



Derby Homes Service Access Review Proposed Closure of Local Offices

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 To note that the Commission reluctantly accept the proposed decision of Council Cabinet.
- 2 That more information be provided to the Commission on the outreach work currently undertaken and how that is expanded through the resources released by the closures/reductions in opening hours.
- 3 That a) there should be statistical recording of contacts made by residents of stock presently managed by the closing offices, so that usage of the substitute - or *other* Derby Homes - offices can be monitored; b) this should cover personal visits, telephone calls and home visits; c) this information should be evaluated before a decision is taken on the other offices considered for closure, so that the right weighting can then be placed on the potentially conflicting interests of business economics and the promotion of social inclusion.
- 4 To note that the Commission shall wish to scrutinise the subsequent report on the three offices still under review and expects to have the documentation five clear working days before the Commission meeting at which it is considered.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 With regard to recommendation 1, Cllr Nath had referred to his difficulty reconciling the housing and social inclusion elements of his portfolio. There were small numbers attending these local offices but they tended to be residents with high support needs. Conversely, the present spread of 15 offices contributed to high management costs per dwelling and could have an adverse impact on the forthcoming Audit Commission inspection. The Commission also noted that the closures run contrary to the goals of enhancing neighbourhood sustainability and neighbourhood working.

- 2.2 With regard to recommendation 2, new and innovative means of providing customer contact were referred to and that these would be further developed from the dividend gained by the local office closures. As some members only received the 27 page report the day prior to the meeting and others on the actual evening of the meeting, it was not possible to digest all of the written report and frame appropriate questions on those aspects. This could be done through a presentation at a future meeting.
- 2.3 With regard to recommendation 3, it is hoped that technology would allow statistical information to be gathered about how in practice the affected tenants respond to the closures. How many actually use the successor office, or different local office, or visit Cardinal Square or phone the enquiry centre cannot be known. There is a comparison with post office closures in Derby and elsewhere, when local campaigners had challenged Post Office Limited's expectations of customer use of alternative post offices. Access to cars, the cost and convenience of local bus routes influence where people go. Having this information on these three offices can help decide whether priority should be given to the housing management case or the social inclusion case for the other three offices being further reviewed.
- 2.4 With regard to recommendation 4, the Commission had on 5 July 2005 resolved that it wished to scrutinise this key decision and that been repeated in the minutes of each business meeting since. No account of the need to factor in consideration by the Commission appears to have been taken. At the point when the decision was taken by Council Cabinet on 17 January, 2006 implementation of the proposals was reportedly so pressing that there was no time for it to be considered by the Commission at its timetabled meeting on 14 February.

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Background papers:	As referred to in the main report
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 to this covering report – Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. As set out in the main report.

Legal

- 2 As set out in the main report.

Personnel

- 3 As set out in the main report.

Equalities impact

- 4 As set out in the main report.

Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 5 As set out in the main report.