

# Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel

6.00pm, Wednesday 21 January 2004  
Committee Room 1, The Council House  
Salisbury

## Minutes

### **Present**

Councillor Mrs M I Evans (Chairman), P J Leo (Vice Chairman), Mrs P J Bissington, B E Dalton, Mrs J A Green, M J Osment, P V H Paisey and B M Rycroft

Apologies – Councillors Mrs P Brown, Mrs E A Chettleburgh and Mrs Greville

### **Cabinet Members**

Councillor J A Cole-Morgan (Portfolio Holder, Community and Housing)

### **Tenants Panel**

Mr C Duller, Mrs J Fazackerley, Mr J Hinnis, Mr T Watkins and Mrs R Williams

### **Officers**

Debbie Dixon (Policy Director), Arabella Davies (Democratic Services Officer), Julie Leng (Accountancy Services Manager), John Meeker (Principal Forward Planning Officer), Andrew Reynolds (Head of Strategic Housing) and Derek Streek (Head of Housing Management)

## **Minutes**

### **24. PUBLIC QUESTION/STATEMENT TIME**

Mr Duller submitted the following question, which the Chairman read out:-

“Why are Tenants’ Panel minutes not held in local libraries or put out with scrutiny minutes, for the public and Tenants to read?”

The Chairman replied as follows:-

‘As the Tenants’ Panel is not a formal Committee there is no requirement for Tenants’ Panel Minutes to be distributed. Under the old political management structure because the Panel considered all housing related matters on the Housing and Health Committee, the minutes of the Panel meeting were circulated with the Minutes of the Housing and Health Committee. The Panel minutes are not so directly related to the Community and Housing or Cabinet Minutes and are not, therefore, circulated with these. However we should in accordance with the Tenants’ Panel Constitution be distributing the Panel Minutes to the library. This is an omission that we will be correcting immediately. We will also be placing them on the Internet’.

### **25. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING –**

**RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the last ordinary meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2003 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –** There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.

## **27. UPDATE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCRUTINY REVIEW**

Together with the previously circulated report, the Panel received a presentation from Andrew Reynolds, Head of Strategic Housing, updating Members on the progress made against the action plan set out in the Affordable Housing Scrutiny Review Report of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

During consideration of this item, the following points were raised:-

- The possibility of a cash incentive scheme to encourage tenants to move from larger to smaller properties.

The Head of Strategic Housing replied that policies used by other Local Authorities have been looked at and the policy employed by SDC needs to be developed further over the coming months.

In addition to this, staff are working through Neighbourhood Managers to highlight the type of properties that are available and to ensure that properties are put to their best use. Consideration not only needs to be given to the right size of property for tenants, but also the location in which they wish to live.

- The Head of Strategic Housing explained that joint working can be undertaken with the South West Regional Development Agency and the Countryside Agency. Housing is a key issue from a strategic point of view and working with these Agencies is a good opportunity for information exchange.
- Retaining families in local villages should remain a priority area.

The Head of Strategic Housing replied that work with Barford St Martin and Dinton had been undertaken in this area in order to clarify local needs. This will then be used as an example to demonstrate to other parishes how local needs can be met.

The Policy Director added that the results on the Community Planning survey had been analysed and affordable housing was a key issue for all six community plan areas.

In light of this, Members emphasised the need to publicise the Council's policy on affordable housing, particularly to local Parish Councils.

- The Council should be proactive in assessing people's housing needs.

The Head of Housing Management replied that provision has already been made in the Council's Housing Allocations Policy to move tenants to smaller accommodation (if they so wish) and this will be reviewed further.

### **RESOLVED –**

- (1) That a further update report/review be brought back to this Panel for consideration in 6-9 months time.
- (2) That officers be encouraged to use every opportunity to publicise the Council's Policy on affordable housing, especially amongst Parish Councils. (This publication could include details such as influences on the housing market, local issues, negotiations between the Local Planning Authority, housing associations and developers).

- (3) That Panel Members be kept aware (via e-mail) of any affordable housing issues that may arise between meetings of the Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel (e.g. planning applications due to be considered by Area Committees with affordable housing implications).

Following this discussion the Panel then received a presentation from John Meeker, Principal Forward Planning Officer on Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance and consideration was also given to the Officer's previously circulated report.

The following points were raised:-

- Concern that developers will not meet the enhanced requirement over and above the 25% minimum requirement for affordable housing.
- Affordable homes should not be placed in one area within each new development – this could create “ghettos”.
- Is it possible to restrain the sale of affordable homes on the open housing market?  
The Principal Planning Officer indicated that the best means of controlling ownership of affordable homes is to provide them through a Housing Association that will ensure properties are available for those in housing need. In this way, even if tenants or shared owners buy out of their properties, the capital receipt is recycled to build new affordable homes in the district.
- The Council needs to be firmer with developers when it comes to the issue of affordable home provision and a consistent approach must be adopted by the four Area Committees

The Principal Forward Planning Officer replied that Members would be provided with further information on the provision of affordable homes within the final Supplementary Planning Guidance to assist them in their decision making process.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That the content of the proposed SPG be noted and the fact that the guidance will in due course be released for public consultation.

#### **28. DRAFT COMMUNITY AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO PLAN 2004/05 AND CORPORATE PLANNING UPDATE**

Together with the previously circulated copies of the Community and Housing Portfolio Plan and the proposed budget for 2004/05, the Panel received a presentation from the Portfolio Holder for Community and Housing.

Councillor Cole-Morgan's presentation detailed a review of the Portfolio for last year including:-

- (a) Progress on delivering more affordable housing
- (b) Improvements to the Council's Housing Stock
- (c) Improvements to Community Safety
- (d) Improving Customer Services

The presentation also covered key factors affecting Portfolio Planning for 2004/2005, risk assessment, resources and the proposed action plan for 2004/2005.

#### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

In relation to the Potential Extra Savings for consultation, the Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel wishes to pass the following comments to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February:-

- (a) The Panel supports the high risk impact associated with cutting Arts Grants by £35,000 per annum.
- (b) The Panel supports the £5,000 savings identified by reducing the administration costs associated with the WISECARD, provided that this does not have a significant impact on the service provided to users.

## **29. ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR WORKING GROUP**

The Chairman informed the Panel that the Working Group comprising herself, Councillors Dalton, Osment, Mrs Greville and Mrs Fazackerley (Tenants' Panel) had undertaken much work in relation to this review and some members had visited Islington and Southampton as part of the review.

The Chairman went on to explain that the Working Group had recently completed its final report, including a number of recommendations based on the key issues as identified by Members. One of the key recommendations relates to the production of policies, procedures and guidance for dealing with cases of anti-social behaviour, a piece of work that is currently being completed.

A report requesting approval of these recommendations and the crucial guidance documents will be brought to a future meeting of the Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel for consideration by Members.

(NOTE: The next meeting of the Antisocial Behaviour Working Group has been provisionally arranged for 17<sup>th</sup> February at 6pm in Committee Room 1)

## **30. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

**AGREED** – That the next meeting of the Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting be held on 24<sup>th</sup> March at 6pm in Committee Room 1.

The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.