

Time commenced - 6.00pm
Time finished - 7.48pm

COMMUNITY COMMISSION
14 JANUARY 2008

Present: Councillors Bayliss, Berry, Jackson, Jennings, Redfern and Troup

60/07 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gerrard and R Khan.

61/07 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

62/07 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Bayliss, Redfern and Troup declared an interest as they sit on the Derby Homes Board.

63/07 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2007 were received as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

64/07 Call-in

There were no items.

Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the Commission

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The extract of the Council Cabinet minute relating to the Commission's Report on the Petition from Derby New Theatre Association on Community Theatre, was noted.

Items for Discussion

66/07 Proposed Revenue & Capital Budget 2008-2011

The Community Commission considered a report from the Corporate Director of Corporate and Adult Services on the Revenue Budget Proposals 2008/09 to 2010/2011 and the proposed Capital Budget 2008/09 to 2010/2011.

Resolved to recommend to Council Cabinet;

- 1. that additional resources were provided beyond replacing the NRF funding stream, for the neighbourhood working agenda and considered providing each ward, at minimum level a dedicated part-time neighbourhood manager to manage and actions issues raised at the Neighbourhood Forums and Boards.**

Reason

Derby was seen as a national leader in Neighbourhood Working and the Commission was disappointed to note that this important service area was not being supported with additional resources. The Council agreed to the new way of working and has developed strong relationships with local residents and partner organisations but the lack of additional resources would seriously limit future progress and credibility to process. The Council could only continue to be visionary if it bends its funding streams to support this new way of community engagement and partnership working.

- 2. that there was a production theatre performing in the city and therefore the Commission welcomed the inclusion £400k in this year's draft budget. The Commission also wished to support amateur theatre and recommended ring fencing a portion of the budget to support amateur theatre groups, this amount was seen as £50k of the £400k budget allocation. There were various options of supporting the groups and the Commission recommended the Cabinet worked with the amateur groups to determine how they could best utilise the resources to enable them to continue to flourish in the city.**

Reason

There was a debate to be had on how the £400k could be best used for supporting producing theatre in the city since the recently elected new management Board at Derby Playhouse announced that they no longer wished to receive funding from the City Council but would still need the £750,000 grant from the Arts Council. However, the Commission was informed by the Head of Arts and Events that the funding from the Arts Council was provided to the Playhouse on the condition that it receives financial support from the City Council.

- 3. that an options appraisal was carried out as soon as practical on the ending of the additional ALMO's subsidy of more than £2.5m per year in 2011/2012 and initiates the consultation process with the key stakeholders so that informed choices could be made on the future rent levels and the best strategy for the avoidance of the negative housing subsidy. There was an announcement from Government that maybe helpful in this respect due on the 8 February.**

Reason

It was important that an early options appraisal was carried out to determine the level of resources available following the end of the £2.5m per annum subsidy and how best they could be utilised. Starting the process early would enable meaningful consultation to be conducted with

the relevant stakeholders, including tenants and enable the Council to set a strategic policy on rent levels with sufficient surplus for stock maintenance at its current level of repair.

4. that the Council rents were increased by 8.2% to bring the convergence in line by 2012 as required by the Government.

Reason

Local authorities were required to harmonise council rents and bring them inline with those charged by RSLs by 2012. The Commission was presented with three options on possible rent increases:

- a) increase rents by 12 %
- b) increase rents by 8.2% to bring them in line by 2012
- c) increase rents by 7.4% to bring them in line by 2016

The commission felt that 12% increase would be excessive and could become a significant burden on those not housing benefits whilst delaying the convergence to a later date could put significant pressure on the HRA. Also the difference between 8.2% and 7.4% would be minimal for the tenant, around 35p per week but could provide substantial resources across the 14,000 housing stock and enable the convergence to be achieved by the timescales set by the Government.

5. that of the £6m Estates Pride Programme that was still unspent, £4m could be spent over the next two years to carry out capital improvement on local estates whilst the remainder £2m was used to support neighbourhood working over the next ten years, funding conditions permitting.

Reason

The £15m Estates Pride Programme was provided for improvements to estates and to provide facilities for the benefit of tenants. Of this £9m has so far been spent some of which was used to support the Neighbourhood Working agenda. The Commission felt the Neighbourhood Agenda was an important new way of working with local partners and for the benefit for local community including council tenants. Using Estate Pride resources to support Neighbourhood Working would extend the benefit over the next years, providing this did not contravene funding criteria.

67/07 Extra Care Housing – Briefing Paper

The Commission considered a report from Director of Corporate and Adult Services on Extra Care Housing – Briefing Paper.

It was noted that early discussions with the Extra Care Charitable Trust had taken place to identify the requirements beyond the 240 units already planned.

The Commission asked to be kept up to date on future plans.

Resolved to note the report.

68/07 Quarter Two Performance Monitoring 2007-08

The Commission considered a report from Director of Corporate and Adult Services on Quarter Two Performance Monitoring 2007-08.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit Service Performance

The Commission considered the performance of the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Service as at 16 December 2007.

The Chair of the Commission thanked the officers for their hard work in doing an excellent job.

Resolved to note the report.

69/07 Retrospective Scrutiny

There were no items identified.

70/07 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

The items identified were:

- Derby Homes New Build
- Rosehill Housing Market Renewal Project

71/07 Matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

There were no items.

MINUTES END