

Time Commenced – 6.00 pm
Time Finished – 8.40 pm

Planning, Housing and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Board

10 September 2013

Present: Councillor Pegg (Chair)
Councillors Dhindsa, Holmes, Jackson, J Khan, MacDonald, Troup, F
Winter and Wood

21/13 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

22/13 Late Items

There were no late items.

23/13 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Pegg, J Khan and Wood stated that they were Members of the Planning Control Committee.

24/13 Call-in

There were no items

25/13 Minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2013

The minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

26/13 Forward Plan

No items were requested.

27/13 Council Cabinet Decisions Relating to the Planning Housing and Leisure Board

The Board considered a report which outlined the decisions made by Council Cabinet on items relating to the Board. It aimed to keep Members informed on decisions made on items relevant to the Board and to highlight the development of items that were on going and that Members may wish to include in the work programme for future scrutiny.

Resolved to note the decisions made by Council Cabinet.

28/13 Welfare Reform – Update on the Impact of Changes

The Board considered a report which set out details of the impacts of the Welfare Reform Act 2012. The report stated that the Act set out the biggest change to the welfare system in over 60 years, with the Government stating their commitment to deliver a total saving of £18 billion over five years. A number of the reforms had already come into force on 1 April 2013. Further changes would be implemented through 2013 with an expected completion date for all changes to be in place by 2017. Detailed in the supporting information were all the changes to date and the majority of changes still to be implemented.

The cumulative financial impact of these welfare reforms was a £5.1m reduction in the benefits previously paid by the Council to Derby residents to help with rent and council tax liabilities. This amounted to £2.7m – abolition of council tax benefit, £1.9m – reduced housing benefit as a result of the bedroom size criteria – over half of which impacted on the Council's own rent collection and £0.5m – reduced housing benefit as a result of Local Housing Allowance changes and the Housing Benefit Cap.

These changes to benefits had significant impacts on affected Derby residents and discretionary funds had been made available to the Council to ease these impacts – Discretionary Housing Payments, Discretionary Council Tax Hardship and Local Assistance Scheme.

The discretionary funds were cash limited and it was important that monies were used in the most appropriate manner. In particular the Council must ensure that decisions around discretionary fund allocations met the needs of the most vulnerable.

Additionally the report highlighted the wider welfare reform changes implemented and planned by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The financial effect of the benefit changes administered by the DWP had not been profiled locally, but the impacts would be greater than the reductions to Derby City Council benefits described above.

Members of the Board expressed concerns in relation to the impacts of the Welfare Reforms on the people of Derby. There was a discussion about people wanting to down size their property and the availability of properties to enable them to do this. Concerns were expressed about the position of split families where children spent some time each week with the parent living in a different property.

It was noted that the benefits cap particularly affected some families with 7 or more children and the Council were working with these families to prevent them from becoming homeless. The discretionary funds to help with transition were time and cash limited, action was needed to mitigate the affects this would have.

Resolved

- 1. To note the financial impacts on Derby residents affected by the welfare reforms and the responses to these.**
- 2. To raise the Board's concerns with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Advice of the impacts of welfare reform (particularly the impacts of bedroom tax and the adverse effects on children living in affected households) and request a report and action plan on how the impacts were being dealt with.**

29/13 The Future Arrangements for Council Housing

The Board considered a report which stated that at its meeting on 15 May 2013 Council Cabinet decided to adopt, in principle, the partnership model as the preferred model for the delivery of council housing in Derby and to agree a comprehensive approach to the integration of support services to maximise efficiencies for the benefit of council tenants and council tax payers.

A programme was underway to implement the Council Cabinet decisions, with three workstreams, led by a strategic implementation group. Each workstream included managers and staff from the Council and from Derby Homes.

The programme was currently in the design stage working out in detail what the new partnership model might look like in practice. This was work in progress by council officers and there were not yet any proposals that could be shared.

Resolved to note the approach that was being taken to implement Council Cabinet's decision about the future arrangements for Council housing.

30/13 Libraries Update – Opening Hours, Volunteering and the Local Studies Library

The Board considered a report which stated that library opening hours were last changed in January 2012. However by working closely with the Leisure and Cultural Development Team some increase in opening hours may be possible in autumn 2013 for five libraries. This was as a result of the b-You Live Well Health Hubs being delivered from these libraries, which also provided the funding for any changes through the project.

Volunteers provided a significant and growing support for library services. Their contribution spanned a large number of activities that supported the service delivery. Preparation and planning was underway to relocate the Local Studies Library to the former Magistrates Court on Full Street.

Members of the Board suggested that link be formed with Neighbourhood forums to try and attract more volunteers.

Resolved

- 1. To note the recent and upcoming library developments outlined in the report.**
- 2. To request the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods to form links with Neighbourhoods Forums to try and attract more volunteers.**

31/13 b-You Live Well Health Hubs

The Board considered a report which stated that from April 2013, Leisure and Cultural Development were commissioned by Public Health to provide an Integrated Lifestyle Service in Derby. This attracted £1.5 million of funding each year for three years with an option to extend for a further two years.

This new b-You Live Well Service aimed to reach 3,000 people and their families a year. 50% of the clients joining the scheme had to come from the areas of highest health inequality in the city. To ensure the service reached into and had a presence in local communities a number of b-You Live Well Health Hubs were being established.

The first five Health Hubs would be located at five libraries in the city and would be referred to as b-You Live Well Libraries. These libraries were Alvaston library; the Philip Whitehead Memorial Library, Chaddesden Park; Mackworth Library; Peartree Library and Sinfyn Library. These locations had been chosen as they were in the areas of high health inequality. Some increase in opening hours at these libraries may be possible due to the health hubs being located there, which would be fully funded through the project. There was a potential to locate a further three Health Hubs at Springwood Library, Derby Moor Community School and Chellaston Library.

Members of the Board suggested that links be formed with GP Practices, outreach workers in the community, health professionals, Council colleagues and schools.

Resolved

- 1. To note the development of the b-You Live Well Health Hubs in Derby and the location of the first Health Hubs in the five named libraries.**
- 2. To note the suggestions from Members of the Board identifying where further links could be identified in the community which could be explored to help contribute to the project's success.**

32/13 Work Programme and Topic Reviews

The Board considered a report which set out potential work plans and topic reviews for the forthcoming municipal year to enable a work programme to be developed. The Board also considered the draft Homelessness Topic Review Report.

Resolved

- 1. To agree the current work programme for the forthcoming year set out in appendix 2 of the report.**

- 2. To approve the Homelessness Topic Review Report as the final report subject to the minor amendments highlighted at the meeting.**
- 3. To approve the dissemination of recommendations resulting from the Homelessness Topic Review to Council Officers, and other partnership organisations and service providers where the recommendations fell outside the direct remit and responsibility of the Council.**

33/13 Outdoor Cycle Track Update

The Board considered a report which gave an update of the outdoor cycling circuit and provided a summary of the key features of the proposed facility; some key reasons why it was proposed to submit a planning application for the facility to be built on the nature reserve land at the side of the multi use sports arena; the key next steps and the feedback that had been received to date for the initial public consultation exhibition that was held on 25 July 2013.

The building of an outdoor cycling circuit met the development and programming needs of British Cycling, which would be considering a funding application from the Council for the capital costs of this facility later this year.

The proposed location of the outdoor cycling circuit enabled key facilities and resources to be utilised from the adjacent multi use sports arena, creating economies of scale, efficiencies, better programming opportunities and greater customer satisfaction.

Comments had been received from some people about the ecology issues relating to the proposed location of the outdoor cycling circuit on the Local nature Reserve (LNR). In recognition of the ecological sensitivity of the site's south western corner the Council had developed an alternative route based on independent professional ecologist survey information.

A formal planning application would be submitted in September 2013 for the outdoor cycling circuit, enabling formal public consultation to take place and for all the key issues to be explored further through the formal channels.

The Board had received a letter from Derbyshire Wildlife Trust on behalf of a number of organisations setting out their concerns about the proposals.

Some Board Members expressed concerns about the proposed location of the outdoor cycling circuit. They were keen to see a facility but were concerned about the location of it. The Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods explained that the proposal was subject to planning approval and that process would look at impact assessments and design.

Resolved

- 1. To note the information in the report regarding this key project.**

- 2. To support the development of a closed outdoor cycling circuit but note that concerns had been raised on the proposed location of the development by a number of ecological groups. The Board requested that the Service Director of Leisure and Culture and the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods note these concerns and consider the concerns raised in the submission from Derbyshire Wildlife Trust in the preparation of any future plans.**

Councillors J Khan, Pegg and Wood requested that their abstention from voting in the above item be recorded.

MINUTES END