

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

5th June 2003

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Southern (Chair), Councillor Lauro (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Carroll, Isham, Jones, Mulgrew, Richards (substitute for Councillor Whyman M.B.E.) and Taylor.

Conservative Group

Councillors Mrs. Hood, Mrs. Renwick, Shaw and Mrs. Walton.

In Attendance

Councillors Bell and Harrington (Labour Group) and Councillor Mrs. Wheeler (Conservative Group).

APOLOGY

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Whyman, M.B.E. (Labour Group).

HCS/1. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th March 2003 and of the Special Meeting held on 17th April 2003 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

HCS/2. **REPORTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES – MONITORING OF COUNCIL PLANS AND STRATEGIES**

The Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Bell presented this item. The Scrutiny Committee had undertaken a review of arrangements for monitoring Council plans and strategies and it was submitting reports to each of the three policy committees. A background was given to the Review and a small working group had been appointed to undertake this matter. It had produced a comprehensive list of all the current plans and strategies and the list contained over one hundred items. Appended to the report were details of the plans and strategies relating to this Committee. The schedule included details of each Plan's status, its date of approval and review, the responsible Officer within the Corporate Management Team and the Committee responsible for the development and implementation of the plan or strategy. The Working Group had considered that it would be impractical to review the monitoring arrangements in detail and the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to refer this matter to policy committees for further discussion.

The report then set out a number of issues for policy committees to consider. In the White Paper "Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services", the Government had announced proposals to streamline and rationalise the number of plans that it required Councils to produce. Essentially, Councils judged "excellent" under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment would

only be required to prepare a Best Value Performance Plan and a Community Strategy. A key decision for policy committees would be whether to retain certain plans and strategies in order to support the effective management of the organisation. A further consideration in terms of rationalisation was the proposed South Derbyshire Community Strategy.

Once the reports had been considered by the three policy Committees, it was suggested that a Task and Finish Working Group be appointed, to ensure a consistent approach to the rationalisation of plans and strategies.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee receives the report of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

HCS/3. **BRETBY CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE**

With the approval of the Chair, Councillor Mrs. Wheeler spoke to this item and advised that the next Bretby Crematorium Joint Committee Meeting would be held on Wednesday 18th June 2003.

RESOLVED:-

That the Open Minutes of the Bretby Crematorium Scrutiny Panel Meeting held on 25th September 2002 be received.

HCS/4. **2002/2003 SERVICE PLANS – FINAL MONITORING REPORTS**

The Committee received the final Service Plan Monitoring Reports for the Community and Leisure Development, Environmental Health, Technical Services and Housing Services Divisions. It was noted that the Technical Services and Environmental Health Service Plans included matters that were the responsibility of the Environmental and Development Services Committee.

Service Plans provided an important part of the Council's performance management framework. The current service plans had been approved in November 2001 as the basis for service delivery throughout the current financial year. The monitoring plans reviewed progress at the end of Service Plan period. Details were provided of the sections contained within each Service Plan and Officers took the opportunity to highlight particular issues.

With regard to the Community and Leisure Development Service Plan, there appeared some confusion over the period of financial assistance to the Asian Over 60's Social and Welfare Group. Members understood that the annual grant of £5,000 was for a maximum of three years and asked that this be researched. Members recognised the success of the Crime and Disorder Partnership, discussing particular projects and the need to secure equitable funding from the agencies involved. Comment was also made on current arts provision in South Derbyshire, which was delivered through People Express and there was a desire to identify funds to enable the appointment of an Arts Officer.

Under the Environmental Health Service Plan, concerns were raised about the condition of the play area within the Lullington Short Stay Gypsy

Caravan Site. The site was owned by Derbyshire County Council and managed by the District Council. The local Ward Member understood that the County Council would only be required to meet a proportion of the costs of improvement works and Officers agreed to raise this issue at the next joint meeting. Dealing with unauthorised traveller encampments and related waste management issues were also discussed, but it was noted that these items were under the Environmental and Development Services Committee's Terms of Reference.

The Committee considered the Technical Services Division Service Plan and a number of Members commented on the need for children's play equipment in their wards. Officers explained that service development bids could be prepared to secure funding for future years. A Hilton Ward Member spoke about the Section 106 planning agreement to provide community facilities in Hilton. She requested that preparatory work be undertaken so that the community benefits could be delivered as soon as the required number of properties were built.

Under the Housing Service Plan, the Chair asked for a review of the way in which the Council dealt with incidents of anti-social behaviour by tenants. Information was sought on the partnership arrangements with the Good Shepherd Trust and clarification was given on the role of the Homelessness Officer. It was agreed to provide further information to the Members concerned. There was disappointment at the lack of progress in following the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in rented housing. Officers were praised for the reduction in the average length of stay in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, although it was hoped that this could be improved even further. The Chair complained that despite the allocation of funds, a new information technology system had not yet been installed in the Housing Division. It was agreed to submit a further report on this matter to the next Meeting of the Committee. Members discussed the Best Value Performance Indicator relating to responsive repairs and questioned whether the current stock condition survey information was still relevant. Officers proposed to submit a report to the next Committee Meeting on the programme of required works to meet the "Decent Homes" standard. The Chair requested that for future monitoring reports, numerical information be provided to support the percentage statistics.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee receives the final Service Plan Monitoring Reports.

HCS/5. **RESTORATION OF MAURICE LEA MEMORIAL PARK**

The Committee was reminded of the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the restoration of Maurice Lea Memorial Park. By way of background, information was provided on the Park's local catchment area and the growing population in this area. Strategically, the Park was important as part of a major "green" area with the Swadlincote Woodlands Forest Park, the Gresley Common and beyond to new National Forest sites in North-West Leicestershire.

The first report to Members on attracting capital monies to restore and develop all the urban parks was submitted in November 1997. The overriding factors in pursuing this objective were reported. In particular, the

HLF's Urban Park Programme provided an ideal opportunity to attract capital funding. Only the Maurice Lea Memorial Park met the restoration criteria of the HLF. The Urban Parks Programme was a multi-stage process and the project had been successful in attracting a HLF monies through these stages. A summary was given of the process completed to date.

In awarding a Stage 1 pass, the HLF had requested further development work comprising an options appraisal, the production of more detailed and accurate costings and production of a ten year Management Plan for the site.

Consultants were appointed to undertake the development work with the project being managed by a team including a community representative and local Ward Members. If the Stage 2 bid was successful, it was likely that work would take place during 2004/05 with the Park available for public use early in 2005.

The Committee received details of the development proposals, together with the detailed costings. The proposals provided an opportunity to address important management issues at the site. The restoration of the Park railings, for example, offered an opportunity to close the Park during the hours of darkness. An outline was given of the areas covered in the Draft Management Plan.

Consideration was given to maintenance issues. There was a need to address the quality of work undertaken and to have a permanent staff presence on site. Currently the Park was maintained by mobile gangs, like all other Council sites. There was a Park Keeper presence during the summer months but no presence during winter other than football attendant cover on Sunday mornings. It was therefore intended to include in the Management Plan proposals to have a permanent, trained groundsperson on site and Park Keeper cover when they were not available. Details were given of the proposed arrangements for recruitment and training. These proposals were a major change to the way the Council managed and maintained sites. There were obvious financial implications, staffing implications and implications regarding the impact of the change in working practice for other Council sites. It was not proposed to go into the detail of these implications at this stage. However, it could be envisaged that the additional staff cover at Maurice Lea Park could fit into a "mobile" warden system to offer cover at other parks and open spaces. It was anticipated that a Service Development Proposal could be submitted for the Newhall and Eureka Parks in the 2004/05 budget cycle.

The financial implications were reported and the total restoration costs were in the region of £1.434 million. The HLF would be requested to contribute up to 75% of the funding. Such bodies liked applicants to attract as much external funding as possible and appended to the report were details of the anticipated partnership funding element of the scheme. As with the HLF award, these funds were not secured at this stage. In realistic terms, the Council needed to be prepared to commit a maximum of £220,000 to the scheme. This was above the amount anticipated previously, but given the scale of the project and the opportunity to attract over £1 million of Lottery money, it offered excellent value. A breakdown of the likely revenue implications was also provided, equating to £25,700 per annum. A tree survey of the site had been required as part of the development proposals and this had identified urgent works. The sum of £137,000 had been

earmarked in the Capital Programme for 2004/05, together with the sum of £24,000 per year in the General Fund Revenue Account from 2004/05. Based on these estimates the Council's commitment was in excess of the £220,000 but this demonstrated that the Council could achieve its part of the funding package, on an ongoing basis.

It was felt that the Council should be proud of the work undertaken to date. The future maintenance requirements were recognised, together with the change in management arrangements for this site to preserve the planned restoration. Members questioned the implications for other parks and it was hoped to submit a Service Development Proposal to raise maintenance standards elsewhere. With the approval of the Chair, a local Ward Member spoke to this item and he commended the proposals. These sentiments were echoed by other Members.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approves the submission of the restoration proposals for the Maurice Lea Memorial Park.

HCS/6. **COMMUNITY SAFETY BEST VALUE REVIEW**

It was reported that this Best Value Review commenced in February and had been progressed through the scoping stage to production of initial baseline assessments. The progress had been reported to the Council at its Meeting on 17th April 2003 when agreement was given for the Review to focus on Section 17 requirements and youth-related anti-social behaviour. Officers had been working with colleagues from the University of Leicester to collate the information and complete the baseline assessments for these two issues. The initial assessments prepared by the University were appended to the report. The report included the principal observations that had been drawn from each of the two areas and key issues relating to these findings.

The Review Team felt that the draft assessments provided a significant summary of the issues, but some further work was still required, including consultation with partners. In terms of Section 17, less than 10% of staff had returned questionnaires and this would be revisited to ensure an increased return. Further work would be undertaken through team briefings to ascertain a more accurate picture of staff's understanding of Section 17 and the Council's obligations under the Crime and Disorder Act. With regard to youth-related anti-social behaviour, the baseline assessment would be circulated to key partners as well as the Anti-social Behaviour Action Team. Their responses would confirm whether the assessment provided an accurate representation. Once this exercise was complete, work would begin on the improvement plans for the two issues.

A Member requested a definition of Section 17, which was duly provided. A view was expressed that this was a long report that was difficult to absorb and had no clear conclusions. Officers explained the nature of baseline assessments and it was noted that the Improvement Plans would be produced as the next phase.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be received and that Members comments on the draft objectives be included in the Review Improvement Plan.

HCS/7. **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS SCHEME 2003/04**

It was reported that the Community Partnerships Scheme for 2003/04 would continue using the same processes and procedures agreed last year. However, the budget had been increased to £150,000 and extra Panel Meetings would be called to allow for distribution of grants across the year. In addition to allocating grants, the Scheme provided for funding advice and project development support to the voluntary and community sectors.

To date, ten applications had been received asking for approximately £105,000 of funds against a budget for the year of £150,000. The Panel assessed and ranked the applications according to the criteria and it had made a recommendation to fund five of the ten projects. In addition to considering the scores, the Panel needed to bear in mind other factors such as the overall budget, the development stage of projects and the quality of information received. Consequently, two awards were for the full amount requested, one was for the full amount, but with conditions and the other two were for the full amount according to eligibility criteria. Of the five unsuccessful projects, one was felt to be ineligible and the others would be given feedback about how to improve their application or advised of alternate funding sources. In some cases, there would be the possibility to re-submit an application for funding. The report included details of each grant application, the weighted scores from the appraisals, the total score and the ranking of the application.

RESOLVED:-

(1) That the Committee approves the recommendations of the Community Partnership Scheme Assessment Panel and that grants totalling £49,395 be awarded to:-

***West Street Methodist Church;
Linton Sports Activity Centre;
Friends of Newhall Churches;
Dalbury Lees Millennium Hall Trust; and
Hilton Scouts and Guide Association.***

(2) That a minimum of two further Panel Meetings be held in September 2003 and January 2004, with additional meetings convened, dependent upon the volume of applications received.

HCS/8. **CRIME AND DISORDER PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

It was reported that in April 2002, the South Derbyshire Crime and Disorder Partnership published its three-year strategy for reducing crime and disorder in the District. The Strategy included a Year 1 Action Plan. The End of Year Report for that Plan had been completed and approved by the Partnership's Strategic Group. A copy of the report was circulated for the Committee's consideration. During Year 1, the Partnership had been most active in reducing house burglary and auto crime and details were provided of the achievements to date. Newhall was historically the Ward with the highest

burglary rate and through a combination of initiatives there had been a 60% reduction in reported burglaries. The Year End Report also included a summary of the Communities Against Drugs Initiative, which had contributed greatly to the reduction in burglary.

A summary of the Partnership's work was contained in an Action Team update, circulated with the report. For Year 2 of the Crime and Disorder Strategy, the Action Plan had been approved by the Strategic Group and this had also been circulated for the Committee's consideration. The Plan was far more ambitious than the first year plan and the actions for anti-social behaviour and domestic violence sought to place these issues at the centre of the Partnership's work for 2003/04. An outline was given of particular issues and projects that would be undertaken. These should give a balanced approach between short-term crime reduction/deterrent measures and a longer-term behavioural change process, linked to facilities for young people and community engagement.

Several Members praised the Crime and Disorder Partnership for the achievements made to date. In particular, there was recognition of the impact in reducing crime. Comment was made on the success of the Liberation Day, the proposed work on domestic violence and the achievements of the Council's small team dedicated to this service area. Members referred to the increasing crime statistics in the Stenson Fields area. Officers were asked to liaise with Ward Councillors to develop projects for this area and assist the formation of local action groups. Nomination to the Partnership's Violent Crime Action Team was discussed. A Member referred to the success of the Partnership in Newhall and hoped that similar support would be received for his own Midway Ward. It was explained that some of the covert Police operations had included both the Midway and Newhall Wards.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee accepts the 2002/03 Crime and Disorder Partnership Year End Report and approves the 2003/04 Crime and Disorder Partnership Action Plan.

HCS/9. **SRB6 AND DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FUNDING APPLICATIONS**

It was reported that the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) 6 Programme was now entering its third year of delivery and Officers wished to continue the successful use of its funding to progress local projects. The programme covered the geographical areas of Newhall and Woodville and it had previously funded a range of projects. For 2003/04, the following projects were being submitted:-

Home Security Project;
South Derbyshire Sport;
BMX/Skateboard Park;
Access for Youth; and
Mobile CCTV.

A summary was given of each of the projects, the total costs and the funding being sought from SRB6. Derbyshire County Council had offered funding of £15,000 for the Mobile CCTV project.

A view was expressed that additional support was needed for community and voluntary organisations, with funding applications. The Chair praised the Council's Partnership Development Officer for the assistance he provided to such groups. These sentiments were supported by another Member.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Council submits funding applications to the Single Regeneration Budget 6 for the identified projects.***
- (2) That the Council accepts the offer of funding from Derbyshire County Council for the mobile closed circuit television scheme.***

HCS/10. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th March 2003 and of the Special Meeting held on 17th April 2003 were received.

COTON-IN-THE-ELMS BAND ROOM (Paragraph 9)

The Committee approved the sale of the site of the Coton-in-the-Elms Band Room and an area of adjacent land.

LAND TO THE REAR OF NOS. 11, 13 AND 15 STANLEY CLOSE, NETHERSEAL (Paragraph 9)

The Committee deferred consideration of this item to enable further research.

LAND ADJOINING NO. 58 LULLINGTON ROAD, OVERSEAL (Paragraph 9)

The Committee rejected a request to sell an area of Council owned land.

VILLAGE HALLS AND COMMUNITY PREMISES (Paragraph 9)

The Committee deferred consideration of this item to enable further research.

R.W. SOUTHERN

CHAIR