

COMMUNITY COMMISSION
1 OCTOBER 2007

Present: Councillors Bayliss (Chair), Berry, Gerrard, Jackson, Jennings,
Redfern and Troup

Also present: Councillors Hussain and Nath

33/07 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

34/07 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

35/07 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

36/07 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 23 July and 29 August 2007 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendments:

21/07

Resolved

1. to defer consideration whether to fully scrutinise the Playhouse until next year.

37/07 Call-in

There were no call-in items.

**38/07 Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the
Commission**

There were no items.

Items for Discussion

39/07 Derby Playhouse Funding Agreement

Pursuant to minute 21/07 the Community Commission considered a report from the Assistant Director of Cultural Services, Regeneration and Community Department.

On 29 March 2007, the City Council signed a Funding Agreement with Derby Playhouse Board, covering the financial year 2007/8. The Agreement expresses the joint objectives of the Council and Board and lays out the obligations on both parties.

Resolved to recommend that next year's funding agreement give a high priority to improving the access to the Playhouse by Derby's amateur theatre community.

40/07 Housing and Council Tax Benefits

The Community Commission considered a report from the Assistant Director – Customer Services. The report provided information about performance improvement requested by the Community Commission at the meeting of 23 July 2007. The Benefit Service has put in a place several improvement strategies, to improve benefits performance. The latest improvement strategy was put in place on 21 May 2007 resulting in a restructure within the benefits teams to enable them to tackle a claims backlog over a 1,000 claims and changes caused by the conversion of benefits processing computer system. This was a significant achievement for the benefits service, which provided the platform for improved performance. Since the introduction of the improvement strategy the backlog of claims has been cleared. All claims are either processed or the customer is asked to provide information required to process the claim within 3 to 4 days of the claim being received.

Members raised concerns that the average time for processing claims was still not at the proposed target but as claims were being dealt with faster it was requested that an update be brought back to the next scheduled meeting. Cllr Nath added that he would shortly be meeting the registered social landlords, RSLs, about how they could assist with the smooth processing of benefit claims.

Resolved

- 1. That an updated report be brought to the next meeting, to include i) information about the number of claims, ii) the design of the application form, iii) the arrangements with Derby Homes to ensure forms are accurately completed so the claim can be processed without the need for further contact with the applicant, and iv) possible measures to better profile resources to tackle peaks in activity**
- 2. To note the report.**

41/07 Older Persons Housing Strategy

The Community Commission considered a report from the Assistant Director – Housing and Advice Services. The Older Persons Housing Strategy had been developed in response to the Government's requirements detailed in the document "Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing – A Strategic Framework" (Department of Health/ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now DCLG); 2002). The Strategy provides a local framework for the future direction of housing and housing support related solutions for

older people, regardless of tenure. The development of the Strategy was overseen by the Derby Older People's Strategic Planning Partnership (DOPSPP) and extensive consultation has been undertaken throughout the development of the Strategy with stakeholders and older people's groups, including the Derby Seniors Forum and the Older Peoples Cluster. The strategy is also closely aligned to the forthcoming Older People's Plan.

The implementation of the strategy is detailed in an action plan, which takes account of these issues and prioritises the key objectives. The Action Plan will run from 2007 – 2010. It allows for flexibility to adapt to changing needs, trends and legislation. It is also proposed to monitor and evaluate the progress made annually and publish these findings annually as well as reporting back to the Senior's Forum, Older People's Cluster and DOPSPP.

The Strategy focuses on the housing and housing related support needs of people over the age of 50 including those with physical or sensory disabilities and mental health needs. The overarching priority for the development of housing solutions is that there should be 'diversity and choice' in the provision of housing and support services.

Members noted that there were high levels of isolation among older residents in the City and that further work was required to promote the relationship between isolation and independence. Officers recognised that there was a need to provide alternatives to older people and the assistance they required, including developing extra care in social settings which provides independence and overcomes isolation

Concern was expressed regarding high levels of under occupancy of social housing. A recurrent difficulty was arranging home moves, as older people were reluctant to move house because of attachment to a family home and the practical issues about relocating. Further support was needed in this area. It was reported that the strategy was actively working on creating lifetime homes and more opportunities for to remain in their own homes.

Resolved to note the report.

42/07 Housing Allocations Policy

The Community Commission considered a report on the Housing Allocations Policy. At its meeting of 2 April 2007, the Community Commission resolved to receive regular monitoring reports on the operation of the new Housing Allocations policy and processes. This report detailed the allocations made during the first six months of operating the new Abritas system.

Members noted that there should be a more robust system for residents on Homefinder who had registered but did not make expressions of interest in available properties. It was reported that the department were moving to a position to review all applications on the 3rd month anniversary and continue a rolling review.

Concern was expressed that emergency housing was being allocated into less desirable areas of the City and it was requested a report detailing the allocations be brought back to a future meeting.

Resolved

- 1. To report back to a future meeting i) details on the emergency housing allocations and ii) how many of the applicants are current tenants seeking an exchange;**
- 2. To note the report but ask that an officer contact box is completed in future.**

43/07 Rose Hill Housing Market Renewal Master Plan

The Community Commission considered a report from the Corporate Director – Corporate and Adult Services. The Rose Hill Housing Market Renewal Area Master Plan was requested by the Commission at the last scheduled meeting following the consideration of the July Forward Plan. The plan was put together by external consultants seeking to stimulate the housing market by developing a legacy of housing regeneration of which the residents and investors will be proud. It aimed to raise the aspirations and enable the local population to reach their potential. The Master Plan sought to create the right balance between the housing, environmental and social needs of the area and improve the quality of life for the residents. It suggests a mixture of demolition, refurbishment and rebuild to improve the layout of the area and build cohesive communities.

Members felt that further transport issues should be taken into consideration in the report. It was suggested that a full copy of the plan be provided to members including the transport study.

Resolved

- 1. To provide a full copy of the Master Plan to members of the Commission;**
- 2. To note the report.**

44/07 Gypsy and Traveller Inter Agency Guidance Document

The Community Commission considered a report from the Corporate Director – Corporate Adult Services. The TIWG was a county-wide forum with representation from Derby City Council, Derbyshire County Council, each of the Derbyshire district councils and other partners including the police, PCTs and the voluntary sector. The guidance has been developed and written by the TIWG and contains a code of practice for Travellers. The code sets out the responsibilities of local authorities and those expected of Travellers on unauthorised land whether or not court action is planned.

Members welcomed the document and noted that it should be available for the public to inspect.

It was suggested that once a site is established members of the Commission carry out a site visit.

Resolved

- 1. To arrange a site visit for Members to the traveller's site once the location is agreed.**
- 2. To note the report**

45/07 Performance Management

The Community Commission considered a report from the Corporate Director – Corporate Adult Services. Members agreed at the July meeting to regularly monitor quarterly performance indicators that are within the remit of this Commission. There are 38 indicators whose performance is measured quarterly and of these:

- 12 are green where the performance was on or above the quarterly target
- five are amber where performance is within 5% of the quarterly target and
- fifteen are red indicators whose performance is off target.

There are also six indicators within the remit of this commission which have statistical no information on them during this quarter. It was noted that indicator BV79b (iii) - % of overpayments written off during the period, was investigating changing the amount of money that could be written off being reduced from £300 to £50 from Council overpayments. Members suggested that an officer attend the next meeting to explain the process.

Resolved

- 1. To receive a further report on BV79b (iii) - % of overpayments written off during the period;**
- 2. To receive a report about empty homes in Derby**
- 3. To note the report.**

46/07 Retrospective Scrutiny

There were no items identified.

47/07 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

It was noted that Call-in had been waived on Item 27/07 in the Forward Plan to allow Cabinet to make the decision, the report would then be considered by the Commission at a future date.

48/07 Matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

There were no items.

49/07 Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the Commission

It was noted that the report From Area to Neighbourhoods had been agreed by Council Cabinet with the amendment at Full Council that religious groups could apply for budget funding for non-religious activities..

MINUTES END