

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

13 MARCH 2012 AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman
Mr PAS Hall and Mr C Ladkin – Vice-Chairman

Mr PR Batty, Mr Bessant, Mrs WA Hall, Mrs L Hodgkins, Mr K Morrell, Mr K Nichols and Miss DM Taylor

Also in attendance: Councillor JG Bannister, Councillor Mrs R Camamile, Councillor DS Cope, Councillor DM Gould, Councillor KWP Lynch, Councillor JS Moore, Councillor Mrs J Richards, Councillor BE Sutton, Councillor R Ward and Councillor Ms BM Witherford.

Ann Harris of the Tenants Advisory Panel and Steve Partridge from CIH Consulting were also in attendance.

Officers in attendance: Steve Atkinson, Cadel Blunt, David Bunker, Louisa Horton, Sanjiv Kohli, Tim Oglesby, Rebecca Owen and Sharon Stacey

433 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Inman and Sprason, with Councillor Moore substituting for Councillor Sprason in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.1.

434 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

435 HRA SUBSIDY

Members received a presentation from Steve Partridge regarding the HRA subsidy buyout and possible options for borrowing and repayment. The Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Direction) then provided a document showing five different options.

Each option was explained. It was suggested that the debt be structured so there is both long and short term borrowing, with the long term borrowing fixed for a 30 year period with no repayments until year 14/15.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- The option of building more houses would be explored but the costs may not be recoverable within a reasonable period, particularly if the land costs are also taken into account.
- The possibility of acquiring housing stock from developers as part of Section 106 agreements would be explored.
- Options for council to deliver new housing would be the subject of a future report.
- The third option presented to Members provided the most flexibility.
- The wish to see much of the housing provided in the SUEs as Council housing rather than owned by a housing association.
- The need to keep current housing up to date and to implement necessary improvements.

Members asked that any updated information be sent to them as soon as it became available.

RECOMMENDED -

1. That the Executive adopts a debt repayment structure for the buyout of HRA subsidy that gives maximum flexibility and headroom: from the options presented, that was the model commencing repayment in year 15, as that option currently maximises the potential for the council to increase its stock capacity over time (new build and acquisitions), as well as improving the quality of the existing stock within 30 years overall debt repayment period.
2. That detailed recommendations on the use of the headroom generated be conceived during 2012, as part of the development of the long term business plan and investment strategy on the use of available funding.
3. That council confirms the change to the funding structure at its next scheduled meeting.

Councillors Bannister, Bessant, Camamile, Cope, Gould, Ladkin, Lynch, Richards and Taylor left the meeting after the conclusion of this item.

436 SINGLE EQUALITY POLICY

Members received the Single Equality Policy prior to the report being considered by Council following the request that such matters be considered first by the Scrutiny Commission. It was explained that under the Equalities Act 2010 a local authority had a duty to publish its commitment to equalities. It was not essential to have a policy such as the one presented, but it had been felt that this was the most transparent way of providing the information and had been created in partnership with neighbouring authorities.

In response to a Member's question it was noted that the equality duty applied to all local authorities including parish councils which meant that they had to publish their intent to meet the duties. It was agreed that parishes could use the document presented as a model.

A Member expressed concern about being unable to capture the true numbers of employees with a disability. It was reiterated that a 'prefer not to say' option had to be included, and it was agreed that this could be made clear in the policy.

Councillor Ward left the meeting at 8.37pm.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) parish councils be made aware of the duty and offered a model policy.

(The Meeting closed at 8.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN

