

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

16th June 2011

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Lemmon (Chairman), Councillor Hewlett (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Mrs. Hall (substitute for Councillor Mrs. Hood), Harrison, Murray, Smith and Wheeler.

Labour Group

Councillors Dunn, Mulgrew, Rhind, Richards, Shepherd and Tilley (substitute for Councillor Mrs. Heath).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Mrs. Hood (Conservative Group), and Mrs. Heath (Labour Group).

HCS/1. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 10th March 2011, were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

HCS/2. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN**

Members received a presentation, which detailed the current HRA system, in place until April 2012. The current ring fenced HRA turned over £11 million in the present year, with 40% of income going to the Government under the current subsidy system. In addition 75% of the Right to Buy income receipts went to Government, and it was suggested that this subsidy system was unpredictable and universally rejected.

Members were advised of the headlines of the new proposal, which would be in place from April 2012. Whilst this system was self-financing it provided a viable HRA for the District Council in the long term, which the current system did not. It also transferred much control from central to local government, but with this came greater responsibility, accountability and changed risk. Key points of the new finance regime were also outlined.

Further information was provided on the Stock Condition Survey, and a base plan with different options, along with a 30-year debt profile was also included.

The benefits of the system were outlined, which included access to additional rent income in the longer term, an ability to catch up on the shortfall to the rent formula faster, and being able to release current reserves.

The risks were also detailed within the report, and further information was given on management of the debt, including interest rates. It was also pointed out that Right to Buy sales might be higher than projected and rents might not increase in line with the formula, and might still be controlled nationally. It was confirmed that the settlement could be re-opened.

In conclusion, within the next six months, a robust five-year rent strategy and a debt management strategy, which included borrowing up to £60 million must be agreed, in addition to a detailed investment plan.

Further details were requested on how the proposed service charge would impact on people claiming benefits, and it was confirmed that further work needed to be considered in this area, which would then be submitted to the Committee at a later date. It was also requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee might consider this as a project. However if this was to be considered, it must be noted that timescales were a key issue.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan be recommended to the Finance and Management Committee for adoption.***
- (2) That further detailed reports be submitted to this Committee during 2011/12 on specific aspects of the Plan, including treasury management/debt options and a medium term income strategy.***

HCS/3. **EUREKA PARK PETITION**

It was reported that a petition with over 100 signatures had been submitted to the Council in line with the Petition Protocol. The detail of the petition was:

“We the undersigned, being responsible dog owners, would like South Derbyshire District Council to consider providing us with a fenced off area of Eureka Park. This will enable us to exercise our dogs in a safe environment away from children and other park users and away from all the broken glass that keeps occurring from people that are drinking alcohol in a place where this activity is supposed to be banned. It will enable us to keep all the dogs in a specific area and make sure any dog mess is cleared up.”

It was confirmed that in accordance with the protocol, an acknowledgement letter had been sent to the lead petitioner, and a review of this matter was being undertaken by the Director of Operations. Following this review, a further report would be submitted to the Committee

RESOLVED:-

That receipt of the petition relating to Eureka Park in accordance with the Petition Protocol be noted.

HCS/4. **CORPORATE PLAN 2009-14: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT**
1st APRIL 2010 – 31st MARCH 2011

A report was submitted that detailed achievements for the year ending 31st March 2011, in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan 2009-14. The Corporate Plan consisted of four main themes, of which this Committee was responsible for actions and relevant performance indicators within the 'Safe and Secure' and 'Lifestyle Choices' themes. Key achievements for the year ending 31st March 2011 were itemised, along with summary details of actual/outturn performance against targets within the Corporate Plan.

It was requested that the Director of Operations consider including a performance indicator on the District Council's progress in relation to the Empty Homes Strategy.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Council's key achievements and performance for the year ending 31st March 2011 be noted.***
- (2) That, where performance has failed to achieve the specified target, the response be noted.***

HCS/5. **SERVICE PLANS 2011/12**

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 form and content of Service Plans had been reviewed and minor changes had been made to this year's plans, which had included to capture a number of cross-cutting themes for the Council, such as the 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 to March 2012.

HCS/6. **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/7. **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 10th March 2011 were received.

LAND AT OVERSEAL (Paragraph 3)

Approval was granted for the completion of leases for Council land as detailed in the report.

LAND AT NEWHALL (Paragraph 3)

Approval was granted for the disposal of an area of Council land, as detailed in the report.

NEW RECOVERY AGENT FOR FORMER TENANT ARREARS (FTAs) (Paragraph 3)

Members approved the replacement of the third-party recovery agency for the collection of former tenant's rent arrears.

REORGANISATION OF THE OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE (Paragraph 1)

Proposals for the restructuring of the Operations Directorate were approved.

J. LEMMON

CHAIRMAN