

**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE****5 September 2013****7.00 pm – 9.02 pm****Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud****3****Minutes****Membership:**

Councillor June Cordwell (Chair)	P	Councillor Stephen Lydon	P
Councillor Karon Cross (Vice-Chair)	P	Councillor John Marjoram	P
Councillor Rowland Blackwell	A	Councillor Russell Miles	A
Councillor Tim Boxall	A	Councillor Nigel Prenter	P
Councillor Miranda Clifton	P	Councillor Paul Smith	P
Councillor John Jones	P	Councillor Penny Wride	P

P = Present    A = Absent

**Other Councillors Present:**

Councillor Nigel Cooper  
 Councillor Geoff Wheeler

**Officers Present**

Head of Cultural Services	Head of Housing Management
Head of Environmental Health	Building Programmes Manager
Accountancy Manager	Head of Community Safety
Facilities & Civil Contingencies Manager	Democratic Services and Elections Officer

**CS.009      APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rowland Blackwell, Tim Boxall and Russell Miles.

**CS.010      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None received.

**CS.011      MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 June 2013 are confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**CS.012**      **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

None received.

**CS.013**      **FINANCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY**

The Head of Housing Management presented the Committee with a final draft version of the Financial Inclusion Strategy and sought approval for its delivery. The Strategy would also be considered by the Housing Committee on 19 September 2013 and would be available on the Council's website consultation page for comments until 30 September 2013.

The accompanying powerpoint presentation demonstrated the need for a strategy, outlined key facts on issues affecting the district and provided an overview of how the Council currently responded to financial exclusion using other resources and services available. The Strategy was both corporate and district wide and intended to respond to many issues including economic challenges, welfare reform, low income, access to affordable finance, increasing utility costs etc. It would be receptive to challenges experienced by all residents in the district.

The Strategy had been developed in response to consultation outcomes and took a multi agency approach to support residents in challenging times. Members were informed of the objective to co-ordinate all skills and community links held by partners and to make the best use of these to support residents, including development of a data sharing protocol. Future work identified beyond the Strategy included production of a Digital Inclusion Strategy to maximise electronic access to services, together with development of a web site. Monitoring and recording outcomes would allow successes to be demonstrated and experiences to be learnt from.

The Head of Housing Management referred to the launch of the Strategy in October with all partners invited to participate. He emphasised the flexibility of the Strategy, which would evolve in response to changing circumstances and suggested good practice. The Strategy had already been considered by the Stroud Council Housing Forum and would be promoted via the community bus; it was hoped that others would champion the Strategy and communicate it to the wider community.

During the ensuing discussion, Members suggested areas to be addressed within the context of the strategy, such as:

- Improvements to broadband access within rural areas and support to enable residents to operate PCs.
- Address the continuing decrease in the average wage and ensure the Strategy linked to the public health agenda.
- Council to be aware of eligibility criteria used within the Strategy, to provide assistance to those with payday loans and utilise the HRA to work with credit unions.
- Raise public awareness of the consequences of using money lending organisations with excessively high interest rates.
- Raise public awareness of the Strategy and inter agency working arrangements.

- Transport provision in rural areas to access banking facilities.
- Consider use of credit unions and other banks with affordable products.

The Head of Housing Management explained the work already underway with regard to some of the above initiatives and explained how other areas, where possible, might be progressed.

The operational aspects of the Strategy and how it would be marketed would be discussed at the October launch. Operational responses to the benefit cap and spare room subsidy could be looked at now before the implementation of Universal Tax Credit. The partnership would be responsible for decision making. With finite resources and unknown demand, partners would assess and co-ordinate resources to provide the best service possible.

- RESOLVED**
- 1. To update the draft strategy with any additional recommendations;**
  - 2. To delegate authority to the Head of Housing Management to finalise the Financial Inclusion Strategy in consultation with the Chair of the Community Services Committee and the Chair of the Housing Committee.**

**CS.014      STRATFORD PARK LEISURE CENTRE VILLAGE CHANGE PROJECT**

The Facilities and Civil Contingencies Manager presented the above report detailing the alterations proposed to the changing facilities at Stratford Park Leisure Centre. The accompanying powerpoint presentation provided examples of current and proposed refurbishment of the changing facilities within the centre and highlighted the new sports hall floor. Members were invited to visit the Leisure Centre in order that the proposals could be further explained. The Committee was referred to the typographical error within the legal implications of the report, with the figure of £60,000 to be amended to £61,000.

The Facilities and Civil Contingencies Manager drew the Committee's attention to the following points during his presentation of the report:

- The proposed alterations would bring the changing facilities to the standard at Dursley Pool and to match those within the fitness area at the Leisure Centre.
- Significant investment and improvements had been made to the Leisure Centre over the past few years. These works represented the final piece of the jigsaw, internally, to modernise the changing facilities which continued to attract a large number of complaints from users, when compared to the rest of the centre.
- The outcomes from extensive consultation had been used to inform the project, including a benchmarking survey which had highlighted how the current changing facilities were not fit for purpose.

- A necessary upgrade to the ventilation system (including the changing facilities and toilet areas) would be brought forward and included as part of the project. This would prevent work to the changing area being undone at a future date and would avoid any disruption to service.
- The Leisure Centre Operator, SLM, had also been involved with the project and had substantially increased usage at the centre compared to the same period last year.
- The floor to the main hall had been replaced sooner than planned due to flooding. The £122,000 cost of this work had been met by Stroud District Council's insurance.
- The proposed new facilities would include better provision for disabled users and would enable privacy for those with particular religious beliefs.
- The scheme would also include a pram park area, which would aid cleanliness and security, together with the installation of energy efficient lighting.

It was confirmed that the work would be undertaken in three stages with minimal disruption to users and without the need to close the centre.

Officers responded to questions confirming the validity of the tender process for the project, the operation of a comprehensive cleaning schedule for the centre and suggestions to develop the outdoor pool. Some Members also expressed dissatisfaction with reference to the project as 'village change'.

**RESOLVED**            **To approve the expenditure required for undertaking the project;**

**RECOMMENDED**    **That the Strategy and Resources Committee recommend to Council that it approves the additional resource of £61,000 required to complete the project, to be funded from the Capital Reserve.**

Councillor Nigel Prenter had abstained from voting on the above project.

### **CS.015            PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY 2013-18**

The Head of Environmental Health presented the report and Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy for adoption. He explained the legislative requirement for such a Policy as without it, the Council would be unable to assist the vulnerable residing in unsatisfactory housing conditions. The Council's first Policy had been adopted in 2003 and had been reviewed to reflect significant national changes in health and wellbeing, with the responsibility for Public Health being transferred from the NHS to Local Authorities.

The accompanying powerpoint presentation outlined the factors that influenced a person's health, together with information on housing tenures, age profiles of housing stock in the district, category 1 hazards across tenure and the costs associated with poor housing. The Head of Environmental Health informed Members of the Council's duty to take action to resolve category 1 hazards in housing. The Council had 26% of category 1 hazards, higher than the national

average of 22%, in addition to a high percentage of older properties (pre 1919), reflected by the high percentage of homes in fuel poverty compared to the County area and South West region.

Reference was made to the high costs associated with those living in poor housing conditions and consequent costs to the NHS. A Health Impact Assessment had demonstrated a cost saving of approximately £425,000 to the NHS if poor homes in the Stroud District were made good. This Council could help reduce NHS costs by addressing category 1 hazards in housing. Members were referred to policy objectives, the Council's corporate priorities and the policy tools and initiatives that would assist this.

In response to questions, the Head of Environmental Health explained that there was a County-wide Home Improvement Agency funded by the District Councils, Gloucestershire County Council and the Gloucestershire NHS Trust to assist vulnerable households in securing essential repairs and adaptations to their homes. It was hoped that more funding could be obtained by tackling health inequalities through the new public health agenda and this would raise the Council's profile with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), by demonstrating the benefits of undertaking preventative work. Progress in relation to implementation of the Policy would be monitored through the performance management system and on a multi-agency basis. The District Health and Well-Being Partnership would also monitor progress through the District's Health and Well-Being Strategy, which would identify deliverables, policy objectives and targets, together with future housing stock condition surveys.

The Leader of the Council commended the report and the initiatives proposed for resolving poor conditions in the district's housing, which would provide a measure of cost benefits to residents and to the Council in addition to the NHS, and which would improve relations with the CCG to further develop health and well-being. He thanked the Head of Environmental Health and his team for production of the Policy.

- RESOLVED**
- 1. To adopt the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2013-2018;**
  - 2. That the Head of Environmental Health in consultation with the Chair of the Community Services Committee be authorised to make minor changes to the policy should it become necessary.**

## **CS.016      BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2013/14**

The Accountancy Manager presented the Committee with its first monitoring report of the financial year, detailing a forecast of the outturn position against revenue budgets and the capital programme for 2013/14. He drew attention to the projected net underspend of £28,600 as detailed in table 2 of the report, the carry forward of £13,700 requested for the Youth Work Strategy, variations to the Capital Budget and areas of risk and uncertainty. The main risk to the outturn forecast concerned revenue and benefits income as set out in paragraph 10, which could be subject to further change. Whilst collection of overpaid housing benefits was slightly down compared to the same period last year, it was anticipated that a surplus could be made on income.

In referring to table 5, the Accountancy Manager explained that whilst the figure for the outturn forecast was correct, the total budget should read £1.337million, due to an error on the budget for housing schemes which should be amended to £620,000.

A Member referred to a possible Council contribution towards the provision of a new mobile police station for rural areas.

The Accountancy Manager explained that an overall budget strategy report for the Council would be considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee on 24 September, detailing the Medium Term Financial Plan and the Council's position over the next four years. He reminded of the spending review undertaken at the end of June and the requirement for the Council to save 1% during years 2014-15 and then to find savings of 10%-15% during years 2015-16. There would be an opportunity for the Committee to consider other budgetary items at its meeting in December.

**RESOLVED** To note the outturn forecast for the General Fund Revenue budget and the Capital Programme for 2013/14.

**RECOMMENDED** That the Strategy and Resources Committee approves the provisional list of budgets to be carried forward to 2014/15 as set out in paragraph 8 (page 3).

#### **CS.017**      **PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

The Chair reminded the Committee of the requirement to appoint two Members of this Committee to attend quarterly performance monitoring meetings with senior management and to report to Committee on an exception basis.

**RESOLVED** That Councillors Miranda Clifton and John Jones be appointed to attend quarterly performance monitoring meetings on behalf of the Committee.

#### **CS.018**      **MEMBER APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Chair referred the Committee to the circulated schedule which sought approval of the Councillors nominated to the appointments outstanding from the last Committee meeting.

**RESOLVED** To make the appointments to outside bodies as set out below:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Councillor(s) Appointed 2013-14</b>
CCTV User Group	Councillor Paul Hemming
Stroud & Rodborough Educational Charity	Councillor Stephen Moore
Stroud & Tetbury District Scouts	Councillor Elizabeth Peters
Stroud & District CVS	Councillor Elizabeth Peters

**CS.019**      **WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED** To agree the Committee's work programme, subject to the following change:

- **24 October 2013** – Postpone 'Review of Homelessness Strategy' to 30 January 2014.

**CS.020**      **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

None received.

The meeting closed at 9.02 pm.

**Chair**