

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS
Monday, 3rd October, 2011

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

J30. IMPROVING FINANCIAL CONFIDENCE

In accordance with Minute No. 18 of the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Equality and Young People's Issues held on 12th September, 2011, Jane Woodford, Financial Inclusion Manager, Voluntary Action Rotherham, presented a report on the above.

The Financial Inclusion Project at Voluntary Action Rotherham was to take the lead in a partnership bid to the new Big Lottery funding scheme, Improving Financial Confidence. It was a 5 year project worth between £500k and £1M focussing on the needs of people in social housing to improve their financial capability.

The project was to work with young people in social housing and first time tenants, in response to the identified need amongst this group to improve the success and sustainability of tenancies. A disproportionate number of young people and first time tenants were represented amongst the failed tenancies which was costly both in financial and social terms for the tenants, the housing providers and the community in general. It was believed that if dedicated and intensive support was provided on a peer mentoring basis and through a well planned, informal and customised training package, it would be possible to be able to significantly improve the financial confidence of tenants and affect their behaviour and, therefore, the success rates of tenancies. Additional outcomes would improve neighbour relations and enhanced employment/educational opportunities.

The future sustainability of the project was based on the use of volunteer mentors, the strength of the partnership and the establishment of an effective training programme. If successful in meeting its objectives, the partner social housing providers would have a strong incentive to support ongoing work in financial inclusion as a cost effective intervention to support tenants and reduce the impact of failed tenancies.

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

- The project's emphasis would be on proactive activity but the Lottery would be expecting the project to work with existing tenants
- The project would still be able to offer some preparatory work with tenants before their tenancies commenced as well as when they experienced crisis points
- Tenants would be offered debt counselling as part of the package as well as signposting to support
- Although the Lottery would not permit use of the funding for crisis loans, 1 of the partners was Laser Credit Union. It was also hoped to partner with furniture schemes
- Monitoring of tenancies and data evaluation was to feature in the next part of the bid

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

J31. NEIGHBOURHOODS GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING TO 31ST AUGUST 2011

The Business Partnering Finance Manager submitted a report which detailed the projected year end outturn position as at 31st August, 2011, for the Neighbourhoods department within the Neighbourhoods and Adult Services Directorate compared to the approved Net Revenue Budget.

The latest position currently showed a projected underspend of £60,000 by the end of March, 2012.

Most services were projecting balanced or near balanced budgets by the year end with the following exceptions:-

Housing Access	£18,000 underspend
Housing Choices	£13,000 underspend
Safer Neighbourhoods	£30,000 underspend
Business and Regulation	£3,000 underspend
Neighbourhood Partnerships	£4,000 overspend
Neighbourhood Investment	Balanced budget

To date there was no spend on either Agency or Consultancy within Neighbourhoods. Actual expenditure to the end of August, 2011 on non-contractual overtime for Neighbourhood Services was £555.

Resolved:- That the report be received and noted.

J32. THE FUTURE SHAPE OF HOUSING SERVICES IN ROTHERHAM

Further to Minute No. 17 of the 8th June, 2011, Cabinet, the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services reported on the outcome of the staff consultations that had taken place and submitted the proposed organisational structure for Integrated Housing Services.

A completed review had identified savings to the Housing Revenue Account of £1,018,000. It was proposed to use the savings to relieve budgetary pressures within the existing structure and reinvest £398,000 into customer facing services. The remainder would enable the Service to meet unbudgeted costs and for the first time in 5 years, deliver a balanced budget. In increasing the focus on frontline services, there would be a net increase of 23 frontline jobs and a net loss of 27 back office jobs.

The proposed structure consisted of:-

- 1 Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods with interim support during a transition period from the 2 previously 2010 Rotherham Ltd. Directors responsible for Business Support and Finance
- 4 operational management areas:-
 - o Strategic Housing and Investment
 - o Housing Options

- Housing and Communities
- Contracts and Service Development

- Housing Finance

- Support Services

Details of each were set out in the report submitted.

Implementation of the revised structures would commence in October with staff being informed of the process through meetings and a weekly e-mail bulletin from the Director.

It was anticipated that all recruitment of existing staff to new and/or vacant posts in the structure would be concluded by the end of November. Those who had not been successful in securing a post at that stage would be issued with notice of redundancy. Work would take place with those affected staff to identify suitable alternatives within the Council Talent Pool.

The Director also drew attention to the following proposals since the report had been submitted:-

- The change of title for the Voids Co-ordinator post
- The proposed transfer of the Domestic Violence Services and IDVA Service to Adult Social Care
- The proposed transfer of ICT duties to the Resources Directorate

Resolved:- (1) That the proposed organisational structure for Housing Management Services and the intention to immediately begin the restructuring process be noted.

(2) That the change of title for the Voids Co-ordinator post to Senior Technical Officer be noted.

(3) That the intention to transfer Domestic Violence and IDVA Service to Adult Social Care be noted.

(4) That the intention to transfer ICT duties to the Resources Directorate to consolidate in one place all Corporate ICT Services be noted.

(5) That the intention to create an additional Performance Officer post within Corporate Policy and Performance and to remove the Customer Services Officer post from the Contracts and Service Development Section be noted.

(6) That the intention to create an additional Performance Analyst post be noted.