To all Members of the Community Development Group

Dear Councillor

A meeting of the COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP will be held on Tuesday 17 July 2012 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West Bridgford to consider the following items of business.

Yours sincerely

Head of Corporate Services

AGENDA

1.   Apologies for absence

2.   Declarations of Interest

3.   Notes of the Meeting held on Monday 26 March 2012 (pages 1 - 7)

4.   Cabinet Member Questions

5.   Choice Based Lettings Progress Report 2012

    The report of the Strategic Housing Manager is attached (pages 8 - 20).

6.   Planning Application – Public Notification Process

    The briefing note of the Development Control Manager is attached (pages 21 - 22).

7.   Work Programme

    The report of the Head of Community Shaping is attached (pages 23 - 24).

Membership

Chairman: Councillor N C Lawrence,
Vice-Chairman: Councillor T Combellack,
Councillors S J Boote, N K Boughton-Smith, L B Cooper, J E Greenwood, M G Hemsley, Mrs M M Males, G R Mallender

Meeting Room Guidance

Fire Alarm Evacuation: in the event of an alarm sounding please evacuate the building using the nearest fire exit, normally through the Council Chamber. You should assemble in the Nottingham Forest car park adjacent to the main gates.

Toilets are located opposite Committee Room 2.

Mobile Phones: For the benefit of others please ensure that your mobile phone is switched off whilst you are in the meeting.

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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: • General Power of	The Group was informed that the Community Right to Challenge would come into force in April

	Competence • Transfer of Public Functions • Community Right to Challenge • List of Assets of Community Value Any issues arising from the change of the Standards regime be referred to the Member Development Group in order that training can be provided. The Head of Corporate Services to report back if excessive council tax rises applies to parish councils.	2012 and therefore the Council would have to develop a policy – this could possibly be presented to the Group at its next meeting.
29. Request for Scrutiny of Planning Application Notification Process	Planning Application Notification to be placed on the Group's work programme	This had been placed on the Group's work programme for July 2012.

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 informal 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)

	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 17 JULY 2012 CHOICE BASED LETTINGS PROGRESS REPORT 2012	**5**

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC HOUSING MANAGER

Summary

Choice Based Lettings (CBL) in Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe was launched on 28 March 2012, so it has now been running for around 15 months. This report provides an update on performance, a discussion of users' experiences, an explanation of enhancements that have been made to the system and planned future developments. The appendices contain a full analysis of system use and outcomes for customers across the relevant protected diversity characteristics.

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Members of the Community Development Group consider the report and make any additional recommendations for its further development.

Background

1. Homesearch provides applicants for social housing with an opportunity to bid for vacant social rented properties that become available in the sub-region. The scheme provides applicants with a greater understanding of the way homes are allocated, which helps to give a more realistic understanding of the likelihood of them being rehoused in the Rushcliffe area.

2. Fourteen housing associations (also known as RPs) are taking part in Homesearch. The benefits of the sub-regional scheme are that it provides customers with greater consistency and increased opportunities, improved choice and mobility through the use of a common allocations policy and housing register application form. The scheme also provides additional benefits to landlords through improved management reporting information, enabling them to manage their stock effectively.

3. Previously, each local authority ran their own housing register. The three authorities now share one central housing register and use the same IT provider (Abritas). All applicants are assessed and banded in line with the Common Allocations Policy of the partnership (approved by RBC Cabinet on 18 May 2010).

Choice Based Lettings housing allocations system performance

4. When people apply for housing, they are sent a 'Homesearch Scheme Guide' and 'How to Bid Scheme Guide for Properties'. Properties are advertised every week on the Homesearch website (www.home-search.org.uk) and a printed newsletter is available at local offices, libraries and support providers'

accommodation, and posted to a list of people without internet access who cannot go to these locations (e.g. disabled and housebound people).

5.   Each applicant is able to see the properties that are available each week, and chooses which ones to bid for, up to three per week. This is the fundamental difference between CBL and the old waiting list system. In the past, applicants were told when they could have a particular property. Under CBL, they can balance the different factors such as price, location, size and facilities, and choose whether they would want to live there.

6.   At the end of the cycle (each Wednesday), the landlord receives a "shortlist" of all the bids received for the property, placing them in bands from 1 to 4, with bids within each band placed by waiting time. A RP staff member then provisionally offers the tenancy to the applicant at the top of the shortlist, unless there is a valid reason to bypass them and move on to the next applicant. The results of the bidding activity of each property advertised is then published on the website and in the newsletter at the end of the fortnightly cycle so that applicants can see how many other people bid, what priority band and waiting time the successful applicant had, and thus gauge their chances of success with similar bids and assess their housing options accordingly.

7.   Choice Based Lettings is a more transparent and accessible system for the customer. It does not, however, guarantee they will be rehoused any faster than the old system, as there is still insufficient social housing in Rushcliffe to meet public demand.

Headline performance

8.   All figures are reported as at 31 May 2012 unless otherwise stated.

Applications processed by month
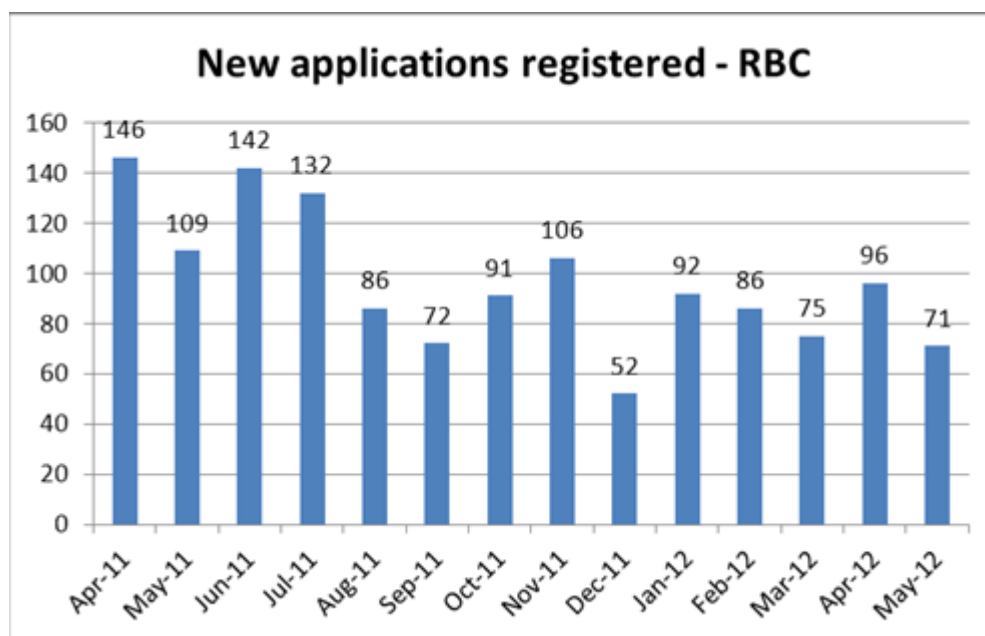
9.   716 historic applications were re-registered before the scheme launched. Since then, the number of new applications registered initially declined and has now settled to a steady level of 70 – 80 per month. A further 740

applications have been processed which have no date – it is likely many of these were part-completed by the customer or were duplicate applications etc.

Properties let by month

Properties let through CBL in Rushcliffe
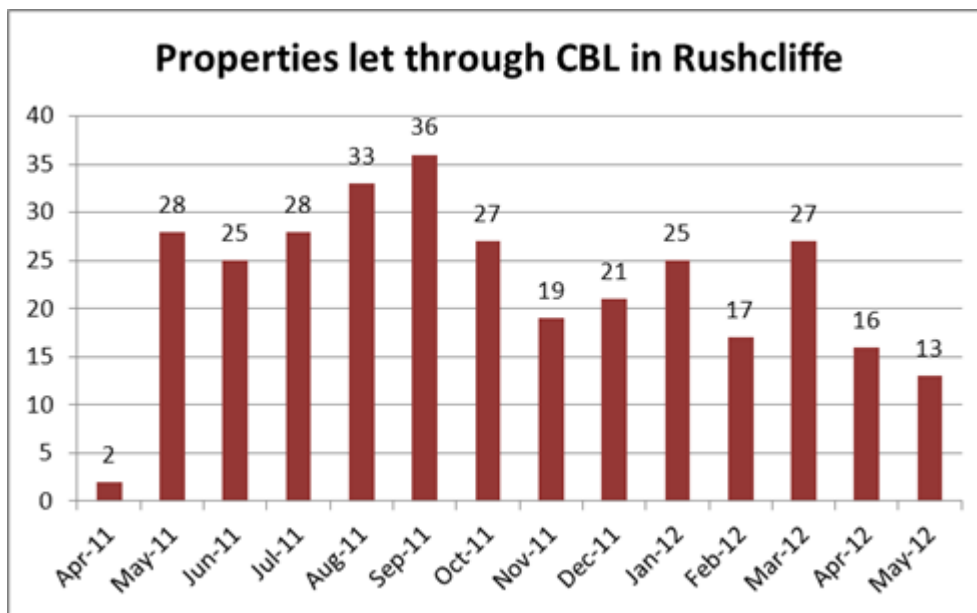
Total lettings completed in 2011/12: **288**; 1 April 2012 – 31 May 2012: **29**; total to date: **317**

10. The number of lettings completed through CBL has been noticeably lower in 2012 than 2011. The lettings process can take some time (e.g. properties advertised in April may not be let until June), but this does not explain why so few lettings were completed in, for instance, April and May 2012. Further work and discussion with housing associations is required to understand this.

Properties let by band

Active applications, 1 June 2012

Lettings to priority bands in Rushcliffe
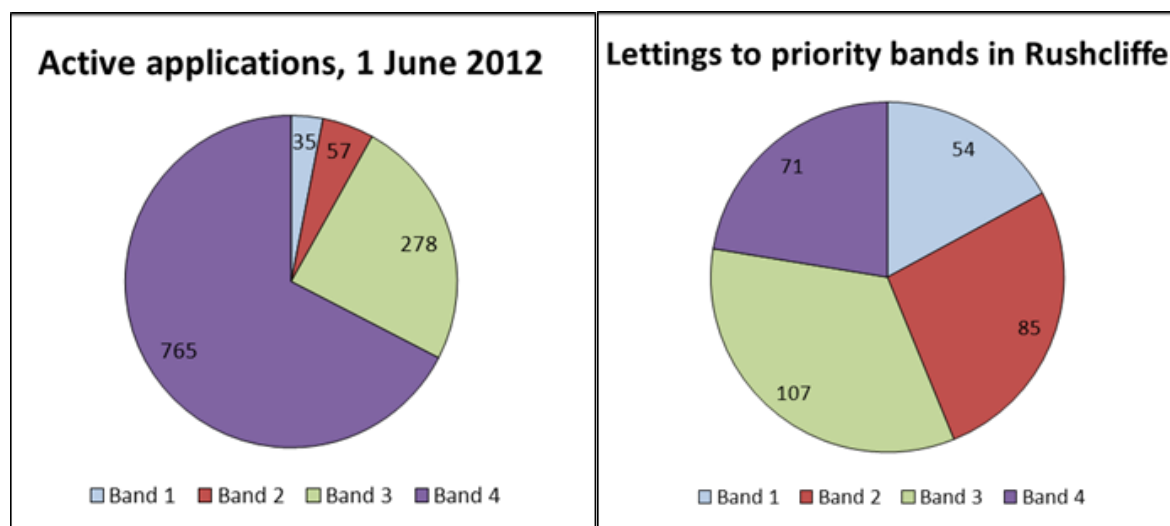
11. Around two thirds of housing register applicants are placed in Band 4, meaning they have a desire to move (often for perfectly valid reasons) but little or no assessed housing need, or they can meet their needs from their own resources. Less than a quarter of properties are let to people from Band 4, and considerably higher proportions go to people from the top priority Bands 1 & 2. This is positive, and suggests that the prioritisation system is working effectively.

12. The high number of allocations to people from Band 3 may again reflect that many of the properties let through the system are sheltered housing. Sheltered housing attracts much less demand than general needs housing, and lettings to applicants in Band 3 and Band 4 are more likely. A low medical priority will place an applicant in Band 3 (e.g. a person is struggling to manage in their home, but the situation is not critical). This will often apply to older and disabled people for whom sheltered housing can be an appropriate option, hence the large number of lettings to Band 3.

13. A total of 1,135 active applications were registered CBL as at 1 June 2012.

Lettings in Rushcliffe by source local authority

	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Total	%
Rushcliffe	53	81	100	67	301	95.0%
Gedling	1	4	7	3	15	4.7%
Broxtowe	0	0	0	1	1	0.3%
Total	54	85	107	71	317	

14. The lettings figures above include a small number of applicants who were registered with Gedling or Broxtowe, with around 5% of lettings going to these people. This is in line with expectations when the scheme was launched. This cross-boundary mobility allows housing associations to access a wider pool of applicants to ensure that even difficult-to-let properties are used effectively. Gedling or Broxtowe applicants who do not have a connection to Rushcliffe (see Allocations Policy for details) will always be ranked below applicants who do have a connection to Rushcliffe on a shortlist, unless there are exceptional circumstances such as domestic violence. However, it is possible that some of the applicants housed may have lived in Gedling or Broxtowe but had a connection to Rushcliffe as well (e.g. working here or having close family here).

Rate of active bidding on CBL

RBC active applicants who have placed a bid at least once
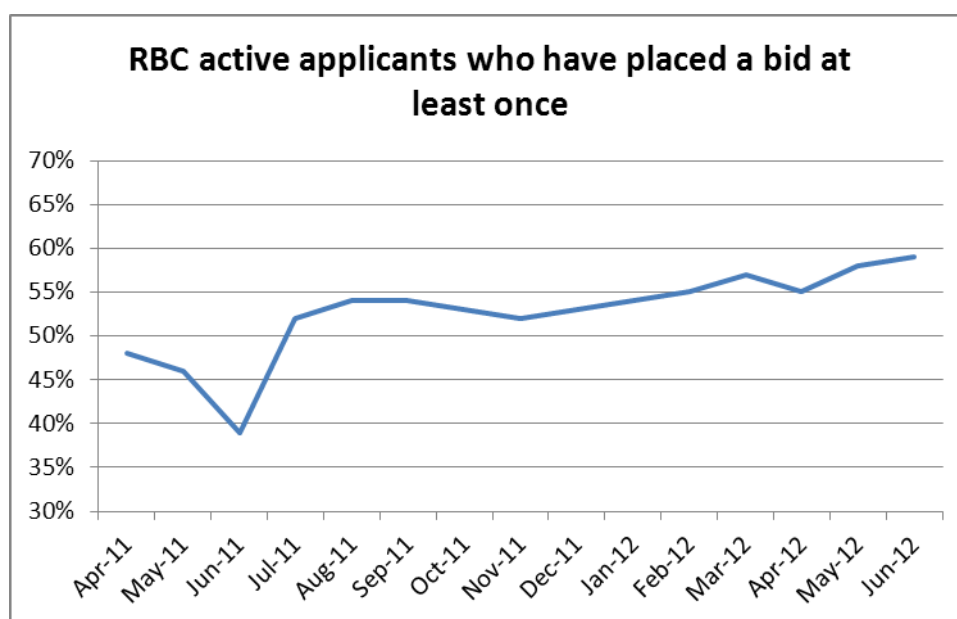
15. Although CBL gives the customer more choice and control, it also requires more input from them by looking at properties and placing bids. They need to

do this regularly if they are going to be housed through the scheme. The percentage of active applicants who have placed bids is monitored and reported every month, and has been rising gradually since the scheme was launched. This indicator will inform a further piece of work to study the accessibility of the CBL system, check customer understanding of what they need to do and ensure that nobody is left without support to use the system.

16.   Rates of active bidding are considerably higher in the high priority bands, but less than half of applicants in Band 4 have ever placed a bid.

Rates of active bidding by band as at 9 July 2012

Band	Have bid	Have not bid	Bidding rate
1	29	8	78%
2	51	8	86%
3	192	66	74%
4	301	319	49%
All bands	573	401	59%

17.   The 41% of active applicants who have never placed a bid on a property probably fall into a number of different groups:

- Some may never have seen a property suitable for their needs (e.g. a 5 bed house)
- Some may never have seen a property in the location they require (e.g. a small village)
- Some may be waiting for an "ideal" property on a specific street or scheme to become available
- Some may know how to use the system and have concluded that, as they are in a low priority, it is not worth bidding. This is one of the advantages of CBL, and these applicants may decide not to renew the application when they receive the annual review letter.
- Some may think that they are on a waiting list and not realise they need to place bids
- Some may know they need to bid but not know the different ways or how they can be supported to do this (e.g. they may think they need their own computer)

18.   The aim will be to target the people in the last two groups to offer support and help them engage with the system. There is a noticeable difference across ages, with older people less likely to engage with CBL than younger people (full details in **appendix 1**). We will probably wish to promote take-up of "auto-bids", where the system bids on the customer's behalf for any property they are eligible for, so they do not need to access the system every week and make choices if they do not wish to or are not able to. There are also options to bid using text and automated telephone services, which have very low uptake at present, but may be a better option for some people.

Means of bidding used by customers

19.   Since the scheme was launched, the vast majority of bids placed by customers across the three boroughs (86%) have been through the website. The low uptake of SMS and telephone bidding suggests there may be a low

awareness of these channels among customers, and promoting them may help customers who have been unable to bid before to engage with the scheme.

Channel	Bids	%
Website	61202	86%
Text message	287	0%
Telephone system	322	0%
Placed by staff	3087	4%
Autobid	5999	8%
Total	70897	

Diversity analysis

20.   A diversity analysis is provided in **Appendix 1**.

Advice and prevention cases

21.   In January 2012, we activated new modules to allow advice and homelessness prevention cases to be recorded in the same software system, with the notes and documents being linked up to the household's housing register application. 235 advice and prevention cases have been registered since January, of which 46 have led to the verified prevention of a homeless application, 98 have been closed as complete (customer needs no further advice or assistance), 7 have been cancelled and 84 remain active.

Homelessness applications

22.   Homelessness applications are also now recorded in the same software package as the CBL system. This allows all information and records of contact on a customer's housing situation to be stored in one place. 28 homeless applications have been recorded since January, and Homesearch is now the only housing software package that staff need to access. Being web-based, staff can also access Homesearch securely from remote locations.

23.   Homesearch also provides automated reporting on applications, decisions, preventions and the use of temporary accommodation to complete the quarterly P1E return to government, which will result in a considerable time saving for staff in not having to run each report separately.

System improvements made to date

24.   As with any complex IT system, teething problems were expected, and a number of them were rectified in summer 2011 by clarifying our requirements to the software provider. The most obvious change was moving from fortnightly cycles to weekly ones, in response to requests from housing associations (who wanted to find their new tenant faster) and applicants (who wanted to know sooner whether they had bid successfully).

25.   In addition, we responded to feedback by changing some wording on the online application form which customers had found confusing, and automatically including the geographical area on the property newsletter.

There were also several corrections to logical tests that the system uses to ensure they reflected the allocations policy.

26. An Enhanced Housing Options module has been added which enables bidders to consider alternative housing solutions such as private rented.

Future developments

27. Now that Homesearch is in place as the central software tool for housing advice, homelessness, prevention and housing allocations, there are a number of further developments planned.

Review of allocations policy

28. A public consultation on minor revisions to the allocations policy is starting in June 2012. These revisions largely clarify the pre-existing policy and make the banding criteria more responsive to customers' situations by, for example, introducing a Band 2 priority for "intermediate" medical need, in addition to urgent and minor needs. The revised policy, if adopted, would also reduce the length of time a homeless household can spend in Council temporary accommodation before being moved into Band 1 and directly allocated a home (with no choice). This will reduce the average length of stay in temporary accommodation and ensure spaces are available for homeless families in crisis.

Wider review of allocations policy

29. There is a need to progress the minor revisions described above immediately for management and financial reasons, in order to reduce the pressure on the Council's temporary accommodation, and avoid the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation. When this is complete, the Council will then need to consider whether to make much more wide-ranging changes to the allocations policy to make use of the flexibility introduced by the Localism Act 2011. This could include:

- Specifying that only people with an identified housing need qualify to join the housing register
- Awarding additional preference to working households
- Awarding additional preference to people who contribute to their community (e.g. by volunteering)
- Awarding additional preference to serving or former members of the Armed Forces

30. There are numerous other possibilities, so long as the allocations policy remains within statutory allocations guidance (which is currently being finalised following consultation) and continues to give reasonable preference to certain people specified by regulations (including people who are homeless, severely overcrowded, at risk of violence or who need to move for medical reasons etc.)

31. This will be a complex area, particularly if a common allocations policy with Broxtowe and Gedling is to be retained, but the flexibilities allow the Council to use its allocations policy to pursue its wider strategic objectives in the Housing Strategy and elsewhere.

Advertising private rent properties

32.   Homesearch has the facility to advertise properties belonging to private landlords as well as housing associations, and this has been used to a limited extent. Shortlisting does not apply to these properties – applicants are simply given the landlord's contact details, and whoever is offered the property is a private transaction. We are able to offer the landlord free advertising to a ready supply of potential tenants; in return, we can ask for certain things from the landlord, such as an undertaking to consider tenants claiming Housing Benefit, or assurances that their property meets minimum standards. By increasing the number of private rented properties on Homesearch, customers will be able to see the range of options available, and contrast this to the likely waiting times for social housing.

Increase proportion of customers actively using the system

33.   Finally, as described in paragraph 15, we intend to carry out a review of the accessibility of the CBL system, aiming to increase the proportion of customers who actively use it and ensure that nobody is being left without support. This will be based on customer satisfaction surveys (which are being regularly completed at present) and informed by good practice guidance published by CLG. It will also include one-to-one discussions with a sample of customers to see how well they understand how the current system and policy work, and whether they are aware of different ways to access the system (e. g. using library computers, receiving a printed newsletter, bidding by text or telephone and auto-bids).

Financial Comments

The current budget includes provision for the ongoing revenue costs of the scheme, including the additional part time post. The budget also assumes that the Borough Council will receive £12,000 contribution from Spirita.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act

The CBL Scheme and Housing Allocations Policy aim to develop a more transparent and equitable housing allocation process to assist in creating balanced communities and delivering against our Section 17 obligations in the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Diversity

The CBL Scheme has undergone an Equalities Impact Assessment and the outcomes and actions included in the scheme implementation and final policy. Ongoing customer consultation will assist in ensuring the scheme continues to meets the needs of various community individuals and groups.

Background Papers Available for Inspection: Nil

Customer satisfaction with Choice Based Lettings

1. We send a satisfaction survey out with each letter generated to a customer at a key point in the process (e.g. registering their application or change in banding). We received 37 forms back in 2011/12, which is a modest but acceptable sample.

2. How satisfied were you with the overall level of service you received from the Homesearch team?

	2011/12		2012/13	
Very satisfied	20	54%	3	60%
Satisfied	10	27%	1	20%
Neutral	4	11%	1	20%
Dissatisfied	3	8%	0	0%
Very dissatisfied	0	0%	0	0%
No answer	0		0	

3. 81% of customers were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they had received. Of the three who were dissatisfied, two had individual complaints (as they were anonymous, they could not be investigated further) and one felt that it was difficult to use the scheme without technical knowledge (paragraph 15).

4. Full results of the satisfaction surveys are available upon request, as well as demographic information about respondents, which allows us to check whether people from any particular background have different experiences. It was notable that a large proportion of surveys were returned by older people (41% came from people aged 65 or over), despite these people having a lower rate of engagement with the system.

Diversity analysis

5. Using a selection of diverse groups, we have compared the proportions of people on the current housing register with the outcomes they achieve through the system, both in engaging with the system to place bids, and ultimately in being housed. We have analysed these figures to provide comparisons across age bands, ethnic origin and disability. Other groups including; sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy & maternity, marriage & civil partnership, religion, sexual orientation, have not been reported on at this stage, but analysis can be carried out into any of these on request.

6. Age – there is a remarkably close correlation between the proportions of active applicants in different age bands and the proportions of lettings going to each age band. This is surprising, given the number of sheltered housing properties and scarcity of general needs accommodation.

7. However, notably more younger people are engaging with Homesearch, with participation rates generally lower for older age groups. This may reflect the factors discussed in rate of active bidding (paragraph 15). Further support will be put in place (paragraph 33) to help older people to use the system more.

8.   Disability – 40% of the active applicants on the housing register have at least one disability (10% have more than one) and 42% of lettings went to a person with a disability. There have been significant numbers of lettings to people with all types of disability considering their prevalence within the housing register. This is encouraging, suggesting that disabled people are achieving outcomes at least as positive as those for non-disabled applicants.

9.   People with at least one disability are significantly less likely to have placed a bid for a property than non-disabled people, and this remains true when looking at each disability separately. This may be linked to age factors (discussed above), given the greater prevalence of disability among older people, so the further support planned may tackle both issues simultaneously.

10.   Ethnic origin – people from an ethnic minority background (i.e. not White British) are over-represented on the housing register, comprising 12% of applicants, compared to 6.7% of the population of the borough (2001 Census). Engagement rates are also slightly higher for people from an ethnic minority than for the housing register as a whole, and looking at engagement rates for each ethnicity separately, they are all either very close to the average, or based on a very small sample of a few households. Housed outcomes for each ethnic group yet to be done.

Housing register applications, engagement with CBL system and lettings by ethnic origin

	Share of housing register 1/6/2012						Engagement rate (inc. housed)			Share of lettings 1/4/2011 – 31/5/21012					
	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Total		Hasn't bid	Has bid	Total	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Total	
White British	30	40	227	622	919	83.8%	424	820	66%	46	77	97	59	279	88.0%
White Irish	0	1	1	6	8	0.7%	3	8	73%	0	0	2	0	2	0.6%
White Any Other	1	0	9	11	21	1.9%	4	26	87%	3	2	0	2	7	2.2%
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	1	0	0	0	1	0.1%	0	1	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	0	0	3	7	10	0.9%	5	7	58%	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	0	0	3	7	10	0.9%	3	8	73%	0	1	0	0	1	0.3%
Asian or Asian British: Any Other	0	1	1	5	7	0.6%	1	6	86%	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Black or Black British: African	0	0	0	6	6	0.5%	0	8	100%	0	0	1	1	2	0.6%
Black or Black British: Caribbean	0	0	4	8	12	1.1%	3	11	79%	0	1	0	1	2	0.6%
Black or Black British: Any Other	0	0	0	3	3	0.3%	0	3	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Mixed: White and Asian	0	0	0	1	1	0.1%	1	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Mixed: White and Black African	0	0	1	1	2	0.2%	1	1	50%	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0	2	6	18	26	2.4%	13	21	62%	2	1	1	1	5	1.6%
Mixed: Any Other	0	0	1	5	6	0.5%	2	5	71%	1	0	0	0	1	0.3%
Chinese	0	0	1	4	5	0.5%	3	6	67%	0	1	1	2	4	1.3%
Other Ethnic	0	0	3	4	7	0.6%	2	9	82%	1	1	0	2	4	1.3%
Not stated	2	2	12	37	53	4.8%	21	42	67%	1	1	5	3	10	3.2%
Total	34	46	272	745	1097	100%	486	982	67%	54	85	107	71	317	100%
% not White British	12%	13%	17%	17%	16%		62	162	72%	15%	9%	9%	17%	12%	

11. Engagement rates are the number of applicants who have placed a bid for accommodation divided by total applicants, including both Active and Housed. N. B. This is a different measure to LICSH50, and will always be a higher figure as it also includes housed applicants in order to check for any differences between groups in allocations that have already taken place. Ethnic groups with engagement rates lower than the average are highlighted in pink. The groups highlighted either have engagement rates very close to the average, or are based on a very small sample.

12. People from ethnic minorities (i.e. all ethnic groups other than White British) have a slightly higher rate of engagement with the CBL system than the average, but represent a slightly smaller share of properties let than their share of the current housing register. This is not necessarily a problem, as we should not expect the distribution within a set of people who used to be on the register to be identical to another set of people who are on it now – it would only raise concern if the differences of proportion were very large, or if one ethnic group with a large number of applicants on the register had not seen any lettings at all.

Housing register applications, engagement with CBL system and lettings by age group

Age range	Number on register, 1 June 2012	% of register	Hasn't bid	Has bid	Engagement rate	Number housed, 1 Apr 11 – 31 May 12	% of all housed
16-17	8	1%	5	3	38%	0	0%
18-24	212	19%	74	215	74%	59	19%
25-44	425	38%	168	392	70%	120	38%
45-59	186	17%	90	160	64%	64	20%
60-64	66	6%	30	60	67%	22	7%
65-74	98	9%	52	78	60%	28	9%
75+	114	10%	67	74	52%	24	8%
All applicants	1109	100%	486	982	67%	317	100%

13. Unlike with ethnic origin, there is a clear pattern here, with younger people more likely to engage with Choice Based Lettings. Even including those already housed (who have all bid), only just half the people aged 75 who have been Active at some point have ever placed a bid. This may be due to the change to an unfamiliar allocations system, or a mistaken belief that one must have internet access in order to use the system. Another factor may be that older people are more likely to be adequately housed, in a low priority band and (from anecdotal evidence) waiting for an "ideal" property to become available before they bid. Plans to increase engagement with older people are described at paragraph 33.

14. The reason so few 16-17 year old applicants and that apparently none have been housed is that a problem with the software configuration means that applicants under 18 cannot place bids. Staff therefore have to manually alter the dates of birth of these applicants and enter details in a free text box. Some ages have clearly been altered back after the bid is placed, but others may not have been, so the true number of lettings to 16 and 17 year old applicants is unknown. The problem with the software has been identified and we are working towards a solution with the supplier.

Housing register applications, engagement with CBL system and lettings by disability

	Number of register	% of register	Hasn't bid	Has bid	Engagement rate	Number housed	% housed
Total	1109		486	982	67%	317	
Applicant with no disability	699	60%	219	623	74%	185	58%
Applicant with at least one type of disability	466	40%	267	359	57%	132	42%
Applicant with more than one type of disability	112	10%	16	149	90%	57	18%
Applicant with physical disability	241	21%	113	219	66%	82	26%
Applicant with learning disability	36	3%	18	27	60%	7	2%
Applicant with mental illness	107	9%	47	106	69%	40	13%
Applicant with visual impairment	40	3%	24	34	59%	13	4%
Applicant with hearing impairment	63	5%	39	42	52%	17	5%
Applicant with speech impairment	11	1%	7	7	50%	3	1%
Applicant with other disability	80	7%	35	73	68%	27	9%

15. The rate of engagement with choice based lettings is somewhat below the average for people with at least one disability, as it is for most individual disabilities although, interestingly, applicants with a mental illness are slightly more likely than the average to have bid, and those with more than one disability considerably more likely (possibly because they are more likely to receive support). It may be that lower engagement rates for disabled people are connected to the lower rates for older people, and that older people are more likely to have these disabilities. In addition to the factors considered above related to the age of applicants, a number of barriers to using the system could be imagined which could affect people with learning disabilities or sensory impairments. The selection of a sample of customers for the research described in paragraph 33 will include disabled people in order to investigate this further.

16. Considering the proportions of people on the housing register, a slightly higher proportion of lettings to date have been made to people with at least one disability, and this is particularly noticeable where the applicant has a physical disability or a mental illness. This may again reflect that a large proportion of properties advertised through the system are sheltered housing.

1. This note briefly sets out the current arrangements for notifying residents about planning applications as background for the Development Control Manager's presentation to Members. During the meeting some case studies will be considered.

2. The purpose of publicising planning applications is "Ensuring that all parties can find information on planning issues which could affect them…." *CLG letter 16 March 2010*. However, only **material planning considerations** can be taken into account in reaching the decision on the application. A balance needs to be drawn between

    - notifying those who might have a material planning interest

    - the resources expended

    - recognising the point at which there are unlikely to be additional material planning considerations raised and

    - not inappropriately raising expectations that a decision can be influenced

3. The right to submit comments on an application is not restricted to those people who have received an individual letter. Anybody has the right to comment on a planning application. Clearly those nearer to an application site are more likely to be affected in ways which could count as material planning considerations.

WHAT DO WE CURRENTLY DO?

4. Under the present arrangements our procedure for residents and neighbours is:

    - publish application documents and the officer report on the Blueprint web site
    - send individual notifications to neighbours where these adjoin the boundary of the site and where a postal address is identifiable from the Ordnance Survey map
    - address the notifications to "the owner/occupier" so the letter can be opened by whoever lives there
    - put up a site notice where legally required or where there is no identifiable adjoining postal address

- check during a site visit that there are no additional adjoining properties requiring an individual notification
- acknowledge in writing all neighbour comments received
- notify the applicant of the date an application is on a Committee agenda
- notify all neighbours in writing of the decision on the application

In addition at the discretion of the officers we may:

- send an individual notification to properties on the opposite side of the road, e.g. where the development may be visible to residents on the opposite side of the road such as a new house or an extension to the front or side of a dwelling.

	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 17 JULY 2012 WORK PROGRAMME	**7**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY SHAPING

The work programme for the Community Development Group is developed around the corporate priorities that fall within its remit and takes into account the timing of the Group's business in the previous municipal year and any emerging issues and key policy developments that may arise throughout the year. It is anticipated that the work programme for the year will be developed in line with the priorities identified in the 4 year plan for budget savings.

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Group notes the report.

Date of Meeting	Item
17 July 2012	• Annual review of Choice Based Lettings • Development Control Process of Notification • Work Programme
30 October 2012	• Work Programme • Request for scrutiny- Community Governance- West Bridgford • Community Right to Challenge • Assets of Community Value
6 December 2012	• Work Programme • Review of the relationship between the Borough and the parish councils
5 February 2013	• Work Programme
9 April 2013	• Annual Review of Scrutiny • Work Programme

Financial Comments

No direct financial implications arise from the proposed work programme

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act

In the delivery of its work programme the Group supports delivery of the Council's Section 17 responsibilities.

Diversity

The policy development role of the Group ensures that its proposed work programme supports delivery of Council's Corporate priority 6 'Meeting the Diverse needs of the Community'.

Background Papers Available for Inspection: Nil