

## NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 8 February 2017 from 14.01 - 15.54**

#### **Membership**

##### Present

Councillor Brian Parbutt (Chair)  
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Leslie Ayoola  
Councillor Azad Choudhry  
Beverley Frost  
Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim  
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora  
Councillor Glyn Jenkins  
Councillor Sue Johnson  
Councillor Neghat Khan  
Councillor Ginny Klein  
Councillor Anne Peach

##### Absent

Councillor Josh Cook  
Councillor Georgina Culley  
(substituted by Councillor Andrew Rule)  
Councillor Pat Ferguson

#### **Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:**

Councillor Sam Webster - Portfolio Holder for Education, Employment and Skills  
David Hobbs - Operations Manager for HMO Team  
Graham de Max - Housing Strategy and Partnership Manager  
Kate Morris - Governance Officer  
Lorraine Raynor - Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards  
Laura Wilson - Senior Governance Officer

#### **44 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Josh Cook - work  
Councillor Georgina Culley - personal  
Councillor Pat Ferguson - personal

#### **45 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

#### **46 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 January 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**47 DISCUSSION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS**

Councillor Sam Webster, Portfolio Holder for Education, Employment and Skills, gave a presentation updating the Committee on the progress of achieving the priorities within his portfolio. Alongside comments and questions from the Committee the following points were highlighted:

- (a) two of the 5 key objectives set out in the Council Plan 2015-2019 fall within this portfolio;
- (b) the first key objective is to ensure every child in Nottingham is taught in a school judged good or outstanding by OFSTED and, although the Council is short of the 90% target at 81.4%, there has been improvement as the baseline was 60.6% in May 2015;
- (c) there have been no adverse OFSTED inspections since May 2015 with all schools either remaining stable or improving, and Nottingham City has the highest proportion of outstanding schools in the region;
- (d) there is a risk that due to the changes in OFSTED inspection standards around outcomes that this improving trend may slow as schools can no longer be rated good or outstanding if their outcomes are below the required level;
- (e) there are 12 or 13 schools which have academised since the last round of OFSTED inspections and, as such, currently have no rating;
- (f) it is still unclear if the Council's statutory duty to improve schools extends to academies and free schools. The amount of Education Services Grant that they Council receives for statutory duties has been reduced, but the Council does have an Education Improvement Team that works with maintained schools. Academies can choose to buy the services from the Team, but most academies choose to seek improvement services within their own trust, or from other sources. The Council's fees for this service are competitive and many academies do buy back other services from the Council;
- (g) school admissions are increasingly complex. Only 42% of schools in Nottingham City are maintained schools and have their admissions criteria set by the Council. Academies set their own admissions criteria and follow guidelines set out by the government. Their admissions criteria may differ to those at schools maintained by the Council;
- (h) admissions appeals services are bought back from the Council by many academies and the low rate of appeals success indicates that the admissions authorities are making sound decisions;
- (i) another priority is to give a choice of places for every child at a local primary school, and to achieve this the Council has invested £42million in creating 4000 new school places across the city. 92% of children were allocated their first or second choice school for first admission in September 2016;

- (j) there is still an issue of placement availability when a child moves to a different area within the city as schools are increasingly taking on full Reception classes. This means that for a space to become available for children moving into the area a child has to leave the school;
- (k) the National Audit Office indicated that mainstream schools will be expected to make £3billion in efficiency savings by 2019/20. Teaching unions have estimated that this will mean between £22million and £25million cuts in real terms, taking into account the reallocation of school funding through the new national funding formula;
- (l) special schools, pupil referral units, and children with special educational needs and disabilities in mainstream schools should not be affected by the funding cuts as their funding is separate
- (m) the Council has increased places at special schools from 449 to 517;
- (n) although still below the national average, Nottingham's percentage of young people achieving good GCSE grades in English and Maths has increased;
- (o) there has been national coverage about low levels of literacy, and reading is an issue in primary school test results. The Small Steps Big Changes programme is focusing on literacy for children, as well as the Dolly Parton Imagination Library;
- (p) the second key objective from the Council Plan 2015/19 is to guarantee a job, training place, or further education place for every 18-24 year old. This is to ensure that unemployment does not become a lifelong issue. All opportunities are using the Nottingham Jobs branding to make them recognisable;
- (q) work is also done to secure jobs, training or education for older people, but this is predominantly through the Department for Work and Pensions, as it isn't a statutory Council function;
- (r) the Step Into Work programme works in local areas with community organisations and has engaged 1,005 young people to date. 341 of these are now in employment, 640 are being supported into employment, and 24 have disengaged. The programme is supported by a Board which monitors its progress and is working on how to engage those young people who are more difficult to reach;
- (s) Nottingham City currently has the fastest falling unemployment rate in the UK, and the rate of young people not in education or employment (NEET) is the best of all the core cities;
- (t) the unemployment rate is calculated using the numbers of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance, however, with the shift to Universal Credit this figure does not take into account those people claiming the Employment Support Allowance. This is a national issue so comparisons with other cities are still valid;

- (u) the employment programmes are reliant on European Union funding and this funding may be cut in the coming years. Business leaders will have to lobby the government to ensure that funding from central government covers the gap;
- (v) job and career advice are offered through Futures Advice, Skills and Employment This also carries the Nottingham Job logo to make the employment campaign easily recognisable;

Beverley Frost, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Advocate, submitted a paper containing information and questions for Councillor Sam Webster to respond to outside of the meeting, which was circulated with the minutes.

**RESOLVED to thank Councillor Sam Webster for his attendance.**

Councillor Neghat Khan left the meeting prior to discussion on the next item due to her role as Executive Assistant for Housing.

#### **48 THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR IN NOTTINGHAM**

Graham de Max, Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager, and Lorraine Raynor, Chief Environmental Health and Safer Housing Officer, introduced a report on the Private Rented Sector in Nottingham. Alongside questions and comments from the Committee the following points were made:

- (a) information from the 2011 census showed that 22% of people in Nottingham lived within the Private Rented Sector (PRS). Research has shown that this figure rose to 32% in 2016;
- (b) this increase is reflected nationally and the number of people living within the PRS has been steadily increasing for the last 10 years;
- (c) there are three accepted reasons for the continued increase:
  - lack of growth in social housing;
  - increase in buy to let properties;
  - home ownership being increasingly out of reach;
- (d) the key areas in Nottingham where PRS properties lie are the older more central areas and student areas;
- (e) recent government policy has signalled a shift to level the playing field between people buying to let and buying to occupy. Tax reliefs on buy to let mortgages were removed and additional stamp duty was applied to buy to let property prices;
- (f) there is also a move to increasing regulation in the PRS, including proposals to extend the scope of mandatory licensing;
- (g) the Council commissioned a survey of PRS housing from the Building Research Establishment. Some key findings were:
  - PRS properties are twice as likely to experience disrepair as those that are owner occupied;

- there is a higher percentage of Health and Housing Safety Rating System Category 1 hazards for the PRS (21%) than owner occupier (18%);
  - areas with higher proportion of PRS properties are more than twice as likely to experience issues with disrepair, and 1.5 times more likely to experience excess cold;
- (h) data from the Council shows that two thirds of complaints about property disrepair or poor standards received are attributed to the PRS that are not homes of multiple occupancy (HMO);
- (i) using rent as a proxy for demand, it can be seen that demand for PRS properties is good in Nottingham. The City has the some of the highest rent rates in the East Midlands;
- (j) there are approximately 50,000 students in Nottingham City and the expansion of purpose built student accommodation has had a positive impact on the PRS. It has alleviated some of the pressures in the high demand areas;
- (k) there is currently no specific policy or funding around purpose built group housing for disabled students. Traditionally properties are adapted to suit the needs of the resident;
- (l) an energy performance certificate is being made mandatory for all PRS properties. The grading runs from A to G (A being the highest and G being the lowest) and by 2020 all properties must reach at least grade E in order to be rented;
- (m) feedback from landlords around all of the changes above indicates that there is a lot of work needed on a lot of properties to bring them to sufficient standard;
- (n) PRS properties are an important part of the housing market in Nottingham City. As such, the Council is working to raise the standards of the properties available. The Safer Housing Team works on improving housing quality, from advice to tenants and landlords to enforcement, licensing and accreditation;
- (o) alongside the mandatory licensing of HMOs with 3 storeys or more with 5 or more occupiers, the Council is running a discretionary scheme of additional licensing which began on 1 January 2014 and runs until 31 December 2018 which licences HMOs of 2 storeys or more with 3 or more occupiers. This additional scheme has received 2,300 licence applications. There have been 2 prosecutions associated with the additional licensing;
- (p) the Council is currently consulting on a proposal to introduce a city wide selective licencing scheme for all PRS homes. This would bring 35,000 homes into the licensing scheme. The selective licensing scheme will offer protection to tenants and support and advice to landlords, as well as enforcement;
- (q) the Council works to secure accreditation for properties with Decent and Safe Homes (DASH) for non-student homes and Unipol for student homes, to make up the minimum standard for homes across Nottingham, known as the

Nottingham Standard. To date 2,500 properties, or 6% of properties, are covered. Membership of this scheme is voluntary;

- (r) the Nottingham Private Rented Assistance Scheme (NPRAS) allows the Council to use the PRS in order to prevent homelessness. The scheme assists both tenants and landlords and offers a range of incentives and support packages to landlords;
- (s) there has been a citywide Article 4 Direction in place since 2012 to control the growth of HMO's, and any conversions from a family property to an HMO requires planning permission;
- (t) Nottingham City Homes currently has 33 properties within its PRS market, and it plans on having 100 properties by March 2018. It will bring high standards of management and maintenance to its PRS stock and aims to become a positive influence on the sector.

**RESOLVED to thank Graham de Max and Lorraine Raynor for their report and presentation.**

#### **49 WORK PROGRAMME**

Laura Wilson, Senior Governance Officer, introduced the report setting out the programme of activity for this Committee and the Review Panels for 2016/2017.

**RESOLVED to agree the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Review Panels for 2016/17.**