

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL – PLACES

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

20<sup>th</sup> October 2011

Present:  
Councillor Brodrick (Vice-Chairman in the Chair).

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

Portfolio Holders: Councillors: Charlish and Mrs. Ackerley.

Officers: M. Bradford, B. Jolly, K. Mehta and E. O'Neill.

Guests: D. Bennett and B. Ashburner from Seven Locks Housing.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors King, Rook (Portfolio holder) and Mrs. Wood.

241 MINUTES

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Panel – Places held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

242 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None were received.

243 SEVEN LOCKS HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT

Following the transfer of its Housing Stock to Seven Locks Housing (transfer completed on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2007), the Council requested that Seven Locks Housing provide an annual report on a five-year programme of improvements as part of the promises made to tenants in The Formal Consultation Document (referred to as 'The Seven Locks Standard'). The report presented to the Panel at this meeting was the fourth of five such reports promised.

The Panel NOTED the following in relation to projects undertaken by Seven Locks Housing.

(i) the following projects completed in years 1-3 (including 2010-11) included:

- § new bathrooms in 1,381 homes (completed in year 2).
- § a choice of a walk-in shower for sheltered housing tenants (completed in year 2).
- § replacement front/back doors to improve security in 1,310 homes (completed in year 2).
- § new/Upgraded heating systems to 908 homes (completed in year 3)
- § spend £750, 000 within the first five years on aids and adaptations – actual spend on aids and adaptations; £763,778 (completed in year 3).
- § upgrading digital TV aerials and additional security cameras –actual spend £232,000 (completed in year 3).

(ii) projects where progress was on-target included:

- § new Kitchens to around 1,600 homes (1413 homes with new kitchens)
- § support for tenant participation.
- § tenant Resource Centre.
- § environmental Improvements (actual spend up to 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2011; £501,901).
- § development of community initiatives.

(iii) projects requiring further work to achieve targets include:

- § provision of storage/charging facilities for mobility scooters in sheltered schemes.
- § provide 60 new affordable homes within 5 years of transfer (39 homes completed in years 1-3).
- § spend £1 million within the first five years on keeping areas around tenant's homes to a high standard (actual spend up to 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2011; £463,850).
- § additional roof insulation.
- § cavity/solid wall insulation.

The Panel RESOLVED to note the progress made by Seven Locks Housing.

#### 244 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' HALF-YEAR REPORT

Three Portfolio Holders report to the Scrutiny Panel – Places. These are: Waste and Recycling (Councillor Charlish), Housing Infrastructure and Planning (Councillor Mrs. Ackerley) and Local Business, Enterprise and Legal Services (Councillor Rook). The Portfolio Holders presented their Half-Year Performance Reports for the year 2011/12 and invited questions from the Panel.

The Portfolio Holders' reports contained the following categories: Achievements, Current Work in Progress, Areas of Concern, Key Performance Indicators and Topical Issues.

A summary of the discussions on each Portfolio is provided below.

##### i) Housing Infrastructure and Planning Portfolio

The Panel NOTED that:

(i) following approval by Council in February, the Local Development Framework Core Strategy was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination and a hearing arranged for July 2011. In summing up on the final afternoon of the Hearing, the Inspector, Kevin Ward, indicated that he considers the document:

- sound in relation to its justification
- subject to changes being made to introduce additional clarity and flexibility, it can be made sound in relation to effectiveness
- subject to other changes, sound in relationship with national planning policy.

The document will come before Full Council for adoption.

- (ii) the Council has a robust Planning Appeal performance. Comparison to the Planning Inspectorate website is favourable. Its most-recently available figures for 2009-10 show 34% of all Appeals being allowed compared to the Council 18.2% for this year.
- (iii) the Council continues to be unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land. At 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011 the provisional figure is expected to be below 4 years. It should be noted that the Planning Committee approved an application at Scraftoft for 150 dwellings in September 2011 and sites at Crowfoot Way Broughton Astley and Lathkill St Market Harborough earlier in the year, (all of which still require legal agreements to be completed before permissions are issued and then can be counted in the supply figures). It is hoped that positive consideration of larger planning applications during the period to March 2012 may also help resolve the five-year supply shortfall but this will also depend on timely completion of the necessary legal agreements which is currently proving to be a delaying factor in being able to demonstrate housing supply.
- (iv) the Council's Planning department will have significant work to do to prepare itself for new legislation including: the National Planning Policy Framework, the New Homes Bonus and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- (v) housing developments in and around Market Harborough may have a significant impact on traffic in the town. This should be borne in mind when assessing planning applications for housing.

- (vi) outstanding Section 106 monies continue to frustrate the Council. It is expected that the new bond process, and the implementation of CIL will prevent future difficulties.

The Panel RECOMMENDED that an email be sent to Members to clarify how the bonding process for Section 106 monies operates. M. Bradford, Head of Environment and Leisure Services agreed to provide this email to Members.

## ii) Waste and Recycling Portfolio

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) the Council is currently ranked tenth in the United Kingdom for recycling.
- (ii) the Council is currently ranked first in Leicestershire for recycling.
- (iii) the Council is currently in the process of creating a Waste Strategy to assess the waste collection service and how it could change to operate even more efficiently and deliver cost savings.
- (iv) the 'bring-site' in Thurnby has been closed. There are currently 65 'bring-sites' in Harborough District. Most of these aren't owned by the Council (the Thurnby 'bring site' was not owned by the Council).
- (v) the Council is undertaking a review of its assets. The use of the Market Hall, Market Harborough is included within this.
- (vi) Green waste collections have increased between April – August 2011 compared to the same period last year, whereas landfill tonnages have decreased. Overall Dry recycling is slightly down on the previous year. This could be due to the recession and households buying fewer products. The combined recycling rate has been assisted through the food waste collection service providing additional tonnage to the recycling rate, this means the rate overall is on a par with last year.

## iii) Change Management, Local Business, Enterprise and Legal Services Portfolio

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) arrangements for the management of Harborough Innovation Centre (HIC) were finalised in June 2010 with Oxford Innovation being awarded the contract for managing the centre. The Centre was officially opened on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2010 and the first businesses took occupation of their accommodation in August. To date 8 of the 60 offices/studios have been let and interest remains high.
- (ii) much interest has been shown, by local businesses, for using the HIC as a conference venue.
- (iii) the Council is continuing with its policy of holding at least three Business Networking Events per year.
- (iv) it is expected that rural broadband speeds will be investigated, via the work of this Portfolio, in the future.

The Panel RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) future reports from the Portfolio Holder also include reports on Change Management and Legal Services (these were omitted from the report presented).
- (ii) it continue to receive updates on the occupancy of the HIC.

## 245 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Panel will receive a future report on the District's Public Conveniences (initial report on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011).

The Vice-Chairman put forward the idea of canvassing local businesses to ascertain if there would be interest and willingness to take part in a Community Toilet Scheme.

The Panel RESOLVED that:

- (i) the idea of canvassing local businesses for their support toward a Community Toilet Scheme was acceptable in principle.
- (ii) preparatory work should be undertaken before canvassing of local businesses took place. This should include compiling a list of businesses to be canvassed and a draft set of questions to be asked. This work should be brought back to the Panel prior to proceeding with canvassing of businesses.

The Meeting ended at 7.53p.m.