

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

29th November 2012

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Lemmon (Chairman), Councillor Hewlett (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Ford, Harrison, Mrs. Hood, Murray and Smith.

Labour Group

Councillors Dunn, Mrs. Heath, Mulgrew, Rhind, Shepherd and Stuart.

In Attendance

Councillor Richards (Labour Group).

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

HCS/34. **HOMELESSNESS – TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION COSTS**

It was reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recommended that Housing Services undertake a review of temporary accommodation, with specific investigation into the following 2 options;

Option A: To negotiate a reduced bed and breakfast rate for accommodating homeless applicants, utilising a threshold of a guaranteed number of applicants.

Option B: To further explore the option of partnering with a local bed and breakfast.

A report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlined the findings of the review, and detailed a proposed alternative, option C for the way Housing Services provided the majority of its temporary accommodation.

Options A and B were detailed in full within the report. In considering Option C, South Derbyshire District Council had worked with P3, who were a charitable organisation working across Derbyshire, who had specialised in the areas of social inclusion and homelessness for over 10 years. They also provided and managed the single person's home in Midland Road, Swadlincote, as well as providing floating tenancy support for those with mental health issues in the District. Housing Services had contacted P3 to see if they were prepared to build further on the relationship that was currently in existence. P3 had put forward a proposal for the provision of temporary accommodation to satisfy the majority of the District Council's homeless requirements. Full details were provided on the proposal, and it was confirmed that this would provide Housing Services with up to 2,555 nights of accommodation, which should eliminate the core usage of bed and breakfast. Full details were provided on the proposal and the current and proposed costs were also outlined within the

report. The Head of Housing and Environmental Services was asked to clarify further financial implications.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That a partnership with the P3 organisation to partly provide, and manage in full, a dedicated temporary accommodation service for homeless applicants, be approved.***
- (2) That it be noted that, the proposal was first considered, and approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24th October 2012.***

HCS/35. **GREEN DEAL AND HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION ACT (HECA)**

A report was submitted which provided an update on the progress of the development of the Governments Green Deal initiative and the recently revitalised Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA).

The Green Deal was a new finance package launched on 1st October 2012 by the Government, which allowed householders to pay for energy efficient improvements to their properties with no upfront costs over a period of up to 25 years. The payments were designed to be less than the financial savings the householder accrued on their energy bills as a result of the work, and the cost of the improvements was paid by the householder's energy bill, and stayed with the property as a charge on the electricity meter/property until the debt was paid. Full details were provided on how the Green Deal worked and also some potential barriers for residents.

Possible levels of involvement for the Council were detailed and they included:

- Provider Role, which involved the direct co-ordination of the whole Green Deal process, arranging assessments, providing the funding for the loans and installation of the measures.
- Partner Role which involved working in partnership with a commercial Green Deal Provider (e.g. Energy Company), to deliver or facilitate delivery of the Green Deal in the District.
- Promoter Role. The Council would have no direct influence on Green Deal Providers and would simply involve the promotion of the Governments Green Deal scheme in the District, to help increase its uptake by providing advice etc, but not promoting a particular provider.

It was reported that some much larger local authorities had explored both provider and partnering models. However, in the main, the procurement of these would not be completed until later in 2013/14.

Further details were provided on other energy efficiency schemes, and the Home Energy Conservation Act.

Members expressed concern perceived risks, i.e. the loan interest rates and also the charge on properties.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Council focuses on improving residents understanding of the Green Deal, and undertakes research to identify opportunities where it may wish to influence the activities of local Green Deal providers.***
- (2) That, Officers continue to work with the Local Energy Area Partnership (LEAP) to explore the potential of a partnership model either with other local authorities or a standalone model for the Green Deal.***
- (3) That a new Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Plan be prepared, based on the above recommendation for Green Deal, and by working with other partners to ensure there is a joined-up approach to improving energy efficiency across the District.***

HCS/36. STAR SURVEY

Following the removal of the regulatory biennial requirement to carry out the STATUS Survey in 2011, the Chartered Institute of Housing's performance organisation, Housemark, had developed the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR), to measure satisfaction in a standardised way.

Following Committee approval in March 2012, consultation was undertaken, which used a questionnaire designed by SMSR Ltd, in conjunction with officers. The aim of the consultation was to assess tenant satisfaction with South Derbyshire District Council Housing Services.

Housemark had over 500 social housing provider members and South Derbyshire District Council's STAR results were benchmarked against 145 other providers within the social housing sector nationwide. An outline of results was as follows:

- Housing Services were placed 'upper quartile' across all of the 7 core satisfaction questions.
- With an overall tenant satisfaction survey rating of 92% for Housing Services, South Derbyshire District Council were the top performing retained local authority within the Midlands and 2nd highest within the UK.
- With a tenant satisfaction rating of 90% for the provision of repairs and maintenance, Housing Services were the top retained local authority landlord within the Midlands.
- With a tenant satisfaction rating of 89.2% for the overall quality of tenant homes, Housing Services was the top retained local authority landlord within the Midlands.
- With a tenant satisfaction rating of 91.4% for tenants who feel very or fairly satisfied that their rent provided value for money, Housing Services were the top retained local authority within the Midlands.

Further details were provided on the results and a full copy of the results table and summary of the STAR 2012 results had been provided to the performance and scrutiny panel.

The Chairman requested that congratulations be passed to all officers concerned and it was also remarked that the assistance and help received from the Tenants Forum had proved very worthwhile and valuable and they were also thanked for their input.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the findings of the recent tenant satisfaction STAR survey, be noted.***
- (2) That the follow up actions arising out of the survey, be approved.***

HCS/37. **FIRE SPRINKLERS**

In the summer of 2012 the Fire Service had approached the District Council and 9 other main housing providers, asking if they would be interested in partnering a pilot project to retrofit sprinkler systems to existing homes. In South Derbyshire, housing officers had expressed an interest in exploring the proposal further and criteria was provided by the Fire Service on assessing which households might benefit most. Following this, housing officers had met with the Fire Service, and a shortlist of potential beneficiaries from within the Council housing stock had been agreed. It was reported that £20,000 match funding was required and it was proposed that this be met from the current year's responsive repairs budget.

Concern was raised over a property in Newhall that was currently in the process of having a sprinkler system fitted.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the sum of £20,000 from the Housing Revenue Account responsive repairs budget be committed to match fund £20,000 from the Fire Service.***
- (2) That the combined budget of £40,000 be utilised to install fire sprinkler systems into 8 homes of assessed vulnerable residents.***

HCS/38. **STRATEGIC TENANCY STRATEGY**

As a result of the Localism Act 2011, Local Authorities had a statutory duty to publish a Tenancy Strategy by January 2013. Members had previously agreed to broad principles, for the draft Tenancy Strategy to be prepared and consulted upon.

Consultation had been undertaken on both the broad principles set out within the report and the draft Tenancy Strategy. The outcome of this consultation was overall agreement that there was a need to make the best use of the social housing stock in the District and that moving towards fixed term tenancy

was the right policy decision. However, there was some concern as to the impact this strategy would have in the short-term. A summary of the consultation was included as an Annexe to the report.

RESOLVED:-

That the Tenancy Strategy be approved.

HCS/39. **NETHERSEAL VILLAGE HALL**

It was reported that urgent and significant repairs that were the responsibility of the District Council were required to Netherseal Village Hall. Capital monies to undertake such work were originally set aside within the capital programme, but were dependent on the Parish Council signing up to a long full repairing lease. The Parish Council was unable to accept this responsibility, but the works were still required. Approval was therefore sought to utilise the capital, properly maintain and secure the building, and therefore meet Council obligations whilst continuing with the existing lease arrangements.

Full details were provided on the lease terms and the existing tenancy arrangement. It was estimated that £22,000 was necessary for the existing works however there may have been additional deterioration, so the recommendation was to set aside up to £25,000 for this work.

RESOLVED:-

That expenditure of up to £25,000 on roof repairs and other critical works to Netherseal Village Hall be approved, and referred to Finance and Management Committee for final approval.

HCS/40. **ALLOCATIONS POLICY AMENDMENTS**

It was reported that a new section of the Housing Act 1996, had been inserted, which required that local connection restrictions within the allocations policy were removed. Restrictions were removed for the following:

- Those who were currently serving in the regular forces or who were serving in the regular forces at any time in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of social housing.
- Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces, where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner had recently ceased, or would cease to be entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly and partly attributed to their service.
- Existing or former members of the reserved forces who were suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.

Due to the relatively small number of applications received from armed forces personnel, this should not have any major impact on future allocations.

In addition the 1996 Act to provide local housing authorities with the power to discharge their main homeless duty by way of a private rented sector offer under Section 193(7AA), had also been amended, and now required that the local housing authority must be satisfied that the private rental sector offered accommodation that was suitable for the applicant before doing so. This amendment would allow greater flexibility and increase the scope of supply in rehousing applicants who were in temporary accommodation.

Following a number of legislation and regulatory changes contained within the Localism Act 2011 and Welfare Reform Act 2012, it was proposed to undertake a full and detailed review of the Allocations Policy. This would include engaging with all stakeholders. The main subjects for a full review were detailed within the report.

RESOLVED:-

That, amendments to the Housing Act 1996, which removes local connection restrictions for armed forces personnel and allows for the discharge of the homeless duty in the private sector, be noted.

HCS/41. **CORPORATE PLAN 2009 – 14; PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT (1st JULY 2012 – 30th SEPTEMBER 2012)**

A report was submitted which detailed progress and achievements during the period 1st July to 30th September 2012, in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan 2009/14. The Corporate Plan consisted of four main themes or priorities and this Committee was responsible for the delivery of two outcomes within the Safe and Secure theme and two outcomes within the Lifestyle Choices theme. Tables were provided which summarised progress against targets, and also those that had not been completed, with remedial action summarised.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That progress and achievements during the period 1st July to 30th September 2012, in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan 2009/12, be noted.***
- (2) That where progress has failed to achieve the specified target, the adequacy of the remedial action taken be noted.***

HCS/42. **WORK PROGRAMME**

Members were asked to consider the updated work programme and review its content where appropriate.

RESOLVED:-

That the updated work programme be approved.

HCS/43. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

HOUSING SERVICES – STAFFING RESTRUCTURE (Paragraphs 1, 2 & 4)

The amended staffing structure for the Housing Service as detailed in the report was approved in principle.

J. LEMMON

CHAIRMAN