

Housing & Community Safety Select Committee

A meeting of Housing & Community Safety Select Committee was held on Thursday, 17th April, 2008.

Present: Cllr Mrs Allison Trainer (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Ann Cains (vice Cllr Robert Gibson), Cllr Jackie Earl, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Mrs Liz Nesbitt, Cllr Steven Nelson, Cllr Bill Noble, , Cllr Bill Woodhead

Officers: J. Edmonds, J. Higgins, M. Batty (DNS), P. Mennear, M. Jones (LD)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr Julia Roberts

HCS 1/08 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Mrs Alison Trainer, Cllr Bill Woodhead, and Cllr Steven Nelson declared personal/non prejudicial interests in agenda item 8, Scrutiny Review of Registered Social Landlords, as members of Tristar.

Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher a declared personal/non prejudicial interest in agenda item 8, Scrutiny Review of Registered Social Landlords, as she received the meeting papers for Tees Valley Housing.

Cllr Bill Noble declared a declared personal/non prejudicial interest in agenda item 8, Scrutiny Review of Registered Social Landlords, as a tenant of a Registered Social Landlord.

HCS 2/08 Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2007 - for signature

Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

HCS 3/08 Minutes of the meeting held on 20th December 2007 - for signature

Minutes of the meeting held on 20th December 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

HCS 4/08 Minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2008 -for signature

Minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2008 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

HCS 5/08 Terms of Reference

Members considered a report noting a change to the Committee's Terms of Reference.

At a recent meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee it had been considered that there was a need to introduce greater flexibility in the remit of the Council's thematic Select Committees in order to allow them to respond to Council priorities where required and to deal with the potential increase in workload following new legislative requirements. Therefore, following Cabinet

recommendation, Council had approved the extension of the terms of reference for all Select Committees on 26 March 2008, so that they could review matters from outside their thematic areas.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 required every Local Authority to have a committee to review or scrutinise decisions made by the Local Authority in connection with the discharge of their crime and disorder functions and to make reports or recommendations to the local authority. Local Authorities or other responsible authority must consider and have regard to the report or recommendations and respond to the crime and disorder committee indicating what if any action it proposed to take. Following Cabinet recommendation and approval by Council on 27 February, it had been decided that the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee would fulfil the role of Crime and Disorder Committee, and this was also included in the new terms of reference.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.

HCS 6/08 Monitoring of the recommendations from the review of Neighbourhood Enforcement Service

Members were presented with a progress report regarding the implementation of recommendations emanating from the review of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service (NES).

It was noted that the Out of Hours Noise service was being developed and would be in place by July 2008. This service would be led by Environmental Health in conjunction with the NES. The Service had also advertised for two part time administration positions.

The Parish/Town Councils had been approached to explore the potential for contributions towards the funding of NES, however there had been no interest from Parish/Town Councils. The Committee suggested that NES approached the Parish/Town Councils again in October 2008, emphasising the additional services that could be provided.

The members were informed that significant dispensations had been agreed with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, which included the right to sell on unclaimed vehicles with a value below £5,000 and access to the DVLA's central pool of impounded vehicles at virtually nil cost. NES had received three such vehicles, and these had to be used for enforcement activity.

CONCLUDED that:

1. NES would again approach Parish Councils in autumn 2008 and subsequently in order to encourage possible contributions towards an additional NES service in their local areas;
2. the Committee agreed with the assessment of progress regarding the implementation of recommendations from the scrutiny review of the NES as contained within the Progress Report.

HCS 7/08 Scrutiny Review of Registered Social Landlords

The Committee received a presentation from Jane Edmonds (Housing Strategy and Development Manager) and Julie Higgins (Housing Strategy Team Leader) as part of the Registered Social Landlord Scrutiny Review and in order to inform the scope and project plan for the review. The presentation informed members on the local position, the role of the Housing Corporation, the funding secured in Stockton and the challenges and opportunities for the future.

Members discussed affordable home ownership schemes and packages in redevelopment areas. Concerns were raised regarding the perception new homes being offered to the existing residents in redevelopment areas were smaller in size to the homes that were being demolished and therefore not able to accommodate the home owners needs. Members noted the redevelopment schemes that had received positive feedback from residents. It was noted that the Housing Corporation expected higher standards of construction from social housing than those which may be encountered in the private sector.

Concern was also raised that the cost of homes in regeneration schemes may not be deemed as affordable to those whose homes were being demolished, or first time buyers in the Stockton area. J. Edmonds stated that she would raise these concerns with the regeneration team, however attempts were being made to resolve these issues with the recent introduction of equity loans for disbursed owner occupiers in Regeneration areas. J. Edmonds also advised that an Affordable Housing Team Leader had recently been appointed and a Home Ownership Register would be formally launched in April 2008, the purpose of the Register was to signpost those in redevelopment schemes and first time buyers to appropriate Affordable Housing Schemes.

Members discussed the possible areas for the review to focus on and agreed that they would concentrate on the following:-

Operational role of RSL's - their role as landlords

- *policies and practices
- *cost of their services
- *their wider role in local communities
- *identification of best practice

Strategic role part A

- *engagement with LSP
- *their future Business Plans
- *post decent homes

Strategic role part B

- *role as regeneration partners
- *discussion/meeting with the Housing Corporation
- *relationship with private developers

Site visit and tour

It was suggested that members of the Planning Committee may be interested and benefit from the evidence to be received for this review.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted and the scope and project plan be agreed.

