

City Area Committee

Special Planning & Licensing

Minutes

4 November 2003 6.00 pm
Alamein Suite,
City Hall
Salisbury

**These minutes should be kept for use by District Councillors
at the next Council meeting**

Present

Chairman: Councillor J R L Nettle (Vice Chairman in the Chair)

Vice Chairman: vacant

Councillors: Mrs P Brown, K A Cardy, B E Dalton, Mrs E A Chettleburgh, J M Collier,
S R Fear, S J Howarth, , P W L Sample, Miss M A Tomlinson, J M Walsh and Mrs S A Warrander

Apologies: P M Clegg, D A Culver, D J McCarthy, Ms S C Mallory, P V H Paisey and I R Tomes

Councillors: C R Vincent (County Councillor)

MINUTES NOT REQUIRING COUNCIL APPROVAL

84. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements by the Chairman.

85. PUBLIC STATEMENT / QUESTION TIME

There were no statements or questions by members of the public.

86. COUNCILLOR STATEMENT / QUESTION TIME

There were statements by or questions from Councillors.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

88. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 16 October are to be presented, for approval by the Committee, at the City Area (Planning & Licensing) meeting scheduled to take place on 13 November 2003/

89. CREATING MORE 'AFFORDABLE' HOUSING IN SOUTH WILTSHIRE – MAKING IT HAPPEN & DELIVERING THE ACTIONS

Members received a presentation from John Meeker (see Annex A, attached), Principal Planning Officer, who set out findings and proposals of the Affordable Housing Scrutiny Review Panel which, during 2002, had sought to examine the means by which the District Council could increase its ability to provide affordable housing. The Officer informed the Committee that the Panel, in conducting the review, had used a wider definition than that given in the Local Plan when considering those classed as being in need of 'affordable housing' - namely 'anyone who cannot afford to purchase a property on the open market'.

Councillor Leo, Chairman of the Scrutiny Review, encouraged the Committee to stand firm against Developers seeking to provide the minimum (or poor standard) affordable housing in response to Council imposed affordable housing conditions. Kate Entwistle, Development Officer, Strategic Housing Service, drew Members' attention to the fact that that funding conditions to support the delivery of affordable homes remained unclear and that it was anticipated that government funding to Local Authorities for the provision of Housing Association properties was soon to be altered. In addition, Kate Entwistle informed the Committee that it was anticipated that the Government would be reducing, to 10 or 11, the number of Housing Associations in the South West that were eligible to receive funding towards the provision of affordable housing.

John Meeker informed the Committee that, in anticipation of the likely funding changes, new proposals in the forthcoming Supplementary Planning Guidance had been put forward and would seek a greater financial contribution from developers towards the implementation of schemes.

During the discussion that followed, the following points were made :-

- It is anticipated that Affordable housing will, increasingly, be provided via the Planning regime, as opposed to via Council Housing Departments.
- Serious consideration should be given to increasing the percentage of affordable homes that the Council requires Developers to provide (as part of a development) from the current 25 per cent (which is low, nationally) to 40-60 per cent. However, deviations from a set, high, percentage should be allowed in special circumstances.
- The need exists for Committees with responsibility for determining planning applications to adhere to any affordable housing provision criteria imposed (as a condition of any consent granted) notwithstanding the reaction, by developers, to their imposition. Challenges by developers to Council-imposed affordable housing provision requirements should be rigorously defended at Appeal and wherever necessary.
- It is valid that some of the profit earned by Developers (which can be considerable, given recent housing market conditions) should be earmarked for the benefit of communities (eg through the provision of affordable housing) and to improve or enhance supporting infrastructure.
- Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)/Housing Associations are key to achieving the Council's housing aims and the Council's relationship with them should be open and constructive.
- Developers should be strongly encouraged to provide affordable housing that is of a high and enduring quality in design and build terms.
- Under free market conditions and owing to the propensity of homeowners to improve/extend their homes, houses that are initially sold as lowcost/affordable housing (at subsidised or below market rates) rarely remain such; by the second or third sale they have become unaffordable to those they were intended to home.

- 'Social housing for rent' and 'shared ownership schemes' are the methods of choice for the provision of affordable housing, with 'low cost, for sale, housing for local people' also being an option for consideration in situations where it is possible to maintain it as such (see also the above bullet point).

RESOLVED - that the Forward Planning Unit be requested to draft an affordable housing policy checklist as part of the Supplementary Planning Guidance exercise for use by Committees when determining applications requiring the provision of affordable housing.

At the conclusion of the Agenda Item, the Chairman, on the behalf of the Committee, thanked John Meeker, Councillor Leo and Kate Entwistle for their contribution to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 18.55hrs