

ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**Thursday, 7th November, 2013**

Present:-

Councillor Hawksworth (Chair)

Councillors	Blank+	Councillors	Gibson
	Bradford		Huckle++++
	Brown+		McManus++
	Callan		Simmons
	Flood		Martin Stone++

Jackie Brobyn – Democratic Services Officer
 Anita Cunningham – Scrutiny Officer
 Yvonne Fox – Housing Solutions Manager+++
 Julie McGrogan – Housing Services Manager++
 Fran Rodway – Customer Services and Revenues Manager+
 Darran West – Head of Environment++++

+ Attended for Minute No. 24
 ++ Attended for Minute Nos. 25 & 26
 +++ Attended for Minute No. 25
 ++++ Attended for Minute No. 27

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

No declarations were made.

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillor Lang.

24 EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES REPORT ON DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS

Councillor Blank, Executive Member for Customers and Communities, Councillor Brown, Assistant Executive Member for Customers and Communities and Fran Rodway, Customer Services and Revenues Manager attended the meeting to report on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP).

It was noted that Council Tax Benefit had been replaced by a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme which meant that DHP could no longer be used to top up Council Tax Benefit to assist with Council Tax liabilities.

Changes were needed to allow for a DHP award when Universal Credit, including a Housing Allowance, was in payment.

The refreshed document included provisions for alleviating hardship arising from the implementation of the Welfare Reform changes, including the withdrawal of Housing Benefit for tenants of social landlords who had spare bedrooms.

It also allowed for a customer to request the review of a DHP decision to be considered by a panel of senior managers of Customer Services and Community Housing, instead of the Appeals and Regulatory Committee. This had been suggested because of the significant increase in available funds and the uplift in applications.

More requests for decisions to be reviewed were anticipated due there being more applications and the increased likelihood of hardship due to the Welfare Reform.

Senior Managers of Customer Services and Community Housing were working closely with residents, including tenants of social landlords, to give the best possible advice to resolve their housing difficulties.

The Customer Services and Revenues Manager circulated a document which gave an analysis of the DHP decisions which stated that there had been 349 decisions made, 244 of which had been allowed and 105 had been disallowed.

She confirmed that there was a budget of £170k to spend and that so far £75k had been committed. Most people were awarded a grant for 13 weeks which would allow them to find alternative accommodation. However if they failed to meet this timescale they were able to reapply for further assistance.

Members expressed an interest in monitoring this and it was suggested and agreed that this could be incorporated within the Welfare Reform Scrutiny Group. The Chair proposed that the scoping document be prepared by the end of the year and that DHP be at the top of the timetable.

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) That the report be noted.
 - (2) That the monitoring of DHP be included in the scoping document for the Welfare Reform Scrutiny Group.

25 **EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING REPORT ON HOUSING/CREDIT UNION SERVICE - VERBAL UPDATE**

Councillor McManus, Executive Member for Housing, Councillor Martin Stone, Assistant Executive Member for Housing, Julie McGrogan, Housing Service Manager – Customer Division and Yvonne Fox, Housing Solutions Manager attended the meeting to give an update in respect of Housing and the Credit Union Service.

It was reported that work had been ongoing for the past 12 months with the Credit Union looking at Jam Jar accounts and potential homeless people were being

encouraged to approach the Credit Union with a view to opening up an account. People with families were being encouraged to take child benefit loans to access safe borrowing and the prepaid card was launched the previous month which allowed for a person's wages/benefits to be loaded on as a safe way to manage money.

The Housing Service Manager – Customer Division reported that the Chief Executive had been in discussion with the Credit Union to see how the Council could assist with funding and it had been agreed that support would be given in the shortfalls in their business plan to enable them to become self sufficient by year 3.

The Assistant Executive Member advised that Derbyshire County Council had made a significant investment of £200k. The Credit Union were now looking for new premises on the High Street to make them more visible and accessible.

A discussion took place about ways of advertising the services of the Credit Union and it was suggested that posters could be placed in all the Council's notice boards and also that leaflets be made available at the next round of Community Assemblies.

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) That the update be noted.
 - (2) That contributors be thanked for support provided to the Credit Union and greater promotion of the Credit Union services be supported.

26 EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Councillor McManus, Executive Member for Housing, Councillor Martin Stone, Assistant Executive Member for Housing, and Julie McGrogan, Housing Service Manager, attended the meeting to report on the Review of the Allocations Policy.

It was noted that changes had been made to the Allocations Policy in order to meet the needs of tenants affected by the benefit changes and also to reflect the changes brought in under the Localism Act 2011. These included:

- Reference to pensionable age in the policy referred to and were consistent with the DWP's pensionable age at the point in time of allocation.
- Under-occupation
- Quota for Transfers
- Changes to Bands
- Armed Forces
- Age on Entry onto the Housing Waiting List
- Sub-Regional Scheme
- Families with Adult Children
- Termination by a Joint Tenant
- Mutual Exchanges
- Transfer Incentive Scheme

A review of the impact of the changes had been carried out and the following had been found:

- 153 (66%) of all households in the transfer band who had been allocated properties since April 2013 had moved because they were either under-occupying properties or were overcrowded.
- There had been a 45% increase in the number of transfers compared with the same period last year.
- By stimulating transfers more two bedroom properties had been released which had resulted in an increase in availability of properties across most areas of the Borough.

It was noted that the following changes were being considered:

- It was proposed that direct matches be carried out for all homeless applicants where they had accepted a statutory duty to re-house
- It was proposed that the Council reintroduce points for households with children who live in flats
- A proposal currently being consulted on by the DCLG on the adoption of a two year residency criteria for admission onto the housing waiting list. The Council were considering the implications of this before responding.

The Housing Services Manager agreed to provide a written report in respect of the Council's response.

It was suggested and agreed that an update be provided to the Committee 6 months after the policy was approved.

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) That the update be noted and proposals supported.
 - (2) That an update be provided to the Committee 6 months after the policy was approved.

COUNCILLOR HAWKSWORTH LEFT THE MEETING AND COUNCILLOR FLOOD TOOK THE CHAIR

27 EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE, CULTURE AND TOURISM REPORT ON SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY

Councillor Huckle, Assistant Executive Member for Leisure, Culture and Tourism and Darran West, Head of Environment attended the meeting to report on the preparation of a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.

It was noted that the outcome of the strategy was to ensure that facilities, parks, greenspaces and associated services were provided with suitable accessibility and

quality so as to maximise community participation in regular and sustainable Sport and Physical activity on both a formal and informal basis.

The statutory requirement for needs and evidence relating to the Council's Core Strategy and responses to consultation by Sport England had necessitated the development of a robust Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and further evidence of the need for a Swimming Pool, Sports Hall and Artificial Grass Pitch provision using the Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM).

The overall methodology for the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy development was appended to the report and it was noted that the FPM work was being completed by Sport England and therefore only the PPS element was being co-ordinated locally.

The range of outdoor sports activities to be included and developed in the PPS was:

- Football
- Rugby
- Hockey
- Netball
- Tennis
- Bowls
- Cricket

Consideration would also be given to multi use or expanded use for other seasonal activities such as rounders, grass track circuit cycling, archery and athletics development.

There were only two organisations currently approved by Sport England to use the new PPS methodology which had meant a delay due to capacity for specialist support. CBC was the first authority in Derbyshire to use the new methodology and the second nationally.

The FPM assessment being prepared by Sport England was expected in November 2013 and the FPM methodology examined:

- Swimming Pool provision
- Sports Hall provision
- Artificial Grass Pitch provision

The draft FPM data had been used to support the planning application for the new Queen's Park Sports Centre and the final report would be fundamental to the indoor sports facility needs.

It was expected that the draft strategy would be completed by April/May 2014.

Members asked whether it would be of benefit to include this within the Sports and Leisure Scrutiny Review. The Head of Environment felt that it might not be appropriate but suggested that it might be useful to have them as a sounding board when fleshing out the Strategy.

He agreed that once the Strategy was in a draft form he would be putting it out for consultation.

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) That the best practice approach to establishing a needs and evidence base for a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and Outdoor Sport and Leisure in the Borough, be noted.
 - (2) That the Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM) 2013 report findings be noted as key drivers for planning future Facilities within the borough.
 - (3) That the Committee note that the collective needs and evidence identified in the PPS and FPM reports, forms the basis of the overarching Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for the Borough being developed and delivered.

28 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1st November, 2013 to 28th February, 2014.

Reference was made to the Careline Consortium and it was suggested that an update be requested on the current position. It was agreed that a request be made for an update to be provided by email.

Reference was made to the HRA Business Plan/Capital Programme/Rents and clarification requested as to whether rents would be agreed before setting the Council Tax.

- RESOLVED -** That the Forward Plan be noted and information raised be requested.

29 SCRUTINY MONITORING

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

- RESOLVED -** That the update be noted.

30 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee considered a list of items raised to date for its Work Programme.

- RESOLVED -** (1) That the Work Programme be agreed.

(2) That an update on the following items be considered at the meeting in January 2014:

- Rationalisation of Play Areas
- Allotments Strategy
- Streetscene Improvement Plan
- DCC Composting proposals
- Appointment of Green Deal ECO Partner

(3) That the reappointed Parking Policy Scrutiny Project Group be removed from the Work Programme.

31 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENTS**

The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members of the Committee that a training session had been arranged at 4.00 pm on Thursday 28th November, 2013 on the budget.

She also reported that a proposal had been made to arrange some training for all Members of the Committee on Chairing skills to assist with the running of Scrutiny Groups. Members were in support of this and it was agreed that this be arranged.

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) That the reminder relating to the Budget training be noted.
- (2) That the Chairing skills training be arranged for Members.

32 **SCRUTINY PROJECTS PROGRESS UPDATES**

(a) Sports and Leisure Review

Councillor Flood gave an update in respect of the Sports and Leisure Review.

She reported that information had been received in respect of the second consultation exercise and that this had been analysed. They had interviewed Deloitte and the Council's Procurement Officer.

Visits had been undertaken to 4 Leisure Centres where scoring had been undertaken on a variety of facilities, and the outcome was similar to that of the Council, with the preferred option being the Arc.

With regard to the financing of other Leisure Centres, reports were being obtained from Dronfield and Buxton, who had both undertaken refurbishments.

The next stage related to the planning application which was to be considered at the Planning Committee on 9th December, 2013.

Consultation would also be undertaken with staff of the Leisure Centres via a survey which was being produced with the assistance of Donna Reddish, Policy Manager for the Council.

(b) Water Rates Policy Review

Councillor Simmons gave an update on the work of the project group on the Water Rates Policy Review.

A copy of the Scoping document for the review was circulated and Members were asked to adopt it.

- RESOLVED -**
- (1) That the updates be noted.
 - (2) That the Scoping document in respect of the Water Rates Policy Review be adopted.

33 MINUTES ON THE MEETING HELD ON 5TH SEPTEMBER, 2013 AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5th September, 2013 were presented.

- RESOLVED -** That the Minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.