

Homes Policy Development Group Chairmans Report 2016/2017

This past year has seen the PDG dealing with a very varied range of subjects in our meetings.

As well as our usual continuing updating of Housing Department policies we have spent a lot of time discussing both in committee and working group the need for MDDC to get involved in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme, it wasn't, I don't think, a difficult task to make the initial decision to try to help these people who have suffered so much trauma, on moral grounds this was a must.

But we then had to get our heads around the nitty gritty of how the scheme would work in our very rural area and we also needed to satisfy ourselves that by being part of the scheme the normal day to day work of the Housing Service would be adversely affected by officer time being drawn away from an already stretched service.

I think we have put forward a balanced decision which will hopefully bring some comfort to the refugees that find themselves in our beautiful district.

As with all departments of our Authority the Housing Service find themselves having to do more and more with less income, the government 1% rent reduction strategy will have a major impact on our financial situation and will mean ongoing challenges to provide the excellent service that our tenants receive especially from our repairs service headed up by Mark Baglow.

As a committee we were able to pay a visit to our maintenance depot where a very comprehensive tour of the facility was carried out which I am sure was extremely useful to the committee members who attended and I think it brought to our attention the problems that our repair service face day by day.

I wish to extend a heartfelt thanks to all our repair staff who on a daily basis are the face of Mid Devon in the eyes of our tenants, it is always pleasing to see the praise that is often recorded for the good work that is done for our tenants.

And now I move to the Housing officers who have for yet another year proved to be invaluable to us, their dedication has made sure that as an Authority we are ranked amongst the best in the land. Their efforts in making sure that our rent arrears are at a constantly low level is a credit to this Council, they diligently pursue outstanding rents and seem to have found a very successful formula for rent collection, well done.

MDDC are in the process of building more affordable homes to try to help some many people who find themselves in need of local authority housing, as we are all aware the scheme at Palmerston Park in Tiverton has suffered some setbacks but I am confident that in the not too distant future we will see these houses being occupied.

We must strive to bring forward more affordable homes in our district which I know has a high priority with both the Cabinet Member for Housing and also our Head of Housing,

May I take this opportunity to thank them both for their dedication and forward thinking and also for the ongoing advice and sound judgement they bring to our meetings.

Whilst on the subject of thanks it would be remiss of me not to extend a very heartfelt thanks to all the members of the PDG who have turned up to our meetings and have taken part in the discussions.

Once again this past year has seen a lot of work carried out by our Tenants Together Group who are very dedicated to their tasks, thank you very much. Their work has not gone unnoticed and they were shortlisted for an award from TPAS, sadly they didn't get "the Oscar" this time (or was there a muddle up with the envelopes?) but I am sure their dedication and hard work will be rewarded in years to come, thank you all.

In the next couple of years I think our housing service will face some very tough challenges brought about by ever changing regulations, customer expectations and last but far from least financial restrictions but I am sure that as in the past they will rally around and produce a service we as members can be proud of.

Finally can I extend special thanks to our committee clerk Sarah Lees for her

dedication, help and advice that is always delivered with a smile and in a thoughtful way, thank you Sarah.

Peter Heal

Chairman Homes Policy Development Group.