

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

11th March 2004

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Southern (Chair), Councillor Lauro (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Carroll, Isham, Jones, Mulgrew and Taylor.

Conservative Group

Councillor Atkin (substitute for Councillor Mrs. Renwick), Mrs. Hood, Lemmon (substitute for Councillor Harrison), Shaw and Mrs. Walton.

In Attendance

Councillors Bambrick and Richards (Labour Group).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Whyman, M.B.E (Labour Group) and Councillors Harrison and Mrs. Renwick (Conservative Group).

HCS/99. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 8th January and of the Meeting held on 5th February 2004 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

HCS/100. **MEMBERS QUESTIONS AND REPORTS**

- (a) Community Transport - Service to Residents in Oakleigh and Ashleigh Avenues, Newhall

With the approval of the Chair, Councillor Bambrick spoke to this item. He declared a personal interest as the Council's representative on the Community Transport Board. Community Transport had withdrawn its service to residents of Oakleigh and Ashleigh Avenues in Newhall. These Council properties could only be accessed by the unadopted Alma Road and its poor condition was causing damage to vehicles and distress to passengers. He confirmed the value of this service to Council tenants, spoke about the representations made to the former Cabinet Member for Highways, to seek the improvement of this road to an adoptable standard and the more recent representations to the local County Councillor.

The Chair suggested writing to Derbyshire County Council to seek an improvement in the condition of Alma Road, in order that Community Transport would reintroduce the service. This was supported by several Members. Specific comments were made that residents of properties on unadopted roads now paid the same level of Council Tax as those on adopted streets. Previously, the Council had operated a Highways Agency and it had

tried to improve the condition of unadopted roads where possible. Members felt that there was a need to pursue the making up of all unadopted roads within the District. The assistance of County Councillor Lucas, the Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment should be sought to achieve this.

RESOLVED:-

That Derbyshire County Council, as Highway Authority, be requested to improve the condition of Alma Road, Newhall in order that the Community Transport Service may be reintroduced to the Council's tenants in Oakleigh and Ashleigh Avenues.

(b) Insurance Liability

Councillor Jones reported that a letter had been received from the Goseley Neighbourhood Watch Group. This sought clarity on insurance liability for tenants who were the victims of burglary or anti-social behaviour. The Director of Community Services agreed to research this matter and to respond to Councillor Jones. The Community and Leisure Development Manager reminded Members of the scheme provided through the Council for Voluntary Services to install alarm systems for victims of burglary.

(c) National Partnerships Framework

The Committee received a report from the Vice-Chair, Councillor Lauro who explained that a new National Partnerships Framework had been agreed between the Arts Council England, the Local Government Association and the National Association of Local Government Arts Officers. Membership of Partnership agreements would be open to the Arts Council England and local authorities within geographical groupings, determined by the sub-regional Strategic Partnership boundaries. He had recently attended two exploratory meetings, where the establishment of a Derbyshire Partnership had been discussed. It had been agreed not to request an annual subscription from constituent authorities. Monies released by partners would be redirected into arts development work identified by the Partnership. This would be matched by Arts Council England, up to the subscription level of each of the member authorities. Talks had progressed well to date and formal agreement would be needed from each council. A full report on proposals for Derbyshire would be submitted in due course and seeking approval to transfer the Council's subscription to the Derbyshire Partnership. Councillor Lauro was thanked for the report.

HCS/101. **PRESENTATION ON SPORTS DEVELOPMENT**

Officers of the Community and Leisure Development Division gave a presentation to the Committee on sport, recreation and physical activity in South Derbyshire. There was a target that by the year 2020, 70% of the population were physically active five times per week. An activity web showed the involvement of Council staff in specific areas which fed into the strategic sports group and Derbyshire Sport. Further detail was then provided on the services delivered under the headings of Physical Activity, Community Sport, Education, Facilities and Sports' Specific Development. The presentation listed hurdles that prevented participation and suggested a way forward. The Sports Development Partnership model was also displayed for the Committee's information.

The Chair praised the achievements of a local boxing club, but felt that it had received little support from the Council. Officers clarified that assistance had been given to the club in submitting a grant application to “Awards for All”, resulting in £5,000 of funding. Councillor Carroll asked about outreach work in the Melbourne area. Whilst there were facilities within this area, problems of anti-social behaviour were experienced. The Community and Leisure Development Manager commented that the results of the Youth Needs Survey would shortly be available. This would provide information on the facilities required by young people. He spoke about provision of BMX/Skateboard facilities and personal safety issues. Officers responded to a question from Councillor Isham about the decrease in sports activity at schools. Councillor Shaw complimented Officers of the Section for the service provided. The Vice-Chair felt this was the beginning of an exciting phase for sports development in South Derbyshire. He was proud of the team’s achievements and this sentiment was echoed by other Members. The Officers were thanked for the presentation.

RESOLVED:-

That the presentation on Sports Development be received.

HCS/102. **WALBROOK HOUSING ASSOCIATION – ALEXANDRA ROAD PROJECT**

The Committee was reminded of the background to this project, built in 1992. It comprised nine bedsit flats and residents had to share toilet and bathroom facilities. Not long after the accommodation was completed, Walbrook Housing Association began to experience difficulties in letting the properties. In September 2003, the Housing Strategy Manager worked closely with the Association and the Local Teenage Pregnancy Group to explore options for the future of the Centre. From discussions with partner organisations it appeared that the problems resulted from the unpopular design of the bedsits and the poor referral process.

Networking had taken place with a number of key partner agencies in an attempt to increase the use of this Project. It became apparent that there was a need for accommodation for young homeless females. As a result, the Project was revived as accommodation used for housing this client group and the occasional single pregnant woman or teenage parent. However, the shared nature of the accommodation meant that it remained unpopular and there were often clashes between the two client groups.

The implications of Supporting People were reported, together with information on housing needs and rates of teenage pregnancies.

In terms of proposals, it was noted that Supporting People rules required the consent of the Commissioning Body for any change in service provision. If there was a significant change the service might potentially have to surrender Supporting People funds and tender for the revised arrangements. The Project needed to cater for a minimum of eight service users, to be economically viable. The proposals were to remodel the building to provide 8 self-contained 1-bedroom flats and Walbrook had secured funds of approximately £150,000 for these works.

It was clear that tenancy sustainment support was an important factor in preventing homelessness. A meeting had been held with the Supporting People Lead Officer to determine whether this change would substantially affect Walbrook's contract. The Officer was supportive of the proposals, particularly as tenancy sustainment support fitted with the Government's current objective to prevent homelessness. The view was that the proposed changes were only minor and re-tendering would not be required. However, the decision was that of the Supporting People Commissioning Body and Derbyshire County Council. Under the new regime, this was the first time that a service provider had pro-actively responded to user-needs to remodel the service. No precedent had been established and whilst Officers view was that the service should not be re-tendered, the proposal would have to be approved formally. To address the poor referral process, a steering group had been established involving key partners.

The report then explained the interim arrangements during the construction phase. If Supporting People funds were confirmed, it was likely that works would commence in early Summer 2004. There were currently 7 service users in Alexandra Road, but in the last few weeks a number of these had relocated. It was anticipated that by the time the work commenced there would be 3 to 4 residents that would require temporary re-housing. There would be a need to continue the service during the construction phase and the implications of not doing so were reported. Discussions had taken place with the Supporting People Lead Officer on the interim arrangements. It had been agreed that in the short term a floating support service would be provided. However, the remaining residents would need to be re-housed temporarily. The Officers were mindful of the accommodation required and the Committee's approval was sought to let 3 to 4 low demand 1 bedroom flats on licence to these residents. It was proposed that the location of the flats be agreed by the Housing Services Manager in consultation with the Chair of the Committee. Once the construction phase had been completed, the residents would return to Alexandra Road. This would ensure continuity of the service and provide a rental income for the Council on some long-term voids.

The Deputy Leader of the Council welcomed the report and the proposals. She commented on the teenage pregnancy statistics appended to the report, noting that there had been no teenage pregnancies in the Etwall Ward. She reminded Members of the pro-active role taken by the John Port School in Etwall. Councillor Richards sought confirmation that these residents would not be re-housed in elderly persons' schemes, because of the potential conflict that might be caused.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee supports the proposed remodelling of the Alexandra Road Project to eight self-contained flats and three units of floating support.***
- (2) That the Committee approves the short-term letting of three to four low demand Council flats to ensure continuity of the existing service, during the construction phase.***
- (3) That the location of the units be agreed by the Housing Services Manager in consultation with the Chair of the Committee.***

HCS/103. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE UNIT AND HOUSING MAINTENANCE UNIT – VEHICLE AND PLANT REQUIREMENTS 2004/05

The Committee's approval was sought to the procurement of vehicles and plant for the Grounds Maintenance and Housing Units. The items required for the Grounds Maintenance Unit were a single cab Land Rover or similar vehicle, a replacement ride-on rotary mower and a 3.5 tonne tipper vehicle. For the Housing Unit, a further 3.5 tonne tipper vehicle was required, together with a transit van or similar vehicle.

Members were reminded that the Environmental and Development Services Committee had considered its vehicle and plant requirements the previous week. That Committee had suggested investigations into the procurement of a more "environmentally friendly" fleet. With the exception of the ride-on rotary mower, it was suggested that similar consideration be given to the vehicle and plant requirements for this Committee's service areas.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee approves the replacement of a ride-on rotary mower for the Grounds Maintenance Unit and the selection of the most economically advantageous tender received from the Open Tendering Procedure.***
- (2) That procurement of the remaining vehicles and plant for the Grounds Maintenance and Housing Units be deferred and that the Council investigates the feasibility of procuring "environmentally friendly" vehicles and plant.***
- (3) That a further report be submitted to a future Meeting of the Committee on the outcome of these investigations.***

Note: At 7.00 p.m., Councillor Shaw left the Meeting.

HCS/104. STATEMENT OF INTENT IN REGARD TO ASBESTOS WITHIN COUNCIL OWNED BUILDINGS

It was reported that parts of the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 would come into effect on 21st May 2004. These regulations placed a duty on various bodies which had maintenance responsibilities for properties. The Council needed to ensure effective arrangements were established and used to control the risk to persons from asbestos. A draft "Statement of Intent for Asbestos" Policy had been prepared and was submitted for the Committee's consideration. The Statement would be signed by the Chief Executive and an appointed Member. It outlined this Authority's commitment to ensure the safe management of asbestos within all Council premises. The Statement was a first stage and would be supplemented by suitable procedures and policies. These would describe how the Authority intended to determine in detail, the places within buildings where asbestos was situated and how essential information would be brought to the attention of employees, contractors and lease holders of buildings owned by the Council. The policy and procedures would also include the methods of how the Authority would deal with situations when

works were undertaken. High risk materials would be dealt with by licensed Asbestos Contractors. Suitable training would be given to all relevant staff.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee approves the Statement of Intent in regard to managing asbestos within Council-owned Premises.**
- (2) That a Member be appointed to sign the Statement of Intent.**

HCS/105. **COMPACT**

It was reported that Compacts were a Government initiative designed to promote good practice between statutory and voluntary agencies at both the national and local level. Derbyshire County Council's Policy Unit had led on developing a County-wide Compact and this was approved by the County's Cabinet in February. The work involved in developing this Compact led to the formation of a Working Group which had initiated and overseen the development of a Joint Compact for Derbyshire. The Working Group was looking to arrange a launch of the Compact at which different organisations would adopt the core Derbyshire Compact and then go on to develop locally based action plans. Progress on the adoption of a Compact had been reported to the Local Strategic Partnership, who it was envisaged would be heavily involved in the development of a local action plan.

RESOLVED:-

That the Council adopts the Derbyshire Compact at its launch in the County.

HCS/106. **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP SCHEME**

Under Minute No. HCS/90 of 5th February 2004, the Committee requested an additional meeting of the Community Partnership Scheme Assessment Panel. This was to consider resubmitted projects from previous rounds and to review the scheme's processes and procedures.

All eligible applicants were contacted and offered feedback, together with the opportunity to resubmit an improved application. The only application received was from Netherseal Tennis Club, requesting £9,657 towards the costs of rebuilding its Clubhouse, following an arson attack. Details were provided of the total scheme costs, the other funding secured towards this project and the additional information submitted by the Club. The Assessment Panel had scored the application against the questions and weightings agreed previously. The revised project had scored above the previously used cut-off point for positive recommendations to the Committee. The Panel had recommended that a grant of £7,000 be made to the Tennis Club. The Panel thought that the grant should be conditional upon the implementation of a Child Protection Policy and that it should work in partnership with the Council's Sports Development Service, to develop coaching programmes for young people.

As agreed previously, the remaining budget would be carried forward into next year's scheme. The Panel was also tasked with reviewing the Scheme's processes and procedures. Time constraints at the Meeting prevented a

formal review, but an informal assessment had found no major issues. A formal review was deferred to the next Panel meeting.

Councillor Taylor confirmed that the Assessment Panel was pleased to recommend this project for grant support, following the detailed reassessment. He confirmed that the project had scored above the previously used benchmark and commented on the requirements for a child protection policy and promotion of the sport. He then assured Members of the transparency of this process and the intention to undertake a full review in the future. He concluded by looking forward to high quality bids for future funding rounds.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approves the recommendation of the Community Partnerships Scheme Assessment Panel and awards a grant of £7,000 to the Netherseal Tennis Club.

Note: At 7.05 p.m., Councillor Lemmon left the Meeting.

HCS/107. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [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 Meeting held on 5th February 2004 were received.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS – REHOUSING OF SEX OFFENDERS (Paragraph 3)

A Member submitted an urgent report on this topic.

PROVISION OF FLOODLIT ARTIFICIAL TURF PITCH AT PINGLE SCHOOL, SWADLINCOTE (Paragraph 8)

The Committee received an update and approved the way forward for this project.

R. W. SOUTHERN

CHAIR

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