



NOTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY GROUP
MONDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2011

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

PRESENT:

Councillors R Hetherington (Chairman), Mrs D M Boote, R L Butler,
H A Chewings, A M Dickinson, E J Lungley, F A Purdue-Horan,
Mrs M Stockwood, T Vennett-Smith

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor S J Boote
J Maxwell, Regional Director (North)
L Khan, Head of Housing (North)

OFFICERS PRESENT:

C Bullett	Deputy Chief Executive (CB)
N Carter	Partnerships and Projects Manager
C McGraw	Head of Community Shaping
V Nightingale	Senior Member Support Officer

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

There were no apologies for absence

6. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

7. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Monday 20 June 2011 were accepted as a true record.

8. Annual Review of Spirita Partnership

The Head of Community Shaping informed Members that the Council had transferred its housing stock in 2003 to Rushcliffe Homes which was now known as Spirita. She explained that Spirita had attempted to incorporate Members' questions into their presentation.

Mr Maxwell and Ms Khan gave a presentation outlining the partnership between Spirita and Rushcliffe Borough Council and Spirita's key services. It also explained the future for Spirita as part of the Metropolitan Housing Partnership, which had six organisations providing the same services. It had been agreed to split these into two regions with Spirita being in the north region. There had been a restructure and the new senior management team had been appointed on 9 May 2011. It was envisaged that this new structure would bring an enhanced financial position and improvements to residents through reinvestment in frontline services. Members were informed that this

would give a uniformed and consistent approach across the business, with local area offices in the regions and a centralised back office. A new single national customer service centre would be introduced. It was agreed that Members would be provided with information regarding who to contact at the local area office.

Ms Khan outlined the areas of partnership work including affordable homes, voids and allocations, anti-social behaviour, residents' initiatives and estate inspection regime. She highlighted their key services and explained how Spirita were performing. With regard to income recovery she stated that there was an improving trend and there was a good working relationship with the Council's benefits section in respect of the verification framework.

With regards to the housing stock she informed Members that Spirita had achieved 100% compliance with gas servicing and the decent homes standard. There was a cyclical programme of improvements ie new kitchens with properties being visited every five years. In respect of responsive repairs Members were informed that it had been decided to move towards a single annual contract with a supplier which was less resource intensive and had increased performance. This had led to a 95% customer satisfaction

Members were informed that the company was considering the redevelopment of garage sites which had been a successful method of adding small developments. This had been possible due to Homes and Community Agency Funding.

In respect of void properties the Group were informed that from April to September 2011 the average length of time to relet a property was 57.2 days although this was starting to improve. Members were informed that as part of the Choice Based Letting scheme the Council had moved towards a weekly bidding cycle rather than fortnightly, it was envisaged that this would also improve the number of days taken to relet properties. It was recognised that this was an area for improvement, although consideration of the stock was required to ensure that the properties available met the needs of the residents.

Following a question the Group were informed that the company had a three stage complaints procedure. As part of the procedure complainants were given a named officer with target response times. If a complaint escalated to stage three it was considered by an independent board consisting a director and two tenants. As part of the restructure there would soon be a dedicated team. Complaints relating to staff, including sub-contractors, were mostly not upheld, however, they were all considered at monthly team meetings.

Concerns were raised about anti-social behaviour and the length of time taken to deal with issues. Mr Maxwell stated that there was now a specialist team to ensure a consistent approach. It was vital that people's expectations were managed and officers needed to explain what actions could and could not be taken. For an eviction a court of law would have to be satisfied that everything had been tried to resolve the issue and modify people's behaviour. These cases were taken seriously and family intervention projects had been introduced. In answer to a question Members were informed that when moving an anti-social behaviour family into another area the need for sensitive lettings was always considered and that local lettings plans could be used

where appropriate. In these cases the company worked closely with the Council to ensure that the make up of an estate did not change. The Head of Community Shaping stated that lessons had been learnt from past experiences and that local lettings plan, where established, worked well. It was requested that communication with the ward members was included in the plan to improve relationships. Ms Khan stated that Spirita worked closely with officers including the domestic violence co-ordinator.

With regard to the number of properties left empty that were damaged Mr Maxwell stated that this was a very small percentage and were not always because of intentional damage for example it could be that the previous tenant had not been able to maintain the property. It cost approximately £500,000 per year but the greater impact was the longer turnaround time.

Following a question regarding meeting the housing needs of the area Mr Maxwell explained that the strategic vision was taken by the parent body, who also look at the local issues and needs. Work was undertaken in partnership with the Council, which was very positive, and funding organisations to develop the type of housing required. He also explained that Metropolitan was not just a landlord who provided homes and sheltered accommodation but also provided registered care homes. Demand for housing could be identified through the bidding process for Choice Based Letting.

In respect of tenants and the use of the internet Mr Maxwell explained that as part of the residents' contact with the Customer Services Centre a tenant profile would be developed. It was recognised that people were individuals and communication needed to be tailored to the person. He acknowledged that some of the elderly did not use computers however there were many silver surfer groups in other areas of the country and this could be developed in Rushcliffe. Many of the wardens at the sheltered housing schemes were on hand to assist people. The Head of Community Shaping stated that the Council was always looking at communication with vulnerable groups and this had been a high priority when introducing the Choice Based Letting scheme, with a newsletter, phone and text options included. There were also support mechanisms in place.

The Group asked that ward Members be contacted regarding community events and estate inspections. Ms Khan agreed to take this on board.

The Chairman thanked Mr Maxwell and Ms Khan for their informative presentation and for answering Members' questions.

9. Work Programme

The Group considered its work programme. It was noted that there would be a review of the Community Contact Centre partnership at the next meeting and Members were asked to provide their questions to the Partnerships and Projects Manager for collation. Following Members' concerns officers stated that questions could always be asked at the meeting however, over the last few years it had led to more productive meetings if the partner involved understood Members' issues and concerns before the meeting as it allowed them to research the areas. Some of the Members felt that it would have been useful for them to have seen all the questions put to the partners.

It was felt that it would be beneficial if a visit to the Contact Centre could be arranged before the meeting for Members.

In respect of scrutiny of any other partnerships officers stated that as part of the Council's four year plan services might develop new partnerships and these could be included if felt to be appropriate. The Cotgrave Masterplan could be included in the future as it had only recently been agreed.

Members felt that there needed to be clarification between the work of the Partnership Delivery Group and the Performance Management Board.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Action Sheet

PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY GROUP - MONDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2011

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
8. Annual Review of Spirita Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Spirita contact details to be provided for all Members b) the percentage of properties damaged/abandoned be provided by Spirita c) Wardens to help collect data on preferred methods of communication or to assist residents d) introduce a silver surfers programme in the Rushcliffe area e) Ward Members to be invited to community events and estate inspections 	Head of Community Shaping in partnership with Spirita
9. Work Programme	A visit to the Rushcliffe Community Contact Centre be arranged before the Group's next meeting.	Partnerships and Projects Manager