

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

15th October 2009

**PRESENT:-**

**Conservative Group**

Councillor Lemmon (Chairman), Councillor Grant (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Atkin, Harrison, Hewlett, Mrs. Hood, Murray and Roberts.

**Labour Group**

Councillors Dunn (substitute for Councillor Richards), Mrs. Gillespie, Mrs. Lane, Rhind and Shepherd.

**In Attendance**

Councillors Mrs. Farrington and Mrs. Wheeler (Conservative Group) and Councillor Taylor (Labour Group).

**APOLOGY**

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

HCS/27. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 3rd September 2009 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**

HCS/28. **STOCK CONDITION SURVEY OF THE HOUSING STOCK**

In October 2008, Members approved the recruitment of an external consultant to undertake a full external survey and 25% internal survey of the Council's housing stock. The survey covered 3,063 tenanted properties and the exterior of 30 leased properties. The 30 properties at Granville Court and Willoughby House were not included in the survey due to their pending disposal. The final report indicated that to maintain the stock over the next 30 years, the Council would need to spend a total of £108M, which excluded the finance required for day-to-day repairs. The total amount did not include any allowance for inflation, salaries or fees. The spend requirement was on the basis of maintaining the stock in the current condition, and did not relate to an enhanced property standard.

A brief exercise had been undertaken to compare the requirements in terms of expenditure for the first five years, with the likely available funding for the same period. The requirement for spending in the first five years was £23M compared with the estimated available funding of almost £11.3M, which left a shortfall of £12M. The estimate of £11.3M assumed that funding for the next

five years was similar to this year, and was the amount available after the deduction of central establishment charges and funding for disabled facilities, with no allowance for a reduction in the number of properties or annual inflation increases.

During this survey, 67 properties were recorded as non-decent and a further 171 had the potential to become non-decent before the end of 2010. These figures were extrapolated from the sample surveyed to indicate that 839 properties either were or could become non-decent before the end of 2010 and that an investment of £0.95M was needed to achieve the Decent Homes Standard.

A further report to the Housing and Community Services Committee in November 2009 would seek approval for a new capital programme that incorporated the work priorities recommended by the survey report. The report would propose a programme of works that would meet the Decent Homes target by the end of 2010, as well as proposing works for the following four years up to 2015.

Further information was also given on this year's combined annual budget from the Major Repairs Allowance and the Housing Revenue Account for disabled facilities on Council owned properties, which was £294,800 against an estimated annual demand of £350,000 based upon current requirements. Further details were given on factors, which were a consideration in anticipating the financial requirements over the next 30 years. Based upon this information, the finance required for the next 30 years was estimated to be £10.5M.

**RESOLVED:**

***That the initial overview from the recent stock conditions survey report be received.***

HCS/29. **PROPOSED REFORM OF COUNCIL HOUSING FINANCE**

A report was submitted which outlined the Government's proposals in their consultation paper, 'Reform of Council Housing Finance', and sought Members agreement to a response to be made by the stipulated closing date of 27th October 2009.

The Government had published its wide-ranging consultation paper on the outcome of the Review of Council Housing Finance on 22nd July 2009. The review had been ongoing for the previous 18 months and followed a previous review, which had lasted a year. There was widespread acceptance that the current national housing system was not working. However it was accepted that there wasn't a ready-made solution. Full details were given on the current system.

There was a summary within the report of the proposals and proposed feedback on the specific questions posed for consultation. The main focus of attention the paper had received, had been on the issue of debt redistribution. It also accepted that the current funding mechanism did not reflect the true

cost and therefore if the current system was retained, it raised the prospect of a reduced contribution to the national pool. This was contradicted by the general understanding that any changes would have to be cost neutral and the difficult general economic climate made this seem more likely. It was estimated that there was £19bn debt in the system that would need to be redistributed.

The consultation paper was broken down into five sections. The first described the review process itself, the second the current system, leaving three sections relating to proposed changes and the future. Full detail was provided under the headings:

- The current housing finance system.
- Costs and standards of Council Housing in the future.
- Options for Fundamental Reform of the System.
- Implementing Reforms.

Members were asked to consider the proposed responses to this consultation.

**RESOLVED:**

***That the response to Government on the proposed reform of Council Housing finance as detailed in the report be agreed.***

HCS/30. **SWADLINCOTE TOWN CENTRE CCTV**

In 2005 a report was approved by the Housing and Community Services Committee, which concluded at the time, that the level of crime did not justify the cost of installing and monitoring a CCTV system for the town centre. Since then the cost of the project had reduced significantly and it was now considered a viable option. The proposed CCTV system would not be a one off solution to the problems occurring within the town centre, but would be used as a tool as part of a larger strategy. There was already a successful Business Watch Scheme, which had over 50 members, and an Alertbox initiative, which had greatly improved the community spirit in the town centre.

A number of boroughs/districts across Derbyshire had utilised systems, which had proved to be very effective when installed, and a similar system would be deployed in Swadlincote. The system offered flexibility in terms of the cameras, i.e. they could be relocated, and further cameras could be added. They could be fixed, or be pan tilt and zoom, and would be completely wireless. The cameras would be located at various points around the town centre. Further details were given on monitoring options, and camera locations.

**RESOLVED:**

***That the installation of a multi-camera CCTV system in Swadlincote Town Centre be approved.***

HCS/31. **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/32. **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**

*Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 3rd September 2009 were received.*

**SWADLINCOTE TOWN CENTRE CCTV (Paragraph 3)**

*The preferred procurement route for delivery of Swadlincote Town Centre CCTV was agreed.*

J. LEMMON

CHAIRMAN