



NOTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY GROUP
TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2015

Held at 7 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs J A Smith (Chairman), A J Edyvean (substitute for Councillor J Donoghue), J E Greenwood, Mrs M M Males (substitute for Councillor E J Lungley), G R Mallender, A Phillips, E A Plant, M W Suthers, J G A Wheeler

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

R Crowder	Chief Executive, Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire
C Perry	Chief Executive, Rushcliffe Community & Voluntary Service
N Raffell	Housing Services Manager, Metropolitan Housing Trust
B Watson	Head of Housing (North), Metropolitan Housing Trust

OFFICERS PRESENT:

D Dwyer	Strategic Housing Manager
K Marriott	Executive Manager - Operations and Transformation
V Nightingale	Constitutional Services Officer
C Taylor	Community Development Manager

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors J Donoghue, E J Lungley

9. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

10. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 30 June 2015 were accepted as a true record.

11. Review of Metropolitan Housing Partnership

The Strategic Housing Manager presented the report and stated that this was the annual review of scrutiny. Ms Watson gave a presentation outlining the company, which nationally had 38,000 homes mainly in the East Midlands, East of England and London, 1,300 staff and 90,000 customers. She said that Metropolitan was a not for profit company with surpluses being reinvested in the existing housing stock and the provision of new homes. She was pleased to say that the company would be building 3,300 new affordable homes in the next five years.

Ms Watson stated that Rushcliffe Borough Council was the company's largest partner in the Midlands region and that they were key partners in the

Homesearch Choice Based Lettings and members of the Cotgrave Strategic Board. Within the Borough they had a total of 3,737 homes and 783 garages.

With regard to the stock Members were informed that 55 new homes for rent had been built in 2014/15, including properties built on former garage sites and also sheltered housing schemes that had been converted into mainstream housing. Also over £430,000 had been invested in modernising homes. Ms Watson said that over £750,000 was planned to be invested in 2015/16, including care and support schemes, addressing fuel poverty and communal improvements. Members queried if the 'right to buy' and the new 'right to acquire' schemes had impacted on the housing stock. Ms Watson stated that there were very few sales, however with regards to actual numbers she would investigate and inform the Group. She also stated that the 'Right to Buy' was only for local authority housing.

Following a question regarding turnover, Ms Watson informed Members that during 2014/15 144 general needs and 123 older persons properties had been relet which equated to a 6.6% and 10% turnover respectively. A further 35 residents had moved home through the mutual exchange system. New tenants that required support were offered services through the METTS programme and the company was in partnership with Recovered, which was linked to the Friary, to help people with low cost furniture. Tenants were also able to take advantage of a national scheme called 'Homeswapper'.

In respect of their maintenance and repair services Ms Watson stated that a new Midlands in-house contractor was due to go live in December 2015 which would give the company greater control over the process. She also said that a new IT system would be launched in October which would assist in monitoring the performance and diagnosing problems. She was pleased to say that 100% of properties were gas, fire and water compliant.

Ms Watson explained that the company now had a specialist team to deliver services to designated properties for older people, including specialist housing and support managers. She stated that over the years the old warden service had changed and now each scheme would receive a minimum of 20 staff hours per week. Since the introduction of the teams the older persons void numbers and turnover had reduced.

With regard to income recovery the Group was informed that performance was improving and the arrears in the Rushcliffe area had reduced by £75,000. In respect of the spare room subsidy 389 tenants were affected which was a slight increase on the previous year. There were 270 of these tenants in arrears and this equated to £138,000. She was pleased to say that there had been no evictions due to this issue and that the company was working with tenants to assist them and also looking at Universal Credit and understanding how people would receive their benefit in the future. They had introduced a range of initiatives including money advice via Digital Unites, money management workshops, IT training and focusing on employment solutions.

Members had raised a question regarding the company's new contract with Streetwise Environmental and were informed that this had started on 1 June 2015. Although the contract had not been in operation for very long it was working well. Members raised concerns regarding the maintenance of some

open spaces and were informed that Streetwise were endeavouring to bring areas into an acceptable state and that this should not be an issue in the future. In respect of the environment Members were informed that 140 estate inspections were carried out each year and that 70% of the estates were graded as good, with none being poorly rated. The housing teams had dedicated improvement budgets and they worked in partnership with the Council's dog wardens and Environmental Health Officers.

The Group had asked for further information on the service charges residents were asked to pay. Ms Watson explained that all residents of certain tenures were charged for the services they received, eg lifts, door entry systems, grounds maintenance and cleaning. The charges reflected the cost of the service plus an administration cost. Following a question she explained that if tenants bought their home they were still subject to a service charge, however it was recognised that any houses before Metropolitan Housing Trust took over the stock did not pay a service charge, but she assured Members that other tenants did not pay extra to cover the charges for those properties. In respect of water charges, these had been included as part of the rent, however, the agreement with Severn Trent was due to expire on 1 October 2015. All residents had been notified of the change by Metropolitan Housing Trust and assistance had been offered, although people had found this quite straight forward. Severn Trent had also contacted customers directly. Following a question Ms Watson agreed to investigate further a complaint regarding surface water flooding in Bingham in 2012 and report back.

With regards to garages these were subject to a separate charge where they were not integral to the property, this charging system had been inherited by Metropolitan Housing Trust and as these properties were re-let the costs were made clear.

Ms Watson explained to Members how the company dealt with anti-social behaviour. There had been 188 cases during the last 12 months with 70% classified as resolved. She stated that noise was the most common cause of complaints. Metropolitan Housing Trust had a dedicated officer and were members of the Rushcliffe Borough Council anti-social behaviour working group and worked with officers and the Police to reduce incidents. Following a question it was recognised that people with special needs often required more assistance and officers dedicated more time to ensure that a plan was devised and put into place. Housing officers were trained to carry out risk assessments and to identify the impact of moving people into different accommodation, for complex needs a case conference would be held.

Members were informed that the company was focussing resources on supporting residents into long term paid employment and their dedicated employment officer worked in partnership with the Ready4work programme and held regular job clubs in Cotgrave, and sessions would soon be delivered in Bingham. Three residents had been supported into employment with Streetwise Environmental Ltd and opportunities were available in the company's sector based work academy, which gave people a six week placement in their contact centre.

Other initiatives for residents included projects that benefited the community, these included volunteering placements, peer mentoring, participating in local

events such as the Cotgrave Festival, resident contact network and projects for young people. In the future the company would be providing health and wellbeing projects through funding from the West Midlands Fund and also work experience for young people in partnership with YouNG. Other future plans included a review of the garages as there was now less demand for these, the new housing to be built at Cotgrave and the provision of an in-house maintenance service.

Following a question, Ms Watson explained that there were only a small number of properties that had a garage next to the house and that the majority were in large blocks where each garage had an individual rent. These garages were rented by a wide range of people and mostly not their tenants, however there were a large number of empty garages as they were becoming unpopular. She stated that garage tenancies were not protected and that although this was sometimes difficult each scheme was assessed and either demolished and used for affordable homes or demolished and used for parking bays. Following a question Members were informed that garages were not sold to tenants. She said that there was to be a review of the garages as the company had acknowledged that parking was an issue and could cause tension between people.

In conclusion, Ms Watson informed Members of the various methods the company could be contacted. Initially any enquires should be directed to the contact centre, or if about grounds maintenance Streetwise direct. All complaints should be directed to Metropolitan Housing Trust and if Members felt that any issue was not being adequately addressed and needed to be escalated then Members could contact her.

It was AGREED that the Group had considered and commented on the presentation made by Metropolitan Housing Trust and endorsed the work of the partnership.

The Chairman thanked Ms Watson and Ms Raffell for attending the meeting, their informative presentation and for answering Members' questions.

12. **Service Level Agreement Rushcliffe Community & Voluntary Service and Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire Scrutiny**

The Community Development Manager presented the report which outlined the support from the Rushcliffe Community & Voluntary Service and Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire that had been in place for voluntary organisations. He explained that there had been a Service Level Agreement between the Borough Council and these two organisations for a number of years; he stated that between 2012 and March 2015 there had been a joint agreement. The Agreements had been scrutinised annually by the Group and also twice per year by the Cabinet portfolio holder.

Mr Crowder and Ms Perry gave a presentation which outlined the work undertaken as part of the three year joint agreement and also how each organisation would continue to work with the Borough Council as part of the new agreements.

Members were informed that during 2014/15 support had been given to 67 community groups, town and parish councils and to parish and neighbourhood plan groups and contact had been made with 1,278 volunteers. Additional funding of £123,818 had been secured in 2014/15 with £458,221 being levered in over the three year agreement. Also Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire had been involved in the Local Enterprise Partnership as a representative for voluntary organisations and this had helped them support the rural economy. Rushcliffe Community & Voluntary Service had supported Rushcliffe Together, previously known as the Cohesion Network, which assisted with equality and diversity issues; an event was planned for early in the new year entitled Respect Rushcliffe which would include topics about Travellers and advice networks.

Ms Perry explained that contact had been made with 3,217 potential volunteers, with 41 volunteers placed who had additional support needs. There had been a programme of intense work carried out regarding good practice with 45 volunteer involving organisations and a further 444 had been contacted.

Mr Crowder stated explained that Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire had been involved in the community led planning process, three of which had been published; they had also supported three Neighbourhood Plans and he highlighted the excellent document by the East Leake community, that had recently been presented to the Full Council meeting.

In respect of communication Members were informed that 140 newsletters had been distributed, Rushcliffe Community & Voluntary Service had over 500 contacts on their database. Both organisations websites contained information and could be used as a resource.

Mr Crowder stated that he was impressed with the level of support from the Borough Council to the parish/town councils especially with the level of information that was shared at the Parish Forums and events. He also stated that business support was available and explained that LEADER ('Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale') funding of £1.7 million had been awarded to Rushcliffe, Gedling and Ashfield for five years. Through the Local Enterprise Partnership, D2N2, there was funding available of £208 million; also as part of his role he had assisted with the development of a small grants scheme which would benefit the smaller communities and ensure that the allocation of funding was not dominated by the larger cities.

In conclusion, Members were informed that the Service Level Agreement had been separated due to the possibility of a merger between local Community & Voluntary Services. As part of the separate agreements Mr Crowder informed the Group of the work that would be undertaken by Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire, including supporting community and neighbourhood plans, town and parish councils, and rural businesses and rural economic growth. Ms Perry stated that the Rushcliffe Community & Voluntary Service would be supporting and giving advice to voluntary and community groups. She stated that £30,900 had been secured which could be used for capital projects or as a kickstart for smaller groups. The organisation would continue to communicate with the volunteers and organise/deliver events for volunteers' week and to promote volunteering to the public. She stated that there had

been a decline in people volunteering and they were working on alternative software for the management of their website. As part of the agreement the Rushcliffe Community & Voluntary Service would continue to support the needs of older people in Rushcliffe through community outreach, voluntary transport scheme, first contact and Rushcliffe Befriends. The organisation would also be working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure that patients were involved in health care planning.

Members raised concerns regarding the current funding restraints and queried if the two groups had any plans in place for the future. Ms Perry stated that, following the decision that the merger between volunteer centres was not proceeding, Rushcliffe Community & Voluntary Service would be considering its strategic planning process, however it would have an impact on their capacity to deliver services. Mr Crowder stated that Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire had always wanted to be self-funding and had not wanted to be totally reliant on funding from local authorities and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

With regard to the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development Members were aware that there was £1 million available in the D2N2 area but felt that many small, rural businesses were deterred from applying due to the process involved. They felt that this was an area that Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire could assist by publicising and helping companies understand the process. Mr Crowder stated that there would be £5.6 million over the next six years, he explained that each application was different and that, depending on the voluntary capacity, the amount of match funding required. He said that six events had been planned to bring people together with an advisor as it had been recognised that people could require assistance to interpret the rules. It had been felt that money could be invested into rural broadband for those areas that would not be covered by the current County Council led project, which was due to end in 2017. Following a question regarding timing Members were informed that from an expression of interest it would be likely that it would be at least six months before any funding was received. The Community Development Manager stated that the Borough Council would be working with Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire and the Rushcliffe Business Partnership in 2016 to ensure that the information was widely distributed.

In respect of a question regarding the withdrawal of the voluntary transport scheme in Gedling Ms Perry stated that they had recently been approached to see if they could be of assistance, however this was being considered and a risk assessment carried out, the amount of funding available was not known and the service could not operate at a loss.

The Group queried the type of work undertaken by volunteers and if certain work required the volunteer to undertake a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check. Ms Perry explained that there were vast opportunities for volunteering from driving, working in charity shops, gardening, working at The Friary with the homeless, etc. With regards to the checks these were carried out for certain tasks and due to the voluntary nature there was no charge incurred.

The Chairman thanked Ms Perry and Mr Crowder for attending the meeting, their informative presentation on the varied work undertaken by the two organisation and for answering Members' questions.

Following Ms Perry's and Mr Crowder's departure the Group discussed how they felt the two organisations would be affected due to the current, and future reductions in funding available. Members recognised the benefits of the work undertaken but were concerned about their viability. The Executive Manager - Operations and Transformation explained that the Cabinet Portfolio Holder and the Executive Manager - Communities were responsible for the Service Level Agreement and that the amount of funding had been agreed through the budget workshops and could be considered again at this year's workshops. She agreed to raise Members' concerns with the Executive Manager - Communities and ask him to provide a response.

It was AGREED that Members

- a) Had commented and endorsed the year 3 delivery of the Service Level Agreement between the Borough Council and the Rushcliffe Community & Voluntary Service and Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire; and
- b) Noted that from April 2015 the Borough Council had a separate Service Level Agreement with each organisation and had commented upon the work undertaken so far.

13. Work Programme

The Executive Manager - Operations and Transformation presented the report which outlined the Group's work programme for the next twelve months. She said that there would be an update on the Bridgford Hall project in January and that members of the Local Resilience Forum, who undertake emergency planning, would be invited to the Group's meeting in March.

The Group AGREED its work programme.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Action Sheet

PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY GROUP - TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2015

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
11. Review of Metropolitan Housing Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ms Watson to provide Members with the number of properties sold as part of the Right to Acquire scheme b) Ms Watson to provide further information regarding the surface water flooding incident in 2012 	<p>Strategic Housing Manager</p> <p>Strategic Housing Manager</p>
12. Service Level Agreement Rushcliffe Community & Voluntary Service and Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire Scrutiny	The Executive Manager - Operations and Transformation to raise Members' concerns about the future viability of the two organisations and the Executive Manager - Communities to respond to the Group	Executive Manager - Operations and Transformation and Executive Manager - Communities