

# ITEM 4

Commenced: 6.00 pm

Concluded: 8.26 pm

## PLANNING, HOUSING AND LEISURE BOARD 18 SEPTEMBER 2012

Present: Councillor Redfern (Chair)  
Councillors Allen, Hillier, Holmes, Ingall, Nawaz and Troup

Councillor Ingall was partially absent for consideration of minute number 30/12 (item number 10). Councillor Allen was partially absent for consideration of minute number 31/12 (item number 11).

### 21/12 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jackson and S. Khan.

### 22/12 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

### 23/12 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 24/12 Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 July 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 25/12 Call-in

There were no items.

### 26/12 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

The board noted that the September Forward Plan (which was attached to the agenda at the time of publication) did not contain any additions to the items listed in the August edition considered at the preceding board meeting. Following a change in legislation, however, the plan was re-issued on 18 September. The revised plan contained one new item concerning the amended Derby Homes Memorandum and Articles of Association (reference number 37/12). It was reported that authorisation was being sought to account for agreed changes to Derby Home's sphere of operation and the requirements of their registered provider status. The Director of Younger Adults and Housing explained that the amendment would enable Derby Homes to operate outside of the city of Derby.

**Resolved to note both Forward Plans for September 2012.**

## 27/12 Decisions made by Council Cabinet

The board received a report from the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of the Strategic Director of Resources. In addition to the August Council Cabinet decisions outlined in the report, seven further decisions had been made at the meeting held on 12 September 2012. These decisions concerned the following:

### Housing and Advice Portfolio

- Proposals for refurbishment of Oakvale House
- Britannia Court post-demolition proposals
- Potential purchase of Poets' Corner by Derby Homes

### Leisure and Culture Portfolio

- Establishment of Derby Museums Trust

### Planning, Environment and Public Protection Portfolio

- Health and Safety Enforcement Plan
- Food Law Enforcement Plan
- Derby City Core Strategy: Consultation on Preferred Growth Strategy

**Resolved to note the report.**

## 28/12 Core Strategy Update

The board received a report from the Spatial Planning and Climate Change Policy Team Leader on behalf of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods. The officer outlined the report and explained the nature of the proposed consultation process.

The board queried the length of the proposed ten week consultation window, considering the gravity of the strategy's impact across the city. The board recognised the significant need for housing in the Derby market area but expressed concern in relation to the provision of associated community infrastructure; specifically schools, highways and transport.

Members discussed both the current and projected admissions capacity of schools, particularly in the Littleover, Chellaston and Sinfin wards of the city. The board further discussed the responsibilities shared by neighbouring local authorities, particularly to the southern boundary of the city, where the impact of projected growth was greater. The officer clarified that houses which were built within South Derbyshire's neighbouring boundary would qualify for a New Homes Bonus. In the absence of a local agreement to the contrary, the bonus would be directly payable to the District Council. The officer further informed the board that financial support derived from central government or section 106 agreements may be limited. The board noted that whilst the strategy endeavoured to identify opportunities for development, it could not always identify ways to resource them. It was reported that the concept of remodelling existing housing stock had been considered but had not proved financially viable.

The officer explained that the proposed strategy avoided significant urban extensions in the western side of the city due to a lack of physical space. The proposals envisaged an opportunity to locate new houses in Allenton, Sinfin and Chellaston wards, where existing secondary schools would be extended to accommodate the increased demand. The officer stated that this would address the inherent problem of creating new schools, which would be expensive and difficult to resource.

The Head of Spatial Planning and Climate Change informed the board that in relation to transport planning, technical data had been collected and analysed to contribute to the proposal. The board contemplated the proposal's likely impact upon the distribution of traffic across the city, together with the affect on public transport arrangements.

**Resolved to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Environment and Public Protection:**

- **to be open-minded with regards to extending the 'Core Strategy Consultation on Preferred Growth Strategy' period if required.**
- **that Ward Councillors be consulted on dates for neighbourhood drop-in sessions that are to be arranged as part of the consultation process.**
- **to challenge the Housing Market Area development views of, and conclusions made by Amber Valley Borough Council and South Derbyshire District Council through an appropriate channel.**
- **that further investigative work is undertaken to assess the community infrastructure developments, which would be required to support the Growth Strategy proposals. This exercise should include:**
  - a) **an investigation into the capacity of local schools in the Derby Housing Market Area (particularly if catchments areas are reduced to limit eligibility) and outline potential options to manage an increased capacity as a result of the Growth Strategy proposals; and**
  - b) **an investigation into issues surrounding the capacity of the local transport network and radial infrastructure in the city, and any improvement works needed to manage an increased capacity as a result of the Growth Strategy proposals.**

## 29/12 Housing Allocations Policy Update

The board received a report from the Housing Advice Manager, on behalf of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods. The officer summarised the report and explained that due to the effects of the Localism Act 2011 (which commenced in early 2012) the Housing Allocations Policy had only been partially implemented, despite approval in April 2011. The officer outlined the changes which had been implemented. It was reported that officers felt that the single offer allocation policy was proving effective, as was the preventative strategy in relation to homelessness.

It was reported that there had there was a greater amount of stability recorded for new tenancies but this trend was reducing the turnover of housing stock. The board noted that this benefitted community stability but reduced the diversity of choice which was available.

The board was informed that officers had met with Housing Associations in April and that a consultation event, regarding the future allocations policy, had been arranged to take place on 27 September 2012 in the Quad, Derby. It was envisaged that the proposed policy would be simplified and accommodate recent statutory changes. The definition of qualified persons for the purpose of the housing register, for example, had been removed. There would be an 'open to all' band.

In response to queries from the board, the officer explained that they had not received many requests from the private sector to utilise the Derby Homefinder service. Officers did, however, work closely with agencies. The officer confirmed that it was possible to conduct reviews of online applications to ascertain the number of genuinely active applicants. To date, this function had not been used but officers hoped to undertake a check in the future.

Members were advised that there was an automated system available as an alternative to the online bidding system. Officers intended to train support agencies to enable them to bid on customers' behalf. Furthermore, members were informed that there would be a bank of machines located at the redeveloped Council House, which could be used by customers to bid for housing. Staff would be available to assist customers to use the machines

**Resolved that an update on the development of the Housing Allocations Policy following consultation is brought to a future meeting of the Planning, Housing and Leisure Board.**

## 30/12 Homelessness Strategy Update

The board received a report from the Housing Advice Manager, on behalf of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods. The officer outlined the report and updated members on the actions being undertaken to prevent homelessness or assist those who were homeless to acquire stable accommodation. The officer recounted the Homeless Strategy and Action Plan, which was developed in 2010 and projected application to 2014. The officer explained that partnership working continued to be key and confirmed that charities had been included as part of the strategy consultation process.

The board considered the plan contained within appendix 2 of the report and questioned how the rough sleeper street audits were being carried out. The officer reported that the audit was conducted across a six week period. Volunteers explored the city using a planned route from 4.30am on every Thursday morning. Historically, recorded numbers were affected by the strict application of a limited definition (provided by central government) of a 'rough sleeper'. The officer explained that this had not created an accurate reflection of the numbers or needs of individuals affected by homelessness. Presently, there was greater flexibility in the definition which was applied.

In a recent check, the officer recalled that thirty-one individuals had been recorded as rough sleepers. Officers hoped to source and offer accommodation to people who were or would become homeless. It was reported, however, that there were a high percentage of people who did not qualify for housing assistance owing to restrictions

under immigration regulations. The board recognised that although recorded numbers had recently risen, a wider definition of key terminology was enabling a greater degree of accuracy.

**Resolved to note the update and actions taken in the action plan.**

## 31/12 Library Opening Hours

The board received a report from the Director of Leisure and Culture, together with the Head of Museums and Libraries, on behalf of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods.

The Director outlined the report and confirmed that the library opening hours had been amended in July 2011 and January 2012. The matter was being reviewed again and consequently, a survey had been produced to ascertain customers' needs. Copies of the draft survey were circulated to members. It was reported that the survey would be available online and in the city's libraries. The consultation period would span twelve weeks. It was the Head of Service's intention that the consultation would be publicised through Neighbourhood forums and in the Derby Evening Telegraph.

The board understood that the revised opening hours were necessitated by budget reductions but was concerned that the current operating hours limited access. Members recognised that libraries provided a resource that was not limited to the rental of books. As a central source of access to information and information technology facilities, residents would perhaps have access requirements outside of the traditional hours of operation. The board suggested that a greater degree of flexibility would be required and accordingly, an option to alternate opening hours across different libraries be included. The officer confirmed that options, such as late night opening, would be included in the survey.

The board explored the possibility of volunteer-supported opening hours but recognised that it would need to be resourced through sustainable interest. The officer observed the importance of being able to meet a customer expectation that was created through support from an initial expression of interest that later dwindled. Furthermore, the officer highlighted the need for an understanding that voluntary support would constitute an enhancement rather than a replacement of salaried jobs.

The Head of Service explained that the survey was designed to create an individual response in relation to each library. Members suggested that this could be made clearer in the beginning of the form. Members also suggested some amendments to the phrasing of certain questions to ensure clarity and ease of use. The officer explained that the number and variety of consultation responses would dictate the complexity of the results. It was expected that analysis of the data would be difficult but would create informed recommendations.

**Resolved to request the Director of Leisure and Culture to ensure that the results of the consultation regarding library opening hours (and any draft revised opening hours) are brought back to a future meeting of the Planning, Housing and Leisure Board for consultation.**

## 32/12 Relocation of the Local Studies Library

The board received a report from the Director of Leisure and Culture, on behalf of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods. The Director outlined the report and detailed the proposal to relocate the Local Studies Library to the former site of the Derby Magistrates' Court.

The board debated the potential to utilise storage space in a separate location, with the intention of minimising escalating on-site storage costs. The board noted the customer service implications in light of the nature of transactional business; customers conducting a research trail would become frustrated with the time delay in processing requests for information stored off-site. Furthermore, the board recognised that additional costs could have been incurred through staffing requirements being split across more than one site.

The Director explained that the site contained two former courts which would be utilised as storage space and one former court which would facilitate a research area open to the public. It was reported that the building, which was limited in use due to its listed status, would comfortably accommodate the library. A cafeteria would be located on site to service the public and accrue some revenue.

The Director confirmed that other locations had been considered including, for example, the Central Library. This had been discounted due to lack of storage space and problems with the safety of documents due to problems caused by damp in the basement of the building.

**Resolved to note the latest option for relocation of the Local Studies Library.**

## 33/12 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. The board reviewed and confirmed both the outline work programme and scope for the private rented sector housing topic review. It was reported that the earliest availability of the budget proposals remained uncertain. The Overview and Scrutiny officer advised the board that the progress of the budget report would be monitored and the work programme would be amended to facilitate scrutiny accordingly. The board was keen to review the service provision for homeless people in the city and requested a topic review scoping report accordingly.

**Resolved to:**

- **agree the scope for the Private Rented Sector Housing topic review.**
- **request that the Overview and Scrutiny Officer develop a scoping report for a review on service provision for homeless people in the city.**
- **continue to delay work on the Multi Sports Arena Governance Topic Review**
- **adjust the work programme to accommodate the scrutiny of the budget proposals.**

MINUTES END