

ITEM 4

Time commenced – 6.00pm
Time finished – 9:05pm

COMMUNITY COMMISSION 24 July 2006

Present: Councillor Turner (in the Chair)
Councillors Afzal, Chera, R. Khan, Lowe, Rawson, Redfern,
Samra, Troup and Webb.

Also Present: Councillors Higginbottom, Jones and Nath

15/06 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Winter.

16/06 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

17/06 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Afzal, Redfern, Troup and Webb declared a personal interest in relation to minute numbers 20/06 and 23/06 as they are all Members of the Derby Homes Board.

18/06 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2006

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 June 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and received by the Commission.

19/06 Call-in

No items were called-in by the Commission

Items for Discussion

20/06 Housing Allocations Policy and Homelessness Topic Review and the Housing Allocation Policy.

The Commission received 2 reports from the Corporate Director – Resources and Housing and the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood, Social Cohesion and Strategy. The reports outlined the Council Cabinet's responses to the former Community Regeneration Commission Topic Review into the Housing Allocation Policy and Homelessness and also set out the final draft policy which was to be sent to Cabinet for approval on 1 August.

Councillor Higginbottom expressed concerns that not all of recommendations in the Topic Review had been accepted by Cabinet. It was reported that legal advice had been sought from Counsel regarding the use of 'indicative allocations' within bands between current tenants and applicants and that the advice had stated this could make the Council open to legal challenge on the policy.

Councillors Higginbottom, Redfern and Jones felt that excluding the recommendation regarding such 'indicative indicators' weakened the Commission's policy goal of increasing moves between existing tenants. Following a discussion of the options available to the Commission they accepted that delaying the approval of the policy to a future Cabinet meeting risked losing the support of the other registered social landlord – RSL - partners involved.

It was noted that the percentage allocations to the bands had not yet been agreed as the IT system would not be in place until October.

Resolved to

- a) express regret that the Commission's suggestion there should be "indicative allocations" within bands A and B between current tenants seeking re-housing and prospective new tenants, has not been accepted due to counsel's advice that it was not lawful but accept i) there remain some of the Commission's objectives that are achievable without those percentage "indicative allocations" and ii) that swift Council agreement of the policy is important to ensure the continued support of partners.**
- b) request reports at appropriate times on the progress against the topic review's objectives including: i) the percentages of existing Derby Homes and RSL landlord tenants who achieve a move under the new policy, ii) the number of mutual exchanges and iii) other issues raised during discussion.**
- c) include appropriate indicators on Performance Eye on the re-housing of current tenants.**
- d) Request that the Community Commission be consulted over the percentages for each housing band which are to be agreed at Cabinet or by the Cabinet member for neighbourhood, social cohesion and housing strategy**
- e) Request i) a report to the Commission on the effectiveness of the new IT system and ii) a demonstration of how it will work to a future meeting.**
- f) Thank officers, Councillor Nath and former Commission Members for all their work on the Housing Allocations Policy.**

21/06 Area and Neighbourhood Agenda

Councillor Nath and the Director of the Community Safety Partnership gave a presentation to the Commission on the Area and Neighbourhood Agenda and described how they would devolve decision making powers to local communities.

Councillor Webb queried whether consideration had been given to how persistent problems in an area could be tackled and what measures were in place to ensure that work was not being duplicated by the Area Planning Partnership pilots and by other Council departments.

Councillor Nath reported that Neighbourhood profiles were being developed to capture the character of an area and any continuing problems an area faced. He said the Area Planning Partnerships would then use the profiles to deal with day to day issues but also on a strategic level to plan work and ensure there was no duplication of work.

It was noted that there were currently 2 operational Area Planning Partnerships but that 3 more were likely to be in operation by autumn. Funding was available for the Area Planning Partnerships until 2008. It was noted that the first year was essentially a pilot structure to establish how the Area Planning Partnerships would best fit the needs of the area and ensure that the structures were streamlined.

Resolved to note the presentation and request a report to a future meeting a) detailing how successful the pilots are proving and b) covering i) the effectiveness of the model in achieving the aims of residents, ii) how many staff are involved, iii) governance and accountability issues and iv) how locally awarding higher priority to one or more services impacts on other services in the area.

22/06 Housing and Council Tax Benefit Administration

The Commission received a report from the Director Resources and Housing regarding the performance of the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Service.

It was noted that the new IT System had resulted in delays of approximately 3 weeks to the processing of claims but that additional temporary staff had been employed to help reduce the backlog.

Councillor Redfern queried whether information could be shared with Derby Homes as it was difficult for people to prove that they had lived in Derby for 2 years if they were homeless. Officers agreed to investigate whether this was possible.

Resolved to

- a) continue to receive periodic performance reports and**
- b) request a report to the next meeting focussing on the implementation of the new IT system and the transitional impact on the service received by customers**

23/06 Derby Homes Re-Inspection

The Commission received a report from the Chief Executive Derby Homes regarding the Audit Commission's inspection which had taken place in February.

The Commission expressed concerns about that the Community Panels

Resolved to a) note the outcomes of the Audit Commission inspection, b) to receive a further report at the October meeting detailing Derby Homes response to the recommendations and c) to explore at the October meeting the sustainability of Derby Homes community panels

24/06 Performance Eye

The Commission received a report from the Director Corporate and Adult Social Services.

Resolved a) that Performance Eye should show all the indicators relevant to the Commission's portfolio and b) to receive quarterly reports to the Commission which should highlight any issues of success or concern.

25/06 Sustainable Housing Business Plans and the Efficiency Agenda

The Commission considered a proposal to authorise delegate fees of £200 to enable the Chair to attend a seminar on sustainable housing and the efficiency agenda.

Resolved to

- a) approve expenditure of £200 to enable the Chair to attend the seminar; and**
- b) to ask the Chair to provide the Commission with a feedback report once he had attended the seminar.**

26/06 Selection of Topic Review and Issues for Focussed Scrutiny 2006/07

The Commission discussed options for their topic review for the year.

It was felt that there may be more value in conducting several smaller in depth focussed scrutiny reviews rather than commissioning one larger piece of work.

Resolved to hold meetings during autumn 2006 and early 2007 for focussed scrutiny of:

- a) Derby Homefinder Housing Application – a day time meeting in September to explore the difficulties people faced with getting their application processed.**
- b) What happens when the money has gone? – to investigate what happens when time limited funding dries up.**

- c) **Section 30 Dispersal Orders and Alcohol Free Zones – to consider the successes and failures associated with Section 30 dispersal orders and Alcohol Free Zones.**
- d) **Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing – to consider whether the Council policy of mixed siting of affordable housing *across* a new housing development is happening in practice.**

Council Cabinet Forward Plan

27/06 Identification of items on the Forward Plan for consideration at future meetings.

The Commission studied the latest version of the Forward Plan.

Resolved:

To scrutinise whilst it is possible to influence the final decisions:

- **83/05 Derby Older Persons Housing Strategy**
- **100/05 Housing Renewal Policy**

28/06 Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the Commission

There were no items.

29/06 Matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

There were no items.

MINUTES END