



NOTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY GROUP
WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY 2017

Held at 7 pm in Council Chamber A, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford

PRESENT:

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr J Collins	Rushcliffe Business Partnership
H Kearsley-Cree	Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire
J Kirkwood	Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire
J Plant	Waterloo Housing

OFFICERS PRESENT:

D Banks	Executive Manager - Neighbourhoods
D Dwyer	Strategic Housing Manager
D Hayden	Principal Community Development Officer
V Nightingale	Constitutional Services Officer

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors E J Lungley

12. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

13. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18 October 2016 were accepted as a true record.

The Group noted the responses to the actions raised at the last meeting. Councillor Donoghue requested further information on the surveys that were being undertaken by Metropolitan Housing Trust and how these would be carried out.

14. Rushcliffe Business Partnership Annual Review

The Principal Community Development Officer presented a report which outlined the work undertaken by the Rushcliffe Business Partnership as part of its Service Level Agreement with the Council. He stated that the Partnership provided support and networking opportunities for businesses in Rushcliffe. The Group was informed that the Service Level Agreement focussed on the delivery of twelve monthly networking events and one annual, all day showcase event; and the maintenance and upkeep of a dedicated website.

Dr Collins gave a presentation that outlined the history, key aims and objectives, highlights of the past year and priorities for the future of the Partnership. With regard to membership he stated that there were over 700 members and approximately 2,900 social media followers; he said that the Partnership used social media to engage with young people and the wider business community.

The Group was informed that the Partnership had, over the last year, designed a new website with additional financial support from the Borough Council, which would enable businesses to obtain information easier. The Partnership had also redesigned its marketing and branding. It was acknowledged that the website could not provide all the required information but that it could signpost businesses to other organisations such as the D2N2LEP and the Growth Hub.

With regard to the events the Group was informed that the 2016 annual event had focussed on education and employability and, in conjunction with Rushcliffe Academy, had considered the needs of local businesses and the skills of young people to ensure that they were work ready. Dr Collins was pleased to say that over the eight conferences the attendance had been between 170 and 230 delegates.

In relation to the monthly meetings it was recognised that these were mainly focussed on West Bridgford, however, the Partnership was trying to engage with other villages. Monthly events were being held in Ruddington and in Keyworth but were hoping to grow into Cotgrave, Radcliffe on Trent and East Leake. Following a question the Group was informed that there were a variety of networking clubs, although it was acknowledged that these could be costly. The Principal Community Development Officer stated that there was a Bingham Business Club and that there was a good relationship between it and the Partnership. He also stated that the Bingham Business Club was closely related to the Council's Bingham and Radcliffe on Trent Growth Board. It was felt that a good outcome that could be measured was the rise in the number of people attending the monthly meetings.

Dr Collins stated that to be able to expand the reach of the Partnership it was now felt that it needed to be self sustaining; to accomplish this the Partnership was offering membership packages, including a gold package for £60 a year which would give added acknowledgement on the Partnership's website. For larger businesses there would be a platinum level and these would appear on the home page of the website. Following a question Councillors were informed that the silver membership would be free. Councillors queried the target of 75 and were informed that there had been no upper limit defined.

The Principal Community Development Officer informed the Group that the Partnership also held an event for the larger businesses as the monthly meetings were mainly attended by small businesses and home workers.

The Group felt that the Partnership was working well and asked how the Council could support it in the future? Dr Collins thanked the Council for its support to date and informed the Group that he had been having discussions with the Executive Manager - Communities regarding extra funding to assist in taking the Partnership forward to achieve its goals regarding the website.

AGREED that Members had considered and made comments on the presentation made by the Rushcliffe Business Partnership and endorsed the work of the partnership.

15. **Review of Waterloo Housing Partnership**

The Strategic Housing Manager presented a report which outlined the work undertaken by Waterloo Housing in partnership with the Borough Council. She explained that Waterloo was the second largest provider of affordable housing in the Borough. As part of the Trent Valley Partnership the organisation provided affordable homes as part of the rural exception site programme. It was noted that, although there had been no properties delivered this year there had been a large amount of background work undertaken, including housing needs surveys. She outlined the exception site programme that had been delivered since 2005 and explained that this had predominately been in more sustainable locations with larger populations but that they were now considering schemes in smaller villages, which depending on need identified, might have to be shared by two parishes.

The Group was informed of the funding that was being levered in from the Homes and Community Agency and how the Borough Council's capital programme supported the programme. The Strategic Housing Manager also explained about the Government proposals on Starter Homes and Right To Buy and the need to consider any impacts arising from this in relation to properties being affordable in perpetuity.

Mr Plant gave a presentation to the Group outlining the work of the Partnership. He explained that last year the Government announced the Shared Ownership and Affordable Housing programme which was a shift in policy towards home ownership, organisations were being grant funded to develop shared ownership and rent to buy properties. He stated that in September 2016 the organisation submitted a bid to the Homes and Community Agency which was awarded in December and he was pleased to say that they received the sixth largest allocation in the country. However, since the allocation the Government had expanded the tenure and the organisation was exploring the impact of this change.

The Group was informed that they would continue to be part of the Trent Valley Partnership and that during the year they had been negotiating 6-12 units in Gotham.

Mr Plant informed the Group that during April 2016 there had been a merger with the Acclaim Housing Group, which had increased their stock by 5,000 units. At present there was a restructure of the teams occurring to amalgamate operating structures, including promoting local and home working.

In relation to housing allocations Mr Plant stated that, during 2016, there had been 21 voids, which equated to 3% of the stock, and 50% of these were advertised through Homesearch. He explained that across the whole company there were 8% voids which highlighted the small turnover in Rushcliffe. On average the turnround of properties was 20 days although this did extend to 35 days for properties for older people. Following a question Mr

Plant explained that there was a variety of reasons, including the need to go into care as to why there were more voids in older persons' accommodation.

With regard to anti-social behaviour Councillors were informed that this was not a big issue; with only six cases in 2016 and four of these were life style issues. Mr Plant explained that there had been an amendment to the Housing Act in 2014 which gave providers larger powers to take enforcement action, especially by working in partnership with other agencies.

The Group had requested information on the organisation's repair programme and he was pleased to say that the budget had been increased by £200,000 which had mostly been allocated for installing energy efficient boilers as fuel poverty had been recognised as an important issue. Also it was believed that by driving fuel efficiency by supplying better insulation and smart meters this would assist residents to reduce their costs and in turn negate rent arrears. Mr Plant explained that in Lincolnshire and Derbyshire there was an in-house maintenance service and that in the other areas there were six contractors that could be used; this had previously been a single company contract and it had been decided that a larger pool of contractors was more beneficial.

In respect of welfare reform Councillors were informed that the organisation had quarterly meetings to consider the impact this was having on the residents. Mr Plant stated that six homes had been affected by benefit capping and there was one live Universal Credit claim. He explained that the Local Housing Allowance cap affected 156 homes and that it now affected people of pensionable age. He was pleased to inform the Group that the organisation had successfully made a bid to the Big Lottery Fund for the provision of a welfare reform advice service, and although this would be based in Leicestershire there was capability to expand the service. He also explained that to avoid debt there was a tenancy support scheme and the organisation worked with the Citizens Advice Bureau to help people. The Strategic Housing Manager stated that colleagues from the Finance section had written to tenants notifying them of the impact of benefit capping and had advised them to contact the Council regarding the availability of Discretionary Housing Benefit. Following a question regarding carers and a benefit cap the Strategic Housing Manager agreed to ask Finance colleagues regarding exemptions.

In relation to income recovery the Group was informed that the organisation had a target of 3% and for 2016 it had only been 2.7% with an average debt of £320, although this could be reduced as tenants in receipt of benefit were paid in arrears. Mr Plant explained that the organisation provided face to face negotiations for anyone who needed it.

Mr Plant informed the Group that the number of complaints was very low and that there had only been three in 2016 and that these had all been resolved at Stage One of the process. He stated that during October 2016 the organisation had reviewed its process and reduced it to a two stage system. He assured Councillors that the organisation monitored any trends so that remedies could be put in place.

Following a question Mr Plant explained that the call centre had a target of answering calls within 60 seconds and although it was acknowledged that at peak times this was not met 100% there were no complaints received about

the service. One initiative that had been well received by customers was the ability to request that an operator would call them back. Mr Plant agreed to provide further information on this service to the Group.

In respect of grounds maintenance the Group was informed that a tendering exercise had been undertaken and this had resulted in a more competitive contract, which had in turn reduced the service charges to residents.

With regard to resident involvement Mr Plant was pleased to say that, following customer feedback, there had been a review and it had been identified that people preferred not to have boards that met quarterly but to have themed engagement on certain areas, ie repairs, anti-social behaviour, etc. The organisation had a digital inclusion group which was expanding. This group allowed the organisation to obtain quick feedback on any consultation. Also the organisation had introduced My Waterloo which gave residents access to their rent account, benefits and shortly they will be able to see any anti-social behaviour cases. It had been recognised that self-service was an efficient delivery method. Mr Plant was pleased to say that, without any promotion, over 3,000 people had registered for the service. Following a question Mr Plant explained that although service was digital by default the other contact methods had not been removed and people could phone or request a home visit. Councillors asked if there would be a digital lounge in Rushcliffe and Mr Plant explained that these were run by volunteers and that the equipment, which was gifted by the organisation, needed to be secured. It was also acknowledged that many of the properties in Rushcliffe were in rural locations and therefore there was not the density of residents to make a digital lounge viable; also these sites were often in areas that were wifi challenged.

The Group asked for further clarification on the Right to Buy properties and the relationship with affordable homes; Mr Plant stated that this had been a one year voluntary pilot and he would be in a better position to provide feedback at the next scrutiny after an evaluation of the pilot.

In relation to refugee support Mr Plant stated that the organisation was happy to assist and was helping when asked and had housed four families in the Newark area.

AGREED that Members had considered and made comments on the presentation made by Waterloo and endorsed the work of the partnership.

16. Service Level Agreement with Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire

The Principal Community Development Officer presented the report that outlined the work undertaken by Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire as part of the Service Level Agreement with the Borough Council for 2015/16 and for the first six months of 2016/17. He explained that the agreement had been scrutinised by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder in July 2016 and it had been agreed that they had exceeded their targets. Officers were currently working on the targets for 2017/18.

Mrs Kirkwood gave a presentation and explained that the organisation had been assisting rural communities since 1924 and were part of 38 Councils that formed the ACRES network, which fed back to Central Government. The

organisation provided research and information, assistance with community planning, transport, health, economic regeneration and rural proofing. Members were informed of the Wheels to Work project which had been running for over ten years and how this assisted young people to gain employment by removing the barrier to transport issues. Following a question the Group was informed that either the business could be rural or the person could live in a rural location and needed to access an employment opportunity in an urban area, each case was considered on its own merit. Also protective clothing, including hi-vis accessories, were provided.

Mrs Kirkwood informed the Group of the IT Community Champions initiative which provided IT training to people in Nottinghamshire over 50. 27 courses had been delivered to 125 learners with 486 volunteer hours gifted to the project. It was noted that the project had been funded through the Lottery and that this was due to expire in March 2017; Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire wanted to extend the project but had not currently found any funding. Councillors suggested that officers should place an article in Councillors' Connection to ascertain if a Councillor could use their Community Support Scheme to assist. Following a question the Group was informed that rural connectivity was varied and also where superfast broadband had been introduced people were not aware that they had to request to be upgraded. The Executive Manager - Neighbourhoods explained that the Community Development Group annually scrutinised the County Council's project to upgrade broadband speeds across the County.

The organisation had assisted five communities to develop a Community Led Plan of which three had been completed and two were being supported in 2016/17. Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire had given funding support and advice to 40 groups and had successfully assisted developing applications that had brought £91,000 in 2015/16 and £73,200 in 2016/17 into the region.

The Group was informed of the Town and Parish Forums and Annual Conference and how the organisation assisted the Borough Council in the organisation of these events. Mrs Kirkwood reminded Councillors of the next forum that would be considering planning.

With regard to the Service Level Agreement it had been agreed to replace the Rural Diversification Conference with a Retail Boosting Workshop in Cotgrave.

In conclusion, Mrs Kirkwood explained its proposals for the future, and that, due to funding cuts, the organisation had considered how to reduce its own expenditure. A skills audit of parish councillors had been undertaken and a database of peer support had been created and although there had been no enquiries so far they would continue to promote it. In respect of Neighbourhood Planning negotiations had been undertaken with a planning consultancy service to enable joint working. Also the organisation had considered its own skills and how these can be marketed to the community.

Finally, the Group was informed of a bid that had been made to the Department of Communities and Local Government to address isolation and loneliness; a hub had been created in Leverton in 2015/16 and it was proposed to run a similar scheme in Rushcliffe.

Councillors reminded Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire that they had their own Community Support Scheme that she could promote to people if they needed some funding. Mrs Kirkwood replied that she did inform groups of both the Borough and the County Council's funding opportunities.

AGREED that Members had made comments on the performance of Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire in delivering the Service Level Agreement for April 2015 to December 2016 (as detailed in **appendix 1 & 2**).

17. **Work Programme**

The Group considered, and agreed, its work programme and noted that an invitation would be extended to Inspector Berry of Nottinghamshire Police to give their perspective on the South Notts Community Safety Partnership.

A request was made to have a further update on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. The Executive Manager - Neighbourhoods agreed to provide a briefing note that would explain how the scheme worked.

The meeting closed at 20.55 pm.

Action Sheet

PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY GROUP - WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY 2017

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
13. Notes of the Previous Meeting	Officers to request further information regarding Metropolitan Housing Trust's surveys.	Strategic Housing Manager
15. Review of Waterloo Housing Partnership	a) Officers to provide information on the impact of benefit capping in relation to carers and any exemptions. b) Waterloo Housing to provide data on the performance of its contact centre regarding the amount of time taken to answer calls.	Strategic Housing Manager Waterloo Housing
16. Service Level Agreement with Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire	An article to be placed in Councillors' Connection to ascertain if any Councillor could support the IT project from their Community Support Scheme.	Principal Community Development Officer
17. Work Programme	Officers to provide further information on the Choice Based Lettings scheme.	Executive Manager - Neighbourhoods