

ITEM 4a

Time commenced – 6.00pm
Time finished – 8:55 pm

COMMUNITY COMMISSION MONDAY 15 JANUARY 2007

Present: Councillor Turner (in the Chair)
Councillors Afzal, Chera, Lowe, Rawson, Redfern, Troup, Webb
and Winter.

Also Present: Councillors Roberts

64/06 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Samra

65/06 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

66/06 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Afzal, Lowe, Redfern and Troup declared a personal interest in minute number 69/06 (d), 71/06, 79/06 as they are all Members of the Derby Homes Board.

67/06 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

68/06 Call-in

No items were called-in by the Commission

69/06 Responses of the Council Cabinet/Cabinet Member to any reports of the Commission

- **Adult Services Cabinet Member Meeting**

- a) **Area and Neighbourhood Working**

The Commission received the draft minutes from the Adult Services Cabinet Member Meeting and a report from the Director of Derby Community Safety Partnership.

Resolved to note i) the comments and ii) that the Commission's proposal that individual ward members be allocated a budget is to be considered as part of the general review of area and neighbourhood working currently under way.

- **Council Cabinet**

b) Swallowdale Road

Resolved to note the minute.

c) Services Charges in the Sheltered Accommodation Service

It was noted that Derby Homes residents would, as the Commission requested, be offered a benefits check and it would be up to the resident whether to take up this offer. The Supporting People's Budgets were being monitored by the Cabinet.

Resolved to note the minute.

d) Housing Rent and Service Charges

Resolved to note the minute.

e) Draft Housing Renewal Policy

Resolved to note the minute.

f) Housing Allocations Policy

Resolved to note the minute.

Items for Discussion

70/06 Let's Talk Budget

The Commission received a presentation on the proposals for the 2007/08 budget.

The Commission discussed the following issues detailed in the budget proposals with the Deputy Leader

- Savings in maintenance
- The criteria used to make savings
- Water safety issues
- Savings from External Funding Unit
- Area and Neighbourhood working
- Derby Homes Care Link Charges
- Foster Service

Resolved:

1. To request further clarification regarding how Directors achieved the proposed savings.
2. To request information regarding the risk assessment process for water and electrical equipment testing, including whether internal audit monitor this, and express the Commission's concerns to Cabinet.
3. To request that the Council Cabinet review their proposals in relation to:
 - the external funding unit and the Council's maintenance budgets as they were concerned that reducing these budgets may be a false economy.
 - Staffing and other support for Area and Neighbourhood Working
4. To express concern that most of the savings being proposed across the Council involved reductions in service levels and that while these would clearly contribute to achieving a balanced budget, they would not contribute to the achievement of Gershon efficiencies.

71/06 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Budget 2007/08 - Consultation

The Commission received a report from Corporate Director – Resources and Housing.

It was noted that the overall financial position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was stable this year and that funding could be maintained at a similar level to last year.

It was reported that the half year position of the Repairs Account was on target to remain in balance at the end of the year but that this would need continual monitoring.

Concerns were raised regarding whether the Major Repairs Allowance was sufficient to ensure that houses continued to meet the Decent Homes standard. It was noted that the budget was based on a government formula and that in the short term it should be sufficient.

It was noted that the final years of the plan were concerning as they were likely to move into a deficit.

Resolved

1. To express concerns to Council Cabinet regarding the likely negative subsidy in the future.

2. **To request that Council Cabinet request a Government review of the formula to ensure the maintenance of up to standard properties continues satisfactorily.**

72/06 Housing and Social Care Capital Programme 2007/08 -2009/10

It was noted that the details of the grant would not be known until March but it was likely that there would be an 8% reduction in the grant compared to this year, except for Rosehill and regeneration schemes.

The Commission discussed the need for an 'Extra Care' facility in the City. It was noted that funding was being sought to create this facility for the people of Derby. It was noted that the Minor Repairs Grant and the Disabled Facilities Grant were publicised in a publicly available Housing Renewal Policy Booklet.

Resolved to:

1. **Welcome the continued support of the Disabled Facilities Grant**
2. **Request a more targeted and sophisticated approach to providing information on the grants available.**
3. **To welcome the Council's approach to 'Extra Care' and to encourage Cabinet to locate a suitable site that could lead to an 'Extra Care' village being developed in the City.**

73/06 Experimental Adoption of Portfolio Working within the Commission

The Commission discussed the Chair's proposal to allocate portfolios to Commission Members and charge them with responsibility for monitoring particular issues and reporting back to the Commission.

Some Commission Members expressed concerns that the majority of the work would fall to the most committed Members of the Commission. It was felt that the Commission as a whole should be responsible for all of the Commissions remit. Others stated that they preferred to have an overview of the topics covered in the Commissions remit rather than developing a specialism. Concerns were also expressed regarding the time commitment that would be involved.

Other Members felt that it would be a beneficial measure and agreed to pilot portfolio working.

Resolved that the following Councillors would pilot portfolio working in the following areas:

- **Councillor Rawson – Housing Issues, Housing strategy and Derby Homes**
- **Councillor Webb – Customer Services**

- **Councillor Chera – Performance Eye**
- **Councillor Afzal – Social Cohesion**

74/06 Commission on Integration and Cohesion – ‘ Your Chance to tell us what you think’

It was noted that 4 members responses had been received to the consultation and those had used to prepare the draft Commission response.

Resolved that the draft formal response from the Commission be confirmed and it together with all 4 individual responses be submitted

75/06 Performance Eye

Resolved to note the report.

76/06 Focussed Scrutiny

There were no items.

77/06 Retrospective Scrutiny

There were no items.

Council Cabinet Forward Plan

78/06 Identification of items on the Forward Plan for consideration at future meetings.

There were no new items.

79/06 Key Decision 28/06 – Derby Homes New Build – Derby Homes Able to Deliver New Affordable Housing

It was noted that a percentage of all housing developments had to be affordable houses. From April 2007 the threshold number of houses in a development before affordable houses were required was to be reduced to 15 from 25.

The Commission discussed the redevelopment of council houses on large existing plots. It was noted that support from Members of the Planning Control Committee in enforcing the 30% affordable housing requirement on sites larger than 25 houses made negotiations with developers easier.

Resolved to

1. request that there be conditions put in place wherever possible to ensure that there was no visual distinction between affordable housing and the rest of the development.
2. request that In existing areas of social housing where clearance is proposed to make way for new build there should be no net loss in the number of affordable units. Therefore the number of units demolished should be the minimum number to be replaced.
3. request that the wisdom of increasing housing density be very seriously examined because the loss of private open space to more housing is likely to result in the creation of additional social problems.
4. request a quarterly statement regarding the number of affordable houses that are developed in the City.

80/06 Matters referred to the Commission by Council
Cabinet

There were no items.

MINUTES END