

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 22nd July 2013

Present: Councillor J Oakes (Chair)
Councillors Creaser, Kenyon (substituting for Procter), Milling,
Pilling, Robertson (substituting for Hughes) and M Smith
(substituting for Bleakley)

Keith Pilkington (co-opted Member)

In Attendance: Rebecca Lawlor, Health, Housing and Regeneration Manager
Stephen Stray, Planning Manager
Simon Cowley, Acorn Service Manager
Zoe Houston, Inspire Housing Co-ordinator
Councillor Barnes, Leader, RBC
Councillor Serridge, Deputy Leader, RBC
Councillor Marriott, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources
Councillor Lamb, Portfolio Holder for Operational Services and
Planning
Councillor Brian Essex
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer

1 Member of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Bleakley, Hughes and Procter.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 24th June be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair agreed to deviate from the Procedure for Public Speaking and allow the member of the public to ask questions as the reports were discussed.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair informed Members that in relation to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, known as RIPA, the Council has authorised use of RIPA on nil occasions. No requests have been refused.

7. SHOP FRONT DESIGN UPDATE

The Planning Manager presented an annual update, as requested by Members in June 2012, of the Shopfront Design Supplementary Planning document, highlighting specifically Appeal decisions over the last twelve months made by the Planning Inspectorate, each of which had been dismissed.

Some of the appeals refer to the Core Strategy Policies and others to the Supplementary Planning Document Shopfront Design (SPD).

The Planning Inspectorate agreed in the appeal decisions that the Council is taking appropriate enforcement action in relation to enforcing against the types of shutters erected which are contrary to the SPD. The existence of shops in the vicinity of the appeal sites with shutters erected so long ago as to be immune from prosecution was not seen as a basis for allowing the appeals to succeed.

The Council was also undertaking proactive work with the use of 'conditions' to stipulate the type of shutters to be used to replace existing shutters when planning applications are submitted by retailers for changes of use to premises.

The Planning Manager advised that based on experience in the past year, more better quality schemes appeared to be coming forward which avoided the need for subsequent enforcement and that some improvements to parades had been observed.

Members praised the use of the Policy and understand that people were beginning to take notice of the Policy.

Eighteen months ago the Planning Department undertook a mailshot to tenants via a leaflet, which informed them of what they need to know in terms of planning permission and design principles they needed to follow.

The Planning Manager asked Members if they thought it would be worthwhile undertaking this again and Members agreed that undertaking this course of action on a two year basis would be a reasonable approach.

A number of questions were raised which the Planning Manager responded and he agreed to supply a briefing note for circulation at a future meeting on S215 notices, which are served when the owner of any land or building is in an unreasonably untidy condition and which the Council considers to have an adverse effect on the amenity of the area.

Resolved

That the information be noted.

8. INSPIRE – GLEN VALLEY

Representatives from East Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Service, provided an overview of the service provided by Inspire from the new abstinence unit which opened in Waterfoot in July 2012, when initially there was resistance from residents. There was now better communication and positive comments from local residents who are now involved in a Steering Group and service users working voluntary in the community.

Inspire service is provided by three organisations, CRI (Crime Reduction Initiatives), Acorn and Work Solutions.

The aim of the service was to provide independent living/sober living that could not be given elsewhere.

Since opening its doors in 2012, Inspire's Recovery Home has housed 14 individuals and Members were given a brief update on success stories on each of the 14 clients, 6 of which remain in the Recovery House. Of the 14 individuals only one had a relapse.

They have at the present time, one 'move-on' house, but are hoping for another near to the Bacup area. Whilst this provides independent living, clients would still be close to the primary house.

Members applauded the work of Inspire across the whole of East Lancashire.

A number of questions were raised, which the representatives responded.

There was to be an 'Open Day' on Saturday, 27th July and it was suggested that an email be sent to all Councillors notifying them of this.

Resolved

That thanks be given for a very informative presentation and congratulations be given to everyone working within Inspire.

9. ROSSENDALE AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE (RADA)

The Health, Housing and Regeneration Manager informed Members that following the work in 2011/12 of the Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group, the recommendations were shared with STAR Centre and she explained how each of the recommendations would progress as follows.

STAR Funding had been secured through the Lottery Fund and there is ongoing work with LCC's Domestic Violence Commissioning Process, which was a key priority for the Community Safety Partnerships and the Children's Trusts, which both have funding to allocate towards a Lancashire Commissioning pot.

LCC have developed a robust process for commissioning domestic violence services and the Council have committed an annual contribution of £6,000 which

will facilitate the generation of c£210,000 of domestic violence support services into Rossendale.

More joint working is now taking place for people who experience domestic abuse and the Rossendale Domestic Abuse Partnership (RDAP) meets every 8 weeks.

Rossendale Against Domestic Abuse (RADA) had its first event in June and produced a commissioning wish list and action plan for DV services in Rossendale. STAR has formed a syndicate with other Providers, whereas previously they relied on funding from such as the Council, so they are in a position to bid for commissioning work from LCC.

A Task and Finish Group has been established – DASH (Domestic Abuse and Safe House), to set up a safe house pilot scheme as Rossendale has no DV refuge within the borough. The pilot scheme is linking into the Council’s empty homes scheme, leasing properties from owners for victims of DV, with referrals through the STAR Centre. This allows properties to be easily moved around the borough so they don’t get known as DV properties. One property has been identified at the present time.

Other recommendations continue to be looked at and the Council is producing an Internal Domestic Violence Policy which would be presented to Cabinet. There will also be a multi-agency policy to be developed by Rossendale Against Domestic Abuse with a series of actions to get more groups engaged within DV services provision across the borough.

A member of the Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group welcomed the recommendations of the Task Group being taken forward.

Members were pleased that the service now looked more sustainable.

Resolved

That the information be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.45pm

Signed
(Chair)

Date