

## Matters Considered By Council Cabinet Referred By The Community Commission

Time began

6.00pm

Time ended

6.50pm

**COUNCIL CABINET  
19 DECEMBER 2006**

Present:

Councillor Williamson (Chair)  
Councillors Bolton, Graves, Hussain,  
Latham, Roberts, Smalley and Wynn

In Attendance

Councillor Jones

### 6b

142/06      Swallowdale Road

The Council Cabinet considered a report from the Scrutiny Management Commission which stated that the Commission at its meeting on 5 December 2006 had received a verbal report about the proposed key decision on the sale of the site at Swallowdale Road. Issues raised by members included the mixed siting of affordable housing units and the phasing of the building work.

It was felt that the proposal to have up to 10 affordable units grouped together was too many and it was better to have smaller sites and more of them. Further, that construction of the PFI and 'market' properties should happen in parallel. The Chair of the Commission referred to a day review conducted by the Commission on 30 November 2006 which had addressed these and other points. A full report was being prepared and would be finalised in the new year. In light of the relevance of that review the Commission sanctioned the making of an interim report which was attached to the report.

In the absence of Councillor Nath, Councillor Roberts responded to the comments, highlighting that the proposals has taken into account a number of the Council's comments although the site was outside of the City boundary

### Decision

To note the report.

153/06      Land at Swallowdale Road, Sinfin

The Council Cabinet considered a report on Land at Swallowdale Road, Sinfen. At its meeting on 26 April 2005, Council Cabinet approved the sale of 1.76 hectares of land off Swallowdale Road on the open market. The site had now been marketed through Salloways property consultants and details of the top offers received were included in the confidential part of the report. The land (0.328 ha) needed for the rented element of the affordable housing requirement would be retained by the Council and included in the Housing PFI scheme.

### **Options Considered**

See confidential part of the report.

### **Decision**

To authorise proceeding as recommended in the confidential part of the report.

### **Reasons**

1. To achieve a capital receipt for this site.
2. To allow the proceeds to be used in accordance with the Capital Strategy.
3. To allow part of the site to be developed under the Housing PFI, to provide the rented affordable housing element in accordance with planning policy.

## **Exclusion of Press and Public**

To consider a resolution to exclude the press and public during consideration of the following items:

“that under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information”

## **Key Decision**

157/06      Land at Swallowdale Road, Sinfen

To consider exempt information in relation to land at Swallowdale Road.

**143/06      Service Charges in Sheltered Accommodation**

The Council Cabinet considered a report from the Community Commission which asked the Council Cabinet to note that the Community Commission

- welcomed the outcome of the review which would result in significantly reduced charges for self funding service users
- was concerned about the possible impact on residents with incomes close to the eligibility threshold for means tested benefits
- was concerned that although the new service was planned to be sustainable, on the basis of known Supporting People allocations, it could be vulnerable in the event of future cutbacks.

The Commission requested that Council Cabinet and Derby Homes should act to ensure that appropriate members of their staff offer each service user a full benefits check at least once per year and that the relevant Cabinet Member should monitor the Supporting People budgets and ensure that in the event of future reductions in the allocation to Derby that these Supported Living schemes were suitably protected.

In the absence of Councillor Nath, Councillor Roberts responded to the comments

**Decision**

1. To note the comments of the Community Commission
2. To ensure that appropriate officers at Derby Homes provide each service user a full benefit check at least once a year.
3. To note that the supporting people budgets should be monitored by the relevant cabinet member to ensure that, in the event of future reductions in the allocation to Derby, supported living schemes are protected.

**144/06      Housing Rent and Service Charges**

The Council Cabinet considered a report from the Community Commission which asked Council Cabinet to note that the Community Commission had concluded that

1. central government had been requiring councils to follow two incompatible policies, achieve convergence between council rents and

those of RSL's by 2012 and cap the percentage rate of rent increases below the rises needed.

2. it was desirable to make the increases as equal as possible to avoid rent hikes.

The Commission requested Council Cabinet to make representations to central government

1. to clarify the government's intentions regarding rent capping in subsequent years and whether the policy shall remain the achievement of rent convergence.
2. if the national policy of rent convergence remains in place to seek an extension beyond the current 2012 deadline to enable convergence to be achieved through reasonable year-on-year percentage increases.

In the absence of Councillor Nath, Councillor Roberts responded to the comments. He confirmed that the Council had already made representations to the government on this issue.

### **Decision**

To note the report.

**6e**

## **145/06 Draft Housing Renewal Policy**

The Council Cabinet considered a report from the Community Commission which asked Council Cabinet to note the Community Commission welcomed the proposals contained in the policy, the Council's commitment to the Disabled Facilities Grant – DFG as shown by the substantial financial support to that budget and the development of a landlord accreditation scheme as previously requested by the Commission. The Commission recommended that Council Cabinet approved the recommendations set out in the report.

In the absence of Councillor Nath, Councillor Roberts responded to the comments

### **Decision**

To note the report.

## **151/06 Housing Renewal Policy**

The Council Cabinet considered a report on Housing Renewal Policy. A review of the Council's Housing Renewal Policy had been necessary to take account of shifts in national housing policy, new legislation and the

development of regional housing strategies. The proposed revised Housing Renewal Policy at Appendix 2 to the report reflected these changes and set out the types of assistance which would be available to qualifying homeowners in the city.

Councillor Roberts agreed to respond to Councillor Smalley on the issues he had raised at the meeting.

### **Options Considered**

There were no options considered.

### **Decision**

1. To approve and adopt the revised Housing Renewal Policy detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.
2. To authorise the Corporate Director – Resources and Housing, in consultation with the Corporate Director – Corporate and Adult Services, to make the necessary arrangements to give public notice of the adoption of the policy in accordance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

### **Reasons**

The proposed revised Housing Renewal Policy would help ensure that:

- assistance was better targeted at those in greatest need
- the Council could meet Government targets relating to private sector housing Improvements
- government funding for housing renewal work in the city would continue to be forthcoming.

**6f**

## **146/06      Housing Allocation Policy**

The Council Cabinet considered a report from the Community Commission which asked Council Cabinet to approve the proposed initial percentages to bands and give delegated authority to the relevant Council Cabinet Member to review and vary them.

The Commission asked the Council Cabinet to note

- i) whole heartedly welcome this response to the former Community Regeneration Commission's previous recommendations

- ii) consider the new 4 band system and percentage of allocations to each should offer much better chances for current social housing tenants seeking to move
- iii) intend to monitor performance to ensure that existing tenants actually do benefit from greater opportunities to move
- iv) hope that over the time the trend should be for the percentage allocated to the emergency band to diminish with the dividend that higher percentages can be awarded to the other bands
- v) may want to explore at a future point the process for verification of applicants' circumstances
- vi) thank the previous Commission for its work and Cllr Nath and his staff for their co-operation and
- vii) offer best wishes to all the staff who will operate the new system given the context that social housing is a scarce resource

In the absence of Councillor Nath, Councillor Roberts responded to the comments

### **Decision**

To note the report

## **150/06 Housing Allocation Policy Agreement of Percentages to Bands**

The Council Cabinet considered a report on Housing Allocation Policy Agreement of Percentages of Bands. The new Housing Allocation Policy was agreed by Council Cabinet on 1 August 2006. The policy was based on a percentage of properties being allocated to each band. This was known as a 'quota of allocations'. The new policy contained four bands of housing need and a percentage of properties would be advertised and allocated to each of these bands. The members of the Community Commission had been consulted on the findings of this report, along with the Derby Homefinder Landlords.

It was noted that the Community Commission were satisfied with the proposals to delegate decision making to the individual cabinet member as proposed in the report.

### **Options Considered**

1. Another percentage of allocations was considered during the data conversion exercise of an applicant's band to the new Housing Allocation Policy.
2. This second proposed percentage of properties to be advertised to each band was:
  - 35% to Emergency band

- 25% to band A
- 35% to band B
- 5% to band C

3. This approach was rejected because:

- the higher percentage to the Emergency band would still encourage people to 'band chase'
- the higher percentage would not help achieve the Housing Allocation Policy's aim of preventing homelessness.

### **Decision**

1. To agree the proposed percentage of quotas contained in the report.
2. To agree that the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing policy be given delegated authority to review and amend the quotas to a parameter of +/- 10% of the total allocations.

### **Reasons**

1. The percentage of properties allocated to the Emergency band, which contained statutory homeless households would ensure the transition from the current policy to the proposed policy still enabled the Council to meet its statutory obligations. Once the backlog of cases was reduced, the proposed Housing Allocations Policy contained the ability to review and amend the percentage or properties allocated to each band.
2. The delegation of authority was required to ensure that the percentage of allocations to each band could be amended in line with changing housing need. The conversion of each housing application was a complex process and once complete would require a quick turn around to ensure the new IT system and Housing Allocation Policy could be implemented.

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