

**Community Services Scrutiny Committee**24 July 2008  
2:30pm – 6pm

**Present:** Councillors Blair (Chair), Al Bander, Blencowe, Kightley, Levy, Lynn, McGovern and Walker

**Non-voting co-optees:** Diane Best, Brian Haywood, Anna Vine-Lott (Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives)

**Also Present:**

Cllr Smart (Executive Councillor for Housing)

Cllr Stuart (Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health)

Cllr Smith (Executive Cllr for Arts and Recreation)

**For the Information of the Council****08/CS/47 Minutes**

The minutes of meetings on 15 November 2007, 10 April 2008 and the Special Meeting on 22 May 2008 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chair

**08/CS/48 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Sanders and Councillor Ellis-Miller

**08/CS/49 Declarations of Interest**

Cllrs Stuart and Lynn declared personal interests as non voting members of the Board of the Junction in relation to minute 08/CS/64: New Town Community Development Capital Grants Programme

Cllr McGovern declared a personal interest as a Trustee of the Arbury Community Centre in relation to minute 08/CS/68: Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances for 2007/08 Community Development and Heath Portfolio

**08/CS/50 Petition – The Future of the Tiverton House Site**

The Chair explained that a petition containing 64 signatures had been received regarding the future of Tiverton House. The text of the petition read:

*We the undersigned local residents are concerned that Tiverton House sheltered housing scheme is now empty and is to be sold on the open market and we:*

1. *OBJECT to the Councils plan to sell it to the highest bidder for development into yet more expensive flats*
2. *OBJECT to any development that is out of character in an area that includes bungalows and where a high percentage of the residents are older people*
3. *OBJECT to an opportunity to provide new and much needed homes for older people being lost*

*We call on Councillor Catherine Smart, Cambridge City Council's Liberal Democrat Executive Councillor for Housing:*

4. *to continue to provide housing for older people on the Tiverton House site whether the current building stays or not*
5. *to specifically invite housing associations, mutual housing schemes and providers of sheltered housing to bid for the site*
6. *to fully consult all local residents before accepting any bid or agreeing the future land use.*

The Chair then invited Mr Tariq Sadiq to speak in support of the petition

Mr Sadiq explained that the sale of Tiverton House, on the open market to the highest bidder, had caused concern and anxiety amongst local residents who feared that it could be replaced by inappropriate housing such as expensive flats. It was also felt that in the current financial climate the site could remain unsold and may be prone to vandalism and squatting

The petitioners had a number of questions:

- How many expressions of interest had been received on the site?
- How many of these had been from Housing Associations?
- What price would be expected for the site?
- What measures had been taken to market the property?

Coleridge Ward Councillor Chris Howell then spoke in support of the petition:

It was felt that the character of the area and the layout of the site would make it difficult to develop and further information was requested on any discussions between the Planning Department and Community Services. Councillor Howells again highlighted residents concerns that the site would be sold to the highest bidder when housing for the elderly was still in short supply. It was also felt that the timing of the sale, with the current credit crunch, was unfortunate.

Coleridge Ward Councillor Jeremy Benstead then also spoke in support of the petition:

Residents felt that the issue had been dealt with badly by the Council and caused a lot of confusion and concern - Tiverton House had been singled out for sale whilst all other sites were to be refurbished

It was felt that the decision had been based on County Council figures that suggested that there were too many sheltered housing beds in the City – these figures were however questionable. Residents had expressed a strong desire that Tiverton House remain as sheltered housing accommodation

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions but none were raised

The Director of Community Services stated that it was regrettable the Council could not afford to modernise all of the sites within the Capital Programme but deficits had to be managed. The current scheme involved 4 refurbishments, 2 sites transferred to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and the disposal of 1 site (Tiverton House)

It was noted that the decision was not related to County Council figures but was purely down to the need to raise additional funds for the refurbishment programme. As Tiverton House had shared facilities it was also felt that any additional funding would be more difficult to secure

In response to the other questions raised, the Director confirmed that:

- Expressions of interest had been received from 4 RSLs and 2 others, with the deadline being September 2008
- It was not a condition of the sale that the site be retained for older peoples housing
- It was hoped hope that the site would make a fair price and during the time in the programme its valuation had increased
- Access to the site could be an issue but this would be a planning consideration
- In order to finish the modernisation programme Tiverton House would have to be sold

The Executive Councillor for Housing confirmed that when sold, any decision on the future of the site would be down to the Planning Committee and that residents would be fully consulted. It was also noted that the poor housing market might be beneficial as RSLs could have better access to funds and building costs would be lower

## **08/CS/51 Public Questions**

None

### **08/CS/52 Draft Affordable Housing Land Policy**

The Head of Strategic Housing Services introduced the report. It was confirmed that the policy was still in draft form and, if agreed, wider consultation would be undertaken with a final report submitted to Committee in the November

In response to a question from Councillor McGovern regarding the inclusion of sustainable urban drainage (SUD) in the draft policy it was noted that, whilst it was not specifically mentioned, point C9 of the report covered sustainability standards. The Director of Community Services also confirmed that a report on SUD had been previously brought to committee and a new post had been created to take this forward. It was also noted that SUD was covered and addressed through planning policy

At the request of the Committee the Head of Strategic Housing Services noted the request for a more specific reference to SUD and also reminded members that further comments could be fed back outside of the meeting

Anna Vine-Lott asked for further information regarding the choice of land parcels as mentioned in point C8 of the policy and it was noted that there was a preference for affordable housing to be delivered as completed built units – but this was a caveat so that the policy remained flexible

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Housing approved the recommendations

### **08/CS/53 Affordable Housing Programme – Use of Council housing sites to provide more Affordable Housing**

The Head of Strategic Housing Services introduced the report that recommended improvements in the way Council owned housing sites are brought forward for development or redevelopment for new Affordable Housing. It was noted that it was designed to be an open and transparent approach based on a 3 year rolling programme that would be reviewed annually

Consultation and communication regarding proposed sites would be in a 2-stage process:

Stage 1 – Executive Councillor would approve the 3-year programme annually, which would include Council Housing sites proposed for development or redevelopment. Ward members, tenant representatives and any tenants affected would be advised

Stage 2 – Detailed consultation on Council housing sites included for consideration with all stakeholders including ward members, tenant representatives and any tenants affected on a scheme by scheme basis, prior to a final decision on a scheme

In response to member concerns over additional sites being added to the programme mid-year (point 4.2 of the report) it was agreed that this point would be removed. The Director of Community Services did however state that there might still be exceptional circumstances (i.e. unexpected funding refusal/approval) when this could happen

Diane Best suggested that point 3.3 of the report – *‘the process will ensure that investment decisions are recommended following full consideration by all stakeholders, including tenants should they be affected’* – should also mention leaseholders. This was agreed by members and officers

Councillor Blencowe questioned who would pay for property consultants involved in the site feasibility studies and it was confirmed that, whilst it would depend on circumstances, it was likely to be other partners such as the RSLs

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Housing approved the recommendations

## **08/CS/54 Miscellaneous Leasing Policy**

The Head of Strategic Housing Services introduced the report and emphasised the importance of reviewing and standardising the leasing arrangements with voluntary and not-for-profit organisations

Councillor Levy questioned the timescale with which existing leaseholders would be informed of potential increases in cost and was informed that it would be a gradual introduction (as and when leases expired) and adequate notice would be arranged

It was also confirmed that Leaseholders had been fully involved with the consultation on this policy

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Housing approved the recommendations

### **08/CS/55 Cambridgeshire Supporting People Draft Review of Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs)**

The Technical Manager introduced the report and explained that authority was needed to approve the proposed response to the consultation questions of the Cambridge Supporting People HIA review. Due to the short timescale officers had only been able to identify some key issues but work was ongoing

It was noted that whilst funding of HIA comes from a number of sources including Local Authorities, Cambridgeshire County Council, Supporting People and Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust, the City Council continually contributes a higher percentage than the others

Councillor Blencowe felt the Councils HIA should be valued and kept in house instead of being provided by an external body. In response to a related question the Technical Manager stated that it was now a general trend for funding organisations to go to the open market in order to get the best deal

In response to a question from Councillor McGovern it was confirmed that the City Council contributed around £130,000 per annum – which equated to 44% of the Supporting People running costs

Through general discussion it was highlighted that value to the customer needed to be maintained as well as value for money – especially as the service catered for some of the most venerable people in the community

The Head of Strategic Housing Services agreed that it was important to understand what the customer wanted and involvement was the key

Councillor Blencowe proposed that recommendation 2.2 be removed in order to show the Councils support of their own in house HIA

On a show of hands the amendment was lost by 5 votes to 3

The Committee therefore approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Housing approved the recommendations

### **08/CS/56 Cambridge Challenge: Update on Project Management**

The Director of Community Services introduced the report and informed members that periodic updates would be brought back to this meeting

In response to a question from Councillor Blencowe it was confirmed that only RSLs involved in the consortium would be involved in the Cambridge Challenge discussions

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Housing approved the recommendations

### **08/CS/57 Affordable Warmth Policy**

The Technical Manager introduced the report. Members were informed that as part of the Home Strategy adopted in November 2006, and because of increasing energy costs, an Affordable Warmth Policy was now required

In response to a question from Councillor Kightley regarding the inclusion of upper-limit healthy temperatures (as well as the lower levels noted in 3.2 of the report) the Technical Manager stated that this type of advice was already given by officers through their regular contact with residents

Councillor Walker welcomed the report and asked what level of funding would be required for this extra activity. In response the Home Energy Officer stated that whilst the Decent Homes Programme would cover a lot of the cost on the Councils own stock, the private sector stock had been a more neglected area. However, a new officer was in post which would mean better access to external funding and a lot more promotional work

The Home Energy Strategy spent £1.3 million on heating and energy efficiencies in 2007/08 – which funded 600 homes for new boilers and 240 homes for improved insulation. The average saving per household over the 3-year period was estimated to be £93.80

It was agreed that the Home Energy Officer would circulate a summary sheet of this information to all members

Anna Vine-Lott confirmed that this information would be included and disseminated at the upcoming Tenant Festival

The Committee approved the recommendations by 8 votes to 0 (unanimous)

The Executive Councillor for Housing approved the recommendations

### **08/CS/58 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances for 2007/08**

The Principal Accountant introduced the report and highlighted the 8 recommendations to members

In response to questions regarding recommendations *f* and *g* the Director of Community Services agreed to arrange a briefing paper in the autumn on Jimmy's Night Shelter and the new Assessment Centre

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations

### **08/CS/59 Exclusion of the press and public**

Before considering the report and appendices for item 14 and the report for item 15, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to exclude members of the public from the meeting on the grounds that, if they were present, there would be disclosure to them of information defined as exempt from publication by Categories 1 and 3 as defined in the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

### **08/CS/60 Update On The Housing Corporation's National Affordable Housing Programmes 2006/08, 2008/11 and 2008/9 Quarter 1 Regular Market Engagement**

The Head of Strategic Housing Services introduced the report and stated that increasing the supply of affordable housing within the City was a high priority for the Council. Working with Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners, the Council were seeking to maximise development opportunities as they arose

He reported back on the grant allocation received for 2006/8 which has been affected by changes to the rules governing allocations, the outcome of the NAHP 2008/11 bid round and reports on the schemes submitted in the Quarter 1 Regular Market Engagement held in April 2008

In response to a question from Councillor Blencowe regarding the outline financial position the head of Strategic Housing Services agreed to circulate a written answer to all members

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Housing approved the recommendations

**08/CS/61 Vacant House: Property Q, Cambridge Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)**

The Executive Councillor introduced the report and explained that in July 2004 she had authorised the compulsory purchase of this property. After much negotiation over the last 4 years with the owner it had been decided to proceed with the CPO

However, advice had now been given to go back to the Executive Councillor to endorse the previous decision due to the lapse in time

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Housing approved the recommendations

**08/CS/62 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances for 2007/08: Arts and Recreation Portfolio**

The Principal Accountant introduced the report and spoke to the recommendations to members.

Members expressed concern about the clarity of the document and the level of detail enclosed especially relating to the Section 106 agreement works. The Director of Community Services said she would provide the additional information to the entries referred to.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation approved the recommendations.

**08/CS/62 Corn Exchange Catering Tender for Contract(s) 2009-2012**

The report by the Head of Arts and Entertainments referred to the requirement of a new contract for the bar and catering services at the Corn Exchange for a further three year period.

Members commented on the lack of success of the daytime catering service at the Corn Exchange arising among other things from the fierce competition in the city centre.

The Head of Arts and Entertainments said that the day time service had to be considered as an integral part of the overall catering facilities, however the position was to be reviewed at the end of the next contract. The Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation said that by then new catering facilities might be operating in the Guildhall and that would have an effect on the day time provision in the Corn Exchange.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation approved the recommendations.

### **08/CS/62 Improving Health Partnership Plan 2008-2011**

Before consideration of item 18, there was a short presentation from Tom Dutton, Head of Strategic Planning at the Primary Care Trust, one of the key partners involved in developing the Plan.

Mr Dutton responded to members questions and comments and the Chair thanked him for his attendance.

A new Improving Health Plan proposed by the Cambridge City and South Cambs Improving Health Partnership had been produced to consider how best to take forward recommendations of the health objectives from the Sustainable Community Strategies for both Councils. The Plan highlighted actions partner organisations needed to take forward work on the health priorities for the two districts and showed a number of areas, backed with evidence, that were of significance for the City and South Cambs.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 8 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health approved the recommendations.

### **08/CS/63 Community Development Strategy – Cambridge University Press site, Brooklands Avenue / Newtown area (CUPBAN)**

The proposed Community Development strategy for the Cambridge University Press Site, Brooklands Avenue and Newtown area (CUPBAN) provided a framework for social cohesion, supporting the new communities being developed in the area and links with the established community. It aimed to build community engagement, capacity amongst community organisations and develop partnership working amongst key stakeholders in

the area. It had been developed in consultation with local residents, community groups and agencies working in the area.

The funding being made available by Circle Anglia, the registered social landlord (RSL) responsible for developing affordable homes on the Accordia site, would enable a medium to long term strategy to be developed for the area. The strategy would be implemented and managed by Community Development in partnership with other stakeholders.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health approved the recommendations.

### **08/CS/64 New Town Community Development Capital Grants Programme**

Planning permission for the Accordia Site in Brooklands Avenue had included an obligation on the developer to make a financial contribution to the provision of off-site community facilities.

This report proposed the establishment of a Capital Programme to provide a framework for the assessment and implementation of projects using this contribution. A draft remit and criteria, listed in paragraph 3.6, for assessing and processing bids had also been proposed for further consultation during August and September 2008.

However, because of the need to make an early decision on funding for the Junction (see minute ) it was proposed that £40,000 from this pot be allocated immediately to the Junction project making the amount available for investment through the New Town Capital Programme an estimated £130,000.

Members said that there should clarity about the purpose of the funding allocated to the Junction, and suggested the Chair and Spokesperson review the wording of the agreement to fund the Junction.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health approved the recommendations, subject to review of the agreement as set out above.

### **08/CS/65 Purchase and Launch of the ChYpPS (Children and Young People's Participation Service) Community Play Boat**

In 2004 funding was announced for all local authorities to develop and promote facilities for children's play, this funding was to be allocated through the Big Lottery. Following consultation with children and young people ChYpPS submitted a successful bid to Big Lottery and funding was released to support 4 projects which form part of the Urban Adventure Play Portfolio.

The proposal for the ChYpPS Community Play Boat was part of the Urban Adventure Play portfolio which had Big Lottery funding for 3 years. The boat would be purchased subject to approval during the winter of 2008 and the project launched in spring 2009.

The Head of Community Development said negotiations were continuing on the mooring location.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 8 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health approved the recommendations.

### **08/CS/66 Cambridge City Charter for Play**

The charter for play would establish a set of guiding principles for agencies and organisations providing play opportunities for children and young people. The charter would be developed with children and young people and its launch would be supported by the development of a Cambridge Play Partnership. The charter would be distributed to all school age children and young people within the city and be used to influence and affect change in provision and promote the right to play.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 8 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health approved the recommendations.

### **08/CS/67 Capital Grant – The Junction Development Programme**

The Junction was planning a significant expansion of its activities for young people aged 11-19 and its role as a local community facility. Its most urgent priority was the development of the building's front of house areas, which offered insufficient space to sustain a successful café, drop in space for

young people or hold a capacity audience in the theatre. In the longer term, The Junction planned to develop its Clifton Road site to house an exciting new youth facility, and new spaces for creative and cultural enterprises. The project was being developed with the assistance of the County Council, Arts Council and voluntary sector.

This award would enable the Junction to create a café area where young people could gather for informal and creative learning, access culture and entertainment, and meet and spend time with other young people in a safe and welcoming environment.

The café would be the first phase of the larger project. It would not only provide a valuable local amenity but create a focal point for the involvement of young people in the project. City Council funding could also provide a stimulus and lever, attracting other funds and support for the initiative.

Members asked that the Director of Community Services report further on the extent of spending proposals for the funding.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 8 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health approved the recommendations.

### **08/CS/68 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances for 2007/08 Community Development and Health Portfolio**

The Principal Accountant introduced the report and spoke on the recommendations to members.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health approved the recommendations.

### **08/CS/69 The Meadows Community Centre – Energy Efficiency Project**

This project was to provide measures to improve the energy efficiency of the Meadows Community Centre by up to 30%. Over a period of three years the centre's lighting will be improved and new insulated ceilings installed in the main areas of the building.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health approved the recommendations.

### **08/CS/70 Capital Grant – The Youth Bus**

The Youth Bus Project was a partnership involving South Cambridgeshire District Council, the Connections Bus Project and the City Council. The project would deliver mobile youth facilities to the city centre, growth sites and villages in South Cambs.

The cost of purchasing and fitting out the bus would be shared by the two local authorities using resources allocated to them by the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). The project will be managed by the Connections Bus Project who would procure the vehicle and oversee its conversion, using grant aid from the City and South Cambs. The day to day use of the bus would be managed by the Bus Project. The funding package also included revenue support for two years after which the project would be reviewed. Beyond the initial two-year period the costs for use of the bus in the city would be met by resources within the Children and Young People's Participation Service budget with contributions expected from other services using the bus.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 8 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health approved the recommendations.

### **08/CS/71 Financial Support to Voluntary and Not-for-profit Groups 2008-9**

This report detailed one application from a voluntary or not-for-profit organisations for 2008/9 community development funding deferred from the January 2008 meeting, allocations made following the meeting, budget to date and a new application from the Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum.

The Head of Community Development updated the Committee on the status of the Cambridge Refugee Support Group and advised that the terms of the grant be revised to accommodate the reported change in circumstances.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 8 votes to 0

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health approved the recommendations.

**Chair**

The meeting finished at 6.00pm