

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SERVICE DELIVERY COMMITTEE HELD AT THE
COUNCIL OFFICES, STATION ROAD, WIGSTON ON TUESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2016
COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

<u>IN ATTENDANCE:</u>		
Chair - Councillor G A Boulter Vice-Chair - Councillor Mrs S Z Haq		
COUNCILLORS (10):		
G S Atwal	Mrs L M Broadley	
L A Bentley	F S Broadley	B Fahey
Ms A R Bond	D M Carter	K J Loydall
J W Boyce	Ms K Chalk	
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE (3):		
S J Ball	S Glazebrook	M Hone

Min Ref.	Narrative	Officer Resp.
36.	<p><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></p> <p>A minute's silence was observed in memory of the late former Councillor, Mayor (1992-1993) and Honorary Alderman (2001) of the Borough, Mr R D Allen.</p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillors Miss M V Chamberlain, Dr T K Khong and R H Thakor.</p>	
37.	<p><u>APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES</u></p> <p>Councillor B Fahey substituted for Councillor Dr T K Khong.</p>	
38.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
39.	<p><u>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2015</u></p> <p>In respect of 'New Build Programme / Refurbishment' (Minute Ref: 29) at paragraph 5, the Chair sought to clarify that two distinct subject-matters were reported: namely: (i) the purchase of former Council-owned properties under the Right to First Refusal (RFR) option afforded under the Right to Buy scheme; and (ii) the separate purchase of a private-sector property to which adaptations were currently being undertaken so to accommodate the intended occupants' disability requirements.</p> <p>RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>Subject to the point of clarification aforementioned, the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 13 October 2015 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.</p>	SJB

40.	<p><u>ACTION LIST ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2015</u></p> <p>RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The Action List be noted by Members.</p>	
41.	<p><u>PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
42.	<p><u>COMMITTEE REVISED FINANCIAL POSITION 2015/16 AND DRAFT BUDGET 2016/17</u></p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages 13 - 17) as delivered and summarised by Interim Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Financial Officer stated that the recommendation at 2.2. as set out in the report (at page 13) should be excluded.</p> <p>With reference to New Homes Bonuses (NHB's) at paragraph 3 (at page 14) citing an increase in the same, Councillor J W Boyce requested that a report be brought to a subsequent meeting of this Committee addressing its long-term potential.</p> <p>With reference to the Revised Budget for 2015/16 detailing the major variances at paragraph 4.1 (at page 15), the Member further requested that the budget be reviewed with the view to remove unnecessary budget heads (e.g. Senior Citizens Grants).</p> <p>The Interim Chief Financial Officer stated that although the £128,000 increase in NHB's was a reasonably healthy one based upon the current scheme, an ongoing central government-led consultation process was underway which sought to reduce this area of funding in future years. He advised that there was some uncertainty as to whether this would exclusively affect new grants or if it was to be applied retrospectively. He further provided an undertaking to review the Budget, accordingly.</p> <p>RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The revised General Fund revenue budget position for 2015/16 (as set out at paragraph 4.1. of the report) be noted by Members.</p>	MHo
43.	<p><u>HOUSING FINANCE UPDATE - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)</u></p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages 18 - 20) as delivered and summarised by Interim Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>With reference to rent levels for 2016/17 at paragraph 4 (at page 19), Councillor L A Bentley enquired as to whether there was a possibility of a further decrease in rents and its discernible impact upon Housing Revenue</p>	MHo

	<p>Account (HRA) and, consequently, the point of service-delivery. The Member further suggested that a review of the Council’s non-dwelling sites and assets be undertaken to ascertain, and capitalise upon, any potential better use(s) of the same.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Financial Officer stated that the 1% reduction in rents per annum was to apply over the duration of the next four years, after which increases in accordance with CPI +1% would resume (subject to the discretion of central government policy). He advised that should rents continue to see a reduction by a further two to three years (2022-2023), the Council’s ambition for the redevelopment of its housing stock would not be achievable and would require a scaling-back of capital programmes and investment of £50,000 per annum: if extended over 30-years, the impact upon the HRA was said to be significant. In respect of non-dwelling sites and assets, it was reported that all local authorities were expected to undertake a purpose-review of their estates and dispose of any redundant holdings.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce stated that the disposal of the Council’s highest-valued housing stock would not proportionately yield a commensurate return. He further expressed serious reservations in respect of the approximate, accumulative shortfall of £250,000 from the 1% reduction in rents and its impact on future capital projects.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Financial Officer advised that, due to the ongoing consultation process, there was still uncertainty as to criteria to be used to identify the Council’s highest-valued housing stock. It was suggested that this may involve the taking of a percentile-value calculated upon the valuation(s) of those highest-valued properties. He emphasised that the levy in question was compulsory and therefore would either necessitate the disposal of property or a payment rendered to the value thereof.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs S Z Haq sought clarification as to “void” at paragraph 3.4 (at page 18).</p> <p>Councillor Mrs L M Broadley sought further clarification as to the determination of “high-value” housing stock and whether the proceeds of the levy were to be retained by central government. The Member further raised concerns in respect of the ever-increasing diminution of housing stock, particularly under the new Right to Buy (RTB) scheme, and the impact upon the housing needs of social tenants. She was hopeful that the levy’s proceeds would be reinvested into social housing projects in the Borough.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Financial Officer was unable to provide further clarification to the points sought above until such time as the outcome(s) of the consultation process were known.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The report be noted by Members and the new levels of rent and service charges (as set out at paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report, respectively) be recommended to the Policy, Finance and Development Committee.</p>	
44.	<u>COMMUNITY SERVICES UPDATE</u>	SG

The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages 21 - 31) as delivered and summarised by Interim Community Services Manager, together with the supplementary agenda update (at page 1), which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.

The Interim Community Services Manager directed Members' attention to particularly significant and noteworthy sections and paragraphs contained in the report. With reference to voids at paragraph 4 (at page 23), he added that a weekly-review process had been implemented to monitor the same and an update report detailing a comprehensive assessment of property voids was to be brought to the next meeting of this Committee on 22 March 2016.

With reference to future development and purchase opportunities at paragraph 11 (at page 26), the Chair opined that it was not advisable to enter into competition with the local Housing Association (HA) in terms of a "bidding war" for the provision of social and affordable housing. He welcomed the possibility of development and, or, purchase opportunities at Station Road, Wigston and Canal Street, South Wigston and suggested that a feasibility study be undertaken to assess the latter option.

With reference to the Housing Related Advice (HRA) services at paragraph 12 (at page 27), Councillor D M Carter enquired as to whether it was possible to distinguish between those providers that operated inside vis-a-vis outside the Borough.

The Interim Community Services Manager advised that of the nine known providers, Age UK, Christians Against Poverty, Helping Hands (HH), the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and the Red Cross had facilities accessible from within the Borough whereas Shelter, Housing Aid, The Bridge, Research Projects and the Saffron Resource Centre operated from Leicester City. He stated that the joint-initiative to use HH and the CAB would ensure the improved delivery of advisory services to Borough residents.

With reference to the Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) statutory consultation at paragraph 13 (at page 27), Councillor J W Boyce sought to clarify that the 'Resident Forums' referred to the Housing Resident Forum and not the three, Community Resident Forums.

With reference to voids at paragraph 4 (at page 23), Councillor J W Boyce questioned the "average" length of the void turnaround time (i.e. excluding the major works exceptions) and requested that greater clarity was needed.

The Interim Community Services Manager stated that the subject of clarity was, in part, a reporting issue inasmuch as lengthy void periods (for the reasons aforementioned) counted against any meaningful average. He added that the facility did exist statistically exclude the same and that the Housing Options Team had been tasked to improve this reporting mechanism. He noted that the turnaround times were greater than ideally anticipated and that new initiatives were to be implemented (viz. quicker maintenance, earlier advertisement during completion of works etc.) in order to substantially reduce this. He further stated that the implications stemming from a low-demand for sheltered accommodation were to be addressed

through the multiple-offer provisions(s) as allowed by the CBL scheme.

With reference to gas safety at paragraph 5 (at page 24), Councillor J W Boyce reiterated the a 100% compliance rate was the only acceptable figure and that more pro-active steps ought to be taken as soon as reasonably practicable to minimise any prolonged periods where such is not the case. The Member agreed with the Chair insofar avoiding competition with the local HA. He noted that any proposed redevelopment at Canal Street entertained significant risk given the building's approximate 30-year vacancy, suggesting that it may well be prudent to reopen the process to identify any third-parties interested in redeveloping the site in order mitigate the implications thereof as may be otherwise assumed by the Council.

With reference to HRA services, the Member further requested that a quantum of need vis-a-vis provision required mapping. With reference to Disabled Facility Grants (DFG's) at paragraph 14 (at page 27), he emphasised the need to be clear in respect of reporting back from the Lightbulb Project and under which defined circumstances. With reference to warden services at paragraph 16 (page 28), the Member stated that ongoing assessments ought to be undertaken to continually re/evaluate and address the ever-changing vulnerabilities faced by those residents affected.

The Interim Community Services Manager reported that he and the Chief Executive were to meet imminently with HH and CAB in order to establish a needs-analysis for advisory services within the Borough, together with a performance-assessment matrix and a method to record footfall. It was said that a process would be undertaken to identify any potential third-party developers for Canal Street.

Councillor L A Bentley agreed with the Chair and Councillor J W Boyce with regards to the means to provide more social and affordable housing within the Borough and endorsed the equity-sharing arrangements incorporated therein in order to better stimulate home ownership. The Member further enquired as to whether a Council-backed bond under any Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) indemnifying any later identified land propitiator of Canal Street site was financially-viable.

The Interim Community Services Manager advised that he was mindful of this implication and that the same would feature in the feasibility study to be conducted.

Councillor K J Loydall emphasised the importance of multi-agency partnership work as part of any advisory services framework so to better signpost service-users within the Borough.

Councillor Ms A R Bond enquired as to the frequency and location of the proposed drop-in surgeries for residents affected by Housing Related Support (HRS) remodel and whether Members were entitled to attend residents' advice sessions. She further requested that Members be informed as to the surgery dates once scheduled.

The Interim Community Services Manager reported that one-weekly surgery session was to be hosted at William Peardon Court, Wigston, and Chartwell and Marriott Houses, Oadby respectively, with an open invitation extended to those tenants living in dispersed bungalows. It was advised that residents

	<p>and Members alike would be informed accordingly once the logistical arrangements were finalised, the responsible Housing Support Officers had received the appropriate training and their obtaining job descriptions revised and approved.</p> <p>The Chair advised that Members would strictly be entitled to attend residents' advice sessions subject to the discretion of individual residents.</p> <p>Councillor Ms A R Bond enquired as to the future development and purchase opportunity at Chartwell House, Oadby at paragraph 11 (at page 26).</p> <p>The Interim Community Services Manager advised that a number of sites were currently being investigated, including Chartwell House and the possibility for the opening-up of a green-field site from the demolition of the garages sited thereat.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The report be noted by Members.</p>	
45.	<p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES UPDATE - RENT ARREARS FOR QUARTER 3</u></p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the supplementary agenda update (at page 1) which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p>	
46.	<p><u>HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY - ADAPTED PROPERTIES</u></p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 32 - 33) as delivered and summarised by Interim Community Services Manager which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce stated that the recommendation at paragraph 2 (at page 32) made economic-sense and would serve to benefit those individuals with immediate disabled adaptations needs.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce moved the recommendation contained in the report.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs L M Broadley stated that should any given property not be matched to a household's requirements, that the property in question ought not to be left void but be brought back into re-occupation within a reasonable period of time.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs L M Broadley seconded the recommendation contained in the report.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The amendment to the Housing Allocations Policy (as set out at paragraph 4 of the report) to permit properties with pre-existing adaptations for the disabled to be matched to households that require those adaptations in preference over those who do not be approved.</p>	
47.	<p><u>HOMELESS PREVENTION FUNDS POLICY</u></p>	

	<p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 34 - 35) as delivered and summarised by Interim Community Services Manager which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The making upto 20% of the Homeless Prevention Budget available to those who whilst meeting the existing criteria are deemed 'not in priority need' be approved.</p>	
48.	<p><u>EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY AND CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT UPDATE</u></p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 36 - 38) as jointly-delivered and summarised by Interim Community Services Manager and Interim Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer), in the absence of the Director of Services, which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>Empty Homes Strategy</p> <p>Councillor D M Carter welcomed the actions taken by Officers in seeking to bring back into occupation those 35 properties that have been empty for more than 2 years. He further enquired as to any targets set, and the timeframes in which those targets were to be achieved, in respect of the remaining 22 non-responding property owners.</p> <p>The Interim Community Services Manager advised that the Environmental Health Team had been tasked with continuing to formally pursue the non-responders in question and that an enforcement action-plan was to be devised, accordingly.</p> <p>With reference to the proposed delegated authority at paragraph a.3. (at page 37), Councillor J W Boyce enquired as whether Offices had a workable policy framework so to render any enforcement action safe and consistent and to ascertain realistic achievement levels within this policy area.</p> <p>The Interim Community Services Manager stated that it was his intention to shortly formulate a sufficiently-robust, written Policy to expedite the enforcement process.</p> <p>Councillor L A Bentley enquired as to the financial-viability, and the risks attached thereto to this Council, in so offering 100% discretionary grants under the Private Sector Housing Renewals (PSHR) Policy given the potentially indeterminate and unpredictable nature and extent of property renovation works.</p> <p>The Interim Community Services Manager advised that grant applications under the PSHR Policy would be carefully considered upon merit and on a case-by-case basis and that the necessary funds would be made available, accordingly.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Financial Officer reiterated the need for a like-for-like approach in respect of any grant offers made whilst taking a holistic</p>	SG/AC

	<p>assessment of the totality of the costs, the revenue streams available and the measure of beneficial occupation likely to be achieved.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs L M Broadley enquired as to whether the 150% council tax rate levied against empty properties had proved successful insofar as encouraging their reoccupation and if any counter provisions were in place to prevent the dual-occupancy of properties serving as a loophole to avoid the increased levy.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Financial Officer advised that all the 35 properties aforementioned have been, or continue to be, subject the increased levy. He added that options were available to close the loophole to which the Member referred and that information on the same would be brought back to a sequent meeting of this Committee.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair enquired as to whether the option of a CPO was still available against properties that had been empty for two years or more.</p> <p>The Interim Community Services Manager answered affirmatively,</p> <p>Corporate Enforcement Update</p> <p>With reference to the costs of electrical rewiring at paragraph b.3.2 (at page 37), Councillor K J Loydall enquired as to the realistic prospect of recharging the costs to the private landlord.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Financial Officer advised that a sundry debtors bill could be raised and that it was always this Council's intention to enforce upon its debts owing.</p> <p>The Chair further advised that the monies owing may well be recuperated by way of an entry on the Local Land Charges Register against the property in question.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The report be noted by Members; and (ii) Delegated authority to Officers to take appropriate enforcement action in pursuance of the Empty Homes Strategy (as set out at paragraph a.3. of the report) be authorised. 	
<p>49.</p>	<p><u>BROCKS HILL COUNTRY PARK UPDATE</u></p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 39 - 41) as delivered and summarised by Interim Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer), in the absence of the Director of Services, which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>With reference to the Stepping Stone Project at paragraph 3.3 (at page 41), the Chair noted that a net return has been accrued to this Council in the past through its partnership contribution to the project's budget as administered by Leicestershire County Council.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p>	

	<p>(i) The report be noted by Members; and</p> <p>(ii) Delegated authority to the Interim Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) to review in-year the continued funding towards the Stepping Stone project as necessary, following further proposals for the project from Leicestershire County Council, be authorised.</p>	
50.	<p><u>OPERATIONS AND FACILITIES SERVICES UPDATE</u></p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages 42 - 50) as delivered and summarised by Interim Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer), in the absence of the Director of Services, which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>The Chair announced that across all the Leicestershire District and Borough Councils for 2014/15, this Council was: the best-performing in respect of the lowest rate of residual household waste (361.63 kg per household); and in the top-performing quartile in respect of the reuse, recycling and composting of household waste (48.84%) (Report to the Meeting of Thursday, 21 January 2016, Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Leicestershire County Council at page 47 - Appendix).</p> <p>With reference to Ervins Lock Footbridge at paragraph 3.1.1 (at page 42), Councillor L A Bentley expressed serious reservations as to the lengthy-protraction of the project and the potential dissipation of the £55,000 budget-allocation. He stated that although the potential use of the existed bridge was considered, it was never pursued. He emphasised that a significant number of residents had expressed that a means of crossing the waterway was urgently needed and that renewed efforts were essential to realise this sooner rather than later.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce agreed with the sentiments of Councillor L A Bentley.</p> <p>The Chair informed Members as to the revised 5-day opening arrangements of the Oadby Waste Site, as circulated within a information leaflet issued by Leicestershire County Council (LCC) ('Essential Information for Leicestershire Residents').</p> <p>Councillor Mrs L M Broadley expressed concern as to the high, itemised price-tariff for the disposal of non-household items at the Waste Site (as of April 2016) citing, amongst other things, an increased potential for fly-tipping within the Borough. She requested that a letter be drafted to LCC outlining this Council's concerns regarding the aforementioned implications of itemised-charging for non-household items.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce stated that the issue of fly-tipping was a pan-County subject-matter to be discussed with all Leicestershire District and Borough Councils.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The report be noted by Members.</p>	AC
51.	<p><u>CUSTOMER SERVICES TRANSFORMATION - PROGRESS REPORT</u></p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages</p>	

	<p>51 - 54) as delivered and summarised by Interim Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer), in the absence of the Director of Services, which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>Councillor Ms A R Bond stated that the Helping Hands Advisory service was operating from the Trinity Methodist Church, Oadby.</p> <p>With reference to the monthly statistics for October 2015 (at page 54) citing a substantial increase in face-to-face enquires, Councillor J W Boyce stated the increased turnover was a measure of the success achieved in terms of the improved efficiency provided to Borough residents through the provision of self-service facilities. He described this measure as both demonstrating customer-service and, moreover, transformational progress and commended all those involved in realising this.</p> <p>Councillor L A Bentley agreed with Councillor J W Boyce. With reference to the pedestrianisation of Bell Street, Wigston at paragraph 4.1 (at page 53), he requested that the black granite blocks be re-positioned to prohibit vehicular to the same.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>The report be noted by Members.</p>	
<p>52.</p>	<p><u>LEISURE CONTRACT - PROGRESS REPORT</u></p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 55 - 57) as delivered and summarised by Interim Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer), in the absence of the Director of Services, which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>Councillor J W Boyce acknowledged the Council's achievement in respect of the opening, and at a notable saving, of two new swimming pool facilities at Parklands Leisure Centre, Oadby and Station Road, Wigston within a single one-year period.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs L M Broadley echoed the sentiments of Councillor J W Boyce.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>(i) The report be noted by Members; and (ii) The leisure facilities be endorsed and promoted to the wider audience.</p>	
<p>53.</p>	<p><u>CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTERS - EXCEPTION REPORT</u></p> <p>The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 58 - 60) as delivered and summarised by Interim Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer), in the absence of the Director of Services, which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>With reference to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests at paragraph 3.4 (at page 59), Councillor J W Boyce enquired as to whether 100% of all FOI request received were responded to in full over time.</p>	

	<p>The Interim Chief Financial Officer answered affirmatively.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>(i) The proposed Service Delivery Charters be considered; and</p> <p>(ii) The performance standards that have not met the set target (as set out in paragraph 3 of the report) and the reasons why this has been noted by Members.</p>	
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THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.47 PM



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CHAIR
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TUESDAY, 22 MARCH 2016
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