

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS
6th January, 2014

Present:- Councillor McNeely (in the Chair); Councillors Astbury and Goult (Policy Advisors).

J56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors McNeely and Astbury declared disclosable pecuniary interests in Minute No. J42 (Housing Rent Increase) on the grounds that they paid rent as a tenant or as a garage holder.

Dispensation had been granted for all Members when dealing with the reports if they were directly affected by the outcome, allowing them to remain in the room and vote.

J57. AREA ASSEMBLY CHAIRS

The following minutes were noted:-

AREA ASSEMBLY CHAIRS
11th November, 2013

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Currie and Read.

12. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th September, 2013, were noted.

13. ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL BUDGET AND COUNCIL PRIORITIES CONSULTATION

Asim Munir (Community Engagement Team, Neighbourhoods and Adult Services) and Anne Ellis (Strategic Finance Team, Financial Services) made a presentation to the meeting about this Council's budget, the Council's service and spending priorities and the public consultation exercise now taking place to try and reduce the Council's expenditure and manage the reducing budget in the future.

Reference was made to:-

: budget forecasting, resource projections, including Government grants and future spending on Adult Services, Children's Social Care, Waste Management, levy charges from Joint Authorities and capital financing costs;

: savings made in the last 3 financial years; including savings made in respect of front line services; the increasing use being made of shared services;

: the increasing demand upon services as a consequence of population changes in the Rotherham Borough area (initial data from the 2011 Census showed that the Borough's population has risen to 257,300 and was still increasing, with a larger number of people in the older age groups and of pensionable age);

: the Council's budget principles; focussing on the need to stimulate the local economy and to protect the most vulnerable people in society;

: the voice of residents would count in making suggestions of future budget savings;

: the methodology of the consultation was explained, including the use of an on-line forum and the list of questions to which the public will be invited to respond; workshops will take place with the Area Assemblies and with Parish Councils;

: a budget consultation event was to take place on Wednesday 13th November 2013 at the New York football stadium, chaired by the Leader of the Council.

During discussion and questions, Members referred to the effect of the coalition Government's spending reductions and the severe impact they have had on local authorities' budgets and capacity to deliver services for the public.

Asim and Anne were thanked for their presentation.

14. AREA ASSEMBLY CHAIRS/AREA PARTNERSHIP MANAGERS UPDATES

Shaun Mirfield, Area Partnership Manager, together with the respective Area Assembly Chairs and Officers, gave the following reports:-

Rotherham North

- Shaun's colleague Helen Thorpe was introduced to the meeting;
- St. John's Green, Kimberworth Park - a 'task and finish group' had been established to improve the co-ordination of work; recent meeting about the local lettings policy have been beneficial;
- South Yorkshire Police report a reduction in the levels of crime;
- Kimberworth Park Community Partnership recently held a community event;
- Efforts were being made to try and relocate and return the base of the Safer Neighbourhood Team to suitable premises within the community;
- lack of recreation provision for young people at the Thornhill Recreation Ground; the Masbrough Youth Forum had arranged consultation about an appropriate site for the provision of a multi-use games area;
- Area Assembly meeting in December 2013 would celebrate the year's events and work (jointly with Rotherham South).

Rotherham South

- Shaun's colleague Kay Bacon was introduced to the meeting;
- Canklow – meeting with Canklow Community Connections and with the Council's Green Spaces Unit about interest in providing a skate park;
- Community garden at Canklow – organising a 'clean up' event;
- Eastwood Liaison Forum – reporting that on-street anti-social behaviour and property based anti-social behaviour is reducing;
- Eastwood Strategic Group to consider the priorities of the Eastwood Community Partnership;
- Community event at Boston Castle Park;
- Area Assembly meeting in December 2013 will celebrate the year's events and work (jointly with Rotherham North).

Rother Valley West

Andrea Peers reporting:-

- 'Big Local' organisation at Thurcroft had formed a community partnership and was undertaking action planning and had acquired premises at Green Arbour Road (from which services such as benefits advice and a credit union may eventually be provided);
- Year 3 Community First money had all been allocated to a variety of projects locally;
- Public consultation taking place about the proposed HS2 high speed railway; the route would directly affect Catcliffe and Waverley;
- Treeton – investigations of the possible future provision of a Benefits Advice Service, based at the Reading Rooms;
- Provision of a Skate Park in Aston – discussions with local young people and an initial contribution from Ward Councillor G. Smith's Community Leadership Fund;
- Reports of reduced anti-social behaviour in Aston;
- Deprived Community Area at Hepworth Drive, Aston – recent appointment of an officer;
- 'Community First' celebration event to be held during December, to showcase each project;
- Community Leadership Funding in Brinsworth – utilised to undertake community clean-ups in January, February and March 2014, including litter-picking by the community;
- Local Democracy Week - work with Year 6 pupils in local primary schools;
- Discussion of use of Planning Act Section 106 monies (Community Infrastructure Levy) – possible use for a community arts project;
- Recent consultation had identified that there should be a continuation of six meetings per year, both of the Area Assembly and of the Co-ordinating Group.

Wentworth Valley

Andrea Peers reporting:-

- Community First – eleven projects had been approved;
- Maltby Craggs 'task and finish' group – had helped to improve the local environment and reduce anti-social behaviour;
- Events held for young people, including a football tournament and a barbecue;
- Awareness-raising event to be arranged about inquisitive crime (eg: shed break-ins) ;
- Multi-agency event to be held on Thursday 14 November, 2013 at Full Life Church in Maltby, about raising the aspirations of vulnerable families;

- Birks Holt estate at Maltby – environmental improvements had been welcomed; the provision of Gardening Tools Loan Scheme was being investigated;

- Community event held on 31st October, 2013 – members of the Chinatown (Maltby) TARA residents' group had helped to mentor residents of Birks Holt, Maltby about community action;

- Local bus services – event to be held on 22nd November, 2013 (at Flanderwell) about the changes to local bus services – a bespoke event for that community;

: planning taking place for a disadvantaged community event – raising aspirations for young women (a case study involving the 1984 miners' strike through the eyes of women in the community); and examining ways of effecting change in the community in challenging circumstances.

Rother Valley South

Andrea Peers reporting:-

- Welcome to the meeting to officer Christine Staniforth;

- Local Democracy Week (in the South of the Borough) – included the “top dog challenge” involving secondary school pupils and the South Yorkshire Police; this event studied the effects of alcohol abuse. The school team which produced the winning project would be making a visit to Parliament during December 2013. A similar project was organised with primary schools and the best team would visit the Rotherham Town Hall with His Worship The Mayor. The events attracted funding support from the Councillors' Community Leadership Fund;

Dinnington Disadvantaged Community – a local allotment site, in private ownership, had become disused and was untidy because of the dumping of refuse. The site was unsuitable for residential development. A meeting was to be arranged with the landowners and local stakeholders to try and make improvements to the appearance of the site and develop an appropriate use for the site;

Wentworth North

Christine Staniforth reporting:-

: Budget consultation had taken place;

: Local Democracy Week - speed dating event, involving young people and Elected Members, to raise political awareness amongst young people;

: Review of provision and use of community centres;

: Significant reduction in crime in the local area, recently;

: Community First – budgets are being utilised to the full;

: Wentworth North and Wentworth South jointly would be organising a Community First celebration event;

: Disadvantaged Communities – a programme of events was being developed;

: Summer Wonderland event at the Mowbray Gardens Library was very well attended bringing disadvantaged communities together;

Thrybergh Parish Council – working with students of the Rotherham College of Arts and Technology to publish a community newsletter;

: East Herringthorpe, Dalton and Thrybergh - provision of debt advice; community alcohol project to encourage sensible drinking;

: Tidy Garden competition winners' event had been successful with commendations for those who voluntarily undertook gardening work in communal areas.

Wentworth South

Christine Staniforth reporting:-

- : Budget consultation had taken place;
- : Review of provision and use of community centres;
- : Crime in the area had reduced by 10% recently;
- : Community First budgets were being utilised to the full
- : Disadvantaged Communities – a programme of events was being developed.

Resolved:- That the progress reports concerning each Area Assembly be noted and the officers be thanked for their work.

15. COMMUNITY FIRST UPDATE

Shaun Mirfield, Area Partnership Manager, submitted an update on the Neighbourhood Grants Programme and the other elements of the Cabinet Office's Community First initiative, specifically Endowment Match Challenge and Community Organisers.

Neighbourhood Grants Programme

- 11 of Rotherham's 21 Wards were eligible for funding - £712,000 over a 4 year period to 31st March, 2015
- Community First Panels were required to allocate Years 1 and 2 funding by 30th June, 2012 and 31st March, 2013 respectively with each project required to submit a monitoring form to the administering body (Community Development Foundation (CDF))
- Rotherham's Panels had notified every Year 1 and Year 2 funded project that failure to provide any information as requested may result in those projects not being awarded any further Community First funding in the future
- All Panels had refreshed their plans/priorities and were registered with the CDF by the deadline of 31st March, 2013;
- Excellent progress continued, with 80% of the Year 3 funding having been allocated from which 86 projects had benefitted
- Where appropriate, Panels were using the funding to complement the Deprived Neighbourhoods work by supporting projects around pre-school provision, debt advice and money management, adult skills and healthy lifestyles.

Endowment Match Challenge

- To be managed by the South Yorkshire's Community Foundation (SYCF)
- Challenge to attract contributions from the private sector, which the Government would match
- Challenge lasted until 31st March, 2015
- SYCF's accountability/reporting mechanism were direct to the UKCF and to the CDF
- After 31st March 2015, any monies raised through the Endowment Match Challenge would be absorbed into SYCF's Small Grants process.

Community Organisers

- Successful application submitted for two East Herringthorpe Community Organisers based at High Greave School with the posts to be advertised locally
- Groundwork Sheffield would be the host organisation and compulsory training was being arranged (to take place during January 2014 at the High Greave Primary School).

Members noted that the Rawmarsh High Street Centre was a private project (i.e. non-Council), although Council Members and officers were often present at its meetings and events.

Resolved:- That the contents of the report be noted.

16. AREA ASSEMBLIES AND AREA ASSEMBLY CO-ORDINATING GROUPS MEETINGS – FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATION

Further to Minute No. 8 of the meeting held on 16th September, 2013, Paul Walsh, Housing and Communities Manager, provided an update of the response from the Area Assembly and the Area Assembly Co-ordinating Groups to the consultation about the review of the future arrangements for both the Area Assembly and the Area Assembly Co-ordinating Group meetings.

The following issues and proposals of the review were highlighted:-

- there would be flexibility in terms of meeting rooms to be used, in order to reduce costs. This may mean that sometimes an Area Assembly meeting would take place at a venue outside its area;
- reference was made to the issue of voting rights and it was clarified that a proposal of the review is that all members of the co-ordinating groups would have voting rights;
- Area Assemblies and the Area Assembly Co-ordinating Groups would have a minimum of four meetings per year.

It was noted that the proposals of the review and the suggested changes to the arrangements, would be subject to further consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Cabinet prior to consideration by the full Council during March 2014.

17. COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Further to Minute No. 10 of the meeting of the Area Assembly Chairs held on 16th September, 2013, Andrea Peers, Area Partnership Manager, reported on the Community Resilience Scheme which had its origins in the Council's Scrutiny Review of the impact of Severe Winter Weather (Minute No. C152 of the meeting of Cabinet held on 22nd February, 2012).

Members discussed the following salient issues:-

- : Category One responders (to emergency occurrences and situations), such as this Council, must ensure that support is provided for vulnerable communities, especially during periods of extreme weather, such as flooding, heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures, etc.;
- : discussions were taking place within some communities and with a number of Parish Councils about the preparation of Community Resilience Plans, with advice from this Council's Emergency Planning Section;
- : there had not yet been significant progress made in the preparation of community resilience plans, in part because the ownership of the plans and the practicalities of implementation of the plans were still under consideration;
- : the example of the appointment of community volunteers as 'snow wardens' was noted as progressing satisfactorily; this role involved local people keeping footpaths clear of snow and ice during Winter weather conditions.

It was agreed that the Council's Emergency Planning Section be asked to provide further advice and guidance on this matter, for the Area Assemblies and for communities and Parish Councils.

18. AREA PARTNERSHIP TEAM STAFFING UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 9 of the meeting of the Area Assembly Chairs held on 16th September, 2013, Paul Walsh, Housing and Communities Manager, reported on recent staffing changes affecting each of the Area Assemblies. Members noted that the increase in hours of various staff would be beneficial to those particular Area Assemblies, especially in terms of support for deprived communities.

Resolved:- That the information about recent staffing changes be noted.

J58. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET MONITORING

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Finance Manager, Neighbourhood and Adult Services, on the Housing Revenue Account which was forecasting an outturn on budget with a transfer from working balances (HRA reserves) of £1.699M, a reduction of £900,000 against the approved budget.

Appendix A of the report provided the Budget Operating Statement for 2013/14 showing the various income and expenditure budget lines which made up the net cost of delivering the Service. The latest forecast net cost of Service was £6.713M, together with Revenue contribution to Capital costs and interest received, would result in an overall deficit of £1.699M to be transferred from Working Balances.

Expenditure

Based upon expenditure and commitments to date, total expenditure was forecast to outturn at £73.011M compared to a budget provision of £73.091M, a decrease in spend of £80K. The main variations were:-

Contributions to Housing Repairs

- Repairs and Maintenance – Currently forecast to budget at £17.966M. The Empty Homes budget was difficult to forecast given it being a responsive service. At the end of October there had been 158 more completions than budgeted, the main reason being the impact of the Welfare Reform as more tenants requested a transfer to smaller properties. Overall forecast overspend on cyclical works offset by forecast underspends within unallocated Planned works to cover forecast overspends in responsive repairs and Empty Homes budget

Supervision and Management

- Forecast to outturn at £20.185M, overall overspend of £120k. The main reason for the variation was the transfer to the Furnished Homes reserve due to additional income as more clients used the Scheme reduced by higher than expected staff turnover and slippage on implementing the review of structures across a number of teams

Income

- Total forecast income collectable was £79.724M, an increase of £820k above budget
- Dwelling rental income was projected to over-recover by £85k as well as non-dwelling rents by £6k due to additional income from garage sites
- Income from charges for services and facilities were forecasting an outturn of £4.220M, an over-recovery of £618k mainly due to additional income on Furnished Homes due to increase in the number of clients as well as more than anticipated fee income from Right to Buy sales. However, there was a forecast under-recovery of income from clients using Sheltered Neighbourhood Centres services as tenants opted out of the laundry charge and more than the anticipated level of voids on District Heating Schemes resulting in a slight under-recovery of income
- Other fees and charges were forecasting an over-recovery of income of £111k related to additional unbudgeted income in respect of the sale of tenants contents insurance, recovery of Court costs, income from second hand furniture and income from utility companies for the use of solar panels

Resolved:- That the latest financial projection against budget for 2013/14 be noted.

J59. NEIGHBOURHOODS GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2013-14

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods in relation to the budget monitoring and financial forecast for the Neighbourhoods General Fund within the Neighbourhoods and Adult Services Directorate to 31st March, 2014, based on actual income and expenditure for the period ending November, 2013.

The latest forecast showed an overall underspend of £125,000 against an approved net revenue budget of £2.463M as follows:-

Strategic Housing and Investment Service (+£10k)

- Vacancy factor not met resulting in small shortfall on staffing budget

Housing Options (-£42k)

- Projected underspend on the Dispersed Units Trading Account
- Small surplus within the Private Sector Adaptations Service as a result of increased fee income
- Projected overspend on the Key Choices Property Management Service as a result of lower than anticipated income

Housing and Communities (-£53k)

- Forecast underspend within Area Assemblies and Supplies and Services as a result of the moratorium on non-essential spend

- Partially reduced by a small overspend on Anti-Social Behaviour due to lower than expected staff turnover
- Small underspend within Community Safety Unit as a result of a recent vacancy
- Underspend also within Community Leadership Fund

Central (-£7k)

- Small underspend due to savings on Supplies and Services

Business Regulation (-£31k)

- Pressures on staffing costs within Health and Safety, Food and Drugs and Animal Health budgets
- Offset by savings within Trading Standards due to vacant posts
- Project small underspend within Licensing due to increased income relating to the new scrap Metal Dealer licences and Bereavement Services

Safer Neighbourhoods (-2k)

- Savings within Community Protection through vacancy management and as a result of the moratorium on non-essential spend
- Partly reduced by a small remaining pressure on income due to reduced Environmental Protection Act applications
- Statutory health and safety work on landfill sites resulting in a forecast overspend

Consultancy spend to date was £23k in respect of data analysis relating to Green Deal Energy Efficient projects which is grant funded. There had been no spend on Agency within Neighbourhoods' General Fund budgets.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the latest financial projection against budget for 2013/14 noted.

J60. HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2013-14

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods which represented the indicative outturn position for the 2013/14 Capital Programme.

As at the end of Period 8 (November, 2013), total spend on the HIP was £11,683,385M compared to a budget provision of £15,080,907M, an underspend of £3,397,522 (-22.5% variance).

The report submitted provided details of savings and slippage on the individual schemes of work with the overall programme and highlighted the fact that the resources not drawn down in 2013/14 would be carried forward into next year.

Further information was provided on:-

Total Capital Works to Properties
Fair Access to All
Regeneration/Neighbourhood Renewal – Private and Public Sector
Other Public Sector

Savings and slippages identified were primarily across schemes funded through the Major Repairs Allowance and would be carried forward into future years.

Resolved:- (1) That the spend and forecast position to the end of Period 8 (November 2013) be noted.

(2) That the slippage of resources, totalling £2,760,000 from 2013/14 to 2014/15 be approved.

J61. 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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information relating to the financial/business affairs of any person (including the Council)).

J62. HOUSING RENT INCREASE 2014-15

Consideration was given to a joint report of the Finance Manager (Neighbourhoods and Adult Services) and Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, setting out the proposed housing rent, new build rents, garage rent and communal facilities increases for 2014/15.

The report set out in detail the proposed housing rent, new build rents, garage rent and communal facilities increases for 2014/15. The rents had been calculated in accordance with the national rent setting regime requiring all authorities to use the prescribed formula and apply annual increases to actual rents to achieve the Formula Rent. The Government expected that all similar properties in the same local area would have similar rent levels even if owned by different social landlords (rent convergence). The Government had set a target for authorities to achieve rent convergence by 2015/16.

For the 132 new Council properties built in 2011/12, the funding model assumed that rents would be aligned to the Council's existing rent structure based on them having a higher property value and greater thermal efficiency than existing stock. These properties had already reached convergence and, as such, the rental increase could be less than other properties.

The report also contained at Appendix A the 2014/15 draft Housing Revenue Account budget for consideration.

It was noted that the report was to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on the 15th January, 2014.

Resolved:- That Cabinet be requested to recommend to Council:-

(1) An average rent increase of 6.57%, in accordance with the Central Government (DCLG) Rent Formula which results in an average weekly increase of £4.54 when collected over 52 weeks.

(2) An average rent of £94.47 on new build (energy efficient) Council properties.

(3) In line with the Retail Price Index, Garage Rents and Communal Facility charges (including where there were applicable laundry charges and cooking gas charge) be increased by 3.2%.

(4) That the draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2014/15 be noted.

J63. DISTRICT HEATING SCHEME CHARGES 2014-15

Consideration was given to a joint report of the Finance Manager (Neighbourhoods and Adult Services) and Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, setting out the proposed increases for District Heating for 2014/15.

In general, District Heating charges were made up of 2 components i.e. a weekly charge and a metered charge per kilowatt hour of heating used. It was proposed that there be no increase in the weekly charges but an increase in kilowatt hour charges to more accurately reflect true costs.

Pooled metered schemes had a weekly pre-payment flat rate charge collected through the rent system applied to all properties dependent upon the size of the property. The actual costs of each property's heating was determined by meter readings of the amount of kilowatt hours of heating actually used.

Resolved:- That Cabinet be requested to recommend to Council:-

(1) That weekly district heating charges be not increased.

(2) That the various proposed increases to the kilowatt hour charges, as outlined in the report submitted, be approved as a means of achieving full cost recovery.

(3) That, to assist some tenants, increases in the kilowatt hour charge be phased as agreed at Cabinet on 16th January, 2013 (Minute No. C131(3) refers) with full cost recovery to be achieved by 2016/17.

J64. PROCUREMENT OUTTURN - ROOFING SCHEME FOR 23 3 STOREY BLOCKS OF FLATS

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods reported on the tender process undertaken for the renewal and repair of roof and associated works on 23 blocks of 3 storey flats across the Borough, the works to include soffits, rainwater goods, pointing, concrete repairs and lintel replacement as required.

The tender had been offered to the market and 6 contractors invited to tender in line with Standing Orders. 5 tenders were returned and evaluated on the basis of quality and price with a 50/50 weighting.

The works were offered as 2 phases due to the geographical spread.

The works were anticipated to be a 12 weeks programme to commence late January, 2014.

Resolved:- That the tender submitted by Morrison Facility Services be approved for the delivery of the programme of works.