

CABINET

2 December 2013

Present:

Mayor Dorothy Thornhill	(Strategic partnerships/external relationships and community safety)
Cllr D Scudder	(Deputy Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Strategy & Client Services.
Cllr Crout	(Community & Customer Services Portfolio Holder)
Cllr Sharpe	(Regeneration & Development Portfolio Holder)
Cllr Watkin	(Democracy & Governance Portfolio Holder)

Also present:

Councillors Bell, Khan and Turmaine

Officers:

- Managing Director
- Head of Democracy & Governance
- Head of Community & Customer Services
- Head of Corporate Strategy & Client Services
- Facilities Management Section Head
- Transport & Infrastructure Section Head
- Corporate & External Communications Section Head
- Client Manager – Waste & recycling
- Traffic Engineer – Regeneration & Development
- Democratic Services Manager

45 WATFORD COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST

Cabinet received the final report of the Watford Community Housing Trust Task Group and the Trust's initial response to the recommendations.

The Mayor opened the discussion by commenting on the improvements made in scrutiny generally and the fact that it was finally beginning to make a difference. She invited Councillor Khan, Chair of the Task Group, to introduce the report.

Councillor Khan explained that the task group had operated on a non political basis and all councillors had taken an active part. The review had been resident led using different methods of interaction and resulting in good levels of feedback.

Whilst it was accepted that the Trust did very good work across Watford, residents considered that there were some areas needing improvement including communication, service charges, repairs and performance. Some responses to the recommendations had

already been received from the Trust and some changes made. The Chair and Chief Executive of the Trust would also be attending the meeting of the Task Group in January.

In response to a question from Councillor Crout regarding the type and level of consultation, Councillor Khan said they had emailed chairs of residents' associations, knocked on doors and carried out surveys. They had then identified emerging patterns in the results.

Councillor Crout commented that the feedback had not been included in the report and the Mayor asked whether they had taken account of the Trust's own consultation. Councillor Khan explained that they had looked at the Trust's Key Performance Indicators and priorities. The Trust had, in fact, thanked the Task Group for some of the additional issues it had identified. In response to a further comment by Councillor Crout regarding the Trust's community involvement, Councillor Khan said that the Task Group's view was that the Trust should be giving greater priority to the management of buildings, including quality of repairs and satisfaction levels and also to Landlord elements.

Councillor Crout asked how the Trust saw its relationship with councillors. Councillor Khan responded that there was currently a working relationship but it needed to be developed into more of a partnership. His view was that it was sometimes seen as adversarial. Councillor Crout endorsed this view and said that it would be interesting to hear the views of the Chief Executive and Chairman when they attended the meeting in January.

The Mayor added that residents should only come to councillors as a last resort who would then act as advocates and champions on their behalf. She advised Councillor Crout to pick up residual issues with Councillor Khan and that the situation be kept under regular review. She added that more use should also be made of the Council's Members on the Trust Board.

Councillor Crout asked Councillor Khan to convey his thanks to the Task Group for a carrying out a thorough review.

RESOLVED

1. that Cabinet's comments be noted and conveyed back to Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
2. that the recommendations in the report be endorsed.

ACTION: Committee & Scrutiny Officer