

Minutes of Health & Housing Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday, 22 September 2011 starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chairman)

Councillors:

C Bartrop	K Hind
S Bibby	J Holgate
S Brunskill	R Newmark
R Elms	L Rimmer
R Hargreaves	M Robinson
B Hilton	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Head of Environmental Health Services and Strategic Housing Officer.

349 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors M Ranson and C Ross.

350 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman informed Committee with reference to minute 222 that the Head of Planning Services would attend the November meeting to address them about affordable housing. Both Councillor Hind and Councillor Robinson made reference also to affordable housing issues.

351 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

352 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

353 RIBBLE VALLEY HOMES UPDATE

Christine Grimshaw, Chief Executive at Ribble Valley Homes, gave Committee a brief update on the progress of Ribble Valley Homes. She reminded Committee that the transfer of houses from the Borough Council to Ribble Valley Homes, had been based on maintaining high levels of service and because tenants were unhappy with the Borough Council. Ribble Valley Homes had done more than promised in their first three years of operation and Christine highlighted the service improvements and the performance improvements that had been made. She remarked that tenant satisfaction continued to be a challenge and that a survey had been done recently that would be followed up on. 14 affordable units would be provided by the end of March 2012 with a further 34 HCA funded

schemes having been confirmed. She highlighted the key local issues and policy drivers for 2011-2016. The Chairman thanked Christine Grimshaw for her informative progress report.

354 REFERENCES FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman reported that performance indicators EH1 and EH2 had been highlighted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as issues that needed consideration by the Health and Housing Committee. The Head of Environmental Health Services explained that although the statistics might look to be of concern, they must be balanced with what was achieved during last year. He referred to the various factors that had affected performance in the last year including two accidents, two prosecutions plus long term absence and a frozen vacancy.

The Chairman suggested that it might be an idea for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to examine some of the indicators.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

355 FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2011-2012

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider and approve the Ribble Valley Borough Council Food Service Plan for 2011-2012. The Head of Environmental Services drew Members' attention, in particular to the contents of part 7 in the report, which reviewed the performance of the service against last year's performance plan and also set out the proposed areas for improvement in the forthcoming year. He informed Committee that there had been no complaints received against the delivery of the service. He also made reference to the implementation of the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme within the borough.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the Ribble Valley Borough Council Food Service Plan 2011-2012 for implementation in the current year;
2. note the satisfactory performance in relation to the identified areas for improvement in the previous year's food safety plan; and
3. reconfirm the continuing priority of food premises inspection for environmental health service provision.

356 GRANT POLICY REVIEW

The Chief Executive submitted a report which provided Committee with a comprehensive document that details all the grant initiatives available to households in the borough. The document set out the information in one policy and identified how the grants matched the key housing strategy objectives of the Council. The Housing Strategy Officer highlighted the seven types of grants available which included landlord tenant grants, renewable energy grants, mandatory disabled facilities grants, discretionary disabled facilities grants,

repossession prevention loans, home energy efficiency grants and home safety grants.

Councillors asked for clarification on various aspects of the grants.

RESOLVED: That Committee accept the proposed private sector housing grant policy for 2011 to 2014 and agreed that the policy be reviewed annually and is subject to budget approval.

357 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT UPDATE

The Chief Executive submitted a report updating Committee on the investigation into the reduction of disabled facilities grant referrals. The Housing Strategy Officer reminded Committee that at the last meeting, they were informed of the reduced number of recommendations received from the occupational therapist and the impact that this was having on an underspend of the disabled facilities grant budget. This had now been investigated and a meeting had been held with the occupational therapy manager, senior occupational therapist from Clitheroe Hospital and a Social Services occupational therapist for Ribble Valley. They were aware of the reduction in workload and felt that this was due to a number of issues. These included the introduction of fair access to care services in April 2011 which had resulted in the criteria for eligibility for disabled facilities grants being changed in that once people are assessed and their needs categorised into bands – mild, moderate, substantial and critical, only the substantial and critical bands were now considered eligible, which had resulted in an overall reduction of the numbers of households being entitled for grant aid. Another change to the service had been the increased screening prior to the occupational therapies assessment. The customer service team at Social Services take all enquiries and these are then passed into an intake team, who again screen the enquiry to establish the banding of the person's need. This had resulted in less eligibility where applicants had been signposted as to where they could buy appropriate aids initially.

Other district councils had raised similar concerns and it was understood that Preston City Council and Lancaster City Council had requested that they be given the addresses of the houses banded in moderate need so that they could consider making provision for adaptation for these households through the disabled facilities grant route.

RESOLVED: That Committee instruct the Chief Executive to investigate the opportunity for Ribble Valley to be included in the pilot scheme with Preston and Lancaster to offer DFG support to applicants in moderate need and to report back to this Committee with the project proposal as appropriate.

358 INTRODUCTION OF NEW CHARGES FOR PEST CONTROL SERVICE

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider and approve the introduction of new charges for pest control services. The Head of Environmental Health services informed Committee that as part of the Council's need to find substantial savings over the next two years, a report had recently been presented to the Council's Corporate Management Team, which included proposals to extend charging for pest control services within the borough. He

had reviewed the various types of issues dealt with by the pest control service and considered that the introduction of charges for treating rats and mice could be introduced. He did however point out that in certain circumstances, a sensible pragmatic approach would continue to be adopted so that rodents did not become a more serious problem in the long term. He also informed Committee that by the introduction of a charging regime and its operation over the next few months, this would enable him to have a more informed judgement as to the ultimate replacement of the recently retired part time pest control officer.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the new fees and charges to be introduced from 1 October 2011 as follows:

- Single standard charge of £20 be introduced for rat and mouse treatments.
- Call out charge of £10 where service requested for unspecified reason.
- The charge for insect treatments be increased from £32.50 to £40.
- That treatments for public health insects – cockroaches, bed bugs continue to be undertaken free of charge.
- 50% concession for residents eligible for state pension, housing or disability benefits.
- 'Out of Hours' charges to be doubled.

359 EXERCISE WATERGATE

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee's information giving them an overview and summary of Exercise Watergate, which had taken place on 5 July 2011.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

360 STRATEGIC HOUSING WORKING GROUP

The notes of the Strategic Housing Working Group were submitted for Committee's information. The Chairman reminded Committee of the status of this group in that it was not there to make decisions but only as a policy steer and that it usually met to respond to queries made by potential developers or as consultees of the planning department. It acted in a purely advisory capacity.

361 MINUTES OF THE HEALTH SUB-GROUP

The notes of the Health Sub Group held on 28 July 2011 and 6 September 2011 were circulated for Committee's information.

Councillor Bridget Hilton gave a brief update on the public health reforms.

362 GENERAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee's information which included a flood protection grant update, Clitheroe Market, transfer of private sewers update, employment of environmental health consultant – food safety, intention to relocate underused dog waste bins and Drinking Water 2009 Northern Region Report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

363 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the fact that the following items of business be an Exempt Information Under Category 7 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

364 GRANTS

The Chief Executive submitted details of seven disabled facilities grants that had been approved. The report also outlined a list of grants approved for the financial year 2011/2012.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

365 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee's information on the affordable housing schemes in progress and proposed in the borough. These had been split into pre-application and applications submitted categories.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Councillors attending the meeting were given a tour of the Ribble Valley Homes offices.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Marshal Scott (414400).