19. Public Question Time

There were no public questions submitted under this item.

20. Apologies for Absence and Attendance of Substitute Members

There were no apologies for absence.

21. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

22. Minutes of the last meeting

Resolved that

(1) the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2017 be confirmed as a correct record

(2) (with reference to Minute 12 of those Minutes) an amendment be made to Annex 3 of Appendix A (‘Freeholders and Leaseholders Decant Policy’) on page A59 Section 2 (‘Resolution’) (first sentence) to delete the word ‘Cabinet’ from the following phrase ‘…the case for a CPO being presented to the Council's Cabinet for decision’ so that it reads ‘…the case for a CPO being presented to the Council for decision..’ – as this more correctly reflects the governance arrangements of this Council.

Voting - unanimous
23. Designation of a borough wide Additional House in Multiple Occupation Scheme

The Council’s current ‘Additional House in Multiple Occupation Licensing (AHMOL) Scheme’ (the purpose of which is to tackle the problems associated with poor management and inadequate conditions in smaller houses in multiple occupation) ends in December 2017. The Sub-Committee considered a report proposing that the Council re-designates its current AHMOL Scheme as is, ie to cover:

- all HMOs occupied by at least five people who do not form a single household, regardless of storey height, and
- all HMOs that are three or more storeys in height and occupied by three or more unrelated individuals.

It is a legal requirement to carry out a consultation exercise before designating an area for additional licensing. The Council it has complied with its statutory duty to consult and has acted in accordance with guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The results of the consultation are summarised within the report with full details found in Annexes 1-8 of the report.

Should an Additional HMO Licensing Scheme be agreed, the Housing Act 2004 states that the designated scheme must not come into force any earlier than three months following the designation of the Scheme. The target date for commencement of the Additional HMO Licensing Scheme would be 1 March 2018.

The re-designation of the AHMOL Scheme supports the aims of the Council’s Housing Strategy Priority to make the best use of existing stock within the borough.

Resolved that

1. the outcome of the consultation (ref. paras. 23-32 of the report and its Annexes) on the re-designation of the Additional Houses in Multiple Occupation Scheme (AHMOs), as summarised in paragraphs 20-22 of the report, is noted;
2. the designation of an Additional HMO Licensing Scheme, which would cover all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) occupied by at least five people who do not form a single household, regardless of storey height, and all HMOs that are three or more storeys in height and occupied by three or more unrelated individuals, as set out in this report, is approved; and
3. the designation of the whole of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames as being subject to the Additional HMO Licensing Scheme in accordance with the criteria set out in resolution (2) above, is approved.

Voting - unanimous

24. Kingston Residents Scrutiny Panel (KRiSP) Sheltered Housing Service Review

The Sub-Committee considered a report which set out the recommendations of the Kingston Residents Scrutiny Panel (KRiSP) on Sheltered Housing (attached at Annex 2 to the report) and the senior management response to these recommendations (attached at Annex 1 to the report).
Under its current terms of reference, KRiSP is tasked with carrying out two service reviews of the Housing Service each year - examining policies, service standards and testing service delivery. Upon completion, the Panel summarises its findings in a written report and makes recommendations for improvement. This, in turn, is submitted to senior housing management, for its consideration, approval and implementation. Council officers draw up an improvement plan aimed at addressing recommendations (and any longer term action, if necessary) which, once agreed by both parties, is jointly monitored at regular intervals through to completion.

The KRiSP report was presented by the Chair of the Panel, David West, and Raewyn Hammond who led the review.

The KRiSP had included eleven recommendations for service improvement of which nine had been fully accepted by Housing management and two (requesting a Service Level Agreement between the Scheme Managers and the Older Vulnerable People service and a review of the role and remit of Scheme Managers) had been partially accepted.

In relation to the issue of Finance officers responsiveness during the review (ref. page 14 of the KRiSP report), Tom Bremner, Lead Housing Consultant, reported that senior Finance officers had offered to meet with KRiSP representatives to discuss the issues raised. In relation to the issue of Sheltered Housing staff reaction at early stages of the Investigation, Officers had noted the KRiSP request that information about the role and remit of the KRiSP be shared with as many officers and departments as possible. Housing management would include this within the review of the New Housing Model and provide training workshop for KRiSP members in interview techniques.

The Chair, Councillor Cathy Roberts, thanked KRiSP representatives for another excellent review report.

Resolved that the response set out in this report to the KRiSP Sheltered Housing Investigation report is agreed, including the officer response set out in Annex 2 to the report.

Voting - unanimous

25. KRiSP Value for Money Report & Annual Appraisal

The Sub-Committee considered the Annual Review and Value for Money assessment Report (attached at Annex 1 of the report) for the Kingston Residents Scrutiny Panel (KRiSP).

The KRiSP was set up in 2013, as part of the Council’s commitment to co-regulation, to investigate the Council’s Housing Service delivery, against its own housing standards and industry best practise, making recommendations for improvements to benefit residents and the Council. It fulfils the regulatory requirements on the Council for a Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

The annual appraisal of KRiSP includes an assessment of the effectiveness of the Chair, Vice Chair and the membership of the group, as well as the group’s overall effectiveness, in terms of suitability, function, operation and sustainability, in addition to a Value for Money assessment.
It was originally intended that KRiSP would carry out up to three scrutiny investigations annually, each to be operationally and strategically focused in making recommendations to improve service delivery and highlight performance that exceeds expectations. However, but low membership numbers on the KRiSP have precluded this higher level of activity, not least due to the depth and detailed nature of the investigations. KRiSP’s total numerical membership is less than half that originally envisaged and further recruitment needs to be undertaken. The original terms of reference were first amended in 2015, but changes to the policy and operational environment in which KRiSP functions require that further refinement be made.

One of the key recommendations of the review report and assessment therefore was: that a review of the terms of reference of the KRiSP takes place, including addressing concerns and issues raised in this report. This to be led by an independent person, and to include officers and KRiSP members, as well as a discussion with the Lead Member. This review should cover the following areas:

- number of Investigation meetings during service investigations
- KRiSP commissioning work and training from Pinnacle
- the involvement of the designated Lead Policy Officer for each investigation in the Findings Meeting
- how recommendations are drafted, agreed and monitored
- Chair Succession strategy
- officer support for KRiSP.

The recommended approach was that a meeting would then be held with the KRiSP to confirm the recommended terms of reference, and exit interviews will be held with departing KRiSP members. A recruitment exercise will take place and workshops will be held for staff about KRiSP and its role.

At the Sub-Committee meeting, in relation to raising the profile of the KRiSP, it was suggested that it would be useful for a KRiSP representative to attend the Leaseholders Forum to explain its role.

**Resolved** that the annual review and value for money appraisal report (attached at Annex 1 to the report) is noted and welcomed.

Voting – unanimous

**26. The Future Delivery Model for Housing Services**

The Sub-Committee considered a report on proposals for consulting on a New Housing Model. The report indicated that the Council’s Housing Revenue Account (HRA) landlord services (property and management) need modernising to reduce operating costs and increase investment in services and in new Council homes.

The report gave assurance that Kingston Council would still be the landlord for both secure tenants and leaseholders. The changes proposed would not involve stock transfer or privatisation or changing the legal rights of secure tenants or Council leaseholders.

These proposed changes would be subject to the statutory consultation for secure tenants, and there will also be broader engagement and consultation to gain wider and more inclusive feedback on the proposals including from Council leaseholders. The consultation would start in mid-November 2017 and run until mid-February.
2018. This would include involvement of Members of the Sub-Committee, KRiSP representatives, officers and others who will meet to discuss the overall proposals.

The six point plan for the proposed New Housing Model to provide a better service that is easier to access, costs less, supports those who need it and invests in new homes, as set out in the report, is:

1. investing in Council housing - building more desperately needed new Council housing and continuing to invest in current housing
2. a clearer deal for residents - being upfront about what the Council does and doesn’t do and what’s expected of residents
3. supporting those who need it - targeted services for our more vulnerable Council tenants
4. a new ‘core’ housing offer - ‘A well maintained, affordable and settled home’
5. reducing paperwork and bureaucracy - saving money on the Council’s operating costs so we can spend more on the things that matter
6. digital by choice - an improved 24/7 digital offer for Council tenants and leaseholders, but by choice not compulsion.

At the same time as the proposals for the new Housing Model are being consulted upon, there will be an active exploration of the option of working with one or more non-commercial partner organisations to help deliver improvements. This exploration will include discussions with Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) which potentially meets the criteria for potential partners set out in paragraph 41 of the report; however the Council would also be investigating other possible partners.

During the Sub-Committee’s discussion on the report, the following points were made:

- a request was made for information about the outcome to a consultation held in June-October 2016 on the Future Delivery Model for Housing Services which had included a door-to-door consultation exercise
- the improvement of the Housing webpages to make them more user-friendly was strongly supported
- the new Model can’t address the problem of the reduction in amount of Council housing stock (some of which is now owned by private landlords with multiple properties) because national legislation provides secure tenants with the Right to Buy their property
- the content of the consultation questions should give a clear representation of the proposed changes and the responses should be accurately reported (the content of the questions is currently being developed with staff; external expertise on consultancy will be used; there will be wider engagement than just questionnaires including workshops)
- the report indicates potential cost savings which could be achieved rather than savings calculated on the basis of specific changes
- Will there be a Strategic Housing Conference to discuss these proposals? (A Conference is scheduled to be held in February which will include this item)
- Neighbourhood Chairs could convene Neighbourhood Conversations to discuss the proposals
- There was a request for a break-down of repairs by estate to be reported to the Sub-Committee as there was a concern that higher number of repair requests would be coming from the older estates and in particular such requests could be increasing on the Cambridge Road Estate because the
Better Homes Programme had been halted on the Estate in view of the forthcoming CRE regeneration project

- A key issue will be for residents to get a prompt response to their reported concerns whatever the media of communication that is used

Resolved that

1. three months consultation and engagement commence as outlined in this report on the proposals for a New Housing Model, starting in November 2017 and completing by February 2018;

2. the Deputy Chief Executive is authorised in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adults Social Care and Health and the two Leaders of the Opposition (or their representatives) to agree the approach to consultation for both secure tenants and Council leaseholders;

3. the results of the consultation and a proposed way forward are presented to the Housing Sub Committee at its meeting on 8 March 2018; and

4. to assist with and oversee this, the Deputy Chief Executive will arrange meetings with the Portfolio Holder for Adults Social Care and Health or her representative, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Labour Group (or their representatives), KRISP representatives, other officers and other relevant individuals, parties or residents for further discussion.

Voting - unanimous

Signed……………………………………………………….Date………………………

Chair