

## Adoptable Estates Task Group

### Interim Report

#### *Foreword*



The most interesting scrutiny task group yet. After 18 months the only conclusion is more research. There are problems that needs addressing.

This Task Group was set up at the behest of Nigel Carter the Devizes Councillor as some estates in Devizes had been blighted by late adoption.

As we as Elected Members care for the residents of Wiltshire we conclude that those that move into new estates want them adopted as soon as possible so they receive street, lighting, refuse collection, parking restraints but most of all they have the ability to sell on if their circumstances change.

It is the latter that probably has most effect on residents. Delays in adoption of at least two years after occupation were quoted in examples. I am told that Archers Gate, Amesbury is even worse.

We asked Developers to explain the problem, we asked Wiltshire Council Officers to explain the problem.

Developers were reluctant to attend for fear of reprisal if they complained about the system.

Officers delivered text book answers to questions where clearly they saw their duty to avoid ALL risk.

If there was any one factor common to the delay it was the award of a clean bill of health for the sewers and drains.

What clearly did happen was, without exception aspects of the Planning Permission process and 106 Agreements came in for criticism.

Other key points were:-

- Lack of staff continuity.
- Nobody with an overall perception of the schemes.
- Delays by Council Solicitors on 106 Agreements and delays in changes to Agreements.
- Lack of any elected Members involvement pre drawing up of 106 Agreements i.e. in the shopping list

#### **What we recommend**

- Research into best practice by other Councils.
- An Officer who is new to the Council (a graduate trainee) to review Best Practice in other Authorities
- Funding for the research to be available from the “New Homes Bonus”
- The brief & timeline to be agreed by this Task Group
- The Report to be submitted to the Task Group for review and recommendations by end of March 2015
- The more imaginative use of Bonds to guarantee performance / payments.

My thanks are due to the two Senior Scrutiny Officers who have served the Task Group:

- Maggie McDonald
- Emma Dove

Plus to the other very patient and understanding Members of the Task Group for their experience based contributions.

- Peter Edge
- Josie Green
- Julian Johnson
- Peter Evans
- Mollie Groom
- Bridget Wayman

**Tony Deane, Chairman of the Task Group**