

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

8th March 2012

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

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

Labour Group

Councillors Dunn, Frost (substitute for Councillor Mulgrew), Mrs. Heath, Rhind, Richards and Shepherd.

In attendance

Councillor Atkins (Conservative Group)

HCS/61. **APOLOGY**

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Mulgrew (Labour Group).

HCS/62. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meetings held on 5th January and 2nd February 2012, were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chairman.

HCS/63. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillors Ford, Harrison and Murray declared personal interests in Minute No. HCS/70, as Members of Derbyshire County Council.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

HCS/64. **SOCIAL HOUSING FRAUD: CONSULTATION**

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had produced a consultation document which invited views on whether existing legislation needed to be strengthened and, if so, how it could reduce the prevalence of tenancy fraud in social housing. There were over 1.8 million households on the waiting list for social housing, and another 250,000 social households were statutorily overcrowded. It was estimated that there were at least 50,000 social homes in England being unlawfully occupied, although the problem of tenancy fraud was concentrated in London and it might only affect 1% of the stock in the rest of the country. In South Derbyshire, no cases of formal subletting or the selling or passing of keys had come to light in recent years. The main points covered in the Social Housing Fraud Consultation document were included as an appendix to the report.

A proposed response from South Derbyshire District Council was included within the report. It was requested that question No. 2, be amended to read “Your suggestion of a maximum custodial sentence of 2 years and a fine of (up to) £50,000 seem appropriate”.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the ‘Social Housing Fraud’ consultation document be noted.***
- (2) That a response to the 13 consultation questions as detailed in the report be agreed, subject to the insertion of the wording “up to” £50,000, in question No. 2, and submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government by 4th April 2012.***

HCS/65. **ALLOCATION OF ACCOMMODATION: GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND - CONSULTATION**

Members were requested to consider the Government’s proposed new statutory guidance to local authorities on the allocation of social housing, and proposed regulations to improve access to social housing for former and serving armed forces personnel.

The new guidance was intended to assist authorities take advantage of the provisions in the Localism Act 2011, which were described as, giving back to local authorities the freedom to manage their own waiting lists, and made it easier for them to move exiting social tenants to more suitable accommodation. It also stated that the intention was to encourage authorities to make use of the existing flexibilities within the allocation legislation, to ensure that social homes went to people who needed and deserved them the most.

In addition, the Government was consulting on 2 sets of draft regulations relating to the armed forces. The regulations sought to ensure that former service men and women who had urgent housing needs were given additional preference for social housing, so that they would be at, or near the top of the housing waiting list, and those service personnel who moved from base to base did not lose their qualification rights. The consultation was divided into 6 main chapters, supported by a series of appendices.

The consultation document was written as if it were already current operational guidance, and following the consultation it was likely to be ready for early adoption. The main changes were detailed within the report with the proposed response.

Members agreed with the proposed responses, however, an amendment to the response to question No. 4, as detailed below was requested.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the ‘Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for local housing authorities in England’ consultation document be noted.***

- (2) ***That a response to the 15 questions as detailed in the report be agreed, subject to amended wording in question No. 4 to include;***
- ***That members of the Armed Forces should get priority in the allocations process***
 - ***That they should have an established family connection in the District***
 - ***That 12 months from the date of discharge is an appropriate time limit, although there should be some discretion allowed in extenuating circumstances.***
- (3) ***That the response be submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government by 20th March 2012.***

HCS/66. **CORPORATE PLAN 2009-14: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT (1st OCTOBER 2011 – 31st DECEMBER 2011)**

A report was submitted which detailed progress and achievements for the period 1st October to 31st December 2011, in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan 2009 – 14. The Corporate Plan consisted of 4 main themes or priorities, of which this Committee was responsible for actions and relevant performance indicators within the Safe and Secure and Lifestyle Choices themes. Tables within the report summarised the progress made against key projects, and showed that all tasks for the quarter had been completed.

A further summary of performance against targets and those at risk of failure was also provided along with comments and planned remedial actions against those at risk of failure.

It was requested that further information be provided to all Members on the financial information provided within Safe and Secure Project SP 02 "Improve the current housing conditions across the public/private sector stock".

RESOLVED:-

- (1) ***That progress and achievements during the period 1st October to 31st December 2011, in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan, be noted.***
- (2) ***That where progress has failed to achieve the specific target remedial action be taken.***

HCS/67. **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/68. 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.

MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Meetings held on 5th January and 2nd February 2012 were received.

REORGANISATION OF THE SPORT AND HEALTH SERVICE (Paragraph 1)

Proposals for the restructuring of the Sport and Health Service were approved.

SURVEY OF TENANTS AND RESIDENTS (STAR) (Paragraph 3)

That a survey of all current South Derbyshire District Council tenants to determine satisfaction with Landlord Services be approved.

SERVICE REVISIONS IN HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (Paragraph 1)

Members approved the proposal for service revisions to the post of Architectural Technician.

FORMER TENANTS ARREARS (FTAS) WRITE OFF (Paragraphs 1 and 3)

It was recommended that the write off in full be forwarded to the Finance and Management Committee for approval.

J. LEMMON

CHAIRMAN