

Minutes of Health & Housing Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday, 20 September 2012, starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Brunskill	R Newmark
C Conner	E M H Ranson
R Hargreaves	L Rimmer
B Hilton	M Robinson
K Hind	C Ross
J Holgate	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Head of Regeneration and Housing, Head of Environmental Services, Housing Strategy Officer.

327 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Bibby and N Walsh.

328 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

329 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

330 HOUSING STRATEGY DELIVERY PLAN

The Housing Strategy Officer referred to a proposed Housing Strategy Delivery Plan for 2012/15 which set out the key objectives of the service over the next 3 years.

She commented that the mid Lancashire Contextual Statement provided a set of profiles for housing across mid Lancashire. These sought to identify and meet the needs of existing communities and to support the economic growth ambitions of the area ensuring that the Housing Officer could both retain and attract people in the area. Sitting under this the overarching statement is the Delivery Statement for Ribble Valley which focuses on the specific needs and strengths of the borough. The agreed three objectives within the Delivery Plan are:

- affordable housing;
- energy efficiency;
- addressing specialist housing need.

Members then discussed the report in some detail. In particular it was suggested to replace the term “elderly” with the term “older people”.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the Housing Delivery Plan for 2012/15 and support the key objectives.

331 CONSULTATION DRAFT OF RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Housing Strategy Officer referred to a review of the Ribble Valley's Housing Allocations Policy. A draft Consultation Policy had been prepared and the document would go through a consultation process with all appropriate partners and then the proposed policy would be reported to Committee for approval in November.

A consultation event with all registered providers with stock in the borough had been organised for the 26 September to review the document in more detail. Ribble Valley Homes had formed a sub-group to focus on the detail of the policy. Later in the year, applicants on the waiting list would be consulted on the main key changes proposed. Once the document had been through the review process the draft would then be reported back to this Committee for final approval.

The key changes being considered were:

- the definition of local connection which introduced a much broader definition of local connection than is currently accepted;
- to identify housing need, also to be considered is whether a household should need to be in housing need to be on the waiting list;
- financial assessment to be considered whether a financial assessment should be introduced to identify whether a household had a financial ability to meet their own housing needs; and
- awarding points, also to be agreed were the points allocated to each new and existing category and the reason/circumstances for awarding those points.

Members then discussed the Allocations Policy in some detail.

RESOLVED: That Committee consider the proposed new changes within the document and agree the publication of the draft for consultation in accordance with the proposals set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report;

332 REPORT ON GARAGES AT RIDDINGS LANE, WHALLEY

The Chief Executive referred to the report of the Director of Community Services about the condition of the garages at Riddings Lane, Whalley, which sought approval from Committee for the demolition and replacement of the garages.

The site was located at the end of a residential street off Riddings Lane, Whalley. The units comprised of two blocks of single storey garage structures.

Overall the garages were in poor condition, the notable defects include damaged asbestos sheet roof coverings, spalling concrete, steel work corrosion and peeling plastisol coatings.

Members were concerned about the condition of the garages and made a number of suggestions as to the future use of any cleared site.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the demolition of the existing garages and that options for the use of the site be explored further.

333 HEALTH AND SAFETY INTERVENTION PLAN 2012/13

The Head of Environmental Services asked Committee to consider and approve the Ribble Valley Borough Council Health and Safety Intervention Plan 2012/13. He informed Members that in November 2011 the Health and Safety Executive/Local Authority Enforcement Liaison Committee had produced extensively revised guidance which had significantly altered the future approach for local authority enforcement. The new guidance required a lighter touch approach concentrating on higher risk businesses, tackling serious breaches of the rules and to carry out an annual programme of only higher risk health and safety premises. This guidance had been incorporated into this year's intervention plan.

He drew Member's attention to the service activity and service improvements achieved during the past financial year and also listed the proposals for the forthcoming year. Whilst the total number of workplace audits achieved last year was only 15, a further 110 businesses had received targeted advisory campaign material of the target intended for last year.

He further stated that Ribble Valley currently had 1,178 premises on the health and safety database with a further 1,400 in relation to smoke free enforcement transferred from the Health and Safety Executive. Of these, 48 were currently identified as high-risk category A premises. Members then asked specific questions in relation to the report.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the

1. Health and Safety Service Plan 2012/13 for implementation in the current financial year;
2. the discontinuation of routine smoke free enforcement audits and that inspections will only be undertaken in response to observed or reported non-compliance or complaint.

334 GOVERNMENT HOUSING AND GROWTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Head of Regeneration and Housing circulated a District Councils' Network Briefing on the recent Government housing and growth announcement which had

been made by the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Local Government and Communities.

The proposal announced a major new housing and planning package designed to promote economic growth including house building, speeding up of planning permissions and boosting the construction industry. The measures included:

- affordable housing;
- private rented sector;
- accelerating larger housing schemes;
- helping first time buyers;
- getting surplus public sector land back into use;
- planning reform;
- Section 106 Agreements;
- green belt;
- house extensions;
- re-use of empty offices; and
- concerns raised by housing professionals.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing pointed out the possible impact this announcement would have on the Ribble Valley, particularly in relation to Section 106 Agreements. The Chief Executive commented on the volume of consultation papers currently being issued by Central Government which needed a response from this Council.

Members also expressed their concerns over the implications of any encouragement being given to the construction industry and property developers in the Ribble Valley at a time when it was proving increasingly difficult to resist large-scale planning applications. Members asked that further consideration of this matter and a formal response on behalf of the Council be referred to the Housing Working Group.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

335 MINUTES OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING PARTNERSHIP GROUP

Councillor Hilton referred to three specific aspects of these minutes and commented on the presentation by Help Direct, the issues around the future expansion of Clitheroe Community Hospital and the Councillor Workshops which would be held at the end of November.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

336 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the fact that the following items of business being Exempt Information Under Category 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

337 GENERAL REPORT – GRANTS

The Housing Strategy Officer submitted details of 7 disabled facility grants that had been approved. In addition, the Housing Strategy Officer reported that the Council would again be bidding for Department of Health funding to provide a range of grants for vulnerable people over the winter of 2012/13, as part of the Warm Homes Healthy People initiative.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

338 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE

The Chief Executive submitted an update on the affordable housing schemes in progress and proposed in the borough. In particular details were given in relation to the Cobden Mill site in Sabden.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Marshal Scott (414400).