



**NOTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
MONDAY 25 JANUARY 2010**

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, Mrs R E J Godkin, M G Hemsley, R M Jones (substitute for Councillor T W Holt), N C Lawrence, Mrs M M Males, G R Mallender, Mrs M Stockwood (substitute for Councillor J E Cottee)

OFFICERS PRESENT:

E Brady	Choice Based Lettings Project Manager
C McGraw	Head of Community Shaping
V Nightingale	Senior Member Support Officer
P Phillips	Environmental Sustainability Officer
P Randle	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors J E Cottee, T W Holt

16. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

17. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Monday 19 October 2009 were accepted as a true record following the replacement of the word aspirational with the word inspirational in the 2nd paragraph of note 13 – Draft Customer Insight Strategy 2009-2011.

The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) gave Members an update on the off-street parking review. He explained that when the issue had been considered by Cabinet it had been agreed that the Council should work in partnership with Bingham Town Council and Radcliffe on Trent Parish Council to consider ways of addressing long term parking problems. He informed Members that a meeting had been held with Radcliffe on Trent Parish Council and that they were happy with the present arrangements, especially as 2 large private car parks in the area were currently being used for long term parking. He also stated that a meeting was being arranged with Bingham Town Council. With regard to the Village Hall Car Park at Keyworth officers had been informed that this car park was largely full during the week. Councillor Boote informed the Group that Keyworth Parish Council had taken a no action stance.

Councillor Boote was extremely disappointed that following on from over a year's work and the consideration of a lot of information by the Member Panel there had been no progress made with regard to this issue. The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) explained that there had been progress made and that

following the recommendations of the Member Panel several parking orders had been introduced.

The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) informed the Group that due to time constraints the Customer Insight Strategy would now be presented in April 2010 and not at this meeting.

18. **Presentation on Choice Based Lettings**

The Head of Community Shaping gave a presentation on the proposal to introduce a Choice Based Lettings scheme. This was a major change to how vacant properties were allocated and was a partnership project between Rushcliffe, Broxtowe and Gedling Borough Councils and the registered social landlords. The project was being part funded by the Communities and Local Government department. Members were informed that a joint presentation had recently taken place and that this scheme would be presented to the other two Borough Councils in the near future.

She outlined the history of the service since the transfer of the housing stock to a registered social landlord. She reminded Members that as part of the transfer agreement the Council had 75% nomination rights of the general housing stock, 25% of sheltered housing and 100% of new build.

Members were informed that applicants would be placed in one of four bandings, A – D, according to their housing need. To be placed in the first three bands applicants would also need to have a local connection. Although it was recognised that anyone in Band D was extremely unlikely to be housed there was a potential for them to access any hard to let properties if no one from another band applied.

One of the main problems with the current process was the need for residents to register on a number of different registered social landlords' waiting lists. This made the scheme very time consuming to administer and allowed for duplication between lists. Another disadvantage for applicants was the possibility of wasting offers as they could not be very specific on their preferences.

The scheme comprised two components the Choice Based Lettings system and the Allocations Policy, which governed how priority was decided for home seekers.

Choice Based Lettings allowed applicants, or home seekers, to bid for properties which were advertised, giving people more choice. The home seeker with the highest priority would be offered the property, although the local authority could override the decision. Property adverts would include photos, property type, number of bedrooms, any special features, housing costs, neighbourhood details and any restrictions on eligibility. The advantages of this system were that people only had to complete one form, it would contain high quality information and it was transparent and open. There would be a variety of bidding methods including phone, website, text, post and a kiosk in the Civic Centre's reception. Officers would identify any groups that might need extra help with the process, and would monitor anyone who did not bid from those assessed as high priority need to ensure that people were not

excluded and to find out why they did not bid. There was also the possibility of including private sector housing in the future.

The Head of Community Shaping explained how officers had explored procurement options and had decided that if the project received approval it would be more efficient to work with an existing provider, which operated a national scheme. The company that had been identified was Northern Housing Consortium who at present delivered the Council's home alarm monitoring.

Following the 12 week consultation period and approval it was envisaged that

- The allocations policy would be agreed and published
- Officers would conduct a publicity and awareness campaign
- Staff and partners would be trained to ensure they could assist the more vulnerable groups
- The system would be tested
- It would go live in the Autumn of 2010

Members were very concerned about the technology used and whether this would disadvantage some of the more vulnerable groups. Members were unsure which staff would be supporting these groups. The Head of Community Shaping explained that even with the current system there were vulnerable people who needed assistance and it was vital that these people were supported. She stated that officers from the registered social landlords and the Council would be trained and it was planned to bring in support agencies such as Stepforward and Framework, who normally stepped in after a tenancy had been obtained, to help with the bidding process. The system that was being considered also had the ability to highlight vulnerable households who were expected to bid and these would be monitored. If households were not applying, officers would contact them to see what other help they required. With regard to help, officers explained that applicants' circumstances needed to be considered to identify which agency was best placed to assist. Members were assured that each property would be advertised for a set period and whether someone used the website or wrote in, their applications would not be weighted by speed but by need.

The Group were informed that as part of the consultation exercise officers were writing to everyone on the current waiting list, using the Council's website to gain views and working with representatives from hard to reach groups. Officers stated that part of the consultation was to identify if there would be an adverse impact on people and how to solve these issues. One area that might need considering is access points in rural areas. It was important at this stage that the scheme was not too rigid and could adapt to the responses received.

Members queried if there was a limit on the number of properties that could be applied for. Officers stated that some schemes have a rule of only 3 bids per week however, this was something that would need to be decided if the scheme was given approval.

Following a question regarding the banding system officers explained that the system would be clear and transparent and that when someone registered

with the scheme they would be informed of what the bands were and where their application fitted into the bands. At present Spirita maintained the list and determined the applicant's banding, however the Council did have a monitoring role to ensure equity. If the scheme was approved it was anticipated that the consortium would determine applications with the Council having a checking system in place for monitoring purposes. Officers stated that as the system was transparent and that every criteria was listed applicants could see why they had been given a certain banding, also this could be reviewed if further evidence was available.

Members were concerned that with the existing scheme registered social landlords used data protection as a barrier when councillors tried to intervene for tenants. The Head of Community Shaping stated that it had been recognised that councillors' enquiries had not been dealt with satisfactorily but that the situation had improved. It was recognised that councillors were a voice for residents. Also in the future more information would be available via this scheme and would be presented to Members on a monthly basis.

Members felt that the Borough Council should consider a single entry route in to the system and that this should be administered by the Council on behalf of its residents. Officers were in agreement with a single entry route but were unsure who would administer it, it had to be the most convenient route for the customers. The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) warned that there was only a small Housing Options team and any request for extra resources would be unlikely to be met in the current economic climate. The Head of Community Shaping stated that she supported the one point of contact which did not necessarily have to be the Council but assured Members that the Borough Council would maintain overall control. Some Members felt that additional resources should be available if this was the chosen route.

Following a question Members were informed that, with prior agreement, proxy bidding could be made available.

In respect of introductory tenancies officers agreed to find out more information and include this issue in their report in April.

It was AGREED that

Members endorsed the proposals to implement Choice Based Lettings, but requested a further report after the consultation period had ended before the scheme was presented to Cabinet.

19. Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

Councillor Hemsley presented a report regarding the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and he also highlighted the work of the Climate Change Member Panel. He explained that the Council had been working with the Energy Saving Trust to meet its Strategic Task number 3, developing and delivering a climate change action plan, which was part of the Council's priority to 'help deliver a sustainable environment'. He informed the Group that the Member Panel had been convened to ensure that the Strategy and the Action Plan were fit for purpose for Rushcliffe, that they had identified gaps and commented on both the Strategy and the Action Plan. He stated

that all the identified gaps had been addressed. The Strategy set out the reasons why a strategy was needed, what the main contributors were, the Council's key challenges, the Council's successes so far and its approach to tackling climate change in the future.

Members were informed that the Action Plan had been approved by all Heads of Service and tasks had been incorporated into service plans for 2010/11. It was envisaged that the majority of the actions could be achieved within existing budgets.

The Head of Community Shaping gave a presentation outlining the main elements of the Strategy including how climate change would impact on Rushcliffe. She explained the Government's target to reduce CO₂ emissions by 26% by 2020 and how this equated locally. Members were informed of the areas of focus and how the performance would be monitored by the Council's covalent system and then reported to the Performance Management Board. She emphasised how as part of the Council's community leadership role Members and officers could influence residents.

The Group were informed of the work of the Energy Saving Trust to develop a draft action plan in 2008/09 and how this had been subdivided into work that had already commenced and those yet to be started.

Regarding National Indicator 188, to have procedures in place to deal with Climate Change, Members were informed that the Council was at present at level 0, which was one of five levels. The Government had deemed that all councils were at level 0 and wanted local authorities to reach level 3 by 2012. With regard to Rushcliffe Borough Council it was envisaged that with some work undertaken, as per the action plan, level 3 would be achievable.

Members queried the savings made by residents by installing insulation and undertaking energy efficiency measures. Officers agreed to clarify these figures.

Members raised concerns regarding street lighting and how the Council could influence Nottinghamshire County Council to use energy efficient lighting. Officers explained that the County Council had, as one of the Local Strategic Partnership partners, agreed to tackle climate change. It was agreed that this issue could be raised through that forum.

Following a question regarding extra funding to combat flooding in the Trent area officers agreed to keep Members informed on any future developments.

In response to a query regarding the amount of emissions produced per capita it was noted that in comparison to other areas of a similar size Rushcliffe performed well. It was noted that the Borough Council had been promoting environmental issues for a number of years and had been a forerunner in local authorities to promote the Agenda 21 initiative. Officers also felt that Rushcliffe residents were very proactive and interested.

With regards to the Strategy Members proposed that the Council's scheme to recycle batteries should be included.

Members discussed the need to obtain heat maps/surveys for the area and the disappointments of the trial conducted in Keyworth. Officers explained that there had been a failure in the IT software and that other options were being pursued.

The Group discussed the production of renewable energy and highlighted the many environmental initiatives undertaken at Rushcliffe Country Park. Members queried why the Action Plan stated that Radcliffe Road in West Bridgford should be targeted. Officers explained that this was an area of dense business use, including 2 major sports ground and 3 large local authority buildings.

With regard to energy use at West Bridgford Community Hall the Deputy Chief Executive (PR) explained that following the withdrawal of the library project work was being undertaken to refurbish the Hall including heating controls.

Following a discussion regarding carbon offsetting Members were informed that work was underway to produce a community orchard at The Hook in West Bridgford, East Bridgford Parish Council were promoting 'plant an apple tree' and that Keyworth Parish Council in partnership with the Borough Council were turning an area of land into allotments. The Head of Community Shaping explained that developers were now looking at large country parks and officers were promoting the idea of including allotments within developments.

The Group discussed the Action Plan it was felt to have included a great variety of actions, without much thought of cost, value for money or prioritisation. It needed to be rationalised and consideration needed to be given to the delivery of actions. It was also unclear how this Plan would be monitored. The Head of Community Shaping explained that the Action Plan was a culmination of a lot of hard work by the Energy Saving Trust, the Member Panel, an officer group, heads of service and officers from the Community Shaping team. With regard to cost, work was either staff time or Heads of Service had agreed that these could be contained within their budgets. Work had been factored into service plans. It was agreed that the financial impact of the actions was difficult to ascertain and it was felt that the significance and impact of an action should be considered.. It was agreed that the officer working group should try to identify costs and which actions could be implemented to give the best results and to ensure that officer time was used to the best advantage. It was also agreed that the Member Panel should be reconvened to consider how to progress the Action Plan and to consider the prioritisation of actions. It was also felt that work should be ongoing with the Energy Saving Trust.

With regard to the monitoring role it was agreed that a further report should be presented to this Group in July, where the future role of the Member Panel should be discussed. It was also felt that future monitoring would either be conducted by this group or by Performance Management Board, this would be discussed at the next meeting of the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the scrutiny groups.

It was AGREED that

- i. the Community Development Group supported the Strategy, but

- ii. recommended to Cabinet that further work be undertaken to prioritise the tasks within the Action Plan having regard to their impact and the resources required for delivery.

20. **Work Programme**

The Deputy Chief Executive (Members) presented the Group's work programme. Members were reminded that this was a fluid programme and it was not too rigid. The Choice Based Lettings project was to be added to the Group's meeting on 19 April following the consultation period. Also the Climate Change Strategy and Action Panel was to be included in the programme for the Group's meeting on 26 July 2010 to discuss the future role of the Member Panel and the Action Plan.

Members raised the issue of toilets in West Bridgford and were informed that this would be included in the programme for the meeting on 19 April 2010.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

Action Sheet

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP – MONDAY 25 JANUARY 2010

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
17. Notes of the previous meeting	No actions	
18. Presentation on Choice Based Lettings	Following the consultation period officers to present a further report	Head of Community Shaping
19. Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan	<p>Officers to clarify the amount of CO₂ emissions saved since 1997 through home insulation and energy efficiency measures.</p> <p>Officers to raise the issue of energy efficiency street lighting with Nottinghamshire County Council as part of the Local Strategic Partnership</p> <p>Members to be informed of any further developments regarding extra funding for the Trent area to combat flooding</p> <p>Member Panel to be reconvened to consider the prioritisation of the Action Plan</p> <p>The officer group be requested to consider the impact of the Action Plan</p> <p>A further report be presented to the Group in July 2010 on the future role of the Member Panel.</p>	<p>Environmental Sustainability Officer</p> <p>Deputy Chief Executive (PR)</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability Officer</p> <p>Head of Community Shaping</p> <p>Head of Community Shaping</p> <p>Head of Community Shaping</p>