

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL – PLACES

held in the Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough

19th April 2012

Present:
Councillor King (Chairman)

Councillors: Dr. Bremner (Ex Officio), Dewes, Hallam,
Mrs. Simpson, Mrs. Tooley and Mrs. Wood.

Officers: A. Ball, E. O'Neill, R. Patel and, S. Pointer.

Guest Speakers: Councillor Mrs. Ackerley (Portfolio Holder for
Housing Infrastructure and Planning) and Elle Rothero (Vice-Chairman of the
Harborough Disability Access Group).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Brodrick.

565 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTION

Councillor Holyoak substituted for Councillor Brodrick.

566 MINUTES

The Panel noted that it had not received an update on the recommendations made at its
Meeting on 1st December 2011. The recommendations were:

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- (i) *a future Scrutiny item be brought before the Panel on the subject of the Choice-based Letting housing service. This item should set out how Choice-based Letting operates and what the alternatives to this system are.*
 - (ii) *further information on how housing tenancy agreements work be presented to the Panel.*
 - (iii) *further information on how Members are involved with Affordable Housing provision, following approval of planning applications for dwellings, be presented to the Panel.*
 - (iv) *it be established whether or not the Council still has nomination rights for housing tenancies. If the Council does still have these rights then a list of properties this applies to should be provided to the Panel.*
 - (v) *it be established whether or not it is possible to allocate homes to only people from Harborough District.*
 - (vi) *the impact of the Localism Bill on Affordable Housing be assessed and reported back to the Panel.”*

Council Minute 334 2011/12

The Panel requested that it be provided with an update on these recommendations.

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Panel – Places held on
8th March 2012 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

567 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No Declarations of Members' Interest were received.

568 CONTENT AND SCOPE OF DEVELOP GUIDANCE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Panel considered a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). An SPD is a non-statutory document that elaborates upon a policy contained within a statutory development plan document. It cannot make new policy or add to the financial burden on development.

An SPD on Affordable Housing was issued in 2006 to inform developers, landowners and others the affordable housing requirements that Harborough District Council will normally seek to secure via planning obligations in relation to development proposals within the District. It sets out a range of requirements and current policy and practice on securing affordable housing in new developments.

Since the SPD was prepared further research, housing needs, viability testing and assessments provided evidence to inform the development of the Harborough Core Strategy. A revised SPD is planned to be published in draft form along with guidance on other Developer Contributions in 2012 and be subject to consultation prior to adoption (specific time-scale to be influenced by programme to introduce Community Infrastructure Levy).

Before discussing inviting discussion, the Chairman read a letter, received in advance of the Meeting, from Midlands Rural Housing and Village Development Association Ltd (attached at Appendix A to these Minutes).

Questions and comments were invited on the Council's Affordable Housing Policy. The Panel made the following remarks and observations regarding Affordable Housing:

- (i) there appears to be popular demand for an increased use of the Rural Exceptions Policy.
- (ii) there is limited scope for developing affordable bungalows for the elderly; developers do not prefer to build this sort of accommodation.
- (iii) the Council's Housing Register is used to ensure that tenants are allocated appropriate housing provision.
- (iv) it would be useful if 'garage sites' could be used for Affordable Housing provision.
- (v) when providing Affordable Housing it is useful to remember that disabled tenants require adapted accommodation.

The Panel RECOMMENDED that:

1. the definition of 'Affordable' contained with the report be simplified in the interest of ease of reading and understanding.
2. the Affordable Housing Policy can be changed or amended as required. The Policy should set out which circumstances would trigger a review and how this process would be undertaken.
3. Re. Commuted Sums in lieu of provision: paragraph 3.4 of the report to Scrutiny stated that:

"The existing SPD provides a formula under which the Council calculates the level of affordable housing contribution payable in lieu of provision when circumstances indicate that this is the appropriate option. This could be when the prospective social landlords have provided evidence that on site provision is impractical to deliver or manage. In such circumstances a commuted sum is payable to ensure that appropriate alternative provision is funded. This is presently based on agreeing the typical price that a registered provider is able to agree for purchase of the land and building in the locality into and then applying a calculation. The calculation is based on an assumption a landlord can pay up to 50% of local open market values x number of units which would have been expected. Registered providers will calculate the price are willing to pay for units by reference to the expected rental income

and any other factors but should not generally factor in social housing grant on sites obtained through planning obligations.”

The Panel felt that the origin and use of the 50% assumption should be explained more fully.

3.1 Each local authority calculates the level of affordable housing contribution payable. The Panel felt that it would be useful to explore which systems other local authorities use and the advantages and disadvantages of each of these.

3.2 the Commuted Sums Matrix table should be amended as set out below (changes shown in bold, red text):

Commuted Sums Matrix (£) based on an average commuted sum value

Average Commuted Sum value £28,885	30-60sqm	61-85sqm	86-110sqm	111-135sqm	136sqm+
	1 bed flat type	2 bed flat or 2 bed house type	3 bed house type	3-4 bed plus house type	4 plus bed house type
Discount Applied	90%	70%	60%	50%	Nil
Charge with the % discount applied	5777	8665	11554	14442	28885

4. the definition of ‘Living Space’ contained within the Affordable Housing Policy be more fully explained. The final version of the Policy could contain a glossary of terms used and their meanings.

5. Re. Commuted Sums in Lieu of Provision: the Policy should contain reference to Ward Members being involved in this process.

5.1 A flowchart demonstrating the decisions made at the relevant various stages of the Allocation of Commuted Sums to Affordable Housing Schemes process should be added to the Policy.

6. the Panel be provide with information on how many houses are re-let through Harborough Home Search.

7. the Choice-based allocation of Housing be scrutinised in greater detail at a future Meeting.

8. Rural Exception Sites be used exclusively for residents of particular rural areas (and in perpetuity, not just in the first instance).

The Meeting ended at 9.15p.m.