

**ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****Tuesday, 27th February, 2018**

Present:-

Councillor Sarvent (Chair)

Councillors Perkins  
D CollinsCouncillors Falconer  
Bagley +

Alison Craig, Assistant Director – Housing +  
Emily Williams, Senior Economic Development Officer ++  
John Ramsey, Principal Green Space Strategy Officer +++

+ Attended for Minute No. 40

++ Attended for Minute No. 41

+++ Attended for Minute No. 42

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

No declarations were received.

**39 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor V-A Diouf.

**40 CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES AND CUSTOMERS**

The Cabinet Member for Homes and Customer and Assistant Director – Housing attended to provide an update on the Allocations and Transfer Policy following review of the policy in 2015 and implementation of the changes in 2016.

The Assistant Director reported that the majority of changes to the policy had been successful however two of the changes had raised additional issues which required revisions to the policy.

The 12 month residency requirement was introduced to ensure that the Council's housing stock was utilised to meet the housing need of existing residents of the borough or those who had employment in the area. It was successful in limiting the number of properties being let to out-of-borough applicants, however it had also resulted in a marked increase in the number of long term empty/void properties. Solutions were trialled including allowing North East Derbyshire and Bolsover District residents on to the housing register for hard to let properties, decorating hard to let flats and advertising on Rightmove. Since these actions were implemented in October 2017, the number of void properties has reduced providing an increase in rental income. In addition, the 12 month residency and employment criteria would be reviewed whilst ensuring preference is still given to Chesterfield Borough Council (CBC) residents.

The pre-allocation risk assessment was introduced to tackle the increasing number of failed tenancies due to rent arrears. However, the minimum income level was not specified in the policy itself and therefore unable to be applied. Following the introduction of Universal Credit, there had been an increase in applicants being offered tenancies when their overall income did not cover their rental amount however they cannot currently be refused a tenancy on the basis that it is unaffordable. The Assistant Director advised that a full financial risk assessment to properly assess affordability would be proposed to ensure tenancies were only offered where there is a likelihood of success and to allow the correct support to be put in place to achieve this.

The Assistant Director provided a summary of other issues and proposals to address these including:

- introducing new conditions on existing tenants transferring from one property to another;
- procuring a new IT system for the delivery of Choice Based Lettings to offer a simpler method of managing applicants' priorities;
- aligning the bedroom age limits with the welfare benefits criteria;
- changing policy wording to make pensionable age limits clearer;
- updating bedroom rules during pregnancy;
- introducing an equity/asset level for applicants;
- closer alignment with the adaptations policy.

In response to members' questions, the Assistant Director advised that there were approximately 1200 applicants on the waiting list at present and a turnover of 1000 houses per year. CBC would have to demonstrate

its need in order to secure funding from the government to meet the housing demand. CBC was working with neighbouring authorities to understand where their demand and surpluses were.

The Homelessness Reduction Act would be introduced from April 2018 placing an obligation on CBC to assist anyone who approaches the Council. Legal tests would still be in place to determine intentional homelessness however the Allocations Policy needed to work with the new legislation and the right support mechanisms put in place.

Members asked when the new system for managing applicants' priority would be implemented. The Assistant Director advised that the intention was to implement the new priority system in conjunction with the new IT system which would bring additional benefits including allowing online applications and amendments and providing an electronic system for processing homelessness applications. The Assistant Director added that the recommended changes to the policy would not be introduced until a public consultation and review of the feedback had been undertaken.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and the Assistant Director for providing the update and answering their questions.

#### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the update be noted.
2. That the review of the Allocations and Transfer Policy be considered for inclusion on the next work programme at the Scrutiny Work Programming sessions.

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#### **CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH**

The Senior Economic Development Officer attended to inform members about the progress made towards delivering the Skills Action Plan 2017-2020, approved by Cabinet in June 2017, and to consult members on the areas for future focus.

The plan was developed with the aims of maximising the benefits of skills related programmes and investments in the town and improving the skills profile of the borough's residents. The plan was underpinned by 4 objectives and the Senior Economic Development Officer provided a progress update on each objective:

**Working with partners to ensure local people and businesses have the right skills to access future opportunities:**

- held a design competition with Level 3 students to develop the Apprenticeship Town brand;
- organised round table discussions with businesses to share experiences and views on undertaking apprenticeships in Chesterfield;
- developed an Apprentice Town web resource in conjunction with Destination Chesterfield;
- worked with CEC and Destination Chesterfield to deliver a skills and employment conference;
- helped businesses access funding to upskill their staff;
- continued to support Talent Match and Ambition.

**Provide clear advice and support to local people and businesses about the range of skills programmes available:**

- updated the jobs, skills and employment pages of CBC's website;
- delivered events including Christmas jobs fairs, skills conference and skills and apprenticeship round tables;
- presented to the head teachers forum about Apprentice Town and provided interview support to schools;
- provided skills support and advice to local businesses.

**Work with our Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Education Partners to ensure that skills provision is aligned to future jobs growth and economic opportunities from emerging sectors:**

- established links between Chesterfield College and the National College for High Speed Rail;
- invited HS2 to speak at October's Skills Conference;
- contributed to regional skills activity and working groups at the LEPs;
- met regularly with education partners to help secure funding;
- working to deliver the Digital Advantage Programme with Derbyshire County Council and Arvato.

**Maximise the number of training, employment and supply chain opportunities for local people arising from new development and secured through Local Labour Agreements:**

- working on the delivery of 4 skills and employment plans with businesses;

- held 2 meet the buyer events and seen over 15 local jobs created;
- contracts worth £1.75m have been won by local businesses;
- local labour conditions have brought about 4 apprentices, 1 permanent position or internship, 5 temporary posts, 3 site visits for schools and colleges, careers talks for college students and 6 weeks work experience.

The Senior Economic Development Officer explained that, whilst the level of jobs growth had not changed, the number of apprenticeships starting in Chesterfield Borough during 2016/17 had risen which went against the declining national trend. The skills profile was showing an increase in the number of GCSE results above national average however the number of people with a qualification at level 4 or above was significantly below the national average though there appeared to be an upward trend.

Some of the key challenges impacting the delivery of the objectives included changes to national policy, particularly in terms of apprenticeship reform, ensuring the quality of local provision, the level of match funding required when bidding for external funding, the need to focus on basic skills highlighted by the introduction of universal credit and an increase in businesses struggling to recruit to technical, managerial and practical skilled positions.

The future focus for the Skills Action Plan was to develop a close working relationship with the key stakeholders in HS2, ensuring business readiness, the development of major sites including Northern Gateway, Waterside and Peak Resort, and improving the picture of the skills profile.

Members were pleased to hear of the links established between Chesterfield College and the National College for High Speed Rail and asked if links were also being made with the University of Derby. The Senior Economic Development Officer replied that the East Midlands Chamber of Commerce had undertaken work around the wider HS2 strategy and the University of Derby had been involved.

In response to Members questions, the Senior Economic Development Officer advised that CBC was working with businesses that were able to provide a job at the end of the apprenticeship however more awareness of workforce development was needed by businesses, especially those who do not offer a job at the end of the course.

Members were asked to provide feedback on the key focuses for the future of the plan. The Chair thanked the Senior Economic Development Officer for providing the progress update and answering their questions.

### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the update be noted.
2. That the slides from the presentation be circulated and that Members feed back to the Senior Economic Development Officer their comments on the areas for future focus.
3. That the Skills Action Plan be considered for inclusion on the next work programme at the Scrutiny Work Programming sessions.

## **42 SCRUTINY PROJECT GROUPS**

### **Play Strategy**

The Principal Green Space Strategy Officer attended to provide an update on the development of a new Play Strategy which was running alongside an assessment of all public open spaces of 0.2Ha or above, jointly commissioned by the Planning Service. Contractors had been appointed to undertake the commission over the next 6 months and a public and stakeholder consultation would be carried out as part of the strategy formulation; it was expected that this would be developed and rolled out in the next 4-6 weeks.

As part of the assessments, each play space had been assigned a category to determine its future use and requirements for investment; ward members had been consulted regarding the interim proposals for each site and Members were provided with a summary of the outcomes of the consultation which were largely in support of the proposals.

### **Leisure, Sports and Cultural Activities**

The Chair advised that the scrutiny project group were still waiting for the final meeting to sign off the project to build the new Queen's Park Sports Centre; this was being followed up with the Leader.

### **Development of the site of the old Queen's Park Sports Centre**

A site meeting took place on 14 February, 2018 with the consultants who were now finalising plans for the proposed development. Consultations were taking place with Historic England to enable a planning application to be submitted.

**43 FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan was considered.

**RESOLVED –**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

**44 WORK PROGRAMME**

The second work programming session would take place on 14 March, 2018 where the long list of items from the first session would be prioritised.

**RESOLVED –**

1. That the Work Programme be approved
2. That the new Assistant Director – Health and Wellbeing be invited to a future meeting of the Committee.

**45 MONITORING SCHEDULE**

The Monitoring Schedule was considered.

**RESOLVED –**

That the Monitoring Schedule be approved.

**46 CORPORATE WORKING GROUPS**

Councillor Perkins provided an update from the Housing Revenue Account Steering Group which was working to put forward a revised business plan that addressed the impacts of the Welfare Reform Act and Housing and Planning Act on the Housing Revenue Account.

The group had made changes to the tenancy agreement and held extensive consultations across the borough which would be examined at the next working group meeting in March, 2018.

**RESOLVED –**

That the update be noted.

**47** **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 December, 2017 were presented.

**RESOLVED –**

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