



**NOTES**  
**OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**  
**MONDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2011**

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

**PRESENT:**

Councillors N C Lawrence (Chairman), S J Boote, N K Boughton-Smith,  
T Combellack, L B Cooper, Mrs M M Males, G R Mallender and  
J A Stockwood (substitute for Councillor J E Greenwood)

**OFFICERS PRESENT:**

D Dwyer	Strategic Housing Manager
C McGraw	Head of Community Shaping
V Nightingale	Senior Member Support Officer
P Randle	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)
G Rhodes	Planning Policy Officer

**APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE:**

Councillor J E Greenwood

**9. Declarations of Interest**

There were none declared.

**10. Notes of the Previous Meeting**

The notes of the meeting held on Monday 18 July 2011 were accepted as a true record.

Councillor Mrs Males sought clarification regarding the Leisure Strategy. She felt that as the original Member Panel had been set up by this Group the Strategy should be referred back. She was informed that this item was now being considered by a Cabinet Member Group as Cabinet would have to make decisions about the way forward. Members could ask the Cabinet Member directly if they had any concerns.

Councillor Boote raised the issue of the Site of Interest for Nature Conservation adjacent to the disused railway line. He was informed that this was part of the Development Control process and officers were seeking clarification and would report back.

**11. Cabinet Member Questions**

There were none received.

**12. Review of Service Level Agreements with RCVS and RCAN**

At the Group's last meeting Members had considered the service level agreements with Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) and the Rushcliffe

Community Voluntary Service (RCVS). The Group had requested further information regarding the work of RCVS to enable it to have a more informed discussion. The Head of Community Shaping explained in more detail the work undertaken by RCVS and how this impacted on the Borough. She outlined the number of staff employed and many of the projects that were undertaken. She informed the Group that nationally community and voluntary groups were merging and consolidating to ensure resilience and adaptability. Members were informed that whilst RCVS and RCAN did work together as part of the South Notts Alliance there were two separate Service Level Agreements, as they both had clearly defined roles and remits. However, she did outline what the Council's priorities could be if a Joint Service Level Agreement was the preferred option. Members felt that a joint Service Level Agreement would tackle any potential overlap in service provision.

With regards to a potential merger officers stated that there was support for a consolidation of back office functions. Following a question Members were informed that the RCVS would still have accommodation at the Civic Centre.

Members felt that the RCVS focussed its work in the West Bridgford area. The Head of Community Shaping explained that following further discussions with both groups she had been informed that RCAN assisted parishes with their parish plans and then the RCVS helped groups to carry out the action plan, although RCAN were also involved when their specialist knowledge was required. Some Members felt that the role of the RCVS in local projects was often quite tenuous.

With regard to staffing Members were informed that RCVS had ten full time equivalents of which six worked on projects that were externally funded. Another aspect of the work of the RCVS was the co-ordination of the Rushcliffe Community Cohesion Network, which assisted the Council to deliver its equality and diversity agenda by reaching vulnerable and hard to reach groups.

It was felt that the Service Level Agreement with RCAN and RCVS should be concluded as soon as possible as the previous Service Level Agreement had lapsed with RCAN and the agreement with RCVS had been extended for a few months. Members were concerned that at present the post of Rural Officer had not been filled by RCAN; especially as the previous officer had raised over a £1 million in external funding for projects across the Borough.

Following a suggestion that Neighbourhood Planning should be included in the Council's priorities Members were informed that this initiative was linked to the Local Development Framework process and that Keyworth had been chosen as a pilot area. It was hoped that a clearer position on this initiative would be available soon. However, it was noted that the Chief Executive of RCAN was keen to support rural areas with parish plans, neighbourhood planning and market town initiatives.

Members were supportive of the work of RCAN and RCVS but felt that it would be beneficial if the two organisations could synchronise their operations to provide savings without affecting the services provided. It was felt that the work of the organisations was a good example of the Big Society initiative.

Following a question the Head of Community Shaping explained that at present both organisations were heavily involved with the Local Strategic Partnership and that, following a review, it had been identified that this was too resource intensive and would have to be scaled back.

With regard to the development of the third sector officers explained that, as part of the 4 year plan, there was a team considering if some of the Council's services could be taken over by a parish/town council or community group. It was noted that this was a new area for everyone but that both organisations could provide groups with their expertise.

Even though the scheme was not part of the Borough Council's funding Members felt the rural transport scheme was of benefit to residents and should remain a high priority.

Members requested that a 12 month review should be included in the Group's work programme.

The Group agreed that their comments should be forwarded to Cabinet to assist in the development of the future working arrangements with RCVS and RCAN.

### **13. Preventing Homelessness**

The Strategic Housing Manager presented a report outlining the results of the healthcheck assessment of the Council's Homelessness and Housing Options Service undertaken by the Department of Local Government in December 2010. The DCLG had been invited by the Council to act as its "critical friend" and to track the customer's journey through the system. The report also presented Members with an Action Plan compiled from the issues and recommendations from the assessment.

Members were informed that prior to the healthcheck the Council had highlighted certain areas as potential issues, these included:

- high staff turnover in 2010
- the introduction of a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- proposed savings resulting in a reduced Supporting People Programme
- the implementation of a county wide protocol regarding 16 & 17 year homelessness applicants
- the move of the Customer Services Centre and the different method of delivering the service at the Contact Centre, and
- the slowdown in the housing market in the delivery of affordable housing developments

Officers stated that all staff in the Housing Options Team were fully trained despite a high staff turnover and close partnership working with other councils had also resulted in maximising resources. In considering the action relating to the Council's provision of temporary accommodation, Members were advised the accommodation had been assessed and accredited Level B by Nottinghamshire County Council as providing a good standard of accommodation.

With regards to the Action Plan Officers stated that:

- Recommendation 2 – the homelessness strategy steering group was being extended to provide a sub regional approach which included both Broxtowe and Gedling Borough Councils
- Recommendation 4 – outsourcing would be considered as part of the Council's 4 year plan
- Recommendation 10 – officers were already considering an enhanced housing options module to ensure that the IT integrated with the Choice Based Lettings system to allow for a more holistic approach to be taken when advising customers of their housing options
- Recommendation 14 – the Council participates in the annual Homeless Watch survey, this would be carried out in the next few weeks and would be used to inform a Rough Sleeping statistics

Members welcomed the fact that the service had commissioned the healthcheck especially as this was an area where the Council was successful. It was noted that the service had made significant progress on reducing the amount of temporary accommodation used and the number of people presenting as homeless.

Following a question regarding the number of homeless applications the Strategic Housing Manager explained that during 2010/11 there had been 240 successful homelessness preventions undertaken and in quarter one of this year there had been 102 preventions. In respect of homeless people there had been 92 cases in 2010/11 and 21 cases had been accepted during quarter one this year. The Head of Community Shaping stated that because the service was preventing people becoming homeless this enabled officers not to use temporary accommodation which in turn reduced the expenditure required in this area. Members were assured that as this was a statutory duty the Authority would have to ensure that there were sufficient resources to meet the needs of the service. Officers stated that expenditure had decreased over the last few years as the Authority had implemented measures that focussed on prevention and also it did not have to use Bed and Breakfast accommodation except in emergencies or for cases not suitable for the Council's temporary accommodation. Officers agreed to provide figures on the amount of money spent on the service and to outline the trends.

With regard to long term homelessness officers stated that there were various reasons for this, rough sleepers, repeat homelessness, domestic violence, etc. Work was undertaken with support agencies to understand and assess the longer term needs of people. The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) stated that there was a difference between homelessness and rooflessness.

In respect of recommendation 4 officers stated that, as part of the Council's 4 year plan, the service would be reviewed in 2012/13. As part of the review the option to outsource areas of working could be considered, for example temporary accommodation could be taken on by a specialist registered provider.

In response to a question Members were informed that recommendation 9 had not been accepted as it was considered that the joint protocol that the Council had signed up to was adequate. Officers also stated that they preferred to

tackle the issues by considering prevention tools such as mediation etc, rather than pursuing re-housing which was not always the best outcome for the individual. The protocol is monitored by a Steering Group consisting of members of the County Council and all local authorities in the County to ensure it is achieving joint outcomes. However, this would be constantly reviewed and any risks identified.

The Group agreed with the Action Plan and also congratulated the staff involved on the work that had been undertaken.

#### 14. **Nottingham and Notts Waste Core Strategy Preferred Approach Consultation**

The Group was informed that Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City Councils were developing a joint Waste Core Strategy to set out their vision for how all waste produced would be managed over the next 20 years. In 2010 a consultation exercise had been undertaken and from that a 'preferred approach' document had been produced. The document was very strategic and was not generally site specific. Following consideration by the Group officers would submit the Council's response to the document. Officers stated that they supported the strategic vision and the ambitious recycling rates, especially as focussed on waste prevention wherever possible and emphasised the need for local decision making. .

With regard to the recycling rates Members queried if these were too ambitious and whether Rushcliffe Borough Council could still maintain its rate of 50% now that there was a possibility of the green waste being disposed of via other means. Officers explained that the 70% rate was for municipal, industrial and commercial and although it was ambitious was a target to aim for. Members felt that this could only be achieved through continuous education and lobbying to increase the amount of materials that could be recycled. They welcomed the Materials Recycling Facility at Mansfield and hoped that this would help to reclaim and recycle more items such as glass and aluminium foil.

Following a question regarding income from green waste the Deputy Chief Executive (PR) agreed to provide Members with further information.

In response to questions regarding food waste officers explained that this would be via anaerobic or invessel methods and not by heat treatment. The Chairman explained that food waste recycling was difficult due to measures put in place by DEFRA<sup>1</sup> to protect against Foot and Mouth Disease had been accepted by the European Union. He felt that Members should ask the County Council to lobby for the removal of these barriers. The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) stated that the City Council had a facility to deal with food waste and this was being considered as a shared provision.

Some of the Group were concerned about the possibility of extra incinerators and the possibility of noxious materials causing emissions. Officers explained that any specific developments would be subject to the planning process. It was felt that there should be a use found for methane gas rather than just

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<sup>1</sup> DEFRA = Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

'flaming off'. The Chairman informed Members of small combined and heating plants that were widely used in Europe.

With regard to questions about recycling sites officers explained that the policy considered the broad issues and any proposed sites would be subject to planning permission. With regards to the provision of large or small sites this would be determined on a site by site basis.

The Group endorsed the comments made on the consultation paper by officers to help inform the Council's response to the consultation.

## 15. **Work Programme**

The Group considered their work programme. Officers stated that:

- a 6 month review of the Green Waste scheme would be added in November 2011
- rural broadband would be added in January 2012
- affordable rents would be added in January 2012
- Choice Based Lettings would be added in March 2012
- 12 month review of the SLA's with RCVS and RCAN

Councillor Boote raised concerns regarding the process of compiling the work programme. He stated that four items had been raised and had then been put to the Scrutiny Chairman and Vice Chairman's Group. He queried the terms of reference and validity of this Group and the fact that the papers were not circulated.

The Chairman explained that the Group consisted of the four chairman and vice chairman and that the papers were quite minimal. The Group met quarterly and that its main function was to consider all the work programmes to avoid duplication of items across the various scrutiny groups and to ensure that the most appropriate group considered items raised. He outlined the fact that certain items had been transferred from the Partnership Delivery Group to the Performance Management Board. If new topics had been raised at scrutiny these were discussed by all the Group. With regard to the papers Councillor Lawrence stated that he had requested officers to compile a paper on the subject of toilets as Councillor Boote had raised this issue. During this discussion Councillor Boote requested that it be minuted that he objected to the tone used by the Chairman. The Group agreed that at its next meeting it would consider whether the subject of toilets should be discussed.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm.

## Action Sheet

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP - MONDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2011

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
10. Notes of the Previous Meeting	Officers to report back to Members regarding the Site of Interest for Nature Conservation adjacent to the disused railway line.	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)
12 Review of Service Level Agreements with RCVS and RCAN	12 month review of the SLA's to be placed on the Group's work programme	Head of Community Shaping
13. Preventing Homelessness	Provide the information regarding the budget for the homelessness service	Head of Community Shaping
14. Nottingham and Notts Waste Core Strategy Preferred Approach Consultation	Officers to provide further information regarding the income from the green waste scheme	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)
15. Work Programme	Officers to update the work programme	Head of Community Shaping