

SOCIAL ISSUES SCRUTINY PANEL

14 March 2007

Attendance:

Councillors:

Hammerton (Chairman) (P)

Chapman (P)
de Peyer (P)
Higgins (P)
Howell (P)
Izard
Love

Quar (P)
Nunn (P)
Stephens (P)
Tait
Weston (P)

TACT Representatives:

Mr Bond (Standing Deputy for Mr Rickman)

Deputy Members:

Councillor Maynard (Standing Deputy for Councillor Izard)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Pearson (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Safety)
Councillor Coates (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Izard, Love, Tait, Mr Rickman (TACT) and Deputy Member Councillor Worrall.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 30 January 2007, be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No comments were received or statements made.

4. **STREET DRINKING AND ALCOHOL EXCLUSION ZONE IN WINCHESTER**

The Panel received a presentation from Mr Ian Davies from the Trinity Centre, Winchester regarding the recent report commissioned by the Winchester Community Safety Partnership (CSP). Mr Davies reported that the CSP and the Council were

currently working to implement the report's recommendations for an expansion to a City wide Alcohol Exclusion Zone, in conjunction with trained outreach services.

Mr Davies also briefly outlined the work of the Centre with regard to 'rough sleepers' in Winchester. He circulated statistics of age groups and categories of 36 clients known to staff for March 2007. In conclusion, Mr Davies reported that although the rough sleeper count had increased in recent years, numbers were close to the national average. He also clarified that although some rough sleepers were actively seeking permanent accommodation (and were on housing lists) others were unable to retain their accommodation and returned to the streets.

During questions and discussion, the following points were raised:

- A managed and controlled 'wet-zone' (an area to be utilised by intoxicated clients) as part of the proposals had yet to be confirmed. Associated costs of this proposal were not yet known.
- Between 15 and 20 street drinkers regularly used the Centre's facilities.
- The Centre continued to enjoy an excellent relationship with its neighbours, with few problems associated with the behaviour of clients. The Centre worked proactively in many instances, such as in association with the railway station to deter nuisance from begging etc.
- Mr Davies explained that the overall rise in rough sleepers in Winchester could not be attributed to anything in particular, nor was there any identifiable trend (other than usual seasonal fluctuations).
- Mr Davies described the facilities and policies of the Winchester Night Shelter. He explained that its staff would not accept clients who were intoxicated.
- Councillor Coates reported on a new Hampshire Voluntary Sheltered Housing Scheme that had recently assisted some homeless clients.

RESOLVED

That Mr Davies be thanked for attending and providing an interesting and very informative presentation.

5. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN 2007/08 ONWARDS**
(Report SO39 refers)

Members asked detailed questions in relation to the key extracts from the draft Business Plan as appended to the report. Reference was also made to information on progress on the key targets for 2006/07.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

Delivering Decent Homes

The Director of Communities explained that Appendix C (page 31) only outlined an indicative profile of commitment of additional expenditure towards supplementary major repairs and renewals programme, further to the main base programme.

Therefore, it was subject to the additional projected income coming on-stream (including that from disposal of housing stock under the agreed policy). Further to this, he clarified that the relatively high allocation for Disabled Adaptations within the supplementary programme was required to address a current backlog.

Key Service Priorities 2007/08 to 2009/10

It was explained that a Strategic Review by Hampshire County Council of Older Persons Services (page 2) could potentially require the Council to tender some of its current service provision in this area.

Other Services we aim to deliver 2007/08

It was requested that the Panel be regularly updated about progress on confirmation of effective links between the new Electronic Document Management System (EDRMS) and the Orchard rents database (page 5). It was acknowledged that the review of Tenancy conditions and the Tenants Handbook (page 5) had been delayed from the previous year due to officers focussing on addressing long term voids. However, it was requested that this work now commence without further delay.

Key Performance Indicators

With regard to BV 212 (page 9) the Director acknowledged that the targets for average re-let times from 2007/08 onwards were ambitious, despite a recent reduction from the 90 days average (2006/07) to 38 days. Turnaround time for general needs housing remained on average at less than one month.

The Director reported that with regard to LPI RA 07 (page 9) (per cent rent lost through dwellings becoming vacant), the figure of 1.46% for 2006/07 equated to approximately £200,000.

Following questions, it was agreed that the Director arrange that a selection of the video evidence produced about every void property (including when brought back to standard) be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

Delivering Decent Homes

With reference to the savings identified at paragraph 5.17 (page 10), the Director explained that a proposed reduction in expenditure for Responsive Repairs was in the context of more planned maintenance.

RESOLVED:

1. That, having regard to the Council's agreed Corporate Priorities on a Safe and Strong Communities, the Panel recommends to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities no changes to the extracts of the draft Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2007/08 as set out as Appendices to SO39.

2. That the Panel requests that future performance monitoring reports include information relating to the progress of confirmation of effective links between the new Electronic Document Management System (EDRMS) and the Orchard rents database.

3. That the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities have regard to the need for a review of Tenancy conditions and the Tenants Handbook to be commenced without delay.

6. **BUSINESS PLANS 2007/08 ONWARDS – STRATEGIC HOUSING DIVISION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY TEAM**

(Report SO40 refers)

Members considered and asked detailed questions in relation to the key extracts from the draft Business Plans 2007/08 for the Strategic Housing division and Community Safety team as appended to the report.

During this discussion, the following issues were raised:

Strategic Housing Division - Key Performance Indicators

During discussion it was noted that an error in BV183i (page 5) be corrected as follows (shown in bold):

“Average length of stay in **bed and breakfast** accommodation.”

Community Safety Team - Key Service Priorities 2007/08

It was explained to the Panel that an accountable officer for the development of new CCTV infrastructure (page 7) would be added, once the proposals for the restructuring of some Council Divisions had been finalised.

Councillor Pearson confirmed that he would check whether the completion date for six monthly crime assessments and actions plans (page 8), currently shown as 31 March 2007, should be revised.

The Chairman requested that further information be provided in due course with regard to the Neighbourhood Warden led ‘Winchester Junior Citizen Event’ (page 10).

RESOLVED:

That, having regard to the Council’s agreed Corporate Priorities on a Safe and Strong Communities, the Panel recommends to the Portfolio Holders for Housing & Communities and Environment, Health and Safety no changes to the extracts from the draft Strategic Housing Division and Community Safety Team Business Plans 2007/08 as set out as Appendices to SO40.

7. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

(Report PS275 refers)

The Director of Communities advised that the final report of the Housing Information Systems Informal Scrutiny Group would be presented to the Panel at its meeting on 11 July 2007.

It was agreed that the comment against the CCTV Control Room Relocation item be deleted, as it was noted that the proposals were no longer tied in with those for Silver Hill and the new Council offices.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the matters raised above, the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda, and as extracted from Report PS275, be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.45pm

Chairman