

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

5th February 2004

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Southern (Chair), Councillor Lauro (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Carroll, Dunn (substitute for Councillor Isham), Jones, Mulgrew, Taylor and Whyman, M.B.E.

Conservative Group

Councillors Mrs. Hood, Harrison, Mrs. Renwick, Shaw and Mrs. Walton.

In Attendance

Councillor Bell (Labour Group) and Councillor Mrs. Wheeler (Conservative Group).

APOLOGY

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

HCS/86 **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th November 2003 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

HCS/87. **BRETBY CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Open Minutes of the Bretby Crematorium Joint Committee Meeting held on 18th June 2003 be received.
- (2) That the Open Minutes of the Bretby Crematorium Scrutiny Panel Meetings held on 10th September and 26th November 2003 be received.

HCS/88. **ETWALL LEISURE CENTRE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED:-

That the Open Minutes of the Etwall Leisure Centre Joint Management Committee Meeting held on 13th October 2003 be received.

HCS/89. **RESTORATION OF MAURICE LEA MEMORIAL PARK**

It was reported that a Stage 2 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid for funding to restore Maurice Lea Memorial Park had been successful. The grant award was £643,500 towards total eligible project costs of £977,033. Members were reminded of the original submission made. To confirm the award, the

Council was required to sign a formal contract and an outline was given of the conditions contained within this contract.

The next stage was to appoint consultants to manage the delivery of the individual elements of the project. In June 2002, the Committee approved a shortlist of consultants to tender for the development work and it was intended to use the same shortlist for tenders for the delivery element of the project. At the development stage, the project was overseen by a small team, comprising a local Member, a community representative, the appointed consultant and the Grounds and Facilities Manager. It was proposed to use a similar arrangement for the delivery of the project. Periodic reports would be made to the Committee at key stages and an outline of the project timetable was appended to the report.

In terms of financial implications, a sum of £137,000 had been earmarked in the Council's Capital Programme for 2004/05 and there was revenue funding of £24,000 each year from 2004/05 onwards. Effectively, the Council had earmarked resources of approximately £257,000. The HLF was prepared to meet 65% of the additional revenue costs for the first five years of the project. At this stage, the major task was to attract the remainder of the partnership funding identified. The success of these applications would influence any flexibility and it might prove necessary to reallocate some funding. Efforts would also be made to attract funding for some of the projects that the HLF had identified as ineligible, particularly tree works and the sports terrace.

Councillor Dunn asked whether the funding shortfall could be met by further applications to Sport England or other such bodies. The Officer felt there might be some opportunity to seek funding from the Football Foundation. Councillor Harrison commented that this was the largest grant award from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Officers were to be congratulated. He questioned what would happen if Officers were not successful in attracting the funding shortfall and it might prove necessary to reduce the scale of the project. Contingencies had been built in and Officers were hopeful of delivering the full project. The Leader of the Council sought further information on the work content and felt the grant award was fantastic news. The Chair praised the Officers involved. He commented that the perimeter fencing would provide a more open aspect to the Park and enable residents to "self police" the area. It was noted that a permanent park keeper would be provided as part of this scheme.

RESOLVED:-

That the Heritage Lottery Fund offer of grant aid of £643,500 to restore the Park be accepted and a formal contract be entered into to deliver a restoration project to the value of £977,000.

HCS/90. **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS SCHEME**

It was reported that the Community Partnerships Scheme for 2003/04 had continued using the same processes and procedures agreed last year. However, the budget had been increased to £150,000 and extra Panel Meetings had been arranged to allow for distribution of grants across the year. In addition to allocating grants, the scheme provided for funding advice and project development support to the voluntary and community sectors.

In total, 17 applications were received for the third and final bidding round of 2003/04 asking for £118,377. Following previous grant awards, the remaining budget was £74,410. The Panel had assessed and ranked the applications according to the scheme's criteria and had made a recommendation to fund nine of the seventeen projects. In addition, the Panel had requested this Committee to consider a further award of a grant to Netherseal Tennis Club, whose scored bid fell just below the previously used award level. However, this level had been set when the number, quality and size of applications was an unknown quantity and the budget needed to be safeguarded.

Whilst the scheme received a large number of applications at this round, the amount of grant requested was smaller than in previous rounds. There was anticipated increased demand for the next financial year. It was thought more prudent to recommend carrying forward the remaining budget into the next financial year. As in the past, unsuccessful applicants would be offered feedback concerning their applications and be invited to resubmit where appropriate.

The Panel also agreed the scope of a review of the scheme to date, to include statistical analysis of the nature and volume of applications and examination of the assessment and allocation processes. The review findings illustrated amongst other things, that the scheme was generating a steady number of enquiries and applications. These were spread geographically and encompassed different organisations and different types of projects. The comparison of grant awarded to total project cost also indicated that the scheme was offering a healthy funding ratio. As the scheme had only recently been reintroduced, these statistics needed close monitoring, to inform marketing and promotion and ensure equality of access.

The Chair reminded Members of the agreed criteria used by the Assessment Panel to determine grant applications. The application from Netherseal Tennis Club had not achieved a sufficient score to be approved. He felt that if Members were minded to approve this application, consideration should also be given to those other previously unsuccessful bids. He commented that additional information had recently been received in respect of this grant application. Councillor Shaw spoke in support of the application from Netherseal Tennis Club. He explained the club's circumstances and that its premises had been destroyed by fire. He quoted from a public health report on the benefits of sport and spoke of the need for facilities in this part of the District. He considered that this was a time urgent matter. If the Committee could not grant the application at this meeting, the Assessment Panel should be reconvened before the financial year end to look at the application.

The Leader of the Council sought clarification on the referral of this grant application, whilst recognising the value of tennis clubs. He understood that the Assessment Panel's terms of reference provided that Members should not consider grant applications within their respective ward. There was an exchange between Members on this issue.

Councillor Carroll submitted a proposal to provide a way forward. As part of this, it was suggested that the Panel's membership be widened and details of grant applications be circulated to all Members of the Council. Councillor Carroll also welcomed the approval of the grant for the Melbourne Methodist Church.

With the Chair's approval, Councillor Mrs. Wheeler spoke to this item, particularly about the gearing that would be achieved through the grant of the Netherseal Tennis Club application. She commented about facility provision in rural areas, anti-social behaviour and Crime and Disorder. The Chair repeated the need for equity in reconsidering all other unsuccessful bids. Councillor Shaw felt that increasing the size of the assessment panel might impede its efficiency. The Leader of the Council responded and compared this Panel to the one which assessed service development proposals. Councillor Harrison felt that the current system needed amendment to provide reasonableness and greater flexibility. The application from Netherseal Tennis Club appeared deserving and had the highest gearing of any application submitted this year. He commented on the political balance requirements of expanding the Group. Councillor Lauro suggested that the Assessment Panel could be reformed given the current underspend on the budget, to reconsider those unsuccessful grant applications. Clarification was provided that the Netherseal application was the only one that fell just short of the approval level contained within the criteria. Several Members were unaware of this fact. Further debate took place, particularly on the expansion of the Panel, the possibility of introducing a two-tier approach for determination of these grant applications and about reconvening the Assessment Panel.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee approves the recommendations of the Community Partnerships Scheme Assessment Panel and awards grants totalling £43,207 to:-
Old Post Regeneration Association;
Melbourne Methodist Church;
People Express;
Nadins Trust;
Hill Street Baptist Church;
Willington Old School Trust;
Emmanuel Church;
Dethick Educational Trust; and
Staunton Harold Sailing Club;
subject to the conditions identified, where applicable.**
- (2) That the Committee does not approve a further grant award to the Netherseal Tennis Club at this time.**
- (3) That all unsuccessful grant applicants for the current year be invited to re-submit bids and that a further Meeting of the Assessment Panel be convened to reconsider those grant applications and to make recommendations on grant awards, utilising the available funds, with any underspend carried forward until 2005/06.**
- (4) That the Committee notes the contents of a review of the operation of the scheme and requests an operational detail review before the scheme recommences in the next financial year.**
- (5) That the Panel's membership be extended to include the Leader of the Council and an additional Member of the Conservative Group.**

HCS/91. **DRAFT HOUSING SERVICES SERVICE PLAN 2004/2007**

The Committee gave consideration to the Draft Housing Services Service Plan for the period 2004/07. Service Plans provided an important part of the Council's performance management framework and details were given of those other elements within this framework. The form and content of Service Plans had been revised with the aim of making them shorter and more focused on key issues. They had also been extended to cover a three year period, although they would be reviewed and rolled forward annually. Progress reports would continue to be made every six months.

Details were provided of the sections contained within the Service Plan. It had been developed on the basis that there would be no change in the level of resources devoted to the service area. Proposals for service developments or reductions along with new capital projects would be considered through a separate mechanism and incorporated into the Service Plan at a later date. Proposals resulting from the new Corporate Plan would also need to be included later. It was proposed therefore that the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to agree the final version of the Plan when the budget and the Corporate Plan had been approved.

The Chair praised Officers on the report content, but requested that in future, figures be provided to support the percentage data. Councillor Mrs. Walton praised the report's clarity and spoke about the reclassification of sheltered housing. Councillor Harrison commented on the County Council view that there were too many units of sheltered accommodation within the District. He sought further information in relation to key tasks for sheltered housing and about a Best Value Performance Indicator on the percentage of authority buildings that were open to the public. The Housing Manager was asked to supply further information to the Member in this regard. The Leader of the Council commented on the opportunity to reclassify underused sheltered housing to provide more general use accommodation. In response to issues raised by Members, the Housing Manager explained the planned timescale for consultation with tenants on the future management options for housing. Councillor Mrs. Wheeler commented on the increasing housing management costs and questioned whether this was because of the reducing housing stock. The Housing Manager confirmed that this did have an impact on the costs. However, statistically South Derbyshire was amongst the lowest 15% of authorities nationally in terms of housing management costs.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the draft Housing Services Service Plan be approved as the basis for service delivery over the period April 2004 to March 2007.***
- (2) That the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to agree the final version of the Plan in the light of the new Corporate Plan and the approved 2004/05 budget.***
- (3) That Members' views be taken forward regarding matters to be addressed through the budgetary process.***

HCS/92. **PROVISION OF PART-TIME SATELLITE POST OFFICE AT KENDRICK'S CLOSE, HARTSHORNE**

The Committee was reminded of the background to this item. The Post Office wished to establish a satellite office in the Community Room at Kendrick's Close, Hartshorne. At the Meeting on 20th November 2003, the Committee approved consultation with residents of the scheme on this proposal.

It was reported that the consultation took place during the early part of December 2003. Information was circulated to residents together with a questionnaire to seek their views. Details were provided of the feedback received and there was a clear majority of tenants that either disagreed or disagreed strongly with the proposal. In view of this, the Post Office had been advised that its request could not be accommodated.

RESOLVED:-

That Members note the outcome of the consultation with the residents of Kendrick's Close Sheltered Housing Scheme, in relation to the provision of a part-time post office.

HCS/93. **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 20th November 2003 were received.

SKATEBOARD/BMX PROVISION, VILLAGE HALL SITE, HILTON (Paragraph 8)

The Committee approved proposals for the provision of a Skateboard/BMX facility on the Village Hall site at Hilton.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY (Paragraph 11)

The Committee adopted a Child Protection Policy for use in the service areas of Leisure and Community Development.

ROSLISTON FORESTRY CENTRE – DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITY/CLASSROOM AREA (Paragraph 9)

The Committee approved proposals to make use of external funding and develop the activity/classroom area at the Centre.

PROPOSED MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME FOR COUNCIL HOUSING 2004/05 (Paragraph 9)

The Committee approved a proposed programme and strategy for delivering the maintenance, refurbishment and improvement of the Council's housing stock for the period 2004/05-2009/10.

R. W. SOUTHERN

CHAIR