

ITEM 4

Commenced: 6.00 pm

Concluded: 7.57 pm

PLANNING, HOUSING AND LEISURE BOARD 13 November 2012

Present: Councillor Troup (Chair)
Councillors Hillier, Holmes, Ingall, S. Khan and Nawaz

34/12 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, Jackson, and Redfern.

35/12 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

36/12 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

37/12 Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 September 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendments:

- Minute numbers 29/12 and 30/12 - 'Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods' corrected to 'Strategic Director of Adults, Health and Housing.'
- Minute number 29/12 - Removal of the surplus words 'had there.'
- Minute number 31/12 - Substitution of '*create* informed decisions' for '*support* informed decisions.'
- Minute number 32/12 - Substitution of '*note* the latest option' for '*support* the latest option.'

38/12 Call-in

There were no items.

39/12 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

Resolved to note the Forward Plan published on 9 October 2012.

40/12 Decisions made by Council Cabinet

The board received a report from the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of the Strategic Director of Resources. The report included executive decisions, relevant to the board's terms of reference, made in October and November 2012.

Resolved to note the report.

41/12 Disposal of Museum Reserve Collections

The board received a report from the Executive Director of Derby Museums Trust on behalf of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods. The officer reported that Council Cabinet had agreed the adoption of a new procedure whereby Derby Museums would actively manage its reserve collections. The procedure required a list of items proposed for disposal to be presented to Council Cabinet prior to sale. The board noted that sale proceeds, if any, would be directed to the museum conservation and specimen budgets. The officer confirmed that the policy operated within the spectrum standard ethical framework.

Resolved to note the proposed list of items recommended to Council Cabinet for disposal by sale.

42/12 Planning Peer Review

The board received a report from the Director of Planning and Facilities Management, together with the Head of Performance and Improvement, on behalf of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods. The report detailed the background of the review, together with the key findings and recommendations arising from it. The board was provided with the improvement action plan and discussed the proposals contained therein.

The board queried the progress of action number 8, namely review of constitutional arrangements. The Head of Performance and Improvement explained that the operation of both the Planning Control Committee (PCC) and Conservation Area Advisory Committee would be reviewed with a view to improving the planning process. The Head of Service informed the board that the threshold of four or more objections to a planning application in relation to the referral of a matter to PCC, for example, could be increased. The Director confirmed that detailed proposals to amend the scheme of delegations would be presented to a future scrutiny board meeting.

The board expressed concern in relation to the lack of resources assigned to enforcement within development control. Members discussed the possibility of constructing a centralised team responsible for enforcement across the council. The Director referred to a report concerning enforcement within development control, which had recently been submitted to PCC. The Director agreed to present the report at a future board meeting.

The Head of Service updated the board on the potential affect of the Growth and Infrastructure Bill 2012-13, should it receive royal assent. Notably, the proposed legislation included provision for underperforming local authorities to lose their decision making powers.

Resolved to note the report and to request the Director of Planning and Facilities Management to:

- 1. ensure detailed proposals regarding the review of constitutional arrangements (action plan number eight) are presented to a future scrutiny board meeting;**
- 2. present an update report to the board in 6 months, regarding the progress achieved in response to both the recommendations and action plan arising from the peer review;**
- 3. present a report concerning enforcement within development control to a future scrutiny board meeting; and**
- 4. update board members on the progress and potential implications of the Growth and Infrastructure Bill 2012-13.**

43/12 Housing Allocations Policy – Consultation Results

The board received a report from the Head of Housing Options and Advice Services, together with the Housing Advice Manager, on behalf of the Strategic Director of Adults, Health and Housing. The Housing and Advice Manager outlined the report and explained the consultation process undertaken in relation to the proposed policy. Members were informed that the re-drafted policy was required as a result of legislative changes.

The board analysed the results from the consultation day held on 27 September at Quad and expressed concern that over half of the attendees were council employees. The board acknowledged the importance of input from local authority stakeholders but questioned the lack of wider engagement, particularly with Derby residents. Members were informed that the Consultation Team had issued guidance in relation to the methodology behind both the consultation day and online survey.

The Housing Advice Manager confirmed amendments had been made to the proposed policy, following consultation feedback. The threshold for savings under section 4.2(b), for example, was changed from £16,000 to £75,000. This change followed the receipt of advice from Derbyshire Housing Aid. The board noted the reference to £60 per annum in section 4.2(c) was a typographical error and would be corrected.

The board was advised that in the interests of minimising confusion, the housing need categories had been reduced to two bands; the emergency band and the housing needs band. Properties falling outside of these bands would be advertised on an 'open to all' basis. Applicants would not need to be registered on the housing register to apply for a property listed as 'open to all.' Officers hoped this would encourage the occupation of properties that had proven difficult to let.

The Director of Housing and Customer Service advised the board that in re-drafting the proposal, officers had sought to achieve a balance between meeting legislative requirements within specified timeframes, supporting the business plan and assisting people with the greatest housing need. The Director accepted that the consultation day was poorly attended but asserted the difficulty in encouraging people who were not directly affected by the proposals, to make a meaningful contribution. The Board noted that existing tenants would remain unaffected by the re-drafted policy.

The board discussed options for re-issue of the consultation with a view to greater engagement. Mindful of the costs associated with delaying the implementation, the board also considered the possibility of continuing consultation after implementation, allowing for the collection of feedback from affected parties and a three month review.

Resolved to:

- 1. note the proposed Housing Allocations Policy;**
- 2. recommend the Council Cabinet give regard to the Planning, Housing and Leisure Board's serious reservations concerning the depth of consultation undertaken in relation to the proposed policy. The board asks Council Cabinet to note, in particular, the participation of only four Derby residents in the consultation day held on 27 September 2012 and twelve Derby residents in the online survey; and**
- 3. request the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to invite the Consultation Team to present a report on consultation methods at a future meeting.**

44/12 Impact of Welfare Reform

The board received a report from the Derby Advice Manager, on behalf of the Strategic Director of Adults, Health and Housing. The officer presented a detailed outline of the significant changes introduced by the Welfare Reform Act. In particular, the board was informed of changes to data sharing, council tax, housing benefit and the under-occupation of social housing. The officer further explained the introduction of a local assistance scheme, a single fraud investigation service and universal credit. Members discussed the resulting impact upon city residents and the delivery of council services.

In relation to section 4.2 of the report, the officer agreed to circulate consultation feedback data, including response statistics, to members.

Resolved to note the report and request:

- the Derby Advice Manager to circulate the consultation results to the board; and**
- an update at a future meeting, scheduled in or after March 2013.**

45/12 Outline Work Programme and Topic Reviews 2012-2013

A report was presented by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of the Strategic Director of Resources. It was reported that the work programme had been amended to incorporate a board meeting on 18 December 2012, to scrutinise the proposed budget. The board noted that the LTP Implementation Plan would also be presented at the December meeting, together with the Highways and Transport Programme. Members requested the forthcoming review of housing management to be included as an item for scrutiny on the work programme at either the December or January meeting.

The board reviewed and confirmed the scope for the homelessness topic review. Members requested the inclusion of Shelter, Centenary House and the Padley Centre in evidence gathering, either through written or verbal witness testimony. Members asked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to explore the possibility of arranging a board visit to a 'wet' hostel.

Resolved to:

- **request the inclusion of the forthcoming review of housing management (Forward Plan reference number 46/12) as an item for scrutiny at either the December or January meeting;**
- **agree the scope for the Homelessness topic review;**
- **recommend the inclusion of Shelter, Centenary House and the Padley Centre in evidence gathering; and**
- **request the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to explore the possibility of arranging a board visit to a 'wet' hostel.**

MINUTES END