

**CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS**  
**29th October, 2012**

Present:- Councillor McNeely (in the Chair); Councillor Goulty (Policy Advisor).

Councillor Currie was in attendance at the invitation of the Chair for Minute No. J36 (Introductory Tenancy Review Panel).

**J32. HOUSING STRATEGY**

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services presented the draft Housing Strategy which had been updated in light of feedback from Members, staff, partner agencies, the voluntary and community sector and Rotherham residents.

The document was also considered by the Improving Places Select Commission on 17<sup>th</sup> October. The Commission had endorsed the Strategy and made a number of comments. Whilst not all the comments necessarily required amendment to the draft Strategy, they were taken on board and where appropriate would be reflected in the action plan. Updates on specific issues could be provided to the Select Commission as and when required.

The Select Commission had also felt that it should be involved in the monitoring process against the Housing Strategy action plan and should be reflected in the work programme accordingly.

Consultation had been carried out over a 3 month period and had included general publicity, Elected Members Seminar, public events, Learning from Customers Forum, Area Assemblies and the Private Landlords Forum.

Due to the rapidly changing national legislative and policy environment, there was always a risk that the Housing Strategy would become out of date. The housing intelligence report could be amended if necessary and the webpage giving an overview of the Strategy could be updated to reflect any major changes. The next instalment of the Strategy, 2016-2019, would be started in late 2015.

Discussion ensued on the document with the following suggestions made:-

- Inclusion of contact details for the Department concerned/responsible for each of the '10 commitments'
- Inclusion of "subject to Green Belt Policy negotiations" wherever there was mention of Bassingthorpe Farm

Resolved:- That, subject to inclusion of above comments, the final draft of the Housing Strategy be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

**J33. COMMUNITY ENERGY SAVING PROGRAMME**

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services reported on the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), funded by energy providers, being implemented for free to some of the Borough's most vulnerable private and Council sector households living in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

CESP had been created as part of the Government's Home Energy Saving Programme with the aim of reducing carbon production through the installation of energy efficiency measures to domestic dwellings. The funding had to be targeted towards residents suffering from fuel poverty with the funding stipulating that CESP could only be spent in the top 10% most deprived neighbourhoods. Rotherham had 21 areas that complied with the criteria, consisting of 13,400 households. All works must be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2012 and included:-

- Solid wall insulation (external and internal)
- Replacement gas boiler (if current boiler is G rated)
- Loft insulation (either complete or top-up if required)
- Draught proofing

CESP schemes were delivered by energy providers usually in collaboration with a construction partner. The Council identified communities that had the correct attributes for successful scheme implementation and influence energy providers/constructors to appraise neighbourhoods and scheme viability. The Council would also promote the benefits of the scheme and increase confidence within the community and provide the links between the energy provider/partner and the community.

Currently schemes were being carried out/completed in the following areas:-

- Ferham (completed September, 2012)
- Eastwood Village (ongoing)
- Meadowbank/Masbrough/Town Centre/Eastwood (ongoing)
- Maltby (to commence October, 2012)

Projects funded through CESP had to be completed by December, 2012. It was understood that there may be opportunities for 'carry over' into the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) but energy providers and their contractors were ensuring timely completion by Christmas. To manage the programme on site, the energy providers/organisations employed a Resident Liaison Officer to inform residents of the intended programme, arrange access, resolve queries and ensure satisfaction upon completion.

To date 395 properties had already benefitted from the energy efficiency improvements which equated to £2.7M. There was to be a further 653 properties before the end of the year which would result in approximate annual household energy bill savings of £400-500.

It was understood that ECO would integrate within the Government's Green Deal package, and would focus on providing energy efficiency measures to low income and vulnerable householders in the Borough's top 15% most deprived neighbourhoods. A Green Deal Working Group had been established to

develop a strategy to maximise the benefits of the new schemes for Rotherham residents. It was felt that Elected Member representation would bring local knowledge which would assist in the developing of schemes and neighbourhood liaison.

Resolved:- (1) That the delivery of energy efficiency measures to both private and Council homes, which had brought about a reduction in fuel poverty in Rotherham's deprived neighbourhoods and its direct impact on reducing poverty in the Borough, be noted.

(2) That the continued influencing and enabling role of the Council to maximise the household take up of energy efficiency measures be supported.

(3) That a 'roll out approach' to extending energy efficiency installations to other neighbourhoods and in particular deprived neighbourhoods across the Borough utilising the Energy Company Obligation, which would take over from the Community Energy Saving Programme in 2013, be supported.

(4) That Ward Members be advised and involved in the planning process as local schemes progress.

#### **J34. REVIEW OF COMMUNAL CLEANING SERVICE TO FLATS**

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods reported that there were 2,338 apartments within 326 Council-owned blocks across the Borough which were accessed via communal entrances, internal hallways and stairwells. The Council was responsible for managing, maintaining and cleaning those areas and was provided on a weekly basis.

Recently a number of operational and service quality issues had arisen which had promoted a Service review. The key issues identified by the review were:-

- Not all blocks of flats were provided with a cleaner's cupboard containing landlord hot/cold water supply. Cleaners were having to carry water some distance between blocks
- The current cleaning specification was very basic and required revision. It currently did not include an annual deep clean, window cleaning or cleaning of communal entrance doors and screens
- Communal areas were in need of a general scheme of investment and improvement

Discussions had taken place with Facilities Services with regard to enhancing the cleaning specification and the likely additional costs of Service provision, details of which were set out in the report submitted.

In order to address the health and safety and customer satisfaction issues, the following options had been considered:-

- Option A - continue with current mobile/fixed cleaning service
- Option B - provide an enhanced service on a fully mobile basis

It was proposed that soft market testing be undertaken with alternative service providers which would enable alternative approaches to Service delivery to be identified and explored.

Condition surveys were currently being undertaken by the Strategic Housing and Investment Service within communal areas to determine the investment requirement and priority phasing for future years. Surveys were scheduled for completion by April, 2013.

Resolved:- (1) That consultation be undertaken with tenants and leaseholders on arrangements to carry out communal cleaning to flats including:-

- (a) proposals to change standards and the organisation of the Service;
- (b) developing a comprehensive programme of investment into community areas to deal with any latent defects and
- (c) proposals to revise charging arrangements.

(2) That a soft market testing exercise be carried out to establish whether better value for money could be obtained.

(3) That checks be made on tenant/leaseholder's charges and what services the charge covered.

#### **J35. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information likely to reveal the identity of an individual).

#### **J36. INTRODUCTORY TENANCY REVIEW PANEL**

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Currie introduced the report of the Introductory Tenancy Review Panel which he had Chaired on 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2012, and also included Councillors Ellis and N. Hamilton.

The decision made by the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer to serve a Notice of Proceedings of Possession on 13th September, 2012, had been confirmed by the Panel. However, the Panel Chairman had had concerns as to whether an impact assessment had been carried out taking into account any vulnerability, child protection and safeguarding (both adult and young people) issues there may be. The officer in attendance had been unable to confirm whether such investigations had been undertaken.

Discussion ensued on the wider implications of a tenant breaching their introductory tenancy and the discussions that should take place with other Council Departments/partner agencies before a decision was made to serve a Notice of Proceedings for Possession. Details of all consultations should be included in the papers presented to Review Panel Members so they were in possession of all the facts to enable them to make a fully informed decision.

Resolved:- (1) That the Panel's decision be noted.

(2) That the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services discuss the comments made above with the Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Manager.