

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SERVICE DELIVERY COMMITTEE HELD AT THE
COUNCIL OFFICES, STATION ROAD, WIGSTON ON TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2015
COMMENCING AT 7:00 PM**

<u>IN ATTENDANCE:</u>		
Chair - Councillor G A Boulter Vice Chair - Councillor Mrs S Z Haq		
COUNCILLORS:		
G S Atwal J W Boyce Dr T Khong	L A Bentley D M Carter R H Thakor	Ms A R Bond Miss M V Chamberlain Mrs S B Morris
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:		
Mrs A E Court S Beard	C Raymakers S J Ball	Ms A Pathak-Mould

Min Ref.	Narrative	Officer Resp.
18.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE An apology for absence was received from Councillors F S Broadley, Mrs L M Broadley, Ms K Chalk and K J Loydall.	
19.	APPOINTMENTS OF SUBSTITUTES Councillor Mrs S B Morris substituted for Councillor K J Loydall.	
20.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST None.	
21.	MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2015 Councillor J W Boyce requested that Members' contributions to debates be herewith identified by name on the record of Committee minutes. RESOLVED THAT: The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 07 September 2015 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.	
22.	PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS None.	
23.	ACTION LIST Councillor J W Boyce requested that a gap-analysis of advisory services within the Borough be added to the Action List for completion by the next meeting of this Committee on 19 January 2016.	

	<p>RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The Action List be noted by Members.</p>	
<p>24.</p>	<p>COMMITTEE BUDGET REVIEW - APRIL TO AUGUST 2015</p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages 20 - 22) as delivered by the Principal Accountant which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>He reported that the General Fund suggested an estimated net overspend for the year of £218,500. This was said to be due to the extension of fixed-term contract salaries and the fall in market price of recyclates owing to a discontinuation of a garden waste subsidy from Leicestershire County Council and a faltering in foreign-market purchasing of recyclates. He stated that there was a general trend of expenditure falling behind profile as departments experienced difficulty in fulfilling their respective allocations, although a review of the 2015/16 set budgets was currently being undertaken. It was said that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was predicted an outturn deficit of £2,121,000 for 2015/16 following under-spends in the preceding year.</p> <p>Councillor D M Carter commended the recent receipt of Heritage Lottery Funding secured since the drafting of the report in respect of the 'Reconnecting with Nature' Scheme (at page 22).</p> <p>Councillors Mrs S B Morris enquired as to why the HRA budget had not been adjusted to reflect the carrying-forward of the revenue and capital budgets. The Principal Accountant advised that the budget would be re-set following the review process with a revised figure due to be brought before the next meeting of this Committee.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce requested that the capital and revenue programmes in the Budget Review be separated to enable Members to distinguish between the same and better indentify issues. Councillor S B Morris said she would raise the matter with the Section 151 Officer.</p> <p>Councillor R H Thakor sought clarification as to the meaning of the risk implication indicators 'CR1' and 'CR9' (at page 21) and whether these suggested any financial mismanagement on behalf of this Council.</p> <p>The Principal Account advised that these were broad strategic risk assessment matrixes assessing the Council's ability to meet financial commitments. 'CR1' was said to refer to a decrease in financial resources as a result of central Government policy. 'CR9' was said to refer to external economic changes and market-based influences.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce stated that strategic risk assessment matrixes served a generic purpose and that, whilst acknowledging the potential budgetary pressures posed by central and local government policy, this Council was at a reduced risk of any financial mismanagement in view of a recent independent auditor's assessment confirming the same.</p> <p>RESOLVED THAT:</p>	

	The current position be noted by Members.	
25.	<p>FEES AND CHARGES 2016-17</p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages 23 - 35) as delivered by the Principal Accountant which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>He added that the external leisure services providers were yet to submit their fees and charges (i.e. up to three months before the start of the financial year) in accordance with the contract, further advising that these would be submitted to a subsequent meeting of this Committee.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The proposed scale of fees and charges for 2016/17 be recommended to the Policy, Finance and Development Committee on 27 October 2015 for approval.</p>	
26.	<p>IMPACT ON HOUSING FOLLOWING GOVERNMENT BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENT</p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages 36 – 41) as delivered by the Head of Community which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>She reported that the requirement for social housing rents to be reduced by 1% served to undermine the HRA Business Plan and that work was being undertaken in partnership with consultants to forecast any impacts and adjustments. With reference to the documented impacts (at pages 37 - 38), it was said that a review of this Council's housing policies was needed in order to carefully manage its obligations in its capacity as a landlord. She stated that the proposal to extend the Right to Buy scheme to registered providers raised concerns in respect of an increasing diminution of stock vis-a-vis an increase in housing demand thus impacting on homelessness and that the policy hitherto affording tenants lifetime tenancy options required a reconsideration.</p> <p>The proposed changes to welfare benefits implicating housing services detailed in the report were also said to be of concern, most notably in respect to changes to retrospective housing benefit regulations (at page 40) and the impact this will have on vulnerable residents' claims. It was also announced to Members that the introduction of the housing element of the Universal Credit (UC) scheme in respect of 18-25 years was due to be implemented in this Borough from January 2016.</p> <p>Councillor L A Bentley sought clarification as to age-bracket of those to due to receive a reduction in credits. The Head of Community advised that those aged 18-25 would be the first tranche of affected individuals whose reduction in credits would be contingent on their circumstances.</p> <p>Councillor Ms A R Bond raised a concern regarding the lack of advisory services available to residents within the Borough, citing the increased</p>	

	<p>workload upon the Helping Hands Advice Centre(s) in the Borough. Councillor J W Boyce stated that an open-bid procurement process was to be undertaken to replace those services whose contracts had lapsed once a gap-analysis of advisory services has been completed.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce enquired as to the feasibility of rent convergence/s considering simultaneous reductions in rental rates. The Head of Community advised that rent convergence/s was now a redundant ten year target due to the recent changes in legislation. The Member therefore requested that an additional report be brought to this Committee exploring the specific implications of this subject-matter once the central Government's intentions were more clearly defined.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce requested that risk implication indicator 'CR1' be added to the report (at page 41). He further opined that the recent announcements would significantly disadvantage those individuals who were not in work and, or, otherwise financially-illiterate, stating that an affordable provision of housing was preferentially required as opposed to intervention in the housing market on the part of the government.</p> <p>Councillor Ms A R Bond enquired as to whether the Chief Executive or the Leader of the Council had responded to a request for assistance by the Chairman of the Helping Hands Advice Centre. Councillor S B Morris advised that no formal approach had been made by the Helping Hands Advice Centre for service-delivery assistance although proactive steps were being taken by this Council to arrange a meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The report be noted and the review of the Rent policy be supported once further details were known of the impact on legislative changes.</p>	
27.	<p>COMMUNITY UPDATE</p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 42 - 45) as delivered by the Head of Community which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>Rent Collection</p> <p>She reported that rent collections were comparatively lower on this quarter due to the effects of recent welfare reforms. It was proposed that the rent collection target remain at an achievable target of 99%, however, the rent arrears target for tenants be revised to 3% from 2.5%. She re-affirmed that measures were to continue to be implemented by Officers to improve collections and support tenants experiencing difficulties in paying, particularly within non-collectable weeks.</p> <p>Councillor D M Carter requested that an additional row be herewith added to the table of the Community Update report (at page 42) expressing rent arrears month-by-month as a percentage figure.</p> <p>Gas Safety</p>	

	<p>The Head of Community advised that a 100% rate of gas safety compliance was recorded until 30 September and that appointments for safety certifications for December were currently being scheduled.</p> <p>Update on Capital Programme 2014/15 and Decent Homes</p> <p>The Head of Community advised that a separate report was being provided to examine the wider refurbishment and new build projects.</p> <p>Boulter Crescent Community House</p> <p>The Head of Community stated that the Community Development Officer was continuing to develop the activities held at the Community House and that redesign work was underway at the Community Flat in readiness for a re-opening before Christmas. It was also reported that the 'Build a Better Boulter Crescent' Residents' Association had re-grouped and that Members were to be duly invited to its AGM.</p> <p>Councillor Miss M V Chamberlain asked whether the levels of disruption to the day-to-day operations at the House caused by refurbishment works had since reduced. The Head of Community confirmed the same noting that the works had reached their half-way point (i.e. phase five).</p> <p>Supporting Leicestershire Families (SLF) and Early Help</p> <p>The Head of Community reported that at a meeting of the SLF Working Group on 29 September discussing the value of the partnership and programme, Jane Moore (Head of Service at Leicestershire County Council) delivered a service presentation and an annual service report. It was agreed that a further 3 year financial commitment be maintained by this Council at the same level as previously at £23,000 per year, subject to a report being brought before to the Policy, Finance and Development Committee on 27 October 2015.</p> <p>Community Payback Schemes</p> <p>The Head of Community advised that the painting of three bus shelters had been completed and that other service-areas were be explored to better capitalise on the resourcefulness of this partnership-work.</p> <p>The Chair moved the rent arrears target for be revised to 3% for a period of one-year only, seconded by Councillor Miss M V Chamberlain.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The proposed target for rent arrears set at 3% for a period of one-year be approved.</p>	
28.	<p>HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT (HRS)</p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 46 - 49) as delivered by the Head of Community which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p>	

She reported that the Supporting People Funding, supporting the Council's on-site Warden Provision, ceased in September 2015. It was stated that there was no financial scope to continue to deliver this provision unless a charged-service was introduced: this proposal was said to be rejected by tenants when consulted, with reference to the results of the consultation as outlined in the report (at page 46). It was proposed that this service-area ought to be remodelled so as to provide inclusive support to all affected tenants, most notably to the elderly, whilst maintaining some on-site presence and by redefining existing officers' job descriptions, as detailed in the report (at pages 47 - 48).

The Head of Community reported that referrals for adult respite accommodation were now to be accepted by the Falcon Centre in Loughborough. It was also confirmed that a protocol was in place for 16-17 year olds in terms of providing secure accommodation, noting that no duty was owned to any such young person at the present time.

Councillor L A Bentley asked whether the results of the October 2014 consultation (at page 46) accurately reflected the up-to-date and inclusive views of all tenants. The Head of Community advised that the consultation did rigorously engage with tenants in an all-encompassing manner, noting a response rate of 47%. It was said that the results of the consultation still held currency given the ongoing efforts to keep tenants well-informed and the need for finality. The introduction of any legal service-change was said to require 80% tenant agreement.

The Member continued to enquire as to what format the proposed morning calls would be provided (at page 47), and what measures were being taken to ascertain tenants' genuine needs. The Head of Community said that morning calls were to be provided through the individual alarm system and that tenants' support needs were assessed via partnership-work whilst being mindful of respecting tenants' wishes.

Councillor Mrs A R Bond asked whether an emergency pull-cord system was installed in affected properties and too noted that a more up-to-date consultation ought to be conducted. The Head of Community advised that such technology was installed and available to tenants.

Councillor R H Thakor enquired as to whether Leicestershire County Council was to fund the proposed purchase of a young people's secure-unit in Oadby. The Head of Community confirmed this stating further information was to be received. The Member further raised a concern about the long-term financial viability and sustainability of the service.

Councillor J W Boyce recognised that this service-area was fraught with complexities yet endorsed a preventative approach. He further noted that affected individuals ought to be encouraged to prudently invest any direct receipts in housing related support, further lending to the need for a gap-analysis of advisory services. He stated that the proposed re-structure was the best that could be achieved within this Council's limited financial capacity and invited further work to be completed.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

	<p>The proposals to re-structure the Housing and Community Support services and roles as set out in the report be approved.</p>	
<p>29.</p>	<p>NEW BUILD PROGRAMME / REFURBISHMENT</p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 50 - 56) as delivered by the Head of Community which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>She reported that the tenant satisfaction survey conducted at Boulter Crescent indicated high levels of satisfaction pertaining to many aspects of the refurbishment works, with an average of three out of four residents fielding a “more than satisfied” response. She noted that there had been some mid-term difficulties in decanting tenants however these were adequately addressed. A copy of the full report and summary was said to be deposited in the Members’ Room for inspection by Members.</p> <p>The Chair commended the successful opening of the new Customer Contact Centre on Bell Street, Wigston on 12 October and congratulated all personnel who contributed to its efficient operation.</p> <p>Councillor L A Bentley enquired as to whether funding had been secured in respect of the development of new Council-built houses at Kirkdale/Station Road (at page 55). The Head of Community confirmed that the obtaining planning permission and section 106 agreement had been finalised. She stated that grant-funding would be applied for from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) at the appropriate time.</p> <p>The Head of Community reported that the purchase of a former Council-owned property (at page 55) had since been completed utilising the ‘Right to First Refusal’ (RFR) option afforded under the Right to Buy scheme, adding that the necessary adaptations to the property were currently being undertaken so to accommodate the intended occupants’ needs. It was said that the RFR option would continue to be investigated with the view to increasingly add to the Council’s housing-stock.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The report be noted by Members and that the continued purchase of existing properties to replace houses sold under the Right to Buy scheme, to be let at 80% of market rent, be approved.</p>	
<p>30.</p>	<p>CHOICE BASED LETTING SYSTEM - RESIDENCY CHANGES</p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 57 - 48) as delivered by the Head of Community which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document, adding that further details would be provided in due course in respect of the statutory consultation.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs S Z Haq enquired as to whether any other neighbouring Leicestershire authorities had amended their minimum residency conditions in line with the report. The Head of Community advised that Leicester City Council was the only known authority to have done so.</p>	

	<p>Councillor J W Boyce raised a concern as to the potential increase in immigration from the City if the Borough's current minimum six-month residency condition was not similarly amended to two years.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The report be noted by Members and the necessary statutory consultation be approved.</p>	
31.	<p>DISABLED FACILITY GRANTS (DFG'S)</p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages 59 - 67) as delivered by the Head of Community which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>She advised that the Council was in receipt of a grant from Leicestershire County Council to discharge what is a mandatory statutory duty and that this Council invested additional funding to ensure reasonable living conditions for those affected residents. An explanation of the Lightbulb Project (LP) was given in terms of a new, integrated delivery mechanism, incorporating both DFG's and Council house adaptation schemes, with reference to the SWOT analysis provided (at page 61). She added that current demand was marginally above predicted levels.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs S B Morris enquired as to whether an aliquot proportion of any pooled-fund under the LP would be ring-fenced for the Borough. The Member also raised a concern as to a breakdown in rapport with local contractors employed by this Council to fulfil the necessary work.</p> <p>The Head of Community confirmed that the Borough's funding allocation would be ring-fenced and independently audited with an identical top-up arrangement from this Council available. She also advised that service-delivery would continue to proceed with Officers working in close partnership with local contractors on a on a pilot basis.</p> <p>The Chair raised a concern regarding the discrepancy between this Council being legally responsible for discharging the statutory duty whilst Leicestershire County Council being in account of the budget.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce raised a concern as to the long-term financial viability of the LP insofar as its absorption of the significant salaries awarded under the project. The Member stated that the LP would need to undergo the proper procurement scrutiny so as to not enter into any unlawfully competition with alternative DFG providers, requesting that written legal advice be provided to that effect (or otherwise). He opined that the LP was still an untested DFG delivery mechanism and that a contingency plan ought to be considered as part of any ongoing work.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs S B Morris stated that an in-house delivery mechanism was an advantage to ensure adherence to this Council's statutory duty.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>Options for the Council to join the Lightbulb Project as the means of</p>	

	<p>delivering DFG's and adaptations for disabled tenants be explored further with a view to joining the project as soon as possible and subject to a further report containing all the necessary details and assurances.</p>	
32.	<p>UPDATE FOLLOWING CLOSURE OF KENNEDY HOUSE HOSTEL</p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 68 - 69) as delivered by the Head of Community which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>She reported that pro-active steps have been taken by Housing Options Officers as detailed in the report (at page 68) to address the individual housing needs of Borough-originating residents since the closure of Kennedy House on 30 September. She confirmed that the new provider, the Falcon Centre, had invited referrals from Kennedy House. It was said that no further information had been received from the Shaw Group as to what the House's prospective purpose or use(s) were.</p> <p>RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The report be noted by Members.</p>	
33.	<p>CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT UPDATE</p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 70 - 71) and the supplementary Corporate Enforcement Update appendix (at pages 1 - 8) as delivered by the Director of Services which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>She asked Members to take notice of the draft Graffiti Policy provided in the supplementary appendix. She added that the Policy hitherto contained no specific charging framework provision however noted that this could be considered and introduced by Members. It was said that training in respect of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) and Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) would be delivered sooner than noted in the report (at page 70) in a local-authority partnership. It was also reported that the Revenue and Benefits department would be writing to all owners of properties vacant for two plus years to ascertain their intentions in the view to assist in these properties' re-occupation.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce enquired as to whether a council tax charge is being levied against empty properties. The Directors of Services confirmed that a council tax rate of 150% is levied against the same.</p> <p>The Chair requested that an update report in respect of empty houses be provided at the next meeting of this Committee on 19 January 2016.</p> <p>RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The report be noted by Members.</p>	
34.	<p>ACHIEVEMENTS AT BROCKS HILL AND OPERATIONS SINCE JULY 2015</p>	

The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 72 - 76) as delivered by the Director of Services which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.

It was said that the use of the Jubilee Amphitheatre at Brooks Hill Country Park for theatre performances during the Summer was well received and attended from far afield. She also commended the recent receipt of Heritage Lottery Funding to allow for a salaried 'Natural Discovery Voluntary Development Project Officer' post at Brooks Hill.

It was reported that there had been a lack of engagement by the Canals and Rivers Trust (CaRT) in respect of the Ervins Lock Footbridge and that the Council would proceed with the project and obtain planning permission for which the CaRT would become a statutory consultee.

She reported that further research into the proposal for an advertising company to install and maintain bus shelters in the Borough yielded insufficient prime locations to make a contract viable. The capital refurbishment programme of existing shelters would therefore continue and requests for new shelters be received via the Residents' Forums.

It was advised that there had been difficulty in obtaining a quote for the proposed dog fouling bin-bag scheme. A single quote was received at £500 for a quantity of 50,000 bags. It was noted that although additional work was required to fully realise the proposal, it was too acknowledged that cost-based decisions have been taken by other neighbouring Leicestershire authorities to discontinue schemes of a similar nature.

Members were also informed that a further East Midlands in Bloom Gold Award had been achieved through the joint working of the Clean and Green Team and the Pride of the Borough Group.

Councillor J W Boyce requested that the respective Brooks Hill and Operations service-areas be herewith presented in separate reports.

Councillor L A Bentley enquired as whether the CaRT has the authority to proscribe the building of the Ervins Lock Footbridge if the proper planning permission were to be granted. The Director of Services advised that to proceed with the course of action aforementioned would ensure an appropriate level of engagement on the part of the CaRT.

Councillor A R Bond enquired on behalf of a Borough resident as to whether the Council intended to replace the wooden gates at Oadby Cemetery. The Chair advised that the matter would be investigated.

Councillor J W Boyce stated that any direct approaches to Officers from Borough residents ought to be noted in the Members' Enquiry System.

The Chair stated that following a recent meeting with Arriva Midlands, it was reported that no further requests for bus shelter installations would be accepted ahead of a review due on the 17 November by Arriva Midlands to reassess the bus routes and services within the Borough.

RESOLVED THAT:

	The progress made be noted by Members.	
35.	<p>LEISURE CONTRACT - UPDATE</p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages 77 - 81) as delivered by the Director of Services which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>She reported that the building programme in respect of Parklands Leisure Centre and Wigston Swimming Pool was progressing well with prospective opening dates of the 04 and 10 December, respectively. The performance against the Council's contract requirements was said to be continuing to be closely monitored and that it remained positive, with increased membership, footfall and constructive feedback.</p> <p>Councillor Dr T Khong enquired as to the opening arrangements at the two sites. The Director of Service advised that the opening arrangements by the Council will be put in place imminently, with the Mayor attending, and that SLM would be hosting an "Oceans of Fun" event at both sites on 10 January 2016, with sporting celebrities also attending.</p> <p>RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The progress made be noted by Members.</p>	

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8:58 PM



.....

CHAIR

.....

TUESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2016

.....