

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MONDAY 12 AUGUST, 2013 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK
PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors:

Kraujalis, (Chairman)

Allen, F.W.C

Toth, J.

Jones, Ms. J.L.

Fisher, P. (Sub)

By invitation: Councillor Mrs. M. A. Davies, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor G. Molineux.

Councillor G. Molineux had given prior notice that Councillor P. Fisher would be attending the Committee as his substitute.

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

No other declarations of interests were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed,

4. Place (Housing) Priority Delivery Plan 2013-14

Consideration was given to the Housing, Portfolio section of the agreed 2013-14 Place Priority Delivery Plan (Item 4.1 – 4.14). The Head of Housing and Waste Management Services advised Members that a monitoring report would be submitted to the Committee each quarter which would assess performance against the agreed targets.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

5. Census 2011 – Housing Related Statistics

Report of the Head of Housing and Waste Management (Item 5.1 – 5.17). The Head of Housing and Waste Management advised Members of key housing related statistics from the 2011 Census in relation to the District. In particular;

- The overall population of the District was getting older
- People were forming smaller households
- The number of “less traditional” households had increased
- There had been a significant shift from home ownership to private renting
- The Districts housing stock primarily comprised of detached and semi-detached properties, although the proportion of flats had increased from 9% to 12% during the last 10 years
- The Districts overall housing stock is skewed towards larger properties, with a greater proportion of smaller dwellings in the local and private rented sectors.
- The District has a relatively small number of resident minority ethnic households

Members enquired why there was an increase in the private rented sector. The Head of Housing and Waste Management advised that in the past building societies and banks had looked favourably on ‘buy to let’ mortgages although this was more restrictive in the current economic climate.

The Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader expressed concern at the Local Plan requirement and the need for a further 5,800 houses to be built and whether this would be possible. The Head of Housing and Waste Management reported that this was an area for the Head of Planning and Regeneration, but that this had not been identified as a corporate issue, as it related to the regions national target which would cascade slowly down.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

6. Housing Policy Development Committee Work Programme (2013-2014)

Report of the Head of Housing and Waste Management (Item 6.1). The Head of Housing and Waste Management advised Members of the topics potentially planned for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

The Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader questioned whether there would be an item on Social Housing Alarm Service. The Head of Housing and Waste Management reported that this issue had been raised at the Health and Wellbeing PDC but that Staffordshire County Council had agreed to extend the current contract to March 2015. He advised that this issue would be more

pertinent during the next Municipal Year when the contract was coming to an end.

The Chair advised that he had requested that the Committee be invited to any openings or site visits for any new Council housing development. Members agreed it was a balanced workload for the next twelve months.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Policy Development Committee work programme for 2013-14 be approved.

7. Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

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8. Gas and Solid Fuel Servicing and Maintenance Contract

Consideration was given for the Not for Publication report of the Head of Housing and Waste Management (Enclosure 8.1 – 8.11 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Housing and Waste Management reported on the performance monitoring report regarding P.H. Jones the Councils contractor, which was now part of British Gas Community Energy. He advised that immediately prior to British Gas acquiring P. H. Jones in 2011 that performance had dropped dramatically. As a result the Housing Policy Development Committee had met with British Gas to discuss how performance could be improved. The targets that had been set were now being met with monitoring showing that performance improvement was being maintained.

He reported that the service was now moving in the right direction and that there were no issues regarding the gas service element of the contract with 99.82% of the stock being in receipt of a valid gas safety certificate, and the remaining properties being addressed through the no access procedure.

The Head of Housing and Waste Management reported that the Council still retained 40 dwellings with solid fuel even though the Council policy had been to replace all solid fuel with gas central heating. He explained that there had been some 70 dwellings using solid fuel heating; 30 of which had transferred to gas central heating with the remaining 40 tenants choosing not to do so.

Members remarked on the fact that some people had refused to have gas fire central heating but understood that it was a personal choice. It was explained that some tenants may still receive concessionary coal as National Coal Board ex-employees. The Head of Housing Services and Waste Management advised members that when the properties became void these would only be re-let after gas fire central heating had been installed.

Members commented that in previous years the suppliers that P. H. Jones had used closed for two weeks during the Christmas period, which had raised problems in obtaining spare parts but had been assured that British Gas carried a larger stock of parts.

Members sought assurances that market testing would take place when the contract with British Gas was due for re submission to ensure value for money but did not want to see a repeat performance of the Grounds Maintenance contract where the company had undercut to get the tender but then could not sustain its business. The Head of Housing and Waste Management assured members that the contract prices were competitive compared to prices being quoted now and that prior to the end of the contract it would be tendered to reputable companies, which would enable market testing to take place to ensure value for money.

The Head of Housing and Waste Management advised Members that performance still needed to be monitored and a performance report would be brought back to the Committee late in the new Municipal Year.

RESOLVED:

That

- (A) The report be noted.
- (B) A further monitoring report be presented to the Committee in the 2014-15 Municipal Year.

(The meeting closed at 4.40pm)

CHAIRMAN