



**NOTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
MONDAY 21 NOVEMBER 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, M G Hemsley, Mrs M M Males, G R Mallender

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors J A Cranswick and J E Fearon.

OFFICERS PRESENT:

D Banks	Head of Environment and Waste Management
D Dwyer	Strategic Housing Manager
C McGraw	Head of Community Shaping
V Nightingale	Senior Member Support Officer
P Randle	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

There were no apologies for absence

18. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

19. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Wednesday 26 October 2011 were accepted as a true record. The notes of the meeting held on Monday 19 September 2011 were accepted as a true record following the addition of the word 'old' to note 13 'Preventing Homelessness'.

With regards to the Action Points

Minute Number	Actions	Response
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.	Access had now been agreed and officers were working on a management plan with Notts Wildlife Trust. The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) would give a progress report at the next meeting.
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	This would be added to the work programme.

13. Preventing Homelessness	Provide the information regarding the budget for the homelessness service	Head of Community Shaping explained that the use of temporary accommodation had fallen and this was reflected in the overall budget. There had been an 18% reduction from 249,000 in 2009/10 to 211,000 in 2010/11. Bed & Breakfast placements were only used in exceptional circumstances. Members were assured that if required additional funds would be found to support need, however the service had never exceeded its budget.
14. Nottingham and Notts Waste Core Strategy Preferred Approach Consultation	Officers to provide further information regarding the income from the green waste scheme	The Green Waste scheme had been placed on this evening's agenda.
15. Work Programme	Officers to update the work programme	Updated

20. Cabinet Member Questions

Councillor Boote asked

- (1) What would be appropriate uses of the New Homes Bonus for improving infrastructure and community facilities in the larger villages in the borough?

Councillor Cranswick replied that it was appropriate, in Government terms to use the New Homes Bonus for almost any purpose and there were already a wide range of uses established to which it had been put, both revenue and capital. The stated preference was for it be used for community infrastructure project as a reward for accepting increased housing growth. Councils could decide for themselves on how to spend the money, however it was felt that capital projects were more sustainable. The types of projects that fell under this heading would include playing facilities for all ages, transport improvement projects, improved broadband, etc. He felt that it would be impossible to list all the possible options and assured Members that as opportunities arose they would be considered for inclusion.

Councillor Boote then asked if the intention was to spend the New Homes Bonus in proportion to the number of houses built in an area. Councillor Cranswick said no.

- (2) What is going to be done about developing the technique of "implicit consultation" for involving the community in finding solutions to known problems? (This technique was mentioned by Councillor Clarke at the Community Development Group meeting on 26 October.)

Councillor Cranswick answered that there was no technique in relation to implicit consultation. He felt that to imply Councillor Clarke had implied it was a technique was the wrong implication. He stated that the definition of the word to imply was 'to involve or comprise logically' of 'to involve the truth or the existence of something not expressly asserted'. With this definition in mind it was possible to realise that Councillor Clarke was referring to the huge body of opinion expressed locally by businesses and commerce, and the comments from private individuals about the need for something to be done urgently with the A453. This constituted consultation even though it was not 'expressly asserted' ie it was implied. It was 'involved by signification' and no alternative consultation was needed.

Councillor Boote queried who would decide if a problem was so well known that it could be considered that the community had been consulted.

Councillor Cranswick replied that the problems of the A453 were widely known and consultation was used to find out what people wanted. This was an unusual situation and very few issues would fall into this category.

21. **Green Waste Scheme**

The Group had previously requested that this item should be scrutinised to give Members an early indication of the success and implications of the scheme. The Head of Environment and Waste Management gave a presentation about charging for green waste collections. He informed Members that Council had decided as part of the 2011/12 budget setting to introduce a charge of £25 for the first bin and £10 for any extra bins. This had been launched very successfully and as of 15 November 25,837 properties had joined the scheme, which represented a 64% take up rate. This figure was different to that previously given as some households had registered twice in the early phase and a significant amount of data cleansing had been subsequently undertaken. With regards to having the green bins collected from properties Members were informed that only 2 or 3 requests had been received.

With regards to expenditure Members were informed that the scheme cost £30,000 per annum with an additional cost of £22,000 for the launch phase. However, the total gross income so far was £679,000. The green collection rounds had been redesigned and optimised which had resulted in an operational staff saving which had been put towards the Environment and Waste Management savings target. As previously reported there had been a small spike in missed green bins during the launch but these had been dealt with by special collection arrangements. Officers were pleased to say that there was no real evidence that green waste was being put in the residual waste bin and that according to the position at the end of October 2011 there had only been a 2% reduction in the recycling rate.

The Head of Environment and Waste Management explained to Members that an effective system had been put in place to ensure that the scheme was well controlled and that produced management reports. It was intended that the renewal process should be lean and simple for both the Council and the customer, with renewal letters being sent out in January 2012. Customers were being encouraged to use web payments or, to a lesser extent, telephone

payments. Officers were still considering the use of direct debits at some point in the future although it was felt that £25 might be too small a sum for this arrangement. The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) explained that there was a significant number of direct debit payments returned every month for Council Tax payments and if the green bin scheme had a similar number then the maintenance of the scheme would significantly increase the cost. Following a question regarding this being added to the direct debits for Council Tax officers explained that discussions had taken place in the very early stages of the project but it was not possible for these to be merged together as one.

With regard to the current issues and opportunities the Head of Environment and Waste Management stated that it had been decided to not collect people's green bins, unless requested, and to try to encourage people to join the scheme. Members were informed that this last weekend had been the first weekend that no-one had joined the scheme. It had also been agreed to continue with the annual sticker. Opportunities for the future had been identified as:

- Reducing the green waste collections during December to March
- Gain commercial sponsorship for the scheme to cover operational costs
- Continue to grow the scheme eg a Green2go club

Following a question, officers stated that they knew that the green waste was not going in the residual waste bin because the waste operatives were checking. Members queried what was happening to the green waste that was not being collected. Officers stated that they encouraged people to take their waste to the household recycling sites or to compost it.

With regards to reducing the number of collections some Members felt that this could lead to resentment from the public as it would reduce the number of collections per year from 16 to approximately 12, making the cost per collection higher. The Group was informed that for 2011/12 most residents would have 25 collections of green waste, if this was to reduce to once a month in December, January and February it would be 20...Members asked what the reaction had been at South Kesteven when this had been introduced. The Head of Environment and Waste Management stated that there had been a mixed reaction as people appreciated the fact that staff resources could be redirected to street cleansing, however the very mild climate so far had led people to say that the collections had been stopped too early.

With regards to the opportunities it was felt that the Council should offer competitive rates on composters to encourage more people to recycle their waste. Officers explained that, through the website, people were directed to a national company, which was used by most local authorities. The company provided composters, wormeries, etc at very competitive rates. Following a question regarding marketing, Members were informed that an item was regularly placed in Rushcliffe Reports; however, officers agreed to put an item in the next edition.

In respect of unwanted green bins it was agreed that it was costly to retrieve them, they have little value, there would be issues with regard to storage and

people would not expect to receive a second hand bin when joining the scheme.

In relation to commercial sponsorship of the Green Bin scheme it was felt that this was a good idea and should be pursued. However, it was noted that many companies did not want to be associated with rubbish.

It was AGREED that the Community Development Group endorsed the successful launch of the charging for green waste and encouraged development to:

- i. Maximise participation
- ii. Minimise expenditure
- iii. Deliver customer expectations
- iv. Investigate sponsorship of the scheme.

22. Introduction to Flexible Tenancies and Affordable Rents

The Head of Community Shaping gave a presentation on flexible tenancies and affordable rents. She informed Members that this was a new subject and officers would bring a further report to the Group when more guidance had been received. She stated that within the Localism Act the Government were looking to shift power from central government to local councils and communities as part of their reform of social housing. The aims of the reform were to make the allocation system fairer and that social housing was available for those who needed it for as long as they needed it. The reform also gave local authorities and registered providers new powers so that they could make the best use of the housing stock available.

She informed Members that a new flexible tenancy with a minimum fixed term would be introduced. There would also be an Affordable Rent product brought in, which would be set higher than social rent but lower than open market rent. Following a question Members were informed that a review would be undertaken after a minimum of two – five years to ascertain if the tenants' circumstances had changed.

Another proposed change to the current system was that local authorities and registered providers would be able to make more use of the private sector to rehouse homeless households where the authority had a statutory duty to rehouse. However, as the First Lets scheme had shown, this was difficult in Rushcliffe due to the buoyant private sector market in the area.

Members were informed that, in Rushcliffe, from April 2011 households made a bid for social housing using the Choice Based Lettings scheme and when successful were given a 12 month introductory tenancy that was converted to an assured tenancy also known as a home for life. Members were assured that the proposed changes would not affect existing tenants and some protection would be given to vulnerable groups. The Head of Community Shaping stated that officers were working with registered providers to identify vulnerable groups and also to decide on what was a reasonable minimum fixed term period.

Officers felt that there were some advantages to the introduction of flexible tenancies as social housing was a limited resource and this would enable reviews to be undertaken to ensure the best use of properties. It was recognised that there were still challenges in meeting demand for affordable housing. A potential disadvantage to the Affordable Rent product was that the higher rent could make it an expensive product even though it would be capped at 80% of the open market rent. Also some existing social housing could be converted to Affordable Rent tenancies as they became available to relet. Officers stated that they would be working in partnership with the registered providers to ensure that the numbers of conversions within the Borough were not disproportionate to overall numbers the Registered Providers were required to deliver as part of their contractual arrangements with the Homes and Communities Agency.

Members were informed that in the future there would be no government funding for social rented housing and that more affordable homes would be built for Affordable Rent. In turn, Affordable Rents would enable Registered Providers to raise more capital to reinvest in affordable homes.

A new duty for local authorities, as part of the Localism Act, was to produce a Tenancy Strategy which registered providers would have to have regard to when developing their tenancy policies. Officers stated that as this was a new duty they would be able to provide more information on this issue at a future meeting.

The Head of Community Shaping stated that there would be consultation with key stakeholders, service users and local councillors on all these proposals in the Spring of 2012. During the Summer feedback would be fed into the development of the Council's Tenancy Strategy, which would go live in January 2013.

Members agreed that this was a very difficult and complicated issue and it would be of benefit if Members read the plain English version of the Localism Act.

Following a question, officers explained that discussions were underway to consider the possibility of developing a joint Tenancy Strategy with neighbouring authorities. It was noted that this could be beneficial to the registered providers.

In respect of existing tenants Members were informed that there would be no changes to their tenancies. With regard to the turnover officers stated that this equated to approximately 100 units over the 4 year period between 2011-2015.

With regard to details on fixed term tenancies, mutual exchanges, secured tenancies and the right to buy, officers explained that the scheme was in its infancy and they were awaiting more guidance from central government. These issues would be contained within the next report.

It was AGREED that the Community Development Group noted the proposals contained within the report.

23. **Request for Scrutiny of Public Conveniences**

The Chairman presented a report outlining Councillor Boote's request to scrutinise the provision of public toilets. Councillor Boote had also circulated an email informing Members of the research he had undertaken in Richmond Upon Thames. Councillor Boote clarified that his request was not suggesting that the Borough Council should build more public conveniences rather that it should look at a community toilet scheme and potentially pilot a scheme. He stated that when this topic had been considered by the Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice Chairmen's meeting it had been suggested that parish council could be asked if they wished to be involved in a scheme. However, he was not aware of any feedback.

Councillor Lawrence informed the Group that the Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice Chairmen's meeting existed to streamline scrutiny and was not a decision making body. It tried to ensure that topics were not duplicated across the four scrutiny groups and that the most appropriate group scrutinised issues.

Following a discussion it was decided that this was not a statutory duty, nor was it a corporate priority. It was felt that with the current economic climate the Council did not have the resources to implement a scheme. However, Members did feel that a letter should be sent to the parishes informing them of the research undertaken by Councillor Boote in order that they could ascertain if they wished to implement a scheme.

It was AGREED that this issue would not be placed on the Group's work programme.

24. **Work Programme**

The Group considered its work programme. It was agreed to add Consultation on Affordable Rents and Flexible Tenancies, and a review of Choice Based Lettings to the agenda for the Group's meeting on 26 March 2012.

Following a discussion the Group added a review of the relationship between the Borough and the parish councils in June 2012.

In response to a question the Chairman explained that the Council representatives had attended one meeting of the East Midlands Scrutiny Network. The next meeting to be held in December 2011 would focus on the Localism Act and this could provide potential issues for this Group to scrutinise.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Action Sheet**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP - MONDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2011**

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
19. Notes of the Previous Meeting	a) A progress report be provided regarding the Site of Interest for Nature Conservation adjacent to the disused railway line. b) Add a 12 month review of the SLA's between the Council and RCVS and RCAN to the Group's work programme	Deputy Chief Executive (PR) Head of Community Shaping
21. Green Waste Scheme	Officers to put an item in the next edition of Rushcliffe Reports marketing the composters and wormeries etc that were available through the Council's website.	Head of Environment and Waste Management
22. Introduction to Flexible Tenancies and Affordable Rents	A future agenda item be placed on the Group's work programme when officers have further details.	Head of Community Shaping
23. Request for Scrutiny of Public Conveniences	A letter be sent to the parish councils including Councillor Boote's research.	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)
24. Work Programme	Items to be added to the work programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation on Affordable Rents and Flexible Tenancies• a review of Choice Based Lettings to the agenda for the Group's meeting on 26 March 2012.• a review of the relationship between the Borough and the parish councils in June 2012.	Head of Community Shaping