building Regulations also applied to the private sector but this was not the responsibility of the Council.

Members noted that the Council had one type of sheltered accommodation (Supported Housing) in the Borough.

#### Asbestos Policy & Management Plan

Members were advised that annual inspections were undertaken together with a survey of any areas that were being renewed or replaced i.e. kitchens, and all information was shared with contractors. However, it was noted that the incidence of asbestos was slowly reducing since the introduction of the ban on its use in 1999.

It was noted that asbestos could remain hidden in the human body for 20 to 30 years and the ban on the use of asbestos was very welcome.

#### Construction & Maintenance Safety Policy & Management Plan

This Plan involved health and safety project planning, before, during and after construction.

#### Fire Safety Policy & Management Plan

This Plan had recently been submitted to the Council's Management Team and there had been a great deal of discussion with regard to the Hackitt report in relation to the Grenfell Tower fire. The consultation document ran to 198 pages and contained 122 questions for consultees to respond to. Gravesham was the only local authority in Kent that had retro fitted sprinklers in two Council-owned blocks of flats. Work was ongoing in high-rise and therefore high risk buildings.

Officers were thanked for their pro-active approach to high-rise buildings and it was noted that building regulations do not require sprinklers to be fitted to these properties.

Gas Safety Policy & Management Plan

This plan included gas installation, repairs and maintenance. Members were advised that the performance of this service had been 100% compliant 24 months in a row.

Lift Maintenance Policy & Management Plan

There were 24 lifts and 150 stair lifts in the Council's portfolio. Zurich Municipal, the Council's insurers undertook bi-annual checks as did the Council's approved servicing contractor.

Water Hygiene Policy and Scheme of Control for Legionella Bacteria

The Committee was advised that this was in relation to stored water in blocks and properties.

It was agreed that the above listed Asset Management Policies be recommended for approval by Cabinet

**Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 8.01 pm