

HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

28 JANUARY 2010 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman
Mrs R Camamile - Joint Vice-Chairman
Mr P Hall - Joint Vice-Chairman

Mr JG Bannister, Mr DM Gould, Mrs A Hall, Mr DW Inman, Mr CG Joyce, Mr C Ladkin, Mr K Morrell, Mrs S Sprason and Mr BE Sutton.

Officers in attendance: Mr S Atkinson, Mr C Bellavia, Mr B Cullen, Mr R Grantham, Miss L Horton, Mr S Kohli, Miss R Owen, Mr R Parkinson, Mr T Prowse, Mrs S Stacey and Mr S Wood.

395 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr Batty and Mrs Francks.

396 MINUTES (SC54)

On the motion of Mrs Camamile, seconded by Mr Bannister, it was

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

397 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

398 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

The Community Safety Manager gave a presentation on the performance of the Hinckley & Bosworth Community Safety Partnership, the success of the Safe Christmas campaign and challenges and priorities for 2010. In response to a Member's question it was agreed that information on comparisons with other partnerships would be sent to the Member.

A Member reminded the meeting of her question to Council earlier in the week regarding training for Community Safety Officers. In response it was reiterated that this would be included in a report to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.

The Community Safety Manager was thanked for the report and his presentation.

RESOLVED – the performance and progress of the Community Safety Partnership be noted.

Mr Gould arrived at 6.46pm.

399 SCRUTINY REVIEW: REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORDS (SC55)

To assist with the forthcoming review, the Scrutiny Commission was presented with a report which provided performance information regarding Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) who were currently actively developing or managing stock within Hinckley & Bosworth. With regard to tenant satisfaction, it was noted that a survey of HBBC tenants had been undertaken in 2009 but confirmation was awaited from the Audit Commission to be able to publish the results.

It was agreed that all five housing associations for which data had been retrieved and included in the appendix to the report should be invited to the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on either 4 March or 8 April 2010, and that they should be invited to make a presentation to include baseline information and key services to tenants. Questions would then be directed at the attendees covering the following areas:

1. Accountability to local community;
2. Partnership working;
3. Communication / consultation / Tenants Association / Community Involvement;
4. Rural expertise;
5. Rents;
6. Services (repairs and adaptations; response to anti-social behaviour).

RESOLVED – De Montfort Housing, Derwent Living, East Midlands Housing Group, Midland Heart and Orbit Group be invited to the Commission on 4 March or 8 April 2010 and that questions be prepared in the areas outlined above.

400 DISABLED ADAPTATIONS IN COUNCIL PROPERTIES (SC56)

In response to a request of the Commission, Members were presented with a report which advised of the position regarding disabled adaptations in Council properties in respect of the waiting list for adaptations. An example of the waiting list was given in that the wait for installation of level access showers was 11-12 months and that to reduce the wait to three months would require an additional £110,000. It was explained that referrals for adaptations were received from an Occupational Therapist as a result of an assessment and were only considered a priority if highlighted as such by the Occupational therapist. With regard to the contract for the adaptation work, it was reported that the current two-year contract had been procured in 2009.

In response to a Member's question it was explained that when an adapted property became void, the list of people awaiting adaptations was reviewed to offer the property to someone who was awaiting that adaptation, but often this was not successful as people didn't want to move to a new property. The next

stage was to look at the housing waiting list for someone awaiting a property with that adaptation. It was noted that sometimes when these avenues were unsuccessful, an adapted property was allocated to someone who did not require adaptations.

Officers outlined some ways of reducing the waiting time including offering an incentive such as assistance with removal costs to encourage people to move into an empty adapted property rather than awaiting an adaptation in their current property, however the cost attached to this would reduce the budget for adaptations. Another option would be not to put adaptations into family houses occupied by a single older person but to encourage them to move to a more suitable property, however officers felt that this would not be acceptable. The third option suggested was responding to Occupational Therapy referrals to clarify the need for the adaptation and to ensure that where doubt existed as to whether the need was genuine, this was re-assessed. It was agreed that Members be supplied with details on the cost of each type of adaptation.

With regard to Disabled Facilities Grants in private sector housing it was stated that this was the subject of county-wide focus and was currently a joint project. It was explained that the process for these was longer as there were more financial tests and altering private houses entailed different considerations to Council houses. With regard to charges put onto private properties that had received a grant, a Member asked if this charge was claimed back where relevant, and also how many level access showers were awaited in private properties. Officers agreed to provide this information.

It was felt that better joint working with Occupational Therapists should be explored. It was also suggested that providing an in-house adaptations service be investigated when the current contract ends. Members felt that performance in this area should be in the top quartile to reflect the performance levels across the authority and therefore more money for adaptations should be sought and cases should be prioritised by Occupational Health. Officers advised on the difficulties of setting such priorities against the Government priority of all homes meeting and maintaining 'Decent Homes' standards.

Mr Ladkin left the meeting at 7.46pm.

Concern was expressed that the priorities regarding housing repairs and adaptations should be reconsidered. Members asked that a report be brought to a future meeting on how the recommendations made at this meeting have been actioned.

RECOMMENDED –

- (i) action be take to ensure performance with regard to adaptations is in the top quartile;
- (ii) Occupational Health support be sought to enable prioritisation of cases awaiting adaptations;
- (iii) Solutions to reduce the waiting list continue to be sought;

- (iv) Consideration be given to tendering for an in-house adaptations service when the contract is re-tendered;
- (v) Consideration be given to opportunities to increase the budget and to prioritise this work within the Capital budget, taking into account other priorities;
- (vi) The Scrutiny Commission supports the work of the Joint Leicestershire project focussing on Disabled Facilities Grants;
- (vii) A report be brought to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Commission to provide an update on how recommendations made at this meeting have been actioned.

401 PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT APPEAL DECISIONS (SC57)

The Scrutiny Commission was informed of Planning and Enforcement appeal determinations made contrary to the decision of the Local Planning Authority. It was noted that of the seven appeal decisions made by the Planning Inspectorate, three appeals had been dismissed, two allowed and two split decisions. Of the two decisions allowed, one was an officer decision (delegated), and one was a Member decision against officer recommendation.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

402 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS (SC58)

Members were informed of the position in respect of the Section 106 contributions that had not been spent within the five year period, and those unspent between four and five years. Members were reassured that there was communication between service areas but officers agreed to check this and report back. In response to a Member's question it was confirmed that permission could be refused based on lack of contributions but that other factors such as community benefits needed to be considered in the decision.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

Mr Bannister left the meeting at 8.05pm.

403 CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009-2014 (SC59)

The Scrutiny Commission was presented with the Carbon Management Plan 2009-2014 and was informed of the Carbon Management Programme. The need to consider ways of reducing carbon emissions in sheltered housing was highlighted.

RESOLVED – the Carbon Management Plan 2009-2014 be noted and the Executive decision on 20 January confirming the target for CO₂ reduction from Council activities as 20% of the 2008-09 baseline by 2013-14 be supported.

404 ANTI POVERTY STRATEGY & CREDIT UNION (SC60)

Members were provided with an update on the Anti Poverty Strategy and action plan since the last meeting. Members were pleased with the achievements and input into the strategy so far.

The Director of Finance updated the Commission on the establishment of the Credit Union, explaining that staff in Finance and Human Resources had received training to be able to deal with enquiries and process applications from Council employees and that there had already been some take-up of the services of Clockwise. He also reported that volunteers for the centre in Earl Shilton had been trained and the key position of Manager had been offered and a response was awaited. The lead time for the opening of the Centre in Earl Shilton would be two to three weeks from the Manager being appointed. It was requested that Members be invited to the opening of the Centre.

RESOLVED – the report be noted and the very positive progress be endorsed.

405 NHS NEW PATIENT RIGHTS CONSULTATION (SC61)

Members were informed of the consultation being conducted by the NHS and were asked to complete the consultation online where possible. It was agreed that feedback should be obtained from the PCT when completed.

406 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10 (SC62)

Members received the Work Programme for 2009/10.

It was agreed that a working group chaired by Mrs Witherford be set up to look into Civic facilities. Members were asked to contact the Democratic Services Officer if they were interested in being a member of the group.

Members were informed that there would be a budget briefing on 23 February at 6.30pm which, whilst a request of the Commission, would be open to all Members.

It was agreed that a review be undertaken into gritting. The County Council had agreed to discuss this and suggested that a county-wide review could ensue.

RESOLVED – the work programme be agreed with the abovementioned additions and amendments.

407 FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL DECISIONS (SC63)

Members received the Forward Plan of Executive and Council decisions.

It was requested that the Housing Options report be brought to the Scrutiny Commission.

RESOLVED – the Forward Plan be noted and the abovementioned item be added to the Scrutiny Commission Work Programme.

408 MINUTES OF SELECT COMMITTEES

The minutes of the following meetings were received:

- (i) Finance & Audit Services Select Committee, 7 December 2009 (SC64);
- (ii) Council Services Select Committee, 19 November 2009 (SC65).

(The meeting closed at 8.35 pm)