

THE FORMER CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS
19th July, 2010

Present:- Councillor Akhtar (in the Chair); Councillor Goult (Policy Advisor).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Kaye.

J26. INCREASE TO FIXED PENALTY FINES - LITTERING

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services submitted proposed increases of the Fixed Penalty Fine for Littering under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The enforcement of littering offences has been dealt with by the Council by targeted enforcement campaigns and partnership working to deter and apprehend offenders. Those identified could opt to pay a Fixed Penalty Fine of £75 or face prosecution through the Magistrates Court with a maximum penalty of £2,500.

The introduction of the Dog Control Order in respect of Dog Fouling on 1st January, 2010, had increased the Fixed Penalty Fine from £50 to £80 reaffirming the Council's approach to environmental crime. The £80 fine level was set by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. This had continued the disparity between the 2 offences.

The level of Fine was last amended in 2006 after the adoption of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act. The benefits of the use of Fixed Penalty Notices to tackle local environmental quality were a quicker and more cost effective method of imposing a penalty compared to taking each case to Court. Although no direct data existed to support the theory, the Community Protection Unit had not seen many cases of repeat offending. Over the last 3 years the Council had issued fewer Fixed Penalty Notices for littering in direct correlation to increasing street cleanliness assessments.

Despite a fall in the number of Notices issued in the last 3 years, there had been a 20% increase in the number of those issued face-to-face by the Rotherham Wardens in the first 5 months of 2010 compared with the same period in 2009. Further high visibility and targeted litter patrols was to continue and increase over the course of the current financial year.

Resolved:- (1) That the Fixed Penalty fine be increased to £80 with effect from 1st September, 2010.

(2) That a press release be issued on the fine increase and re-

emphasise the enforcement of littering offences.

J27. LOCAL AMBITION PROGRAMME

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services presented a report outlining progress made to date since the above Programme was launched in March, 2010 together with the Neighbourhood Improvement Plans implemented for each of the three Local Ambition neighbourhoods.

The Programme was developed to roll out Intensive Neighbourhood Management into 3 of the Borough's most deprived neighbourhoods i.e. Ferham, Canklow and East Herringthorpe. The approach was focussed at Super Output Level (circa 1,000 households in each neighbourhood). Whilst each neighbourhood was diverse, they all shared very highly concentrated levels of worklessness, deprivation and vulnerability.

The Programme would act as a 'catalyst' in the 3 Local Ambition Neighbourhoods ensuring services were delivered which met the needs of local people and local issues. Since its launch in March, 2010, progress so far included:-

- Launch events held in each of the neighbourhoods in March/ April, 2010 to both inform and engage with key local stakeholders in order to set the vision of the Programme, its aims and highlight the importance of commitment from partner agencies to be actively involved
- Extensive research and consultations undertaken to establish residents and stakeholders issues and priorities for improvement including:-
 - o Over 750 residents surveyed as part of the Household Survey to establish residents' perceptions, priorities and barriers to employment
 - o Local Stakeholder events where over 100 stakeholders were consulted on their views regarding local priorities
 - o 1:1 interviews with key community stakeholders
 - o Classroom activities, consultation and engagement through local priority schools
 - o Consultation with 11-19 year olds
 - o Various community and voluntary groups
 - o Street consultation
 - o Consultation with local businesses
- Findings from consultation presented at local joint Resident and Stakeholder 'Setting the Priorities' events throughout May, 2010

- The following priorities have been set for the 3 Local Ambition areas reflecting local need and local issues:-

Ferham

Priority 1 – A Thriving Neighbourhood

- Assisting people to get a job
- Increase volunteering
- Promoting self-employment as a career option
- Focussing on 16-18 year olds Not in Education, Employment and Training

Priority 2 – A Stronger Community

- Promoting cohesion and integration
- Involving the community in effective and innovative ways
- Awareness raising of existing service provision

Priority 3 – A Cleaner and Safer Neighbourhood

- Improving the street scene
- Addressing road safety concerns
- Increasing visibility of the Safer Neighbourhood Team
- Safeguarding and improving the wellbeing of children and young people

Canklow

Priority 1 – More Confident

- Promoting and raising awareness of local job, training, enterprising, volunteering and learning opportunities
- Improving outside perception of young people from the area
- Raise aspiration and self-esteem of young people

Priority 2 – Better Connected

- Increasing involvement from the wider community and developing a feeling of community ownership
- Tackling the negative perception of the area
- Increasing trust between the community and Council/ Service providers

Priority 3 – Cleaner and Safer

- Cleaner streets
- Increased visual presence from enforcement agencies and awareness of the SNT
- Tackling anti-social behaviour (including gangs of young people,

alcohol and drugs)

East Herringthorpe

Priority 1 – Better Informed and more aware of Opportunities

- Promoting local job, training, enterprising, volunteering and learning opportunities
- Focussed and targeted activity with 16-18 year old NEETs
- Celebrating success and raising aspiration

Priority 2 – Stronger and more Active

- Increasing community involvement and engagement
- Providing Family/ Parenting support and promoting healthy lifestyles
- Improved sport activity and provision

Priority 3 – Cleaner and Safer

- Improving the street scene and untidy gardens
- Tackling anti-social behaviour and perceptions of anti-social behaviour
- Tackling alcohol misuse
- Increasing visibility, presence and awareness of the Safer Neighbourhood Team

The Plans had been signed off by Yorkshire Forward who were fully supportive of the wider focus of them. Each Plan had 'Measures of Success' setting out the outcomes aimed to achieve through delivery of the Programme which were a combination of perception measures, key outputs agreed with Yorkshire Forward, crime data and value for money.

Newsletters would be delivered by the end of July, 2010, to all households to feedback the consultation findings and explain how/ what would be focussed upon and how local people could become involved.

A full evaluation would be undertaken in Autumn, 2011, including a follow-up household survey.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress made be noted.

(2) That the Improvement Plans be approved.

J28. CHOICE BASED LETTINGS – IMPROVING THE SERVICE FROM A CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE

Further to Minute No. 89 of 30th November, 2009, the Director of Independent Living reported on progress made against the recommendations of the Sustainable Scrutiny Review into Choice Based Lettings (CBL).

The Review made 25 recommendations all of which had been actioned, a detailed analysis outlined in Appendix A.

A number of the review recommendations had incurred financial implications including the review of the Housing Register and provision of more information. This had required the Key Choices Service to carry out further exploration to identify funding streams.

Resolved:- (1) That it be noted that the Scrutiny Review recommendations had now been addressed by the Directorate and 2010 Rotherham Ltd.

(2) That the report be forwarded to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel.

J29. 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 those paragraphs, indicated below, of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

J30. NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE CONVERSIONS

Further to Minute No. 21 of 29th June, 2009, the Director of Independent Living submitted an update on the Neighbourhood Centres Review.

Following resident and Ward Member consultation, the review had identified 2 Centres whose present usage was considered unsustainable. The consultation had revealed that the preferred option was for the Centres to be decommissioned and converted to affordable housing. The Department of Independent Living had confirmed that there was a demonstrable need for the proposed housing units which could be created as a result of conversation.

The options considered by residents and Ward Members included:-

Option 1 Retention as communal facility and investment

- Option 2 Retention and conversion to an office base
 - Option 3 Retention and conversion to disabled persons housing units
 - Option 4 Sale to Registered Provider and Conversion to disabled persons housing units
 - Option 5 Open market sale and conversion to retail shops
 - Option 6 Open market sale and conversion to a residential unit
 - Option 7 Demolition
- Removal and conversion of communal facilities

Although the feedback with residents of the Elizabeth Finch Centre had indicated that the provision of a neighbourhood centre was not a key priority, the removal of the laundry facility would cause many difficulties. The conversion feasibility study had identified that such a facility could continue to be made available. If it was retained, the current laundry charge would have to be increased to mitigate the loss of the communal facility charge income which was currently subsidising the laundry facility.

Sufficient capital resources to meet the costs of conversion had been identified within the current approved Housing Investment Programme.

Resolved:- (1) That Option 3 identified in the report submitted be approved.

(2) That the removal of the communal facility charge from the tenants residing on the Elizabeth Finch and Caine Gardens Neighbourhood schemes be approved.

(3) That an increase in the laundry charge to £1.50 at Elizabeth Finch be approved for the reasons stated in the report.

(4) That the above be communicated to users of the affected facilities.

(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial/ business affairs of any person (including the Council))

J31. PROPERTIES EXCEEDING THE INVESTMENT THRESHOLD - RAWMARSH

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services submitted proposals for Nos. 5a and 7a The Parade, Rawmarsh, to be transferred from the HRA Commercial Property portfolio to the HRA General Housing portfolio to facilitate re-letting and management by 2010 Rotherham Ltd. as secure tenancies to meet local affordable

housing need.

Whilst 1 of the flats was let to a commercial occupant, there was currently no demand from commercial occupants for the remaining 2 flats and were vacant.

A number of options had been considered for the future use of the properties including:-

- Option 1 Relet the properties as secure tenancies
- Option 2 Sale to a Registered Provider
- Option 3 Open Market Sale

Ward Members have been consulted and all supported Option 1 .

Both properties required Decent Homes works and funding had been identified to complete such.

Resolved:- That Option 1 , as identified within the report submitted, be approved.

(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial/ business affairs of any person (including the Council))

J32. PROPERTIES EXCEEDING THE INVESTMENT THRESHOLD - RAW MARSH AND KIVETON PARK

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services reported on No. 75 Hague Avenue, Rawmarsh and No. 28 Danby Road, Kiveton Park, Council-owned vacant properties which were awaiting re-letting but were in need of substantial investment.

Both properties had structural problems and re-let repair requirements to achieve a lettable standard. The total cost of work to bring the properties back into use exceeded the investment threshold for individual properties, and, in accordance with No. 304 of 21st May, 2007, were referred to the Cabinet Member for consideration.

A number of options had been considered for the future use of both properties:-

- Option 1 Retain and Invest
- Option 2 Disposal to a Registered Social Landlord
- Option 3 Open Market Sale
- Option 4 Demolition

The Ward Councillors for Hague Avenue had been consulted and supported the option of retention and investment; the Ward Councillors for Danby Road wished to see the property retained and repaired.

Resolved:- That the retention of Nos. 28 Danby Road, Kiveton Park and 75 Hague Avenue, Rawmarsh, and the completion of structural repair works to facilitate re-letting be approved.

(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial/ business affairs of any person (including the Council))