

## **ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 6th December, 2016**

Present:-

Councillor P Gilby (Chair)

Councillors	Perkins	Councillors	Catt
	Callan		Sarvent
	Dyke		V Diouf
	Bellamy +++		
	Serjeant ++		

Alison Craig, Housing Manager +  
 Anita Cunningham, Policy and Scrutiny Officer  
 Trevor Durham, Licensing Manager +++  
 Martin Elliott, Committee and Scrutiny Coordinator  
 Michael Rich, Executive Director ++

+ Attended for Minute No.38  
 ++ Attended for Minute No.39  
 +++ Attended for Minute No.41

### **36 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

No declarations were received.

### **37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Derbyshire.

### **38 CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING - PROGRESS REPORT ON HOUSING POLICY AND THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN**

The Housing Manager attended to provide a progress report on Housing Policy and the development of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan.

The Housing Manager advised that all the policies that had been announced in the 2015 Summer Budget including the reduction in social housing rents by 1% for 4

years, the freeze on working age benefits including the Local Housing Allowance, and the requirement on local authority housing providers to dispose of higher value assets, had now been enacted. It was noted however that the “Pay to Stay” policy where households with an income over £31,000 would have to pay market, or near market rent, with difference to the social rent being returned to Treasury, had now been made discretionary.

The Housing Manager reiterated that despite the self-financing arrangement that had begun in 2012 these changes would have a significant impact on the delivery of housing services in Chesterfield and the financial viability of the HRA Business Plan. These changes had created a situation where there had had to be a fundamental look at how the Business Plan would be managed in the future to ensure that it remained both sustainable and financially viable. In order to facilitate the review of the HRA Business Plan a steering group had been established in order to look at, and find ways, to fill revenue gaps in the HRA and to put forward a revised business plan. The steering group was comprised of Officers and Members including Councillor Perkins as the Scrutiny representative, with Councillor T Murphy the Cabinet Member for Housing, Chairing the meetings. The steering group had also been working in conjunction with the tenants sub-group.

The Housing Manager outlined the full list of recommendations that the steering group would be recommending to Cabinet for inclusion in the HRA Business Plan. These included:

### **Rents and Recovery**

- Moving to a 52 week rent year and removing ‘rent free’ weeks to match universal credit payments and also to encourage a regular payment culture.
- Encouraging tenants in receipt of universal credit to arrange direct payment to landlord to prevent them from falling into arrears.

### **Voids and Lettings**

- Decorating and carpeting difficult to let properties, instead of issuing decorating vouchers to make the properties more appealing to potential tenants.
- Marketing properties via Rightmove/Zoopla/Social Media/ Voluntary Sector in order to compete with the private rented sector and to encourage applications from working tenants who may have not previously considered council housing.
- Leasing blocks of flats to other local authorities with full maintenance responsibilities.

### **Repairs and Maintenance**

- Reviewing tenant repairing obligations e.g. Tenants taking more responsibility for own repairs and damage.
- Charging tenants where they fail to keep an appointment for a repair.

The proposals had been created after a high level of tenant involvement and consultation and it was noted that many of the more difficult and challenging proposals

had been suggested by tenants. The Housing Manager emphasised that all the financial assumptions used in drafting the new HRA Business Plan, as well as all the mitigating measures proposed needed to be realised in order for the HRA Business Plan to be viable into the future.

Members asked several questions about the proposals and areas for savings including how much was being spent on “responsive repairs” by the council. The Housing Manager advised that the current cost of responsive repairs was around £1000 for each property each year. This figure was well above the amount spent on responsive repairs by other authorities and as there needed to be £1.5 million saved from the repairs budget over the next three years responsive repairs was a key area for savings to be realised. Members also asked about the introduction of fixed term tenancies. The Housing Manager advised that fixed term tenancies had previously been discretionary but were now mandatory, however the legislation stated that the length of a fixed term was “up to 10 years” so there was some flexibility in how fixed term tenancies were implemented.

The Housing Manager also provided details to the committee regarding the recent meeting between the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Housing Manager with the Housing Minister in Westminster which had been arranged by Chesterfield MP, Toby Perkins. Members thanked the Housing Manager for attending to provide the progress report and for answering their questions.

#### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the progress report be noted.
2. That Chesterfield MP, Toby Perkins be thanked for arranging the meeting of the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Housing Manager with the Housing Minister.
3. That the recommendations to Cabinet made by the Steering Group for inclusion in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan regarding Rents and Rent Recovery, Voids and Lettings and Repairs and Maintenance, be supported.
4. That any further comments or questions from members regarding the recommendation made by the steering group be directed to Councillor Perkins as the Scrutiny Committee’s representative on the steering group.
5. That further progress reports on Housing Policy and the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan be brought to the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee as required.

The Cabinet Member for Town Centre and Visitor Economy and Executive Director, Michael Rich, attended to provide a progress report on the consultation on the future use of the site of the former Queen's Park Sports Centre. The Executive Director advised that a contractor had been appointed for the demolition of the old sports centre and that work would begin in January, 2017 taking 12 weeks to complete.

The public consultation on the future use for the site of the former Queen's Park Sports Centre had taken place between 12 September and 23 October and had received 583 responses. A full report on the consultation responses had been produced and published on the council's website. The Executive Director provided an overview of the consultation process, the principles which had been used when considering potential uses for the site, and of the responses received to the consultation. The Executive Director advised that research had been carried out prior to the consultation on the potential demand for the council's preferred option of 3G sports pitches which had shown that there was a demand for such a facility in the area. The consultation process had shown that while respondents had suggested a wide and diverse range of other potential uses for the site, they had been broadly supportive of the principles that had informed the council's preferred option of 3G sports pitches.

The consultation had shown that an ice rink on the site was a popular alternative use; however advice sought in advance of the consultation process had shown that a standalone ice rink, even if it were to be delivered using a low-cost design solution, would struggle to be financially self-sustaining. This was due to amongst other factors, it having an overlapping catchment area for users with other local ice rinks in Sheffield, Doncaster and Sutton-in-Ashfield.

The Executive Director outlined the next steps of the process in the making of the decision on the new use of the former sports centre site and advised that a decision in principle for the use of the site would be made by Cabinet on 24 January, 2017. The Cabinet Member for Town Centre and Visitor Economy stressed the importance of stakeholder engagement in the planning and development processes for any future facilities on the site.

Members asked if consideration had been given to any spectator facilities for the 3G pitches. The Executive Director noted that any space for spectators could be limited, but did advise that this issue could be looked at further during consultation on any agreed proposals. Members also asked whether consideration would be given to implementing any of the other ideas received during the consultation as it appeared that the option to install 3G pitches was being heavily favoured by the council. The Executive Director advised that none of the other suggestions received met all of the criteria set out for the use of the site. However consideration would be given to see if some of the other ideas could be looked at for implementation elsewhere in the park. The Cabinet Member for Town Centre and Visitor Economy noted that the council's Playing Pitch Strategy had identified a shortfall of smaller playing pitches in the Borough, and that it was these types of pitches that were being considered for the site in order to meet the identified need. The Cabinet Member also noted that it was important that any solution proposed for the site was able to pay back the investment made quickly, which the 3G pitches were able to do.

Members noted that 52.7% of the responses received had been from women and asked whether in depth analysis of the data received from the consultation had been made to see if the option of 3G pitches was supported by all sections of the community. Members saw it as essential that any proposed development of the site must be based on evidence of a broad appeal to, and with the support of, the local community. The Executive Director advised that further analysis of the data could be made to look at how different genders and age groups had responded to the consultation. Members asked whether the “footprint” of the proposed 3G pitches would be the same as the old sports centre and also whether any consideration had been given to increasing or reducing the size of the car parks on the site. The Executive Director advised that the demand for any pitches would be further assessed and that nothing had been discounted at this stage.

Members thanked Cabinet Member for Town Centre and Visitor Economy and Executive Director, Michael Rich for attending to provide the progress report and for answering their questions. Councillors Sarvent and Catt were also thanked as proposed Scrutiny Project Group Leads for their comments, and members were also pleased to see the building demolition works moving forwards.

#### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the progress report be noted.
2. That the Chair, Vice-Chair and Councillors Catt and Sarvent, meet with the Cabinet Member for Town Centre and Visitor Economy, and Executive Director Michael Rich in January, 2017 to further discuss the consultation.
3. That members would like to see comments from external bodies in relation to the proposals early, such as from Historic England.
4. That further progress reports on the consultation on, and the future use of the site of the former Queen’s Park Sports Centre be brought to the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee as required.

## **40 CORPORATE WORKING GROUPS**

Councillor Perkins provided an update from the meetings of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan steering group.

Councillor Perkins noted that the group’s main objective was to look at ways to address the revenue gaps in the HRA and to put forward a revised business plan. As a consequence of this priority task there had not yet been an opportunity to consider, possibly through the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR), the measuring of the impact of housing improvements on health. Councillor Perkins noted that the Health and Wellbeing Manager will be attending the February, 2017 meeting of the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to discuss his priorities for coordinating the council’s approach to health and wellbeing and that this would provide an opportunity

to discuss how health and wellbeing priorities could be linked to the operation of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

**RESOLVED –**

That the progress report be noted and the matter of monitoring the impact of housing improvements on health be raised with the Health and Wellbeing Manager for discussion at the next meeting.

**41 SCRUTINY MONITORING**

The Committee considered an update on the implementation of approved Scrutiny recommendations.

Councillor Bellamy, Chair of the Appeals and Regulatory Committee and the Licensing Manager attended to provide a progress report on the Hackney Carriage Licence Unmet Demand Survey. In 2010, a survey had been carried out which had resulted in the Appeals and Regulatory Committee limiting the number of hackney carriages licensed by the Council. A further unmet demand survey took place in 2013 and in February 2014 where the Appeals and Regulatory decided to maintain the limit at 110 hackneys and asked that a further survey would be undertaken after a period of three years. The Licensing Manager provided an overview of the report's findings which had shown that there was currently no unmet demand for Hackney Carriages in the Borough. After considering the survey results the Appeals and Regulatory Committee had subsequently resolved at its meeting on 30 November, 2016 that the limit of 110 Hackney Carriage licences should be retained.

Members thanked Councillor Bellamy and the Licensing Manager for attending and for providing the progress updates on the committee's recommendations.

**RESOLVED –**

1. That the monitoring report be approved.
2. That the Hackney Carriages Licence Limit item (EW4), be removed from the monitoring schedule as the committee was satisfied that its recommendation had now been fully implemented.

**42 FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan was considered.

**RESOLVED –**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

**43 SCRUTINY PROJECT GROUPS**

Councillor Derbyshire, project group Lead Member for the Play Strategy Scrutiny Project Group, was unable to attend the meeting; the Councillor Gilby as Chair updated Members in her absence. The Principal Green Spaces Officer had been unavoidably off work recently so the production of the draft strategy had been delayed; it was however noted that the Principal Green Spaces Officer would be back at work soon. Councillor Gilby noted that documentation had been circulated to the project group members with regard to the development of the strategy which had asked for their comments and input.

Councillor Gilby, project group Lead Member for the Sport and Cultural Activities Scrutiny Project Group, provided members of the committee with a progress report on the group's work. The final task for the project group was to review and monitor the final sign-off with the contractor. Councillor Gilby advised that the last remaining aspects regarding the sign off with the contractor of the new Queen's Park Sports Centre had now been agreed with the council and that early in the new year project group members would be meeting with the both the new build project board as well as the contractor. Councillor Gilby advised that details regarding this meeting would be brought to the committee at the earliest opportunity.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That the progress reports on the Scrutiny Project Groups be noted.

#### **44 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its Work Programme.

#### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the Work Programme be approved.
2. To confirm that the Health and Wellbeing Manager will be attending the February, 2017 meeting of the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in order for the committee to receive further information about his role and his priorities for coordinating the council's approach to health and wellbeing.
3. That the Committee and Scrutiny Coordinator pursues the possibility of members receiving the agendas and minutes from the HS2 Staveley Depot board to bring them up to date with current developments around HS2 and their impact on Chesterfield and surrounding areas.

#### **45 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 October, 2016 were presented.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes be accepted as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.