

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

15th March 2007

**PRESENT:-**

**Labour Group**

Councillor Southern (Chair), Councillor Richards (Vice Chair) and Councillors Carroll, Dunn, Jones, Shepherd, Tilley and Whyman, M.B.E.

**Conservative Group**

Councillors Harrison and Shaw.

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Hood and Mrs Littlejohn (Conservative Group) and Councillor Mrs Walton (Independent Member).

HCS/94. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 15th January 2007 and the Meeting held on 8th February 2007 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chair.

HCS/95. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Harrison declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 11, Community Partnership Scheme in respect of the application by the Aston- on- Trent Parish Council.

Councillor Richards declared a prejudicial interest in the Agenda Item 19, Fairground in Swadlincote Town Centre, as he was an acquaintance of the applicant.

**MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**

HCS/96. **'TOWARDS AN EXCELLENT SERVICE' – PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND EXTERNAL VALIDATION**

The Committee considered a report which informed Members of the results of the self-assessment and external validation of the 'Towards An Excellent Service', model undertaken in February 2007 and which sought approval for developing an Improvement Plan over the next two years.

The 'Towards An Excellent Service' framework for sport and recreation services followed a similar approach to that adopted for Leisure and Cultural Services and was recognised by the public sector, Sport England and the Audit Commission as the principal model for measuring performance. There were eight key factors that influenced the quality of sport and recreation services delivered to users, these were:-

- Leadership
- Policy and Strategy
- Community Engagement
- Partnership working
- Use of Resources
- People Management
- Standards of Service
- Performance Measurement and Learning

In July 2005 the Division undertook the first 'Towards An Excellent Service' self assessment. The model assessment scored the Division as "fair" and an improvement plan was subsequently approved by this Committee. In February 2007, the Division undertook the self assessment process again, this involving seven sessions with contributions from staff, partners and stakeholders who scored this service as 'good'. The progress made by the Division was testimony to the hard work and dedication of a small team of officers, partners and stakeholders. The external validation provided independent verification of the team's self-assessment and confirmed the significant progress made over the last two years.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Committee accepts the results of the 'Towards An Excellent Service Self Assessment and External Validation' and approves the development of the Improvement Plan.***
- (2) That Members note that the 'Towards An Excellent Service' Self Assessment will be repeated in March 2008 and that the progress made will be reported to this Committee.***
- (3) That the Director of Community Services be requested to write to all staff in the Leisure and Community Development Division on behalf of the Committee to express the thanks of Members for their hard work.***

**HCS/97. PLAY FACILITIES AUDIT**

The Committee considered a report which informed Members of the Play Facility Audit and which provided information on Play Areas across the District. The report also proposed a way forward for the development of a Play Facility Plan which would be reported to a future Meeting of the Committee.

Members were advised there had been significant focus for provisional Play Facilities in Derbyshire following the recent adoption of the Play Strategy, the formation of a play partnership and the recent funding announcements supporting children's play. The Play Strategy Action Plan identified the need to review current play provision and develop a strategic plan for improvements to fixed play facilities across the District. Significant funding had been invested in play facilities over the last year including:-

Play and Youth Provision, Arthur Street, Castle Gresley	£45,000
Play and Youth Provision, Chestnut Avenue, Midway	£60,000
Play Provision, Woodville Road, Overseal	£40,000
Play and Youth Provision, Hatton	£80,000

There had also, over the last three years, been investment in youth and play provision in Linton, Hartshorne, Maurice Lea Memorial and Eureka Parks, Hilton, Rosliston Forestry Centre and Coton Park.

To develop future investment and a strategic and planned framework, the Council had commissioned Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire who had assisted with the production of a play strategy to:-

- Undertake a site survey of all 45 play sites owned and/or maintained by the Council across South Derbyshire.
- Collate the findings to produce a Play Facilities Delivery Plan. Detailed criteria was used to assess the data from each site and three categories were identified:-
  - Play Value- using LEAP assessment criteria
  - General site quality – e.g. footpaths, fencing, furniture, signage
  - Age ranges catered for at each site

The next stage in the production of the Play Facilities Plan involved:-

- Consultation with Parish Councils to establish their support.
- A priority list of sites based on a scoring criteria for three year delivery.
- A cost estimates schedule drawn up for each site.
- Delivery plan approval.
- Consultation with Councillors.

**RESOLVED:-**

***(1) That the findings of the Play Facilities Audit be noted.***

***(2) That the Director of Community Services be authorised to develop the Audit into a Play Facilities Plan, which will be reported to a future Meeting of this Committee.***

**HCS/98. REVIEW OF SUPPORT TO THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**

The Committee considered a report on the rationale for a review of funding and related support to the Voluntary and Community Sector. The report outlined the process undertaken in the review and sought approval for the recommendations in the action plan agreed by the review panel. The Council's support for the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) was delivered largely through three services - revenue funding, capital funding and funding and project development advice and support. The Council's Partnership and Development Manager and the Community Partnership Officer undertook this work.

The rationale for undertaking the review included:-

- The length of time since the service was last reviewed.
- The level and nature of enquiries about funding.
- To establish the effectiveness of the re-introduced Community Partnership Scheme.
- To match the service to changing local regional and national priorities.
- To improve the service generally to ensure value for money, fairness, openness and transparency.

A review team had been established chaired by the Director of Community Services and which included five Members, three representatives from the CVS and various council officers. The team established the baseline position, undertook research and analysis into comparable provision and policy factors and undertook a consultation involving a questionnaire and focus group. The information obtained was utilised to prepare a draft action plan.

The actions within the action plan were grouped together to support four key outcomes:-

- A more transparent and fairer system of capital and revenue funding.
- Increased capacity for the local Voluntary and Community Sector to deliver services.
- Greater awareness and take-up of services.
- A more effective and user-friendly capital grants scheme.

Grant aid and related support to the Voluntary and Community Sector provided the District Council with an excellent means to support a variety of community partners in improving the quality of life for local residents. The action plan offered an opportunity to further maximise the efficiency of the Council's investment and improve service delivery.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Finance and Management Committee be requested to recommend to the Council as follows:***

- (1) That an examination take place at the first opportunity into the level of increase in capital and revenue funding necessary for the support of core funding for the Voluntary and Community Sector.***
- (2) That £100,000 over a period of three years be ring fenced from existing reserves or future funding, from which the Voluntary and Community Sector can bid into and that objective guidance, criteria and a systems protocol for the assessment of bids be worked up by officers.***

HCS/99. **SOUTH DERBYSHIRE COMMUNITY DANCE PROJECT**

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of the six-months pilot project on the South Derbyshire Community Dance Project, which sought approval for the further development of this area of work. The 2004 Youth Needs Survey undertaken by the Council's Sports Development Team found that girls were particularly interested in dance as a new leisure opportunity in the district.

As a result of these findings, a six-months pilot project in partnership with the School Sports Partnership and the Primary Care Trust was launched in September 2006. The aim of the project was to increase physical activity levels through dance for young people (with an emphasis on girls aged 11-16). The Project aimed to:-

- Increase self-esteem and self-confidence of young people through dance.
- Increase the number of girls participating in out of school hours learning.

- Increase the number of qualified dance leaders from Burton College and Local Schools.

In order to achieve the above aims, a Community Dance Coach had been appointed on a part time basis (20 hours per week). A programme of dance classes for local secondary schools had been established with the support of a local steering group, which consisted of key partners. The pilot project had been a major success and had provided evidence of the need for expansion of the service.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Committee notes the content of the report on the South Derbyshire Community Dance Project and authorises the Director of Community Services to progress funding applications to extend and develop the Community Dance Project within a larger Young Peoples' Cultural Project.***

HCS/100.**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP SCHEME**

Councillor Harrison declared a personal interest in the application from the Aston on Trent Parish Council.

The Committee considered a report on applications for funding received by the Communities Partnership Scheme which sought approval for recommendations from the meeting of the Assessment Panel for awards from that scheme. The Committee was advised that two applications were received for the fourth round of bidding for 2006/07. The applications were as follows:-

- **West Street Methodist Church – Disabled Improvement**  
The Church wished to provide a ramp and new toilet facilities in its community hall to improve facilities for people with disabilities.
- **Aston on Trent Parish Council – A Secure Community**  
The Parish Council wished to provide a discreet CCTV security system within the village centre to provide a sense of safety and protection for residents and to deter and reduce anti-social behaviour.

The Community Partnership Scheme Assessment Panel met on 2nd March 2007 to score the above two applications against the questions and weightings agreed previously during the re-launch of this scheme. Once the weightings had been applied, the final score for each project was as follows:

<b>West Street Methodist Church</b>	<b>4.33</b>
<b>Aston on Trent Parish Council</b>	<b>3.83</b>

Members were advised that the level used previously as a cut-off in terms of making positive recommendations to the Committee was 4.67. The Panel's recommendation was to reject the grant application from both of these applicants. The Panel acknowledged the merit of the two projects and requested that an offer of support from officers in relation to re-submitting bids or making applications to other funders be made to assist the applicants.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Committee having considered the recommendations of the Community Partnership Scheme Assessment Panel declines to award grants of £1,800 to the West Street Methodist Church and £2,000 to Aston on Trent Parish Council.***

#### HCS/101.HOUSING STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report on progress on the Council's strategic housing work which detailed the direction and process for the next twelve months. Members were advised that the Council had a strategic housing role, which was distinct and separate from the strategic planning role or the housing landlord function. The Council should adequately plan and undertake the strategic housing role and develop a 'fit for purpose' housing strategy, which should be implemented. The structure and terms of reference for the Core Strategic Housing Group were set out at Appendix 1 of the report and the Group's work plan proposed for 2007/08 was detailed at Appendix 2 of the report.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Core Strategic Housing Group be formally re-established as a joint Member/Officer Working Group and that Members be nominated to the group in the ratio of three from the Controlling Group and two from the Opposition Group and at least one Member from each political group be a Member of the Environmental and Developmental Services Committee.***
- (2) That the Terms of Reference for the Working Group be reviewed and amended as indicated in Appendix 1 of the report.***
- (3) That the work plan for the Working Group for the next twelve months as detailed at Appendix 2 be approved.***
- (4) That the Committee receives an annual progress report on the development of the Council's strategic housing function.***

#### HCS/102.TENANTS' HANDBOOK

The Committee considered a report on the approach being taken on the production of a new Tenants' Handbook. Members were advised that one of the Housing Service Plan's commitments was to produce a new Tenants' Handbook in the current financial year. The text for the Tenants' Handbook had been approved by the Plain English Campaign and would carry the Campaign's crystal mark logo. The handbook was designed to reflect the accessibility of the language being used and would be attractive and modern whilst produced on paper and card from sustainable resources. It would clarify the responsibilities of both the Council as Landlord and the Tenant from the outset of the tenancy. The design and print cost for 4,000 copies of the Handbook would be approximately £10,000.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Committee approves the approach being taken for the production of a new Tenants' Handbook.***

HCS/103. **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 8th February 2007 were received.*

**LONG TERM LEASE – DARKLANDS LANE ALLOTMENTS SWADLINCOTE (Paragraph 3)**

*The Committee approved recommendations in respect of a long-term lease to an Allotment Association and delegated authority to the Director of Community Services to enter into leasing arrangements with other Allotment Associations which occupy Council allotment sites in the district.*

**FAIRGROUND, SWADLINCOTE TOWN CENTRE, MAY 2007 (Paragraph 3)**

*The Committee approved a request for the a fun fair on Swadlincote Bus Station Car Park from 17th to 19th May 2007.*

R.W. SOUTHERN

CHAIR