

**CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS
18th March, 2013**

Present:- Councillor McNeely (in the Chair); Councillors Goulty and Kaye.

J63. AREA ASSEMBLY CHAIRS

The following report was submitted:-

**AREA ASSEMBLY CHAIRS
MONDAY, 4TH MARCH, 2013**

Present:- Councillor Atkin (in the Chair); Councillors Beaumont, N. Hamilton, Whelbourn Havenhand, Johnston, Dodson and Swift.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Goulty, McNeely Kaye.

21. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th January, 2013, were noted.

22. RMBC PLANNING CONSULTATION (SITE SELECTION AND PLANNING POLICIES) UPDATE

Helen Sleigh, Senior Planner, reported that 3 seminars had been arranged on the emerging "allocation" sites to be proposed for housing and employment development in the Rotherham Local Plan. The seminars had been established on an Area Assembly basis as follows:-

19th March, 2013, 1.30 p.m.-3.30 p.m. Rotherham Town Hall
Rother Valley South
Rother Valley West
Wentworth Valley

20th March, 2013, 9.30 a.m.-11.30 a.m. Rotherham Town Hall
Wentworth North

22nd March, 2013, 9.30 a.m.-11.30 a.m. Rotherham Town Hall
Rotherham North
Rotherham South
Wentworth South

Consultation on the Sites and Policies Document would commence on 13th May, 2013. A number of drop-in sessions would be held, similar to those held in 2011, but focussing on the areas proposed for significant new development.

Discussion ensued with the following points raised:-

- The events would give Members a chance to see the selected sites – 25 new sites
- Core Strategy Policy stated how many dwellings needed to be built in each statement then look at how many planning permissions had already been granted. Where there were planning permissions

- agreed they would not be reassessed
- Ongoing work identifying where additional sites were required
- Consultation would commence on 13th May
- Bassingthorpe Farm Concept Framework required detailed consultation which would be done with the landowner and possibly some of the consultants as well
- Need to avoid the confusion caused at previous public consultation events particularly with regard to the Bassingthorpe Farm site
- Potential implications of HS2 on the Waverley site

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

23. AREA ASSEMBLY CHAIRS/AREA PARTNERSHIP MANAGER UPDATES

Shaun Mirfield, Area Partnership Manager, gave the following reports:-

Rotherham North/South

- At the February meeting, Rotherham North Area Assembly had received a presentation in relation to Connect to Support, the new website set up to support those that wanted control of their own care. Concern had been expressed by members of the public regarding the website given that any service provider could add themselves to the website without any checks being made. The site was under the banner of the Council and, even though there was a disclaimer stating that the organisations were not vetted, it was still felt that it was open to abuse
- Rotherham South, at its last Area Assembly meeting, had discussed the Alcohol Strategy together with issues raised regarding Rotherham Hospital

Local Communities

- Eastwood Village continued to take up a lot of time. A meeting with residents had raised a number of questions but the outcome was positive and there had been recognition of the work the Council and Police. There was a realisation of the 2 unique big challenges faced in Eastwood and Ferham given the changes in population
- A bid was being worked on for submission to the Police and Crime Commissioner Grant which would benefit potentially Eastwood and Ferham and hopefully 2 other communities elsewhere in the Borough

Area Housing Panel

- All of the budgets for 2012/13 had been allocated. Now in the process of planning for 2013/14

Community Chest

- There were 5 panels – Rother Valley, Keppel and Rotherham East had now allocated all their funding. Wingfield had approximately £6,000 but had proposals to submit. Boston Castle had approximately £7,000 to be allocated but should have done so by its meeting on 7th March
- Sarah Curren, Andrea Peers and Shaun had met with the Cabinet Office whose Programme it was and with Panel partners. Positive feedback had been received for the role the Council played in ensuring the money had stayed within the Borough

Deprived Communities

- Wherever possible, linkages had been made between Community First and Deprived Communities work. Eastwood and East Dene had

both identified children's education and the need for more pre-school provision and adults skills as priorities. The Rotherham East Community First Panel funding was being used to support projects which would deliver against those 2 priorities as well as using the Panel as a vehicle for other partnership work

- A similar process in Ferham and Masbrough was being followed for the Rotherham West Panel

Andrea Peers, Area Partnership Manager, gave the following report:-

Rother Valley South

- The Area Assembly had been very involved in the Community Alcohol Partnership and there was a great deal of momentum around the issue. At a recent meeting the retailers had been in attendance and the Co-op had agreed to be the lead retailer for the area. All had signed up to be part of the Partnership, training their staff to the same standards in terms of how to deal with alcohol sales and the Buddy system. Some of the key actions that would be in the action plan were around enforcement, diversionary activities, an education package which also included a fairly comprehensive 1 for schools
- Consultation carried out with young people through a questionnaire and a perception survey with the community which would give a baseline to track any progress.
- Launch of the Partnership on 20th March

Rother Valley West

- Big Local – not a great deal of progress since last meeting, however, the group were very much on their way to producing their action plan. The residents would have the opportunity to give a presentation to a future meeting
- 1 of the wind turbines had been erected

Community Chest

- Rother Valley had allocated Y1 and 2 spend and anticipating allocating Y3 at its next meeting. There was a lot of interest and would be presenting a Ward plan for approval

Wentworth Valley

- The next Area Assembly meeting would consider the Alcohol Strategy and Heart Town
- Work was progressing on Disadvantaged Communities for the Maltby Ward. 3 action plan activities had been held recently which had been promising in terms of partnership-buy in and resulted in really good projects
- Area Assembly and Maltby Town Council policy plan action day facilitated. Signed up to Disadvantaged Communities agenda and looking at where joint working could take place

Co-ordinating Group

- Discussion on Welfare Reform and its impact. Looking at how support could be given to connect communities with Credit Unions as a potential tool to support, however, there was concern as to the capacity in Rotherham to meet the demand. Trying to work with Laser Credit
- A request had been made for a future discussion at Area Assembly with regard to the Co-ordinating Groups' role in Section 106 monies and Infrastructure Levies and how they could play a part in that
- It was felt that the Co-ordinating Group could really play a role in it given that Area Assemblies and Co-ordinating Groups were

instrumental in setting the local priorities and required some synergy in how that money was spent

Sarah Currer, Area Partnership Manager, gave the following report:-

Borough-wide Issues

- Tenants' Spring Conference to be held on 14th March, 2013, at the New York Stadium
- Council Gardening Competition for Council tenants to be relaunched

Wentworth North/South

- Application to be submitted to Police and Crime Commissioner Grant for Youth Services for diversionary activities

Area Housing Panel

- Fund was allocated and slightly oversubscribed to the end of the financial year
- Wren funding for a play area for which the tendering process had commenced.
- Safer Rotherham Partnership funding for graffiti type art project on Swinton Rec changing rooms

Community First

- Hooper – all funding allocated. Community Plan to be agreed
- Wentworth South – there had been a lot of the work carried out around 2 Community First areas and 3 Deprived Communities.
- Rawmarsh had allocated all their funding after having received numerous applications. Work commenced on 2013/14. Community Plan completed and submitted
- Valley and Silverwood – lack of community groups to get the money spent in the areas. It was hoped to carry some of the funding forward or into another project. Both Community Plans had been agreed

Deprived Communities

- Currently East Herringthorpe, Dalton and Thrybergh were considered together but eventually they would be separated off due to the size of the meetings becoming quite large
- Really good projects under Employment and Health priority areas. An Employment Surgery was to be set up, held once a week, linking in with the Citizens Advice Bureau, where members of the public could go for advice. A financial awareness event was also to be held based around "the price is right" quiz
- Consideration being given as to how that could be delivered into communities and would be using the Youth Service bus to take it out onto the streets. If successful, would look as to how something similar could be funded in the future

Community Alcohol Partnership

- Had meeting with licencees and stakeholders. Will be launched on 21st March
- Also piloting a practitioners network event where statutory bodies would make presentations, inviting voluntary and community sector to come along and share information and network with the idea of reversing the process in the future. The first event was to be held on 16th May linked to Employment and Health and with Every Contact Counts
- Through Families and Communities there were actions around Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Letters were being sent to the 200 residents that had completed a

consultation form at the Christmas event informing them of a planting project with the school on 13th March. There was also to be an Easter Egg hunt on 2nd April and a community surgery pilot

Community Workers

- Together with Rotherfed and Groundwork, an application was being completed for salaried workers who would be based in the locality, working with the community

Neighbourhood Action Group

- Looking at Parkgate. Series of walkabouts held and possibility of some funding for diversionary activity. A further meeting had been arranged for 22nd April

24. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Budget 2013/14/Community Leadership Fund

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services reported that the budgetary positions for both of the above were unchanged from the previous financial year.

25. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING -

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Monday, 17th June, 2013, commencing at 2.00 p.m.

J64. PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR RMBC'S LEASEHOLDERS TO MEET THE COST OF CAPITAL WORKS

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods submitted payment options for those who purchased leasehold properties to meet the cost of capital works.

There were 459 leaseholders in owner-occupation in Rotherham who had exercised their Right to Buy and were paying service charges to the Council. A very small number of the leasehold agreements were signed post-2002 and it was estimated that 60 leaseholders would receive invoices for major repair works.

Data collected indicated that Rotherham Council levy charges averaged around £200 annually per leaseholder per flat. However, service charges may often exceed £3,000 if properties were subject to major works, in particular non-traditional properties and roof repairs.

The Land Valuation Tribunal heard cases of legal dispute between leaseholders and landlords and would examine how far a landlord had considered the financial impact of its plans for major repairs. The landlord should offer a range of payment options, reflecting the financial circumstances of leaseholders, whilst allowing major works to proceed as necessary.

The Council was not able to help leaseholders manage their finances ahead of a programme of major repairs, therefore, it was proposed that payment options be offered through loans, instalments in arrears or other measures.

The Council wished to support leaseholders with a set of affordable solutions:-

- Signpost leaseholders to financial advice, working in partnership with a Credit Union and the voluntary sector, in particular for pensioners and people with disabilities
- Maintain deferred payment facilities over 12 months, interest free and without charges
- Offer 5 year loans secured by a legal charge and managed by a credit union with a cap on the value of the loan
- Use discretionary powers to grant voluntary charges on properties to people in financial hardship

Discussion ensued on the proposals with the following issues raised:-

- Leaseholders would be offered advice and support with regard to claiming their full entitlement to benefits
- Leaseholders could not be given independent financial advice by the Authority as they could potentially become their debtors. They would have taken financial advice to purchase the property initially and it would be their responsibility subsequently
- In light of the above comment, literature should highlight that leaseholders may wish to seek independent financial advice
- Work should take place on the implications of offering an interest free loan for 24 months
- Publicise the benefits of joining a Credit Union

Resolved:- (1) That the payment options set out in the report to enable leaseholders to meet the costs of capital works to their flats be approved.

That consideration be given to offering an interest free loan for up to 2 years after obtaining further advice from legal and financial services.

(3) That the LASER Credit Union administer the loans on behalf of the Council.

J65. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET MONITORING 2012/13

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods presented a report on the Housing Revenue Account which was forecasting an outturn on budget with a transfer to working balances (HRA reserves) of £3.964M, an increase of £2.126M above the approved budget.

Appendix A of the report submitted illustrated that the forecast year end spend on Repairs and Maintenance was an underspend of £655,000

compared to budget. Under the review of the 2011/12 Cost Collection workbook, part of the Repairs and Maintenance contract, both contractors had had their Price per Property reduced generating a net saving of £655,000. Every endeavour had been made to spend the savings, however, due to them not having been identified until late in the current financial year, further additional works could not be delivered. The savings would be carried forward into 2013/14 to address repairs and maintenance items.

It was difficult to forecast the Empty Homes budget given the responsive nature of the Service. The original budget was based on an estimated 1,600 minor voids in year; the actual number of voids to the end of January, 2013, was 120 below the budgeted sum. However, it was a responsive budget and close monitoring was ongoing. Alternative works were being prepared which could be released at short notice to take up savings on this head of account.

A bad weather contingency of £200,000 was also in place and would be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

It was noted that the total expenditure within Supervision and Management was forecast to underspend by £216,000. The main variance was a forecast overspend of £549,000 to purchase furniture within the Furnished Homes Service but was offset by increased income from additional charges generated by more take up of the Service. Savings were also being forecast within Supervision and Management and Rent, Rates and Taxes budget. The provision for the final Housing subsidy claim had now been signed off by the external auditor and was slightly higher than forecast resulting in an one-off saving of £157,000 transferred to HRA reserves.

Dwelling rental income was projecting a slight over recovery of £388,000 due to an improvement in void turnaround rates, however, non-dwelling rents were forecast to under recover against budget by £35,000 due to garage voids. A programme of repair had been started in an effort to reduce the numbers of garages which were void.

Income from charges for services and facilities were forecasting an outturn of £3.940M, an over recovery of income of £635k. This was mainly due to additional income as a result of the Furnished Homes Scheme continued growth offsetting the increase in expenditure reported above.

The report provided further details of:-

- Budget Operating Statement (Appendix A)
- Income and expenditure charged to the HRA
- Projected outturn based upon activity to the end of January, 2013 (Appendix A Column B)
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Supervision and Management

- Income

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

J66. PROPOSED HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2013/14

The Finance Manager, Neighbourhoods and Adult Services, submitted the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget for 2013/14.

The cost of delivering services in 2013/14 could be met from existing resources with a contribution from Working Balance to be made in year to underpin Service delivery and capital investment requirements in 2013/14 as identified within the 30 year Business Plan.

Appendix A of the report submitted identified the budgeted cost of delivering Services was £73.090M which could be met from budgeted income of £78.904M. However, a contribution of £8.437M would be made towards the cost of investment in 2013/14. This would result in an in-year transfer from the Working Balance of £2,599M to contribute to capital investment requirements.

A detailed analysis of the individual budget lines was set out in the report.

Resolved:- That the draft 2013/14 Housing Revenue Account Revenue Budget be approved.

J67. NEIGHBOURHOODS GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Finance Manager, Neighbourhood and Adult Services, in relation to the budget monitoring during the 2012-13 financial year of the Neighbourhood General Fund. The report detailed the projected end of year outturn position as at the end of January, 2013.

The latest forecast showed an underspend of £160,000 against an approved net revenue budget of £2.459M. The main variations against budget were:-

Environmental Health (-£20k)

- Significant pressure at the start of the year due to the Vacancy Factor. Identified savings within salaries from the merger of a number of teams into 1 joint Community Protection Team had now met the vacancy factor in full. Further planned savings and efficiencies had been identified in Transport and Premises together with restricted spend on Supplies and Services as a result of the moratorium on all non-essential spend was resulting in a projected underspend of £20,000.

Public Health (-£77k)

- The restructure had now been actioned and a projected underspend within Trading Standards of £84,000 in part due to delayed recruitment
- Minor savings on Health and Safety and Food and Drugs had been identified due to vacancies held partially reduced by a small projected overspend on Bereavement Services as a result of one-off repair costs to meet Health and Safety standards and on Animal Health due to unmet Vacancy Factor.

Housing and Communities (-£40k)

- Pressure in Community Safety Unit as a result of slippage in implementing the new structure agreed as part of budget setting savings
- Projected underspend due to a vacant post within the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and savings within Supplies and Services due to the downsizing of the Team
- Area Assemblies Teams and Management and Administration had a combined projected underspend of £22,000 as a result of vacancies and one-off external funding
- Projected underspend in the Community Leadership Fund, although this had been approved for carry forward in previous years

Strategic Housing and Investment Service (-£27k)

- Overall pressure as a result of a small shortfall on the staffing budget including a vacancy factor. Further sources of funding identified to offset the pressure
- Anticipated underspend in respect of income from interest on the Equity Loan Scheme
- Forecast underspend on the Lighting of Staircases budget based on costs to date projected to year end
- Small overspend on Registered Social Landlords cost centre as a result of the reduction in number of Landlords in the Scheme

Housing Options (Balanced)

- The small overspend projected on the Medical Mobility and Community Care cost centre had been offset as a result of savings due to a vacant post

Central (+£4k)

- Previously received an income contribution from the Asylum Team as recognition of location costs. The Asylum Grant had now ended and the work outsourced resulting in an income shortfall. Additional vacancy factor pressure
- Savings identified on pension and insurance costs as well as within supplies and services. With the realignment of procurement savings, there was now an overall shortfall of £4,000 forecast

To date there had been no spend on either Agency or Consultancy within Neighbourhoods General Fund budgets. The only non-contractual

overtime for Neighbourhoods related to grant funded overtime for the Food, Health and Safety Teams.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the latest financial projection against budget for 2012/13 noted.

J68. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS

This report was withdrawn from the agenda.