

Minutes of: POLICY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 4 March 2008

**Present: Councillor Cheetham (Chair)
Councillors A.Barnes (substitute for Durkin), Robertson
(substitute for Hewlett) and Sandiford (substitute for Steen)**

**In Attendance: Jon Cook, Independent Housing and Homelessness
Consultant
Philip Mepham, Environmental Health Manager
Caroline Ridge, Assistant Planner – Forward Planning
Carolyn Law, Committee and Member Services Officer**

**Also Present: Councillor Farrington.
1 member of the public**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Challinor (Portfolio Holder for Regenerating and Promoting Rossendale), Durkin, Hewlett and Steen.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 26th November 2007 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

No urgent items were raised under this item.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were raised by members of the public.

6. ROSSENDALE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY – VERBAL UPDATE AND PRESENTATION

The Independent Housing and Homelessness Consultant delivered a presentation on the Rossendale Homelessness Strategy and the Supported Housing Strategy (minute 7). He informed the Committee that the Homelessness Strategy and action plan were working documents and constantly needed updating to continue to be effective, in addition to multi-agency working to achieve targets.

The Policy Scrutiny Committee discussed issues relating to:

- Emergency accommodation for the homeless
- Safe houses or suitable accommodation for families subject to domestic violence
- The provision of a women's/family refuge
- Addressing homelessness needs through partnership working
- Achievements over the last 5 years

Resolved:

1. That the Policy Scrutiny Committee welcomes the proposals of the Rossendale Homelessness Strategy and recommends that the Council continues to work closely with partners to implement the strategy.
2. That Cabinet be recommended to approve the Rossendale Homelessness Strategy, in addition to considering suitable emergency accommodation for the homeless and the provision of women's/family refuge facilities.
3. That the Independent Housing and Homelessness Consultant provide a summary of achievements over the last 5 years following the implementation of the strategy.

7. SUPPORTED HOUSING STRATEGY – VERBAL UPDATE AND PRESENTATION

The Independent Housing and Homelessness Consultant informed the Committee that it was good practice to have a Supported Housing Strategy as it helped shape decisions at regional level. The strategy included services for homeless with support needs as well as a wider range of individuals, for example, older people, care leavers, domestic violence victims, and offenders.

A member of the public asked a question in relation to housing support for offenders and levels of support available.

The Policy Scrutiny Committee discussed issues relating to:

- Differing expectations concerning sheltered housing
- The role of the Probation Service in re-housing offenders and the possibility of securing accommodation and support prior to release
- Linking in wider issues such as training, education and employment
- The role of home improvement agencies to help people with care needs

Resolved:

1. That the Policy Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet the approval of the Supported Housing Strategy in principal, however, the Committee would like Cabinet to consider the impact on other sections of the community including older people and expand the strategy to include such groups.

2. That the Local Strategic Partnership, Greenvale Homes and the Elderly Persons Advisory Group be kept informed of the concerns raised by the Committee.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UPDATE

The Environmental Health Manager informed the Committee that the purpose of the update was to bring the strategy and action plan together.

The Policy Scrutiny Committee discussed issues relating to:

- To what extent the policy will benefit new planning applications
- How the policy will be shaped to include existing housing stock in the future
- Whether future reports will contain a section on the impact to the environment

Resolved:

That Cabinet be recommended to adopt the Environmental Policy.

9. OPEN SPACE AND PLAY EQUIPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS: A CONSULTATION DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

The Assistant Planner – Forward Planning reported on proposals to introduce an Open Space and Play Equipment SPD. She informed the Committee that the SPD identified the levels at which developers would be expected to contribute in relation to open space and play equipment contributions. The recommendations and responses of the Policy Scrutiny Committee were being sought as part of the consultation process prior to being considered by the Cabinet.

The Policy Scrutiny Committee welcomed the Open Space and Play Equipment Draft Supplementary Planning Document and discussed issues relating to:

- The length of the consultation period
- The calculation used for S106 Agreements
- The benefits the document will bring to Rossendale
- The Monitoring and Review section will ensure actions are completed
- The document will help to maintain and improve standards
- It gives guidance to developers about what is expected

Resolved:

1. That the comments of Policy Scrutiny Committee be submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Regenerating and Promoting Rossendale and the Executive Director of Regulatory Services.
2. That an update be provided at the next Policy Scrutiny Committee meeting to inform of any amendments made as a result of the consultations and the outcome from Cabinet.

10. ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES: A CONSULTATION DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

The Assistant Planner – Forward Planning informed the Committee that the purpose of the document was to provide a guidance document on alterations and extensions that would be useful to homeowners and officers. The recommendations and responses of the Policy Scrutiny Committee were being sought as part of the consultations before submission to Cabinet.

The Policy Scrutiny Committee welcomed the Alterations and Extensions to residential Properties Draft Supplementary Planning Document and discussed issues relating to:

- The usefulness of Part 3 – Detailed Guidance and also the use of diagrams to provide understanding of what is being explained
- Guidance on back gardens and how soon guidance on this will be available
- The document being available prior to drawing up plans and making it widely available through agencies such as architectural agents, and also publicising through Rossendale Alive, local newspapers, the web site and also making it available in the One Stop Shop
- The document will assist in providing good customer service and satisfaction.
- The document will be useful in providing guidance for future residential property alterations
- It would be useful if the document was available in estate agents as a guide for advising prospective buyers whether they can make suggested alterations to properties

Resolved:

1. That the comments of Policy Scrutiny Committee be submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Regenerating and Promoting Rossendale and the Executive Director of Regulatory Services for consideration as part of the consultations.
2. That an update be provided at the next Policy Scrutiny meeting to inform of any amendments made as a result of the consultations and the outcome from Cabinet.

11. FORWARD PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1ST MARCH 2008 TO 30TH JUNE 2008

The Committee reviewed the key decisions within the Forward Plan for the period 1st March 2008 to 30th June 2008.

The Committee discussed the Housing Green Paper, City Development Company, and the Approval of the Proposals Map for Consultation and agreed they should be included as items on the next agenda.

Resolved:

- That the Housing Green Paper, City Development Company, and the Approval of

the Proposals Map for Consultation be brought to future meetings of the Policy Scrutiny Committee prior to submission to Cabinet.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.25pm)

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date