

MINUTES of the SPECIAL MEETING of the  
SOUTH DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL  
held at Civic Offices, Civic Way,  
Swadlincote on 20th September 2007  
at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:-**

**Conservative Group**

Councillor Bale (Chairman), Councillor Mrs. Hood (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Bladen, Mrs. Coyle, Mrs. Farrington, Ford, Grant, Harrison, Hewlett, Jones, Murray, Mrs. Patten, Mrs. Plenderleith, Roberts, Stanton, Timms, Watson, Mrs. Wheeler and Wheeler.

**Labour Group**

Councillor Bambrick, Mrs. Gillespie, Mrs. Mead, Pabla, Richards, Shepherd, Taylor, Tilley and Wilkins.

**Independent Member**

Councillor Mrs. Brown.

CL/56. **COUNCILLOR BOB SOUTHERN**

The Chairman paid tribute to Councillor Bob Southern, following his recent death and Members observed a minute's silence in his memory.

CL/57. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Atkin and Lemmon (Conservative Group) and Councillors Dunn, Mrs. Lane, Lane and Southerd (Labour Group).

CL/58. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported on his recent engagements, including the official opening of a multi-use games arena at Netherseal on 17th August. This project had received financial support from the District and Parish Councils and he was sure it would be well used. The Chairman spoke about his visit to the Foston Prison on 20th August and about a training event with the 1211 Swadlincote Squadron of the Air Cadets on 23rd August 2007. Further information on this visit was provided on the Council's website. The Chairman advised that a further report and display would be provided at the next ordinary Council Meeting, the following week.

CL/59. **AFFORDABLE HOUSING ISSUES – CONJOINED PLANNING INQUIRY**

It was reported that a Special Meeting of the Housing and Community Services Committee was held on 4th September 2007. This was to consider the Housing Market Analysis and Needs Estimates for the District, in order to inform the level and tenure of affordable housing that should be sought by the Council, in relation to new housing developments in the Derby fringe, for sites currently being promoted at the Conjoined Planning Inquiry. Members were reminded of the decisions reached by that Committee. It was followed

by a Special Meeting of the Environmental and Development Services Committee, at which agreement was sought to the proposed percentage of affordable housing. Members were also advised of that Committee's decision.

The Leader asked the Council to accept these recommendations and she confirmed the importance of providing affordable housing. This was recognised in various documents, including the revised Corporate Plan. She referred to the proven demand for affordable housing.

Councillor Taylor stated that the former controlling group had demonstrated its commitment to affordable housing provision over the years. He spoke about the decision to retain the Council's housing stock. He felt it very important to justify the proposed decision on this issue, in the knowledge of the consultant's recommendations for up to 50% of affordable housing. A specialist had been engaged to undertake this research and the report's recommendations had been overturned. He questioned the cost of the consultant's work and in light of the proposed decision, felt that this expenditure was not justified. He commented on typical property prices in the Derby fringe and the salaries people needed, to be able to afford such property costs. Reference was also made to previous negotiations where a level of affordable housing of 20% was sought, but only 10% was actually secured.

The Leader of the Opposition Group endorsed these sentiments, questioning how the funding for the consultant's report could be justified, if the report's recommendations were subsequently ignored. He referred to specific sections of the consultant's report and re-stated its recommendation for up to 50% of affordable housing. By starting at this lower figure, the Council might not even realise the Regional Spatial Strategy target of 33% of affordable housing and he therefore moved an amendment that the Council set the level at up to 50%.

Councillor Shepherd seconded this amendment and spoke to this item as one of the Members in an affected ward. He explained previous concerns about a particular site, confirmed that his ward did not have a single Council house, only limited social housing and very limited nomination rights. He asked the Council to set the level of affordable housing at a minimum of 50%.

Councillor Ford spoke about the respective commitments of the current and former controlling groups. He noted the historic levels of affordable housing achieved at Hilton, those at Willington and Findern and a recent application at the Development Control Committee, which had only secured 29% of affordable housing.

Councillor Harrison also spoke on the importance of this issue, which he had advocated personally for more than forty years. He gave his opinions about people being unable to afford to live in the communities in which they had been raised. Councillor Harrison spoke about the process undertaken by the consultant and the difficulties in estimating the requirement for affordable housing, referring to a number of sections of the report. There was a clear vision for the future of South Derbyshire and everyone accepted it was a vibrant area, with economic growth, a good road network and "the place to be". Councillor Harrison said that the vision for the area was of high skill jobs and the right mix of housing was required. He explained the merits of intermediate housing rather than social housing. He had every confidence and faith in the recommended proportion of affordable housing proposed and

asked about the likely impact on Section 106 contributions if the Council did seek 50% of affordable housing.

Councillor Mrs. Brown was dismayed that this serious issue had been debated on party lines, as providing affordable housing was of paramount importance. She referred to the average house prices in this area and asked all Members to set aside politics. She then voiced her concerns that the proposal for up to 40% of affordable housing could be extrapolated to other areas of the District. The wording “up to” gave the potential for enormous flexibility. As a Member on the Development Control Committee, she had found the proportion of affordable housing secured disappointing. She suggested that the wording of the recommendation be altered to give a level of affordable housing of 20% to 40%.

Councillor Taylor restated his views on the disregard of the consultant’s recommendations. He repeated his request for information on the costs of employing the consultant. Councillor Wilkins spoke about the time taken to produce the report. He considered that South Derbyshire was a vibrant area, demonstrating this by reference to the competition between developers for a specific site. If levels of affordable housing of up to 50% could be secured, he could not see the harm in this.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that discussions had taken place with the consultant, who was happy with the proposed level of up to 40% of affordable housing being taken forward to the Inquiry.

The amendment, that the Council set a level of a minimum of 50% of affordable housing was put to the vote and defeated.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Council adopts a figure of up to 40% of affordable housing, up to half of which should be intermediate housing (shared ownership/home buy) as recommended by the Housing and Community Services and Environmental and Development Services Committees at their Meetings on 4th September 2007. This resolution only relates to Section 106 Agreements for housing sites in the Derby fringe of the District, currently the subject of a Conjoined Planning Inquiry.***

Note: Members of the Labour Group wished it to be recorded that they had voted against this decision.

M.J.P. BALE

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 6.40 p.m.