

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

11th June 2009

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

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

Labour Group

Councillors Mrs. Gillespie, Mrs. Lane, Rhind, Richards and Shepherd.

In Attendance

Councillor Mrs. Farrington (Conservative Group).

HCS/1. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd April 2009 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

HCS/2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Harrison declared a personal interest in Minute No. HCS/6 (Leisure Pot Capital Expenditure Proposal) as a Member of Derbyshire County Council.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

HCS/3. **SERVICE PLANS 2009/10**

It was reported that Service Plans were a key part of the Council's performance management framework, acting as an important link between high-level plans and strategies, such as the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy, and personal performance objectives established through the Employee Review and Development Scheme. This year's plans captured a number of crosscutting themes for the Council such as Value for Money, outcomes and linking priorities to budgets.

Details were provided of the contents of each Service Plan, and they reflected current themes and priorities within the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy. These would be reviewed, with new plans being published in 2009. For this reason, the plans covered a one year period and monitoring reports would be provided on a quarterly basis.

Members were invited to ask questions, and responses were given on anti-social behaviour and fuel property.

Members praised achievements detailed within the Plan, and thanks were conveyed to all staff involved.

RESOLVED:

That Service Plans for Housing Services, Environmental Services and Leisure and Community Development be approved as the basis for service delivery over the period to March 2010.

HCS/4. **DRAFT NEW HOUSING STRATEGY 2009 - 2014**

A presentation was given detailing the proposed Draft New Housing Strategy for the period 2009 to 2014.

Background information was provided and the Housing Strategy Manager pointed out that in developing this New Housing Strategy, officers had been mindful of the prospect of having to review this strategy again as a result of the Government publishing further guidance in the near future. The new strategy was prepared now to provide the strategic housing direction for all other relevant strategies such as the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Local Development Framework.

It was confirmed that the outcome of the consultation exercises and housing needs research had been considered when developing the strategy. It was important that the big issues which impacted on the wider community, were focussed upon, hence the strategy focussed on the following two key priorities:

- To reduce the shortfall in affordable housing.
- To prevent loss of a home and promote independent living.

In addition, the strategy proposed action to build upon the outcome of the recent Audit Commission inspection of the Strategic Housing Service (awarded 2 stars) by maintaining up to date housing needs evidence and regularly reviewing the service against the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry standards.

The Housing Strategy Manager confirmed the requirements of a "home for life".

RESOLVED:

- (1) ***That the proposed draft Housing Strategy for the period 2009 – 2014 be approved.***
- (2) ***That the draft Housing Strategy be subject to a further 4 week consultation.***
- (3) ***That authority be given to the Director of Community Services to make minor amendments as a result of comments received following further consultation. Any proposed major amendments to be reported back through the Committee process.***

HCS/5. RECHARGEABLE REPAIRS

A report was submitted requesting that the percentage administration fee applicable to raising a rechargeable repair be amended, and that the VAT rules applicable for a rechargeable repair were defined.

Full details were given on numbers of responsive repairs that were carried out, primarily by the Housing Services in-house workforce. A definition was given of rechargeable work, and having recently reviewed the procedure for the recovery of debt for such work, it had become clear that the administration fee for these repairs needed to be amended from 15% to 10%. In addition, where a rechargeable repair was charged to a tenant who was still in residence, then there was a supply of service to the tenant that was liable to VAT at the standard rate. Charges for repairs and making good when a tenant had vacated the property and left it in an unfit condition were regarded as compensation. Charges for rechargeable repairs to third parties to recover costs of damage to Council dwellings were also regarded as compensation, and therefore no VAT was due on these.

RESOLVED:

- (1) *That the amended rechargeable repairs policy be recommended to Finance and Management Committee on 18th June 2009.***
- (2) *That an amendment to the administration charge be made for processing a rechargeable repair, from 15% to 10% to bring it in line with the Fees and Charges 2009/10 policy.***
- (3) *That the application of VAT at the standard rate be approved only in instances where the tenant is still in residence.***
- (4) *That the non-application of VAT for rechargeable repairs and the cost of making good where the tenant has vacated the property and left it in an unfit state, be approved.***
- (5) *That the non application of VAT for rechargeable repairs and the cost of making good where a third party (i.e. not the tenant) is the party liable for paying the rechargeable repair costs, be approved.***

HCS/6. LEISURE POT CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROPOSAL

A report was submitted on the success of the Youth/Play Facilities capital programme delivered over the last three years, and to outline proposals for the expenditure in 2009/10, of monies currently contained in "leisure pots".

A capital programme of Youth/Play Facility improvements had been delivered over the last three years. In addition a Play and Youth Facility Audit was undertaken to assess the quality of play provision of the 47 sites across the District. These sites had been graded and ranked according to score, and were used to provide a priority list of projects for inclusion on the capital programme.

A list of priority sites for 2009/10 were given within an annexe to the report along with costs, which were an estimate of the funding required to bring the sites up to a good standard, and were based on consultation with the Parish Councils where appropriate. External funding had already been secured against the programme, and a total of £100,000 had been allocated through the Derbyshire County Council Play Builder programme. This programme would attract additional funding through partnership working and had the ability to demonstrate excellent added value through leverage generated by successful grant applications.

Funding for the programme was principally to come from developer contributions received through Section 106 agreements for off site provision of open space and play facilities. Contributions that were not site specific had been organised into “leisure pots” for the North, Central and South areas of the District.

RESOLVED:-

That priorities identified in the report for allocating “leisure pot” funding in 2009/10 be approved.

(Councillor Harrison declared a personal interest in this item as a Member of Derbyshire County Council).

HCS/7. **NOS. 18 AND 20 ASKEW GROVE, REPTON**

Members were requested to grant approval for the relaxation of the restrictive covenants imposed on numbers 18 and 20 Askew Grove, Repton in their Right to Buy transfers.

RESOLVED:-

That the relaxation of the restrictive covenants on numbers 18 and 20 Askew Grove, Repton to allow the redevelopment of the site for four new properties be approved.

HCS/8. **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/9. **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 Meeting held on 23rd April 2009 were received.

LAND AT MELBOURNE (Paragraph 3)

The Committee agreed to dispose of an area of land deemed surplus to Council requirements.

CIVIL ENGINEERING WORKS – MIDWAY FISHPONDS (Paragraph 3)

Members approved the shortlist of contractors to be invited to tender.

J. LEMMON

CHAIRMAN