



NOTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
MONDAY 24 JANUARY 2011

Held at 7.00 pm in The Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West
Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs J A Smith (Chairman), S J Boote, T Combellack, J E Cottee,
M G Hemsley, T W Holt, G R Mallender, J A Stockwood, B Tansley

OFFICERS PRESENT:

D Dwyer	Strategic Housing Manager
B Knowles	Leisure Contracts Manager
E Mano	Housing Options Team Leader
P Randle	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)
L Reid-Jones	Democratic Services Manager

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

There were no apologies for absence.

14. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

15. Notes of the Previous Meeting

Councillor Boote asked for clarification on Minute 12 Small Environmental Improvements Programme regarding the criterion for the scheme. It was confirmed that the criterion were that the scheme had to provide a visual enhancement and was not on public land wholly owned by either the Borough or County Council, and did not fall under the remit of another budget.

Councillor Boote questioned the accuracy of Minute 12 where 'it was noted that there would be a freeze on how much Council Tax could be raised by the parish/town and Borough Councils'. It was agreed that this should be minuted as 'it was noted that there **could** be a freeze on how much Council Tax could be raised by the parish/town and Borough Councils'.

With these amendments the notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 26 October 2010 were accepted as a true record.

Councillor Stockwood asked for an update on the suggestion at the previous meeting that Children and Young People should be added to the Group's work programme for April. The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) reported that the issue had been considered by the both Performance Management Board and the Community Development Group previously, and that a Rushcliffe Action Plan had been produced and was being delivered through the Local Strategic Partnership. He advised Members that the Council's review was to be

undertaken following the development of a new Strategy by the County Council. However, as the County Council has decided not to proceed with this work it was not the right time to scrutinise the issue further.

The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) updated Members on the action sheet in relation to Affordable Housing in Rural Areas. He informed Members that the Housing Trusts were now likely to be replaced by Neighbourhood Planning, and that the requirement for local support was likely to be 50%. He stated that the Council were applying to Government to be a vanguard authority, but that the successful authorities had not yet been selected. Furthermore this initiative was part of the Localism Bill which was not due to become statute until November 2011, and therefore any initiatives would have to be within current legislation.

16. **Cabinet Questions**

There were none received.

17. **Review of Homelessness**

The Strategic Housing Manager presented a report setting out the achievements in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2008-13 and the impact of homelessness in Rushcliffe, including predicted future trends, emerging issues and the resources available to the Council to tackle homelessness. She informed Members that the Council had a statutory duty to households considered to be homeless, and also to have in place a homelessness strategy. The Strategy had been revised in 2008 where the focus had changed to prevention rather than reacting to homelessness. By reference to the report the Strategic Housing Manager drew Members' attention to recent achievements in the 2008-13 Strategy in particular:-

1. Nearly 500 household had their homelessness prevented
2. 30 educational seminars had been provided to young people at risk of homelessness through the school project
3. homelessness presentations and acceptances were down
4. a county Children and Young Persons' protocol had been developed and a joint assessment panel implemented
5. Surestart services had been provided at the Council's temporary accommodation premises
6. referrals to health visitors and school nurses of all homeless households accommodated in temporary accommodation had been provided
7. prevention funding had been utilised to provide financial incentives to private landlords to ensure the availability of private rented properties for households on low incomes.

Furthermore Rushcliffe's share of the government's Preventing Homelessness grant had been increased by 26% to £50,000 this year.

The Strategic Housing Manager informed the Group that Community and Local Government (CLG) advisers had recently carried out an informal assessment of the service. Officers were awaiting the final report and action plan, however the verbal feedback had been positive.

In terms of the economic housing landscape, the Strategic Housing Manager stated that it was important to have resilience in the service, particularly as changes to Housing Benefit and Supporting People could mean an increase in the number of people presenting as homeless.

In response to a question regarding the credit union, the Strategic Housing Manager explained that the credit union was a resource that provided access to loans with low interest rates and payment plans. She agreed to report back to Members on the success of the credit union.

In clarifying the issue of young people excluded from home by their parents the Strategic Housing Manager explained that their first task was to enable the young person to return home where it was safe to do so. If that was not possible officers had a protocol with other local authorities in order to support the young person. She explained further that this was a good example of partners working together to achieve a successful outcome.

Officers described their efforts in raising awareness of the service, which included working with outreach advice agencies, producing leaflets and sign posting people. They outlined the obligations of mortgage providers to notify the Council where there were any difficulties in relation to mortgage repayments.

In explaining the definitions of prevention and acceptance, officers explained that there were national definitions and guidance which they followed. Prevention was defined as where the Council prevented a household from becoming homeless, either by helping them to remain in their current accommodation where appropriate, or assisting in securing other suitable alternative accommodation. Acceptance of a case was defined as where a household was threatened by homelessness or homeless and in looking at alternative options the Council had been unable to provide suitable alternative accommodation through prevention. At this point the Council would accept the case as homeless if the household/individual was deemed to fulfil the statutory criteria of homeless i.e. be eligible, in priority need and not intentionally homeless.

Members asked for clarification of the number of successful preventions for the year 2010/11, and also for further information on the reduction in the number of homeless applications in West Bridgford. Officers agreed to provide this information to Members.

Members commented on the Homeless Prevention Grant. In response officers informed Members that this grant was not ring fenced and could be used for anything by the Council, however by demonstrating its effectiveness in preventing homelessness the Government had increased the Council's grant. The grant would also be subject to review by Government after two years to determine if the uplift in grant has been effective in preventing homelessness. Officers further informed Members that some of the grant was being used to part fund the Citizens' Advice Bureau, Sanctuary Domestic Violence project and magazines for schools. Other initiatives being considered include working with the Probation Service to prevent homelessness for people with complex needs.

In discussing the CLG visit the Strategic Housing Manager informed Members that officers had already begun to implement the recommendations. These included training for staff, and improvements to case notes and files. The actions would be monitored through staff 1-1 meetings and reported to the Senior Management Team. The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) stated that it would also be brought to the attention of the portfolio holder.

In conclusion the Strategic Housing Manager stated that the focus of their work was on prevention. Overall Members agreed that this approach represented value for money.

It was **AGREED** that the work being undertaken to prevent and tackle homelessness be endorsed and that Members considered the current approach offered value for money.

18. **Leisure Strategy Review – Second Interim Report**

The Chairman of the Group introduced a report which provided interim feedback on the areas for investigation identified following the first report by the Leisure Facilities Strategy Member Panel in April 2010. The Panel had met on several occasions and had received presentations from officers. The Panel had agreed a number of areas for investigation.

The Chairman updated the Group on the issues. The single agreement and joint use policy had now been agreed. The Lenton Centre presentation had been very informative, giving Members an insight into the workings of the Centre which was run by volunteers. It was an example of a social enterprise organisation set up to run a former Nottingham City Council leisure and community facility. By reference to the report the Chairman stated that the Parish Councils had been requested to undertake an audit of all leisure facilities in their area. The purpose of this was to capture the importance and use of these facilities for villagers. At this stage the response had been low. The Panel had also considered housing growth issues and their impact on the provision of leisure facilities.

The Chairman stated that Parkwood would be attending the next meeting of the Leisure Facilities Strategy Member Panel to discuss their work with other local authorities and how existing facilities could be altered to meet current demand.

It was **AGREED** that the Group note the progress made by the Member Panel in relation to the areas recommended for investigation by the Community Development Group at its meeting on 19 April 2010.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

Action Sheet

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP - MONDAY 24 JANUARY 2011

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
17 – Review of Homelessness	Officers to provide Members with further information on the reduction in the number of homeless applications in West Bridgford	Strategic Housing Manager
17– Review of Homelessness	Officers to clarify figures in paragraph 10 of the report, in relation to the number of prevention cases in the current year	Strategic Housing Manager
17– Review of Homelessness	Officers to provide Members with information on the success of the Cotgrave Credit Union	Strategic Housing Manager