



**NOTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
MONDAY 26 MARCH 2012**

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 and Mrs M M Males

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)

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE:

Councillor G R Mallender

31. Declarations of Interest

Councillors T Combellack and L B Cooper declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 - Service Level Agreement with RCVS and RCAN.

32. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Monday 16 January 2012 were accepted as a true record. With regard to the action points

Minute Number	Actions	Response
26. Notes of the Previous Meeting	A further report be provided, when appropriate, regarding the Site of Interest for Nature Conservation adjacent to the disused railway line.	The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) explained that there had been no progress on this issue. However, he anticipated that a further report would be available at the next meeting.
27. Rural Broadband	The ward data regarding broadband speeds to be checked and clarified.	Officers had contacted Mr Lockley and had been assured that the data was correct. It was explained that there could be a significant difference in a geographical area depending on the location of the box.
28. Localism Act 2011	Items to be referred back to the Group when appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Power of 	The Group was informed that the Community Right to Challenge would come into force in April

	<p>Competence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of Public Functions • Community Right to Challenge • List of Assets of Community Value <p>Any issues arising from the change of the Standards regime be referred to the Member Development Group in order that training can be provided.</p> <p>The Head of Corporate Services to report back if excessive council tax rises applies to parish councils.</p>	<p>2012 and therefore the Council would have to develop a policy – this could possibly be presented to the Group at its next meeting.</p>
<p>29. Request for Scrutiny of Planning Application Notification Process</p>	<p>Planning Application Notification to be placed on the Group's work programme</p>	<p>This had been placed on the Group's work programme for July 2012.</p>

33. Draft Tenancy Strategy and Affordable Rents

The Strategic Housing Manager presented a report informing Members of the implications of the Localism Act on social housing. She stated that Registered Providers now had greater flexibility to determine the length of tenancy that they offer to new tenants. The Act also requires all councils to develop a Tenancy Strategy by January 2013.

Members were informed that there were five possible tenancy options; registered providers could offer tenants an assured tenancy or an assured fixed term tenancy, councils could offer a secure tenancy or a secure fixed term tenancy. Any of these tenancies can be converted to affordable rent tenures, these are charged at 80% of the market rent. With assured fixed term and secure fixed term tenancies a review would be carried out six months prior to the expiry of the tenancy. This review would ascertain if the tenants still required social housing.

The Strategic Housing Manager explained that the Council's draft Tenancy Strategy identified those tenancies the Council expected registered providers to grant, the length of time for a fixed term, any groups that the Council feels that only an assured tenancy should be granted and the circumstances in which a tenancy may or may not be issued. She informed the Group that officers had worked with the registered providers to produce the draft Tenancy

Strategy. Members congratulated the staff on producing the strategy as early as possible as it was recognised that the registered providers had to consider strategies from all the councils where they held stock; and it was felt that this would be prominent as it was the first.

Following a question Members were informed that the additional income from an affordable rent tenure was to be used to provide new homes, however, it could not be ring fenced to the area it was collected in. Also officers explained that Metropolitan Housing Trust was taking a cautious approach to converting tenancies to affordable rent tenures. Members were reminded that the Borough Council and Metropolitan Housing Trust had been working in partnership for many years on projects to reinvest money into new buildings in the area, especially affordable housing and turning garage sites into homes.

With regards to the applicants officers felt should only be offered an assured tenancy Members were informed that the categories put forward were for people aged 55+ and those classified as vulnerable. It was essential that social housing was only for those who needed it. It was recognised that previously social housing had been a tenancy for life and that this was a culture change.

Following Members' concerns officers stated that, at present, there were 1,200 people requesting homes and approximately 250 properties relet per year. The Council's current target for building affordable homes was 50 – 100 properties per year. It was acknowledged that this left demand far outweighing supply.

With regard to under occupancy Members were informed that officers had tried to address this issue by encouraging people to move, however there was a need to ensure that the stock is fully utilised wherever possible. The stock profile was currently being assessed.

Members were concerned about the communication of these new tenancies. Officers stated that all existing tenants would not be affected and that any new tenants would be informed about their new tenancy agreement in full, including information on the review process. They will also be informed of the advice and assistance that will be available to them following the review process. Following a question, Members were informed that part of the assistance for tenants whose tenancies were not being renewed would be to provide details of three properties within a five mile radius of their current location, although it was recognised that these might not be within the Borough. Officers stated that use of private landlords would become more commonplace.

With regard to the use of private landlords Members were concerned that many landlords saw people on benefits as 'bad tenants'. Officers stated that they had been working with the private sector for some time to break down the stereotypes. There was a Landlords Forum and the Council offered landlords a number of incentives, including deposit guarantees.

Following a question, Members were informed that the Registered Providers needed to develop their Tenancy Policies by April and therefore it was envisaged that officers would have more information then. It was explained

that although the Council could encourage Registered Providers to include certain criteria in their Strategies the Council did not have a power of veto.

Members were concerned that as part of the review process people would be means tested and felt that this could lead to discrepancies as this could be an emotive issue. Officers stated that it was felt this would place a huge administrative burden as people would have to be means tested when taking on the tenancy to ascertain if their circumstances had changed. For this reason and the possibility of inconsistencies the Council's strategy had been based on under occupancy and not financial status.

Following a query regarding purchasing equity shares the Strategic Housing Manager explained that shared ownership and part buy properties were also included in the stock and that Housing Associations could encourage people who felt they could purchase a share of the property, to move into a shared ownership or part equity property.

Members asked for a definition of affordable housing as it was felt that the definition had changed over the last few years and now focussed more on social housing. Officers agreed to provide a definitive definition.

Members recognised that the philosophy of social housing was changing and that it was no longer a house for life but only for the time of need. However, the Group was concerned that these new changes were further reducing the involvement of councillors.

It was AGREED that the Community Development Group endorsed the draft Tenancy Strategy and the introduction of Affordable Rents.

Councillors.T Combellack and L B Cooper declared a personal interest at 8.05 pm in Agenda Item 6 - Service Level Agreement with RCVS and Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire but did not leave the room.

34. Service Level Agreement with RCVS and RCAN

The Head of Community Shaping presented a report outlining the proposed single service level agreement between the Borough Council and the Rushcliffe Community Voluntary Service and Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire. She explained that the Group had received two reports in 2011 regarding the service level agreements with these two organisations. Officers had then taken a report to Cabinet who had agreed in principle to a single agreement but had referred the matter back to scrutiny in order that some measurable outcomes could be developed. Officers proposed five outcomes, these were:

- Deliver infrastructure services to voluntary and community groups, including direct provision of support services to individual volunteers and voluntary and community organisations.
- Support town and parish councils and community groups in the development and delivery of parish plans, neighbourhood plans and market town initiatives.

- Assist the Council in developing and implementing its Transformation Agenda.
- Assist the Council in implementing its Equality Scheme - including managing the Rushcliffe Community Cohesion Network.
- Communication - RCVS and RCAN will work closely with the Council to actively engage local residents and community groups.

The Group was informed that these agreements had been strengthened and there was now a duty for the organisations to demonstrate that they were achieving the required targets. The performance of the organisations would be monitored and evaluated quarterly by the Head of Community Shaping and the Head of Transformation. Strategic meetings with all parties and the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Community Services and Resources would be held every six months. The Head of Community Shaping assured Members that the two Chief Executive had been fully consulted on the agreement and how this would be performance driven and that they were both fully on board with the project.

The Group felt that the agreement was an improvement and felt that the outcomes would help with performance management, although there were concerns regarding how the two organisations would work together. Officers informed Members that by working together it would avoid duplication and that they both worked together at present as part of the South Notts Alliance. The agreement was not prescriptive and it was for the two organisations to decide on who would lead on projects and how the money was spent.

The Chairman pointed out that Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire worked with all the other district Councils for Voluntary Service and this could be a model for the other areas. He also stated that as the agreement, following Cabinet's approval, had been developed it was suggested that the Partnership Delivery Group should monitor the performance of the partnership.

It was AGREED that the Community Development Group recommend the attached Service Level Agreement with RCVS and RCAN for 2012-2015 to Cabinet for approval and that future monitoring should be by the Partnership Delivery Group.

35. Annual Review of Work Programme 2011/12

The Chairman presented the Group's annual report. He explained that a report would be presented to Council on 21 June which would incorporate all the scrutiny group's reports.

The Group agreed that the report was comprehensive and that it acknowledged how busy the Group had been. It was also noted that it would be updated to include this meeting before being forwarded to Council.

It was AGREED that the Community Development Group approve the report and forward it on to Council for consideration

36. **Work Programme**

The Group considered its work programme for the forthcoming year. It was noted that the annual review of Choice Based Lettings had been moved from this meeting to the meeting in July. Also in July the Group would consider the Development Control process of notification and the Climate Change Action Plan.

Following a discussion it was decided that the programme needed to be flexible as the Group could possibly have to consider how to implement the Community Right to Challenge, which was part of the Localism Act. The Chairman explained that officers were awaiting Government guidance on this issue and it would either be considered as part of the Group's July or October meeting. It was agreed that the Climate Change Action Plan would be postponed if necessary.

The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) explained that at the recent Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice Chairmen's meeting there had been a request for a scrutiny group to consider the democratic representation in West Bridgford. Therefore a report would be presented to the July meeting for the Group to consider if it wanted this issue to be put on the work programme.

Councillor Boote asked if the Council could express a view on the Nottinghamshire County Council's project to cut the street lighting in the Borough.

The Chairman stated that the scrutiny of this issue could not happen until after the consultation had finished and therefore this was probably not the best method of addressing his concerns. Councillor Cooper stated that there was an online consultation open at the moment, which could be completed by a councillor as part of their community leadership role. The Group took an informed view that this was not something they wished to consider. However, Councillor Boote could present a report to the next meeting and the Group could formally consider whether this was an issue for scrutiny.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Action Sheet**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP - MONDAY 26 MARCH 2012**

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
33. Draft Tenancy Strategy and Affordable Rents	Officers agreed to provide a definitive definition of affordable housing.	Head of Community Shaping
35. Annual Review of Work Programme 2011/12	The document to be updated to include this meeting's discussions.	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)
36. Work Programme	Officers to put an item on the Community Right to Challenge for the appropriate meeting A report outlining the request for scrutiny of the democratic representation in West Bridgford be presented to the July meeting.	Head of Community Shaping Deputy Chief Executive (PR)