



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

22 June 2011

PRESENT:-

Councillors D. Wright (Chairman)
P.M. Chandler, M.C.R. Graham MBE, E. Holmes,
V. Manderson, T. Moncrieff, J. Moulding,
P.M. Posnett, B. Rhodes, J. Wyatt

As Observers

Councillors M. Gordon, M. O'Callaghan

Mr S. Pearson (Freeth Cartwright)
Ms Lisa Forsyth (Max Associates)

Chief Executive
Strategic Director (KA); Head of Central Services;
Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods; Solicitor to the Council
Chief Accountant; People Manager;
Administrative Assistant

C1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

C2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 9 March 2011 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chairman.

C3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rhodes declared a personal and non prejudicial interest in relation to any issues concerning the Leicestershire County Council by virtue of him being a County Councillor, and in the Melton Community Partnership by virtue of being a member of that organisation.

Councillor Posnett declared a personal and non prejudicial interest in relation to any issues concerning the Leicestershire County Council by virtue of her being a County Councillor, and in the Friends of Melton Country Park by virtue of being a member of that organisation.

Councillor Graham declared a personal and non prejudicial interest in relation to the Melton Community Partnership by virtue of being this Council's representative on that organisation.

Councillors Manderson and Moncrieff declared they had fettered their discretion in minute C.14 by virtue of being members of the Overview, Scrutiny and Audit Committee and would not take part in the discussion or voting on this item.

C4. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Minute number P91 2010/11: Policy, Finance and Administration Committee 2 March 2011: Council Offices and Major Projects Update

It is requested that the Community and Social Affairs Committee review the Council's garage sites portfolio as to suitability, feasibility for demolition and redevelopment.

This item was offered to the Overview, Scrutiny and Audit Committee as an area of examination and policy development. That Committee had referred the issue back to the Community and Social Affairs Committee with the suggestion that a survey be undertaken on how many of the garages were in fact used as garages and how many were either storage or empty.

The Chairman proposed that the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods be asked to bring back a report on this issue to the next meeting of the Committee. Support for a further report was indicated but concern was expressed by a Member regarding three garage sites which had previously been identified for sale by the Policy, Finance & Administration Committee in March this year. Consideration of a further report would delay their disposal and the Member urged that planning permission be sought for these sites as the Council should endeavour to maximise the return on its assets. The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods confirmed that the review would put forward recommendations for the sites including the three referred to so that opportunities were not lost. A further suggestion was made that the review cover potential uses for the strip of land next to the Dalby Road garage site. The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods agreed to incorporate this within the review.

RESOLVED That the Head of Communities & Neighbourhood submit a report to the September meeting of the Committee on a review of the Council's garage site portfolio with recommendations regarding the future of these sites, including options for the strip of land on the Dalby Road site.

C5. TASK GROUPS

RESOLVED

(1) a Housing Landlord Services task group be formed to have the same terms of reference of the previous individual tasks groups of the Sheltered Housing, Housing Consultation and Housing Options Task Group respectively, as currently they all link into services around current and potential housing tenants. The membership to comprise Councillors Chandler, Holmes, Moncrieff, Posnett, and

Wright.

(2) to reconstitute the Housing Repairs Task Group with the terms of reference to consider the Housing Repairs Contract. The membership to comprise Councillors Holmes, Moncrieff, Posnett, Wright, and Wyatt.

(3) to reconstitute the Customer Services Task Group with the following terms of reference::

- to improve the customer experience in terms of interaction with the Council;
- to review the Council's approach to access channels;
- To review the Council's customer service strategy together with the development of an action plan;
- to oversee the implementation of the action plan;
- to make recommendations as appropriate to the Community & Social Affairs Committee.

The membership to comprise Councillors Chandler, Holmes, Manderson, Moncrieff, and Wright.

C6. PETITIONS

The Committee considered the following petitions referred from the Council meeting on 20 April 2011.

Two Petitions were received on 5 April 2011 from the Tenants' Forum Executive Committee (TFEC) which contained 81 and 89 signatories respectively and stated the following:-

"We the undersigned residents object to the decision of the CSA Committee to impose £1.50 per week charge for cleaning landings and stairwells in Flats."

"We the undersigned residents object to the decision of the CSA Committee to impose £30 car parking fee and £30 for one visitors pass."

The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods submitted previous reports considered by the Committee on 25 January 2011 which informed its decisions, together with an extract of the relevant minutes from that meeting (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members).

In relation to the communal cleaning arrangements, the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods advised that it was very early to judge the outcome of the Committee's decisions made in March. The People Manager reported that the cleaning regime had started in April and monies had been invested into getting the backlog of the grime cleaned in accordance with the specification. A few initial problems had arisen but these had now been resolved. The second cleaning was near completion and all tenants had been written to explaining the cleaning standards within the specification. Six or seven cleans would be carried out per year. The People Manager highlighted that out of 324 tenants, there had been 6 complaints, and one complaint about the charge. Reference was made to issues around enforcing the charge and Members were advised that this was

being considered as part of the tenants review. Members indicated their support for the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods' recommendation that a report be brought back in six months' time to see if the outcomes of the cleansing programme had been delivered.

The Chairman advised Members that since receipt of the petition on the residents' car parking scheme a letter had been received from the Chair of TFEC suggesting that the parking arrangements at the town centre flats be left as they are.

The People Manager reminded the Committee that TFEC had approached the Council about the number of non residents using the parking spaces at the town centre flats. Meetings had taken place with the Leicestershire County Council who would be managing the scheme agreed by the Committee. The operational management would start in November 2011. Members were advised that if the scheme did not now go ahead there could potentially be delays with the County Council in the future if the scheme was then introduced at a later date. The TFEC chair had suggested that a barrier system would be cheaper however this was likely to cost £30K to £50K to install and then there would be an annual maintenance cost. It would also raise the issue of how passes were administered. A Member asked about installing a metal bollard which could be raised and lowered. The officer replied that this had been considered and would also be a costly option with the associated risks of people losing keys to the bollards.

A member asked whether an equality impact assessment had been done having regard to how this would affect Blue Badge holders. The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods replied that an initial equality impact assessment had been completed for the report presented to the Committee on 9 March 2011 and suggested a further report on how the scheme would work operationally would be prepared and be accompanied by a full equality impact assessment. As the scheme was not due to be implemented until November, Members agreed with the officer's recommendation for a further report on how the scheme would work operationally.

RESOLVED That

- (1) the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods submit a report to the September meeting of the Committee to review whether the outcomes of the cleaning of the communal landings and stairwells in the flats have been delivered;
- (2) the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods submit a report to the September meeting of the Committee on how the car parking permit scheme for the HRA car parks will work operationally, including a full equality impact assessment for the scheme.

C7. FREE SWIMMING FOR UNDER 17'S

Further to Minute C.61 2010/11 of the CSA Committee meeting held on 9 March 2011, the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods submitted a report (copies of

which had previously been circulated to Members) which set out the options for the provision of free swimming to those aged 16 years and under, and the cost implications to the Council should the Committee decide to adopt either of the options which extended the current arrangement by which free swimming was offered to children enrolled on the swimming lesson scheme at Waterfield Leisure Pools. Members were reminded of the current financial pressures on the Council as a result of anticipated further reductions in central government funding.

The Chairman advised the Committee that there had been significant developments since preparation of the report. The People Manager explained that through Melton Active who reported to the Leicester-Shire & Rutland Sport, funds had been secured to support the free swimming requested. The funding of £30K would also be used to target a wide age range of residents, including the more vulnerable and families to encourage participation in sport and physical activity. It was anticipated that the programme would be on line by July. Members welcomed this news and felt it was important to get this message out to the community at the earliest opportunity. The People Manager advised he would be working with schools the following week to promote participation in the free activities on offer. It was suggested that acknowledgement of the efforts by the Young Mayor should be recognised as part of the publicity as Members were supportive of his campaign to provide free swimming for those under 17.

RESOLVED that

(1) to note the update regarding the funds available through Leicester-Shire & Rutland Sport (LRS) to offer free participation in swimming and other sporting activities for a wide range of age groups including the more vulnerable members of the community and those under 16;

(2) the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods be granted delegated authority to work with the LRS to ensure the programme of free sport and physical activity is introduced;

(3) that an appropriate Press Release be issued.

C8. SHOPMOBILITY – APPLICATION FOR FUNDING

The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods .submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which sought Members' approval to award a grant of £1,500 (subject to annual review) to Shopmobility Melton Mowbray. The Committee was reminded of the recent review of grants to community and voluntary organisations which focused on the benefits for the community and asked organisations to demonstrate how they felt their services were closely aligned to the Council Corporate Plan and the priorities contained within it. Shopmobility had submitted details of how their service supported these priorities and these were appended to the report before Members.

The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods advised the Committee that organisations seeking grant funding were asked to show they could be self sustaining and access funding from other sources. In response to a question on the budget, he confirmed that the total amount available currently unallocated

was £1,350. Should the Committee agree to award the grant this would not leave any other funding for other applications in the current year. Members were supportive of the work carried out by Shopmobility but were concerned that this application had been submitted after the Council had considered its grant funding to voluntary organisations. It was suggested that Shopmobility approach local retail businesses for sponsorship. It was proposed and seconded that a grant of £1,350 be awarded.

RESOLVED That a grant of £1,350 to Shopmobility Melton Mowbray be approved, subject to the organisation demonstrating how they intend to make the funding sustainable and subject also to an annual review.

C9. I-PLAY UNIT – PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF ELECTRONIC GAMES UNIT FOR MELTON COUNTRY PARK

The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which sought Member support to request the Policy, Finance and Administration Committee to endorse the purchase and installation of an outdoor electronic games unit (an “I-Play” unit). Funding for the purchase and installation of the I-Play unit would be drawn from external Section 106 monies at a cost of £21K with an estimated ongoing annual revenue cost of £200.

A question was raised on where the I-Play unit would be located within the Country Park and the officers were asked to ensure that residents who live near that part of the park be consulted. The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods was asked if the unit could be placed where it could be seen and therefore not vulnerable to vandalism. The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods acknowledged the need to consult with residents and confirmed this would be taken on board before the unit was sited. He pointed out that it was difficult to ensure that a piece of equipment was entirely vandal proof but the manufacturers try to minimise the risk in the design. After the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods had responded to questions on how many people could use the unit at one time and equality issues, it was proposed and seconded to support the business case and mandate for the play equipment and the Policy, Finance & Administration Committee be requested to give final approve to include the project within the capital programme.

RESOLVED that the Policy, Finance and Administration Committee be requested to endorse the development of Melton Country Park by supporting the business case and mandate attached to the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods’ report for the purchase and installation of an I-Play unit using Section 106 funding.

C10. STEPHEN’S FOOTPRINTS MEMORIAL GARDEN

Further to Minute C66 (2010/11), the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which updated Members on the progress and development of the proposed

memorial garden to be located within the Melton Country Park. Members' support was sought for making a one off contribution of £2,000 towards securing the site as part of the gardens one-off set up costs.

A member who had recently visited the site commended the work that had gone into it.

RESOLVED

(1) to endorse and support the proposed development and establishment of the Stephen's Footprints Memorial Garden;

(2) to support a donation of £2,000 contribution towards the garden's set up and establishment costs.

C11. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – PROVISIONAL YEAR END POSITION**
2010/11

The Chief Accountant submitted a report on behalf of the Head of Central Services (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) that provided Members with information on the provisional year end position for 2010/11, which was subject to external audit certification, and the implications for the working balance on the Housing Revenue Account. Following despatch of the agenda, Members had been supplied with a revised copy of appendix A to the report which set out the variances against the approved estimate.

A Member referred to the housing stock condition survey and asked if Members would have access to the detail of that survey. The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods referred to the presentation given to Members in October last year on the public sector housing stock condition survey. More detail was available but he would be reporting to the Committee in September on the high level issues identified in the survey. Another Member raised concern that opportunities had not be taken to undertake more repairs to properties and suggested it was incumbent upon the management to use the funds available to keep properties up to the decent homes standard. The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods replied that as well as restoring the working balance there had been phasing of the empty properties which were then repaired and relet. He drew Member's attention to the fire risk audit in the report and advised that works would be prioritised and funded from the working balance. The Chairman expressed concern at that the independent review of the HRA repairs improvement plan which did not reflect a positive position. The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods directed members to the final column of the report which set out the improvements compared to the same point last year; 90% of actions identified had now been completed.

A Member asked if the Committee could be supplied with the void information. The Chief Executive advised that this was an area of detail which the Landlord Task Group would examine to maintain the split between operational and strategic issues.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the variations to the 2010/11 original estimates and the latest approved estimates as set out in the revised attached paper and the effect on the working balance be noted;
- (2) the updated Housing Revenue Account Improvement Plan be noted.

C12. COUNCIL HOUSING FINANCE REVIEW – HRA REFORM PROPOSALS

The Head of Central Services submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which informed members of the issues arising from the Government's document on the Council Housing review. The report went on to explain the key implications of the Government's aims to replace the current centralised, redistributive system of rents with a new system that devolves financing and accountability to local authorities in order to give Councils more flexibility to respond to the needs of local people and more ability to plan long term, driving services and improving efficiency.

The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods drew Members' attention to the main changes proposed and what this would mean for this Council in terms of its debt allocation. He confirmed that he would report back to the Committee when more details were received from central government. In the meantime, in preparation officers were developing a HRA business plan and an asset management strategy for the management of the properties currently owned by the authority. The model would be ready for April 2012 and would be robust enough for the Council's asset value in 30 years' time.

Concern was expressed at the iniquity of the present system which effectively represented a tax on council house rents. The tenants of Melton Borough had not been able to realise the benefits of a Council that had managed its housing stock well. The Member expressed disappointment that the new measures would not leave the Council with a rental income to enable expansion of its stock. However, he commended the programme to deal with the changes as sound. After the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods confirmed that officers had fed back on all stages of the changes, it was proposed and seconded to accept the recommendations.

RESOLVED to approve the approach and the next steps proposed in response to the document "Implementing self financing for Council Housing".

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the Public be excluded during the consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (Access to Information : Exempt Information) under paragraph 3.

C13. WATERFIELD LEISURE POOLS – AWARD OF MANAGEMENT CONTRACT AND CONSIDERATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The Solicitor to the Council referred to the presence of Councillors Manderson and Moncrieff who had both declared that they had fettered their discretion in this item by virtue of being members of the Overview, Scrutiny & Audit Committee who had already considered the issue. She advised that whilst it was a matter for the individual Member, it was permissible for them to remain at the meeting in an observing capacity. Councillors Manderson and Moncrieff remained in the room but sat back from the Member arena and took no part in the discussion or voting on this item.

The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods submitted a report jointly prepared with the Head of Central Services and the Strategic Director (CAM) (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which sought Members' approval to award the management contract for Waterfield Leisure Pools and a decision on how to proceed with development proposals for the facility.

After despatch of the agenda, Members had also been previously circulated with the recommendation from the Overview, Scrutiny & Audit Committee from its meeting held on 14 June 2011, together with an addendum to the report which set out the implications of the OSA Committee's recommendation and legal advice which had been sought thereon.

RESOLVED that the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Strategic Director (CAM), the Head of Central Services, the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods, the Solicitor to the Council, and the Corporate Property Officer be granted delegated authority to carry out the decisions of the CSA Committee in relation to the award of the management contract for Waterfield Leisure Pools and the development proposals.

C14. EXTENSION OF HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE

The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which sought Members' approval to progress EU procurement to secure a long term responsive repair contractor.

RESOLVED

- (1) to note the legal advice provided in regards to the recommendations made by the Community and Social Affairs Committee on 9 March 2011;
- (2) to approve proceeding with an EU procurement route to secure a long term Housing Responsive Repairs Contractor;
- (3) to note that officers will not be pursuing the previous EMPA (Scape) framework options to secure a Housing responsive Repairs contractor.

C15. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting which commenced at 6.30 p.m., closed at 8.59 p.m.

Chairman