

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

9th October 2003

**PRESENT:-**

**Labour Group**

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

**Conservative Group**

Councillors Bladen (substitute for Councillor Mrs. Renwick), Mrs. Hood, Harrison and Mrs. Walton.

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Mrs. Renwick and Shaw (Conservative Group).

HCS/44. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th August 2003 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

HCS/45. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs. Hood declared a personal interest in respect of item No. 12 – Community Partnerships Scheme.

HCS/46. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS**

(a) Facilities Development Officer

The Chair introduced James Miller, the recently appointed Facilities Development Officer.

(b) Maintenance of Housing Association Properties

A Hilton Ward Member voiced concerns about the maintenance of Housing Association properties in that area. She explained that some of the low cost housing within the Village had been neglected and there had been some vandalism of shrubs, trees and fencing. Whilst the Council had no direct authority over registered social landlords, there was a Housing Strategy Group which the Council attended with RSL's. The Member was asked to provide details so that this matter could be investigated.

(c) Improvement Works to Swadlincote Woodlands Forest Park

Further to Minute No. HCS/36 of 28th August 2003, it was reported that a visit had taken place to Sheffield to view a climbing boulder, similar to that proposed for the Swadlincote Woodlands Forest Park. The Member explained that the climbing boulder visited was popular with children and the health

and safety implications had been assessed. It was considered that a similar feature on the Swadlincote Woodlands Forest Park would be well used.

(d) Council Policy on Sex Offenders and Drug Dealers

A Member sought an update on the Council's policies regarding convicted sex offenders and drug dealers. He had been involved with an issue in his own Midway Ward, but given the nature of this subject, it was agreed to consider the matter further in the Exempt part of the Meeting.

**MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**

HCS/47. **BRETBY CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE – SCRUTINY PANEL**

**RESOLVED:-**

That the Open Minutes of the Bretby Crematorium Scrutiny Panel Meeting held on 30th July 2003 be received.

HCS/48. **ETWALL LEISURE CENTRE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

That the Open Minutes of the Etwall Leisure Centre Joint Management Committee Meeting held on 7th April 2003 be received.

HCS/49 **2003/04 SERVICE PLANS – HALF-YEAR MONITORING REPORTS**

It was reported that Service Plans were an important part of the Council's performance management framework. In November 2002, the Committee approved Service Plans for the Housing Services, Community and Leisure Development, Environmental Health and Technical Services Divisions. These Plans were intended to provide a basis for service delivery during the current financial year. Reports were provided to review progress from 1st April to 30th September 2003. Members were reminded of the form and content of each Service Plan and Divisional Managers were invited to highlight particular issues within their respective Service Plans.

The Leader of the Council commented on the excellent progress made within the Housing Division. He questioned whether any progress had been made on the re-designation of certain parts of the housing stock. The Housing Services Manager confirmed that a review was to take place and a report would be submitted to the next Committee meeting. The Council's Leader then referred to the tasks at risk of non-delivery, particularly those that had been assessed initially as a high priority. Clarification was provided on the relative priority of the actions referred to.

A Member sought clarification on the achievements section of the report, particularly relating to performance on arrears, voids and repairs and the introduction of Supporting People. It was confirmed that performance on repairs would be the subject of a report to the next Committee Meeting. The use of "bed and breakfast" temporary accommodation and the registration of private landlords were also discussed. The Chair congratulated staff within the Division on the performance indicator relating to rent collection.

Consideration was given to the Service Plan for the Community and Leisure Development Division. In response to a Members' question, the Divisional

Manager explained the staffing arrangements and contract periods for those staff funded externally. A view was expressed that the Derbyshire County Council should provide some funding towards the Environmental Education Officer post. There was a discussion about the relative priority afforded to culture and heritage within the District. Crime and Disorder was a key issue and praise was voiced for the work being undertaken. It would have been useful to benchmark performance indicators for this area to demonstrate the effective service delivered. There was a discussion about the Council's role in supporting bids by community groups for external funding. Reference was made to the support provided previously and it was understood that this would continue to be provided by the new Officer. It was explained that the post involved had been redesignated to cover additional service areas. This post did not provide dedicated support to community groups and a service development proposal to deliver this service had been unsuccessful. Emerging issues were considered and a Member referred to anti-social behaviour. An announcement was awaited, but it was expected that additional funding would be provided for this area of work. The Vice-Chair praised the achievements of this Division and felt that it should be developed to further the Council's community leadership role.

In receiving the Environmental Health Service Plan, there was a discussion about the transfer of Liquor Licensing, the additional staffing resources required and the Member and staff training that would be needed. It was understood that many local authorities had been preparing for the transfer over recent months and an outline was given of the work that had been undertaken to date. Questions were submitted about the Division's enforcement action and clarification was sought on the performance indicators. A response was provided and further information would be circulated to the Leader of the Council. In response to questions from the Chair, information was provided about the Dog Warden service, the number of stray dogs collected over the last six month period, the number of fouling complaints received and the need for witness support to enable successful prosecutions. Further questions were submitted about the pest control statistics and Officers were requested to supply information to Members. The measurement of savings in domestic energy usage was also discussed.

Consideration was given to the Technical Services Division Service Plan. The Deputy Leader of the Council asked about the emerging issue relating to prioritising and addressing gaps in the public space CPA diagnostic assessment. The Director of Community Services confirmed this was an important issue and would be the subject of a separate committee report. The development of the Swadlincote Woodlands Forest Park was discussed and Members felt there was a need for continued investment and to pursue further development opportunities. Officers recognised the need for countryside management expertise and ensuring access to further resources. The Chair voiced his disappointment at the reported vandalism problems on the recently completed skateboard park on the Woodhouses site in Woodville. This view was shared by other Members who referred to other vandalism problems on children's play facilities elsewhere in the District. Through the Crime and Disorder Partnership, young people had been involved throughout this project and it had been hoped that their involvement would deter vandalism problems.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the half year Service Plan Monitoring Reports for Housing Services, Community and Leisure Development, Environmental Health and Technical Services be received and that Members comments be noted.***

**HCS/50. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT – BALANCING HOUSING MARKETS – THEMATIC REVIEW**

It was reported that an Officer Group had been established and a base-line assessment had been produced on Balancing Housing Markets. From this, a summary of key issues was established and details were appended to the report. Many strengths had been found with the way that the Council worked to balance its housing markets and some examples were provided. There were some areas for improvement relating to keeping up to date information, poor cross authority working and poor links with partner strategies or linkages between departments. The Group had consulted with staff, TACT, developers, private landlords and others, to test the findings and discover whether there were any other areas for improvement that should be built into an improvement plan. The responses received were set out within the report.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Committee notes the progress made on the Balancing Housing Markets Thematic Review.***

**HCS/51. FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

It was reported that James Miller commenced employment as the Council's Facilities Development Officer on 22nd September 2003. His primary responsibility was to develop and deliver some of the Council's capital projects. The Officer had an architectural and project management background. Appended to the report was a summary of the Draft Work Programme and Members were reminded of the schemes included through the service planning process or identified through the shortfall on the facility strategy.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Committee notes the content of the report and approves the work programme submitted.***

**HCS/52. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS SCHEME**

It was reported that the Community Partnerships Scheme for 2003/04 would continue using the same processes and procedures agreed last year. However, the budget had been increased to £150,000 and extra Panel meetings would be called 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, six applications were received for the second bidding round, asking for approximately £70,000. Following the first round of grant awards, and

with one further round scheduled, the remaining budget was £100,605. One application had been withdrawn due to funds being available from an alternate source. The Panel had assessed and ranked the remaining applications according to the criteria and had made a recommendation to fund two of the five projects. In addition to considering the scores at this round, the Panel was mindful of other factors such as scores from previous and future applicants, the overall budget, the development stage of projects and the quality of information received.

Consequently, two awards were recommended, one for the full amount requested and one for 25% of the total project costs. Two other projects were to be reconsidered at the next Panel Meeting and the remaining project would be invited to re-submit and offered support with its application. In addition, following general consideration of the effectiveness of the scheme, it was recommended that a mini-review should take place.

A Melbourne Member voiced her disappointment that a project for the ward had been unsuccessful. She spoke of the need for facilities, particularly for young people and current problems with anti-social behaviour. She requested project development support for the group, so that the bid could be re-submitted.

Councillor Taylor advised that he had Chaired this Panel and assured Members of the consistent approach applied in determining grant bids. Another Member questioned the equity of opportunity and asked how the scheme was publicised. Several Members responded with details of how the scheme was marketed. The Vice-Chair commented on the leisure facility shortfall within South Derbyshire, referring particularly to the John Port School site and facilities in Melbourne. There was a need for significant resources and he felt that the Council should look at all funding possibilities including private finance initiatives.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Committee approves the recommendations of the Community Partnerships Scheme Assessment Panel and awards grants totalling £26,195 to Burton YMCA and Linton Parochial Church Council Brick Room Management Committee.***
- (2) That Members approve the proposal for a mini-review of the operation of the Scheme and that this be submitted to the February 2004 Committee, following the third meeting of the Assessment Panel.***

HCS/53. **COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT – DECENT HOMES STANDARD – THEMATIC REVIEW**

It was reported that an Officer Group had been established and a base line assessment had been produced for this CPA thematic review. From this, a summary of key issues was established and details were appended to the report. Many strengths had been found with the way that the Council worked towards implementing the 'Decent Homes Standard' and some examples were provided. There were some areas for improvement with identified gaps in service provision, poor links with some partner strategies, no formal linkages between departments, limited securing of additional

available resources and poor links between the housing strategy and other strategies. The Group had consulted with staff, TACT and contractors to test out the findings and discover whether there were any other areas for improvement that should be built into an improvement plan. The responses received were set out within the report.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Committee notes the progress made on the Decent Homes Standard Thematic Review.***

HCS/54. **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.***

**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS – COUNCIL POLICY ON SEX OFFENDERS AND DRUG DEALERS (Paragraph 3)**

***The Committee gave further consideration to this matter.***

**MINUTES**

***The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th August 2003 were received.***

**ETWALL LEISURE CENTRE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (Paragraph 7)**

***The Committee received the Exempt Minutes of the Etwall Leisure Centre Joint Management Committee Meeting held on 7th April 2003.***

**VILLAGE HALLS AND COMMUNITY PREMISES (Paragraph 9)**

***The Committee was advised of current lease arrangements for village halls and made a recommendation on the terms on which these leases should be renewed.***

R. W. SOUTHERN

CHAIR