



MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2006
10.00 AM

HELD AT THE BOURNE CORN EXCHANGE

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Pam Bosworth
Councillor Mrs Joyce Gaffigan
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing

Councillor Peter Martin-Mayhew (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Margery Radley
Councillor Mrs Judy Smith (Vice-Chairman)

OFFICERS

Director of Tenancy Services
Repairs and Improvements Manager
Supported Housing Manager
Housing Solutions Manager
Business Service Team Leader
Housing Solutions Admin Assistant
Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Support Officer

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

43. COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

44. MEMBERSHIP

The Panel were notified that Councillor Mrs Radley was substituting for Councillor Mrs Wheat for this meeting only.

45. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Sandall.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

47. ACTION NOTES

The action notes for the meeting held on 14th September were confirmed as a correct record with the amendment that the following Councillor and Officers

were present at the meeting:

Councillor Mrs Cartwright

Corporate Head of Finance and Resources
Service Manager, Assets & Facilities
Service Manager, Development & Building Control
CCTV Manager
Community Safety Officer
Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Support Officer
Sergeant Mike Jones Local Authority Liaison Officer

48. SERVICE PLANS: GATEWAY REVIEW 1

Tenancy & Neighbourhood Services

Members had been circulated with a copy of the service plan which had been colour coded for ease of reference. The Director of Tenancy Services informed the panel that the 17 objectives listed had been discussed at a meeting of the District Compacts on 9th October and a traffic light system had been introduced to explain the performance assessment of each of the objectives. He then went through the 5 objectives which covered Tenancy Services as a whole and were shown in red ink. The first objective was to "*Develop a fully integrated and successful Tenancy Service Team*". The Tenancy Services structure had been in place and fully staffed since January this year. A two day away day had taken place in February for team building and annual appraisals had taken place although a lot of work had been done there was still more to do and therefore an amber light had been given. The next objective dealt with "*LSVT pre ballot work*" a significant amount of work had been done with both the tenants working group and LIBRA the independent tenant advisors, the offer document had been sent to all tenants and the ballot was currently taking place. There was still work to be done and therefore this objective had also been given an amber light. The next objective dealt with the "*delivery of Gershon savings*" a projected saving of £34,000 had been made, however the actual saving was £61,000 and therefore this objective had a green light. The next objective "*Customer Services Strategy*" had a red light. The Director of Tenancy Services informed the panel that priority had been given to work on the LSVT and key members of staff had been doing work on policies for South Lincolnshire Homes. Also there was a gap in the information that the tenancy services database held which meant that the IT system needed to be developed in order to capture the relevant data. After the results of the ballot were known a more meaningful customer services strategy could be produced. A question was asked about how the relevant data was measured to which the Director of Tenancy Services replied that it was a case of sitting down with the tenants and discussing their satisfaction level with the service they received. Also information obtained from satisfaction surveys carried out when new

tenants moved in to properties or had repairs carried out helped in shaping the strategy. A further question was asked about staff resources, did these affect gershon savings. The Director of Tenancy Services replied that any savings identified were re-invested in the service and he referred to areas such as Supported Housing where less sickness in the staff had meant there was no need for the paying of overtime or employing agency staff which contributed to savings. Another question was asked about staffing, whether there was insufficient staff to complete the targets. The Director of Tenancy Services replied that most staff were in place and although the structure was tight you did the best with the resources that you had. The final objective was "*Scope Vision for improved use of asset base*" again work on this objective had been displaced due to LSVT and further work was necessary to identify gaps in the data held. The Director of Tenancy Services referred to the under occupation scheme which identified stock that was not being used to it's potential but again more work was required and this objective also had a red light. Further comments were made about the provision of new housing and the new anti-social behaviour team which would be funded and run by South Lincolnshire Homes if the ballot was a yes vote. The work they undertook would be in conjunction with the Council's Community Safety Team and the Police but would only relate to those properties which came under the RSL.

The Director of Tenancy Services then went through the three Tenancy and Neighbourhood objectives. "*The Resident Involvement Strategy*" this objective had been given an amber light because again priority had been given to LSVT work and although some research had been carried out more was required on best practice. The next objective "*Bedding in new neighbourhood services team to tackle anti-social behaviour*" due to the excellent team work within the Community Safety team and the regular estate inspections and being able to identify problems direct with residents this had been given a green light. The third objective was the "*Implementation of Service charge structure across all tenancy services areas*" until the outcome of the ballot was known work on this had not been progressed and therefore a red light had been given.

Repairs & Improvements

The next four objectives dealt with the repairs and improvement section of Tenancy Services. The interim Repairs and Improvements Manager spoke about the "*Asset Investment Strategy*" this was on course, but dependent on the outcome of the ballot. A question was asked about the stock condition and the Repairs and Improvements Manager replied that a 10% sample was enough to gauge the general condition of the stock which meant that by 2007 all the Council's stock would meet the decent homes standard, he also confirmed that none of the Council's stock was uninhabitable, but that didn't mean that work was not required on some properties. The next objective was "*Modernisation of Direct Works Organisation*" there was still a considerable amount of work still to do in modernising the section with the training and development of staff for them to become multi skilled. Payment would become monthly rather than weekly and as there was still a considerable amount of work still to do this objective had been given a red light. A question was asked about the use of consultants, surely this was a waste of money when the skill

required were available in house. The Repairs and Improvements Manager replied that the service could perform better and often external consultants could see efficiencies and savings from a different perspective. The work ethic of the DWO was introduced in the 1970's and this applied up and down the country. However, times had changed as had tools used and construction methods and it was necessary to re look at working methods and reward people accordingly. The next objective *"To put in place key service level agreements with other Council services and service providers"* had taken a backseat due to the LSVT issue and therefore this also had been given a red light. The next objective *"Void Improvement"* had been given a green light. A tremendous amount of work had been done on the voids and the restructure of tenancy services to include the DWO had made an impact on the services which had gone from 37 calendar days to 29 calendar days. A question was asked about the workforce's attitude to the changes being made to which the Repairs and Improvement Manager replied.

The Business Service Team Leader, Debbie Scales was then introduced to the Panel. This was a new team within tenancy services and was not a tenant facing team. This team supported work on ANITE; helped prepare the PI's, diversity, it also dealt with administrative support when required and helped with manuals and procedures for the section. This team had three objectives the first was *"The adoption of a Procurement Strategy"*. This issue was well on course and a green traffic light had been given. The next objective was *"The continuing development of Housing Management systems (including Anite)"*. Although some work had been undertaken with this objective it was found that a permanent member of staff was needed, not temporary and therefore an amber light had been given. The third objective dealt with *"Diversity & Equal Opportunity Strategy and Generic Equality Impact Assessment"* this had been given an amber light.

Supported Housing

Two objectives came under Supported Housing within the Tenancy Services. The first one dealt with *"Review of hardware, software processes and procedure relating to control centre operation"*. This issue had been given a green light as in May this year the system had been upgraded from a PNC3 to PNC4 which was the latest monitoring system available. The system was now very much embedded within the work of Care services and the Council had a good working relationship with Tunstall which began in 1988. The accreditation work was still being undertaken and it was hoped that this would be completed in March 2007. A question was asked about resources and the Support Housing Manager replied that some issues had arisen with new procedures and more staffing for the control centre. A data base needed to be compiled to include every contact, key holder, support client which was 20,000 + which was going to mean more resources in the next gateway review. A further question was asked about what LSVT would mean to the service. The Support Housing Manager replied that if it was a yes ballot a service level agreement would need to be in place between the new RSL and the Council to ensure that all procedures and policies were robust and that the funding for the service was correct. The next objective was *"Vision for sheltered housing for*

future generations” this was an important objective which involved a lot of work. The supporting people regime would have a significant impact but as funding was now directed from LCC this was causing problems. A secretariat review was awaited and any change would be reported to this DSP. The budget was as robust as it could be in the current environment but there were changes to be made to the way the service is delivered in the future and therefore this had been given an amber light. Concerns were expressed about the current work that wardens were being expected to do with regard to sheltered housing and supporting people. The Support Housing Manager replied that a review would be taking place within the next 12 months and it was possible that wardens would have a title change and their work would be more generic in nature but capacity and capability would be included within the review. It was also confirmed that vulnerable people now came within the category A priority of affordable housing.

Housing Solutions

The next gateway review dealt with the Housing Solutions Section. In a presentation to the panel the Housing Solutions Manager gave a brief background to the service which was “born” in December 2005, following the audit inspection which had been held in February 2005 at which the council had been given nil stars with uncertain prospects for the future. An improvement plan for the service was approved in May 2005. A further inspection of the service had taken place in July this year at which the Council had received one star with promising prospects for the future. However, the government kept moving the goal posts and a report was being submitted to the Cabinet on 6th November. He then outlined the statutory main policies which the section dealt with;

- Housing Strategy
- Private Sector Housing Policy
- Homelessness Policy
- HMO Licensing Policy
- Affordable Housing Policies (as part of planning framework)

The Housing Solutions service plan included affordable housing which was enshrined in planning legislation, guidance and constraints. Currently the council was on course to exceed its target of 130 affordable houses. A review of the Section 106 policies was still needed but with the legislation changing with regard to the Local Development Framework, this document would not now be complete until 2008. A question was asked about Section 106 policies and the number of affordable homes per houses built and the Housing Solutions Manager replied that the ratio currently was for every 25 homes or more there should be 30% affordable housing, however the new guideline was for every 15 homes or more there should be 15% affordable homes. He then spoke about the Housing Strategy which was agreed fit for purpose in July this year and the fact that the Housing Market Area for this area actual came under Peterborough not Lincoln, also work was ongoing with regard to sites for the gypsies and travellers. Private sector work included warm front top-up grants, links with energy efficiency and getting people aware of the benefits that they

could be entitled to. Also the disabled facilities position had been identified and extra funding of £200,000 had been requested from the government. A Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency had been in place since July. He then spoke of the work being undertaken on the homeless side which included work towards a countrywide policy which was due in April 2007, a rent deposit scheme, more prevention work which included a shared domestic violence co-ordinator with North Kesteven District Council and improved partnership working. An electronic procedure manual was also available and this would be included in the new CSC. The Housing Solutions Manager then referred to resources which had impacted the section and these included recruitment difficulties, an overspend on the B& B budget and the fact that the disabled facilities grants budget had been committed as at 30 September 2006. A further question was asked about homelessness and the Housing Solutions Manager gave two recent examples of how two families had been dealt with. Further questions were asked about what was affordable housing and the type of housing needed in the Deepings to which the Housing Solutions Manager replied. If LSVT was a yes ballot how would this affect the use of units for homelessness? The Housing Solutions Manager replied that an agreement would be entered into between the Council and the RSL.

49. RE-INSPECTION OF STRATEGIC HOUSING SERVICES

Members noted the report and congratulated the Housing Solutions Manager on the work that he and his team had carried out which had resulted in the Council receiving a report of a one star service with promising prospects.

50. CLOSE OF MEETING

Conclusion

That the next meeting of the Community DSP be held on Wednesday 22nd November at Stamford Arts Centre.

The meeting closed at 12 noon.

Members decided to postpone the meeting scheduled to be held on 9th November to Wednesday 22nd November and that it be held at Stamford Arts Centre.