



**NOTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
MONDAY 18 JULY 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, J E Greenwood, Mrs M M Males, G R Mallender and D G Wheeler (Substitute for M G Hemsley)

OFFICERS PRESENT:

A Goodman	Member Support Officer
C McGraw	Head of Community Shaping
D Mitchell	Head of Partnerships and Performance
P Randle	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE:

Councillor M G Hemsley

1. Declarations of Interest

Agenda Item 8 – Review of Service Level Agreements – Councillor T Combellack declared a personal interest – Council’s representative on Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire (RCAN)

Agenda Item 8 – Review of Service Level Agreements – Councillor L B Cooper declared a personal interest – Council’s representative on Rushcliffe Community Voluntary Service (RCVS)

2. Notes of the Previous Meeting

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

In respect of the review undertaken by the Community and Local Government advisors on the Council’s Homelessness Service, Members were informed that Officers were working to summarise the report and that an action plan would be presented to the Group at the next meeting in September.

Action The Head of Community Shaping to provide a report and action plan on the Council’s Homelessness Service to the meeting in September

Nature Conservation - Councillor S J Boote informed the Group that the land adjacent to a disused railway line, designated as a SINC, was owned by the Heritage Centre.

3. **Cabinet Member Questions**

There were none received.

4. **Role and Remit**

The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) gave a presentation outlining the role of scrutiny and in particular the remit of the Community Development Group. He explained that scrutiny was the method for the 'non executive' Members to influence policy development and service delivery. It was also an opportunity to examine the Council's Cabinet decisions and look at issues that affected the wellbeing of the Borough and the Community.

The Community Development Group was a forward looking scrutiny group that helped develop the Council's policies. A key element of the Group's role was understanding the issues that were important to residents and ensuring policies were developed to empower and not constrain.

In order to maintain influence and accountability, each of the four scrutiny groups had its own work programme. In determining this programme the Group needed to consider how to best to inform and influence policies in line with the Council's Corporate Priorities. Only items that were consistent with the Group's remit and terms of reference could be included in the programme. Any actions arising from meetings would be recorded in the minutes and reported to the next meeting.

In response to a question, the Chairman informed the Group that where there was uncertainty surrounding which scrutiny group should consider a specific partnership, this would be resolved at the meeting of the Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice Chairman.

5. **Leisure Facilities Strategy Member Panel Update**

The Head of Partnerships and Performance informed Members that at its meeting in July 2009, Cabinet requested that the Community Development Scrutiny Group set up a Member Panel to undertake a review of the Leisure Facilities Strategy. The Member Panel had completed its investigatory work and now the challenge was to translate its findings into a strategic policy that would guide the development of leisure facilities in the future. Since the development of this strategy would require a series of decisions by Cabinet, it was felt that a Member Group, chaired by the portfolio holder for Community Services, would be the most effective way forward.

It was acknowledged that the Panel had developed a complex understanding of leisure services, therefore to ensure some continuity, it was recommended that it would include many of the same Members.

It was AGREED that;

- a) Cabinet be requested to set up a Cabinet led Member Group to develop and finalise the leisure facilities strategy, and

- b) subject to Cabinet agreeing to set up a Member Group, the Leisure Facilities Strategy Member panel be closed down.

6. **Choice Based Lettings Progress Report**

The Head of Community Shaping presented a progress report on the implementation and the first three months operation of the Choice Based Lettings scheme. The scheme was a partnership between Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe Borough Councils and 14 Registered Providers of social housing and had gone live on 28 March 2011. The scheme provided benefits for both landlords and applicants by providing greater consistency and improved choice through the use of a commons allocations policy and housing register.

Members were informed that each property was advertised on the Homesearch website and at the end of the cycle, bids would be analysed and properties allocated according to the prioritisation levels within the Allocations Policy. The property would then be offered to the applicant in the highest band, who has been registered the longest. It was noted that after three months 13,006 individual bids had been received from 1,878 different applicants. Officers had proactively contacted applicants who had not yet made a bid to establish if there were any barriers and to assist them to engage with the process.

With regard to the method of bidding Members were informed that 12,392 (95%) of bids were placed via the website in comparison to 394 text messages, 85 via the phone or 135 using the autobid facility. Vulnerable customers, which included the homeless, could use the autobid facility or appoint a proxy to bid on their behalf.

Members questioned the viability of the newsletter distributed to various locations across the three Boroughs and were informed that it would be reviewed after a year.

In response to a question Members were informed that residents were given priority within their own Borough, however there were special arrangements for cases involving domestic violence or threats of violence.

The Head of Community Shaping stated that positive feedback regarding the scheme had been received from focus groups, partner organisations and via the website.

Regarding the number of applicants on the waiting list Members were pleased to note that the figures could be accurately measured from the number of registrations, removing the uncertainty of the "double counting" on the old waiting list. The Head of Community Shaping explained that when transferring to the new scheme some people who were included in the old waiting list had not reapplied, as they no longer required housing.

In respect of members of the Armed Forces Members were informed that they could potentially be included in Band 1 depending on their personal circumstances and could apply under the local connection category.

Members were concerned that it appeared that 65% of applicants in Band 1 had not accessed the scheme. The Head of Community Shaping informed the Group that this was an area for future consideration and officers had been investigating this issue. However, it was felt that there could be a number of reasons for this including the potential location of the housing availability, as most applicants wanted to be in the urban rather than rural areas.

It was AGREED that an annual report should be presented in March 2012.

Action The Head of Community Shaping to present the Choice Based Lettings Annual Report to the Group in March 2012

7. **Review of Service Level Agreements**

The Head of Community Shaping reported that as part of the Four Year Plan, the Council was undertaking a review of its Service Level Agreement's (SLAs) to ensure that they supported the Council's Corporate Priorities and met the needs of the community. As part of this review, Members' views were being sought on how the Council achieved service delivery through working with the voluntary sector. Currently the Council provided £131,042 of funding to Rushcliffe Community Voluntary Service (RCVS) and £126,317 to Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire (RCAN), to deliver services on the Council's behalf. These funding arrangements were agreed for a period of three years from 2008-2011 and the details were set out in Service Level Agreement's (SLAs) between both organisations.

The Group was informed that the RCVS worked with community and voluntary groups within Rushcliffe and that the SLA included:

- Promoting and facilitating volunteering across Rushcliffe
- Identifying funding streams and assisting groups in accessing them
- Assisting the Council in delivering the diversity and inclusion agenda, such as the Community Cohesion Network
- Promoting and managing the Voluntary Transport Scheme
- Assisting with the delivery of the Rushcliffe Community Strategy
- Communication with community organisations.

RCAN worked with rural communities and groups to provide a range of services including a dedicated rural officer in Rushcliffe. The SLA included:

- Providing advice and assistance to rural groups, including town and parish council's on behalf of the Borough Council in relation to parish planning
- Providing an efficient grant finding scheme
- Providing input and assistance with the Local Strategic Partnership

The Head of Community Shaping explained that as part of the Big Society the Government were looking to the voluntary sector to provide services in their communities. As part of the Localism Bill communities would be given new powers to deliver local services, however at present many do not have the infrastructure to carry out these roles. RCVS ensure that these groups are fit for purpose by giving legal advice, assisting with administration, supporting

development and the delivery of services. Additionally RCAN assist in empowering groups by providing advice and assistance which will be enhanced following the adoption of the Localism Bill. She stated that, in future, both partners would need to work closely together to avoid potential duplication.

The Group considered the report in detail and felt that more information regarding the work of RCVS was required to make a more informed decision. Members requested statistics for the ratio of paid officers to volunteers, the number of projects undertaken and whether these were provided only in West Bridgford or throughout the Borough.

Action: The Head of Community Shaping to provide further information regarding the activities of RCVS and the ratio of paid officers to volunteers.

The Group felt that RCAN, through the provision of a Rural Officer, provided a valuable resource to the rural community. It had enabled parishes to access a wide knowledge base and to develop parish plans. Working with residents the Rural Officer has provided access to 'Grantfinder' which has helped benefit rural communities by generating approximately £1,000,000 over the last three years.

It was AGREED that a further report be submitted to the Group in September 2011 to allow Members to provide comments to Cabinet.

Action The Head of Community Shaping to provide a further report to the Group in September 2011

8. Work Programme

The Group considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive (PR) that set out details of the proposed work programme for the municipal year 2011/12.

Members were informed that the Group's work programme was developed around the Council's Corporate Priorities that fell within its remit and the priorities identified in the four year plan for budget savings. The programme also took into account the timing of the Group's business in previous municipal years, key policy developments and any emerging issues that arose throughout the year.

The Chairman invited Members to put forward items that they wished the Group to consider. He explained that any suggestions would be subjected to the scrutiny matrix at the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen's meeting and if deemed suitable, would be added to the work programme. The following topics were put forward; broadband coverage in rural areas, six month review of the Garden Waste Scheme, provision of public toilets and grass cutting.

As agreed by Members earlier in the meeting, Homelessness Service and Review of Service Level Agreements were added to programme for September 2011 and Choice Bases Lettings Annual Report to March 2012.

The Group AGREED the Work Programme as set out below;

Date of Meeting	Item
18 July 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role and Remit of the Community Development Group • Leisure Facilities Strategy Member Panel Update • Choice Based Lettings Progress Report • Review of Service Level Agreements • Work Programme
19 September 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness Service • Review of Service Level Agreements • Work Programme
21 November 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Rents • Work Programme
16 January 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Programme
26 March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice Bases Lettings Annual report • Work Programme

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm.

Action Sheet

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP - MONDAY 18 JULY 2011

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
2 Notes of the Previous Meeting	Provide a report and action plan on the Council's Homelessness Service to the meeting in September 2011	Head of Community Shaping
6 Choice Based Lettings Progress Report	Provide an Annual Report for the meeting in March 2012	Head of Community Shaping
7 Review of Service Level Agreements	a) Provide further information regarding the activities of RCVS and the ratio of paid officers to volunteers.	Head of Community Shaping
	b) Provide a further report to the Group in September 2011	Head of Community Shaping