

Time started: 6.00pm  
Time finished: 7.30pm

**COMMUNITY COMMISSION**  
**10 JUNE 2009**

Present: Councillor Grimadell (Chair)  
Councillors Leeming, Lowe, Redfern

**01/09 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bayliss, Chera, Redfern and Richards.

Councillor Redfern joined the Commission later as she was chairing the General Licensing Committee.

**02/09 Late Items introduced by the Chair**

Two late reports were admitted by the Chair as an aid to the agenda items:

- Regarding minute 05/09, a Briefing note providing Empty Property Data.
- Regarding minute 10/09, guidance on how Scrutiny can effectively monitor the city's local heritage.

**03/09 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**04/09 Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on the 30 March and the 16 April 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**05/09 Empty Properties**

The Commission considered a report on Empty Properties within the city. It was reported that the statistics were based on empty dwellings and not properties, therefore a house in multiple occupation mean several empty dwellings. The statistics differentiated short and long term vacancies, the latter defined as being unoccupied for more than six months. Ward-by-ward figures were also provided. The statistics were compiled from Council Tax records as this is considered to be the most comprehensive database.

Councillor Leeming requested that any future reports on this issue also specify the number of empty Council dwellings broken down on a ward by ward basis. Councillor Leeming asked for clarification of the level of asylum

seekers residing in the city following the previous influx. Officers agreed to bring a report to a future meeting updating the commission on the current position of this issue.

The Chair expressed concern that the number of empty properties in the city did not appear to have fluctuated in the last four years and asked how officers plan to reduce the number. Officers stated that the housing market is responsible for a large proportion of that figure. Every quarter more than 1000 properties change hands with a number of freehold and leasehold dwellings becoming registered as empty in the process. It was reported that officers do not target these short term empty properties but instead focus their efforts on bringing the long term empty properties up to habitable standards. Currently there are six confirmed Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) and these are awaiting the legal orders to be drafted. A further six CPOs were sanctioned by Cabinet which could go to public inquiries if they are challenged and may take six months to resolve. Officers also plan to take an additional six CPOs to Cabinet in the near future. Officers stated that there are anomalies to the figures such as properties that are wrongly listed as dwellings, for example, spaces above some shops which are not actually suitable for residential use, and these may slightly inflated the figures. However, these are a minority of cases.

**Resolved to:**

**A. Note the report;**

**B. Receive a further report to the next meeting on: the number of Council dwellings that were allocated and that still are allocated for asylum seekers, including the number of properties in the private sector that were and are still leased by Clear Springs and Accommodata and then sub-let to asylum seekers; and additionally information on rejected asylum applicants where the Council took on short term leases to avoid undue pressure on the register and allocations scheme; and**

**C. Require any future report on empty properties to include a ward by ward breakdown by tenure, including the number of empty Derby Homes dwellings.**

**06/09      Parks and Open Spaces Strategy: Approval of draft for final consultation**

Members considered and were asked to comment upon the final draft of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. It was reported that the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy has been prepared using the results of public consultations, facility audits, along with reviews of other relevant strategies both internal and external to the City Council. It was written to ensure the Parks contribute to the achievement of the Council's six priorities for 2008-11 and to eight of the LAA outcomes chosen by the Council.

Cllr Leeming raised concern with the current level of toilet provision. He suggested that where no facilities are currently provided, that mobile toilets could be used instead and they could be removed at the end of each day. The Officer stated that the permanent toilets are normally only on parks where a full time ranger is based. New pavilions at two other sites would provide facilities by September 2010. It was reported that the strategy would be followed by an action plan to implement the proposal.

Councillor Leeming also referred to the possible provision of mobile cafés and allowing personal use of kayaks on the lake and requested an officer contact. Details would be provided after the meeting. .

Councillor Redfern expressed concerns about the damage to facilities when travellers gain entry to the Council's open spaces and parks. It was reported that with 377 locations in the city it is very difficult to secure every one. It currently takes the Council around three to four weeks to gain the necessary legal documentation to evict travellers.

**Resolved to recommend that Cabinet adopt the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.**

## 07/09 Call-In

Members received a report setting out the Call-In process. There were no specific items.

## 08/09 Councillor Call for Action

Members received a report setting out the new Call for Action procedure. There were no specific issues..

## Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the Commission

### 09/09 Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the Commission

There were no items.

## Items for Discussion

### 10/09 Remit and Work Programme 2009-10

Members of the Commission were asked to suggest topics that they would like to consider as part of their work programme for 2009-10.

Members requested the further information and reports previously recorded at minute 75/08 - Public conveniences – evening opening of toilets and at minute 76/08 regarding fly tipping. It was noted that the initial report by De Montfort University on Neighbourhood Working would soon be available to Members and would be brought to the July meeting

**Resolved a) that Members submit further suggestions for this year's work programme to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer and b) that all members of the Council be invited to the 20 July meeting for the item on Neighbourhood Working.**

## 11/09      Performance Monitoring

Members considered the current performance indicators relevant to the work of the Commission and were invited to suggest performance indicators for investigation to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer

**Resolved for Members to submit performance indicators for investigation to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer.**

## 12/09      Retrospective Scrutiny

There were no items suggested for retrospective Scrutiny.

## 13/09      Council Cabinet Forward Plan

Resolved to identify items in the Council Cabinet Forward Plan for consideration at future meetings of the Commission.

## 14/09      Matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

There were no items.

MINUTES END