

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 9 SEPTEMBER, 2010 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK
PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors:

Williams, B. (Chairman)
Ansell, Mrs. P.A. (Vice-Chairman)

Beddows, J. Freeman, M.P.
Bernard, J.D. Grice, Mrs. D.
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.

10. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors F.W.C. Allen and G.N. Molineux.

11. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

There were no declarations of interests declared.

12. Minutes

AGREED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July, 2010 be approved as a correct record.

The Chairman made reference to the meeting held on 11 August 2010 and a copy of the Minutes of this meeting were circulated to Members of the Committee. Following a discussion, Members approved these minutes as a correct record.

AGREED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 August 2010 be approved as a correct record.

13. Connaught plc

The Head of Housing advised the Committee that Connaught Property Services had gone into administration and KMPG had been appointed as administrators. Connaught are the contractors for both the external envelope and second doors to bungalows programmes. Connaught

Environmental Services are also the contractors for the street scene contract but that division of the company is unaffected.

It was explained that the external envelope works programme comprised of repair or replacement works to the external fabric of Council dwellings, i.e. works to the roof, chimney, render and/or brickwork, guttering and fascia and soffit boards. Connaught had been undertaking work on three estates – Bevan Lee, Mavis Road and the Springfields. Following an inspection of these estates any unfinished work had been noted and the sub contractors were being paid to complete the work. Similar action was being undertaken in respect of bungalows where work was in progress in respect of the second doors to bungalow programme.

Legal advice was currently being sought regarding a replacement contractor with a view to recommencing the works as soon as possible. It was noted that the priority for the Council was to ensure that work was completed for the tenants as it contributed to the Decent Homes Standard.

The Committee requested that they be kept fully informed of any developments with regard to this matter and additional meetings of the Committee would be called if necessary.

AGREED:

That the Committee be kept fully informed of any developments with regard to Connaught going into administration and the effect on the Housing Maintenance Contract and additional meetings of the Committee be called if necessary.

13. Housing Priority Delivery Plan 2010-11

The Chairman asked the Head of Housing whether the Government's proposed cut backs would affect the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). He explained that, at present, the HRA was not affected although the review of council housing finance had not yet been concluded. He commented that the majority of the housing service was funded through the HRA apart from two services which were funded through the general fund; these were the homelessness service and the strategic housing and enabling role.

The Head of Housing then outlined the key elements of the Housing Priority Delivery Plan 2010-11 and commented on the various priorities contained within it. The Committee noted that increasing the supply of affordable housing remained a priority for the Council and the aim was to achieve 100 affordable housing units this year. It was further noted that the budget had been increased through the capital programme to facilitate the adaptation of the homes of people with disabilities.

Reference was made to the HRA Capital Programme and it was confirmed that the completion of 475 properties under the external envelope programme and 85 properties under the second doors to bungalows programme would be affected by Connaught going into administration. With regard to the second door to bungalow programme the Head of Housing explained that properties where a tenant had refused a second door would have this facility provided when they became void.

The Chairman made reference to the HRA revenue information contained on page 13 of the

Priority Delivery Plan and questioned why the Government were taking approximately £3.5 million in “negative subsidy” out of the HRA. He considered this money could be better used to provide more affordable housing. It was agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Government outlining the Committees view that this resource should remain with the Council.

Members discussed the £20,000 budget for the demolition of garages. The Head of Housing explained that the money was allocated in order to clear the garage sites and make them ready for development although not all the budget would necessarily be used. Garages were demolished where they are uneconomical to repair or the site could be brought forward for development. However, the sites were generally small and expensive to develop.

A Member sought information on how the Council allocated Council dwellings to those on the housing register. It was agreed that this item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting and the Head of Housing would arrange for a presentation on the allocations policy. He further explained that he could arrange for Members to visit the Allocations Office and any Member who was interested should contact him direct.

With regard to performance target NI 156 (number of households living in temporary accommodation) a Member considered the performance target of 4 should be decreased. The Head of Housing stated that unfortunately when the target was set there had been 4 households living in temporary accommodation whereas previously there had been none or 1. However the target could be amended to 2. The Member further commented that performance target NI181 (time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events) should be improved and a target of less than 14 days should be set. The Chairman stated that this target was excellent as it had previously taken 63 days to process new claims.

AGREED:

- (A) That the Housing Priority Delivery Plan 2010-11 be noted.
- (B) That a letter to forwarded to the Government on behalf of the Committee outlining concern regarding the £3.5 million of “negative subsidy” payable out of the HRA.
- (C) That a presentation be given at the next meeting outlining the Allocations Policy.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 5.00 p.m.