

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

14th June 2012

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Lemmon (Chairman) and Councillors Bale (substitute for Councillor Hewlett (Vice-Chairman)), Ford, Harrison, Mrs. Hood, Murray and Roberts (substitute for Councillor Smith).

Labour Group

Councillors Dunn, Mrs. Heath, Rhind, Richards, Southerd (substitute for Councillor Stuart) and Taylor (substitute for Councillor Mulgrew).

In attendance

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

HCS/1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Hewlett and Smith (Conservative Group) and Mulgrew and Stuart (Labour Group).

HCS/2. **MINUTES**

The Open and Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th April 2012, were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

HCS/3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Murray declared a personal interest in Minute No. HCS/6, (Thursday Farmers and Specialist Markets in Swadlincote), as he was an acquaintance of the Market Manager. Councillor Richards declared a personal interest in Minute No. HCS/4, (Funded Voluntary Organisation Review), as he was a non-Council appointed representative on the Citizens Advice Bureau.

HCS/4. **FUNDED VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION REVIEW**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had undertaken a detailed review which was attached as an Annexe to the report. The report recognised the work done throughout South Derbyshire by the Funded Voluntary Organisation and the volunteers themselves. The Committee had considered a large amount of evidence in depth, visited several groups, invited participation and received several presentations.

Members requested further details on the £100,000 of revenue funding, that was proposed to be used to augment the work of the sector to further address the corporate aims of the Council.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee receives the Funded Voluntary Organisation Review Report and approves the recommendations contained within.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

HCS/5. **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP SCHEME**

Background was provided on the Community Partnership Scheme which offered capital grants of up to £25,000 for projects from the voluntary and community sector. Money was allocated to the scheme for each year 2002/03 to 2007/08. The last grants to be made were allocated during 2008/09.

There was currently no annual budget for this scheme, however it had the potential to operate through under-spend, and where grants had been allocated but projects had not managed to progress and awards had been taken back into the scheme. The remaining total budget currently stood at £42,000.

It was recommended that £42,000 of capital grant money which remained within the Community Partnership Scheme be distributed in accordance with the schemes guidelines and criteria.

RESOLVED:-

That the Community Partnership Scheme be re-opened for funding applications.

HCS/6. **THURSDAY FARMERS AND SPECIALIST MARKETS IN SWADLINCOTE**

It was reported that Swadlincote Market had been successful since its move onto the High Street. Stall lettings were up and turnover had increased. Details of events which took place in the Town Centre were provided, and it was also confirmed that there were currently plans underway to increase such events further.

One specific proposed development was the creation of a Farmers Market in Swadlincote. Consultation exercises for both the Town Centre Vision and the retention of the market in the High Street had both yielded strong support for a Farmers Market. Full details were provided on the existing market and further consultation which had taken place. The current market was managed by Geraud Markets UK Limited, and they had agreed to manage a pilot Farmers Market.

RESOLVED:-

That approval be granted to designate Thursday as an extra Market Day for Swadlincote Market.

HCS/7. CORPORATE PLAN 2009 – 14: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT YEAR END REPORT 2011/12

A report was submitted detailing achievements for the year ending March 2012 in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan 2009 – 14. The Corporate plan consisted of four main themes or priorities, of which this Committee was responsible for the delivery of two outcomes within the Safe and Secure theme and two outcomes within the Lifestyle Choices. Tables were provided which summarised progress against targets, and also those that had not been completed, with remedial action summarised.

It was asked why timescales were noted within the report as 1.25 weeks etc., rather than 1 week, 3 days, for example. The Director of Operations agreed to look into this for the ensuing year.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Council's key achievements and performance for the year ending 2011/12, in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan be noted.***
- (2) That, where performance has failed to achieve the specified target, the response be noted.***

HCS/8. SERVICE PLANS

Service Plans had been distributed, and Members of the Housing and Community Services Committee were asked to focus on the following service areas:

- Housing and Environmental Services
- Community and Planning Services

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 Sustainable Community Strategy, and personal performance objectives established through the Employee Review and Development Scheme.

The formal content of Service Plans had been reviewed. This years plan had been amended to capture a number of cost cutting themes for the Council, such as a transformation programme, partnerships, outcomes and linking priorities to budgets.

RESOLVED:-

That the Service Plans for Community and Planning Services and Housing and Environmental Services be approved as the basis for service delivery over the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013.

HCS/9. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

An overview was provided on the up to date financial position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and how the service moves forward under the new self financing regime.

Since the HRA Business Plan was written, several potential variables had now been confirmed as actual. In summary:

- The debt settlement take on was £57.423m, giving a total HRA debt of £58.723m.
- The interest rates for that debt were at an average of 2.78% over 30 years – all rates were fixed and the debt was paid back in 6 tranches ranging from year 10 to year 30.
- The actual rent settlement figure for 2012/13 and the outturn on the account for 2011/12.

Further to the above, an 8 page supplement to the HRA had been drafted, and was attached as an appendix to the report. Key messages from this were in line with the original plan and were summarised within the report.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) *That the Housing Service undertakes a series of workshop sessions with tenants, staff and Members regarding the future of the Housing Revenue Account business.***
- (2) *That the Committee considers an updated HRA Business Plan incorporating proposals arising out of workshops, in the Autumn of 2012.***

HCS/10. RIGHT TO BUY RECEIPTS – INVESTMENT IN NEW AFFORDABLE RENTED HOMES

A report was submitted that advised Members that when a property was sold under the Right To Buy (RTB) provisions, the Government took 75% of the income, with the remaining 25% being retained locally. In the self financing settlement for the future operation of the HRA, the Government had predicted the Right to Buy sales for the next 30 years for each local authority landlord. These predictions were based on sale numbers in recent years. The Government then built their predicted income into its own budgeting figures. For South Derbyshire the number of sales ranged from 6 this year and next year through to 11 per annum by year 30.

Prior to 2nd April 2012, the cash discount that any prospective purchaser could obtain on buying their house in South Derbyshire was capped at £24,000. This was the East Midlands capping level – the amount varied according to regional circumstances. On 2nd April 2012, the Government increased the cap nationally on Right to Buy sales to £75,000. This was expected to substantially increase the number of sales beyond the number previously predicted, and the issue at hand was how the income from those additional sales was treated.

The Government had stated that it would allow local authorities to retain all of the additional receipts if the income was used to provide new affordable housing. They had also stated that the maximum amount that could be used from the sales for each property built or purchased could not be more than 30% of the cost of build or purchase. The balance of up to 75% would need to be funded by borrowing.

Options on how the new provision could be delivered were provided within the report, although early signs were that most local authorities would sign the agreement, as it kept the money local. The Chartered Institute of Housing also supported such a stance.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That it be recommended to Finance and Management Committee, that the signing of an agreement with the Government to use additional Right to Buy receipts for investment in new affordable homes, be approved.***
- (2) That a feasibility budget of up to £20,000 be approved, to assist in developing delivery models for the new homes.***

HCS/11. **STRATEGIC TENANCY STRATEGY**

Members were advised of the statutory duty Local Authorities were under to prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy within 12 months of the publication of the Localism Act 2011. This duty applied to all Local Authorities whether or not they still retained housing stock and were seen as part of the Authority's strategic housing role.

Due to timescales, the consultation needed to be started on a draft strategy during the summer, giving Members the opportunity to review the outcome of consultation and the proposed Tenancy Strategy in late autumn.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the statutory duty for Local Authorities to publish a Tenancy Strategy be noted.***
- (2) That a draft Tenancy Strategy be prepared, based on the broad principles set-out in the report, and that subsequent consultation takes place during the summer.***
- (3) That a further report providing feedback on the consultation and a proposed Tenancy Strategy for the District be considered during Autumn 2012.***

HCS/12. **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/13. **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.

LAND AT WOODVILLE (Paragraph 3)

This report was deferred for further consideration.

EVICTION JUDGEMENT (Paragraph 2)

The Judgement was noted.

J. LEMMON

CHAIRMAN