

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 30 JUNE, 2009 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK
PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Williams, B. (Chairman)

Allen, F.W.C.	Freeman, M.P.
Ansell, Mrs. P.A.	Grice, Mrs. D.
Beddows, J.	Williams, Mrs. P.
Dixon, D.I.	

(An apology for absence was received from Councillor J.D. Bernard).

1. Minutes

AGREED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May, 2009 be approved as a correct record.

Mrs. J. McGoldrick, Principal Solicitor updated the Committee on the procedure for agreeing and approving Minutes. It was explained that meetings of Policy Development Committees would be held on a quarterly basis. In exceptional circumstances, the Chairman, in consultation with the Chief Executive (or anyone duly authorised by him) could convene additional meetings(s).

The proposals for agreeing and approval of PDC minutes sought to address the potential for an unacceptable delay arising in minutes being approved under the current arrangements, given that the PDC would ordinarily meet quarterly. The Committee was informed that draft minutes would in future be emailed to Members of the Committee within 7 working days of the meeting for comments/amendments. Members would then confirm their amendments (if any) within 10 working days. Should significant amendments be proposed, the Chairman would meet with the appropriate Lead Officer and Committee Officer to consider and confirm the amendments proposed. Once finalised the minutes would be deemed as 'Agreed Minutes' as opposed to 'Approved Minutes' and would again be circulated to Members of the Committee. The Minutes would still be included on the Agenda for the following Committee meeting for approval, when they would then be deemed 'Approved Minutes'. Should a Cabinet meeting be scheduled before the next meeting of the Policy Development Committee, the Agreed Minutes would be presented to Cabinet for them to note and to enable recommendations to be considered.

2. Presentation on the role and remit of the Housing Policy Development Committee

The Committee received a presentation from the Principal Solicitor on the role and remit of Policy Development Committees.

It was considered that issues of capacity for both Members and Officers had been raised in the past and it was considered that a more focused approach should be taken by Policy Development Committees to deliver improved outcomes.

It was reported that the Policy Development Committees had been aligned with the Local Area Agreement blocks. The Committees would be guided by a more robust framework, established by the PDC Terms of Reference and the Performance Management Framework. Such an approach would require PDCs to focus their efforts on key areas of concern highlighted from performance data (provided quarterly) and which would detail those targets that the Council was failing to meet. The PDCs should explore and consider proposals/options to tackle and overcome such failures with recommendations being made to Cabinet or Scrutiny Committee as considered appropriate. The principal function of PDCs was to performance manage PDPs and examine how failing targets could be improved, particularly through policy development. To assist PDCs with their role, they have the choice of inviting external partners to attend meetings if it was considered that a more co-ordinated approach was required.

3. Presentation on Performance Management Framework

The Committee received a presentation from Mrs. J. Baldasera, Housing Service Improvement Manager on the Performance Management Framework.

The Housing Service Improvement Manager reported that the Corporate Plan 2009-2012 was approved on 29 April, 2009 and the purpose of the PDPs was to provide a clear link from the Corporate Plan priorities through to Services Plans and PDRs, namely the 'Golden thread'.

All PDPs would be reported every six weeks to DMT updating them on the current position with respect to the delivery of actions and performance indicators. The PDPs would then be reported quarterly with more comprehensive information to DMT, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committees. Progress would be reported using the traffic light assessment method for actions, PIs and risk actions. Exception reports would be completed with details of what actions were being taken to address matters when red and amber indicators were shown, the main focus being on the red indicators.

4. Presentation on the Committee's Priority Delivery Plan

The Committee received a presentation from Mr. I. Tennant, Head of Housing on the Committee's Priority Delivery Plan.

Consideration was given to the Housing Policy Development Committee – Review of the 2008-09 Work Programme (Enclosure 6.1 – 6.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council)

The Head of Housing reported on the work of the Committee during 2008-09 and the

actions that had resulted from the Committees decisions in respect of proposed policy changes.

In relation to the 2008-09 work programme, the Head of Housing reported that Members had raised concerns regarding the progress of providing second doors to bungalows which was being implemented through the External Envelope Works Programme. As a result, the Chairman had requested that a further report be considered by the Committee regarding the options and financial considerations of implementing the works through a separate programme.

Consideration was given to the abridged copy of the Healthier Communities, Housing and Older People Priority Delivery Plan (Enclosure 6.3 – 6.18 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Housing explained that the PDP provided the framework for the Committees work programme during the 2009-10 municipal year. It was reported that this contained three “housing challenges”, together with a number of identified actions in relation to each challenge. Progress in respect of these actions would be monitored by the Committee during the year.

As part of the 3 “housing” challenges the Head of Housing reported on the following:-

Challenge 1 – Affordable Housing

The Head of Housing updated the Committee regarding progress on the replacement housing which was being provided on the Cornwall House and Cherry Tree House sites by the South Staffordshire Housing Association. These would result in 8 new houses being provided on the Cornwall House site and 12 new houses on the Cherry Tree House site.

It was reported that the Housing Association had originally planned to complete the Cornwall House scheme by October 2009 and the Cherry Tree House scheme by December 2009. Despite a later than anticipated start on site, substantial progress has been made and it is now envisaged that both schemes would be completed in October 2009 subject to the utilities companies providing the new properties with electric and gas supplies.

The Head of Housing reported that as part of the budget the Government had provided £100 million nationally (£50 million of grant and £50 million of credit approval) to help local authorities build new Council house on a pilot basis. Local authorities have been invited to submit “small scale” bids for these resources and as a result a feasibility study was being undertaken to provide 15 houses on 4 former garage sites. Further information on the progress of this work would be provided at future meetings.

Challenge 2 – Vulnerable People

Members expressed concern about the length of time that disabled Council tenants were waiting for adaptations in relation to their homes. It was noted that there was a particular problem with providing showers and this caused considerable problems for the households concerned.

Members enquired as to whether additional resources could be provided from the sale of one bedroom bungalows to increase the disabled facilities works budget. The Head of Housing reported that Council on 24 September, 2008 had agreed that resources generated from this source would be used to provide additional affordable housing, and that a further redirection of these resources would require a policy change.

The Head of Housing agreed to provide a report on the current situation regarding disabled facilities works and potential actions to address the situation to the next meeting of the Committee.

Challenge 3

The Head of Housing updated the Committee regarding the current situation in relation to the Elizabeth Road scheme.

He reported that the current financial climate had resulted in major problems and as a result, work was in progress to formulate a viable funding package.

A number of meetings had been held with the Homes and Community Agency (formally the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships) regarding the provision of grant funding and subject to these reaching a satisfactory conclusion; it was proposed to submit a report to Council on 26 August, 2009.

Members enquired about the provision of dwellings for shared ownership as part of the development and the Head of Housing confirmed that swellings for sale under shared ownership arrangements would form part of the scheme.

In view of the exceptional circumstances in relation to the need to progress the second doors to bungalows programme, and the situation in relation to disabled facilities works, Members considered that an additional meeting was required before their next scheduled meeting in September, 2009.

AGREED:

That an additional meeting of the Housing Policy Development Committee be arranged for 25 August, 2009 to consider:-

- (A) The second doors to bungalows programme
- (B) Disabled facilities works

CHAIRMAN