



Cabinet **25 March 2009**

Report of the Policy Development Committee: 11 March 2009

At this meeting the Committee also considered the following issues:-

- (a) Parks Management Plans and Proposed Improvement Plan;
- (b) Playgrounds in St Edmundsbury;
- (c) Cultural Strategy; and
- (d) Community Centres Review – Progress Report.

Separate reports for these items appear on this Cabinet agenda.

1. Cabinet Forward Plan/Work Programme

- 1.1 The Committee examined the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period March to June 2009, but did not ask for any further information or involvement on this occasion.
- 1.2 Turning to its own Work Programme, the Committee noted the current position and received an early indication of the topics expected at its first meeting of 2009/2010 on 10 June 2009. Members also received an update from the Monitoring Officer regarding the production of an annual summary of investigations carried out under the Council's Covert Surveillance Policy, and agreed that this should be published in the Members' Bulletin.

2. Parish and Town Council Revenue Support Grants

- 2.1 St Edmundsbury is one of a small number of district councils that give grants to parish councils. Following a major review of the system of grants undertaken by the Policy Development Committee in 2004, and a consultation exercise and amendment made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2006, the Policy Development Committee has asked to look again at the scheme, to ensure it remains easy to understand, and fair.
- 2.2 To this end the Committee appointed Councillors Mrs Bone, Houlder, Nettleton, Redhead and Mrs Whittaker to a Member/officer working group to look again at the current scheme, and to report back to the Committee on 10 June 2009.

3. Choice Based Lettings Review

- 3.1 The Home-Link Choice Based Lettings Scheme was introduced in February 2008. The Committee had requested a review of the scheme, in order to investigate how the scheme had operated in its first twelve months, to provide baseline data for

future scheme reviews and for evaluating scheme developments or improvements, and to suggest areas of further work to be done to improve Home-Link.

- 3.2 Members discussed a number of the statistics provided in the report in detail, including the spread of allocations across the bands, and an analysis of who was bidding for properties. There were currently approximately 5,000 people on the register, of which approximately 5% were in Bands A and B, and 95% in Bands C and D. Around 25% of bids came from those in Bands A and B, 50% from Band C and 25% from Band D. Of those actually housed, 80% came from Bands A and B, 15% Band C and 5% Band D. The statistics therefore showed that Home-Link was in the main housing those most in need, although those in Bands C and D also had a chance of being housed.
- 3.3 One issue which came out in the debate was that approximately 3,500 of those on the register were not actively bidding, most of which were in Bands C and D, and the Housing Team intended to have a system whereby people who did not bid for 12 months were contacted to ascertain whether their circumstances had changed, or whether they simply needed more support in making bids.
- 3.4 The Committee advised officers which local Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be reported through the Members' Bulletin, and also agreed that officers work with sub regional colleagues, Locata and local agencies to improve feedback information. The Committee also agreed that ongoing monitoring be established, as outlined in the report.

4. Review of Vision 2025 Action Plan: Health, Social Care and Safety

- 4.1 The St Edmundsbury Vision 2025 document was adopted by full Council in December 2005, following development throughout 2005 with key partners and the community. The document sets out the Borough Council's vision for the Borough for the next 20 years. Following adoption, it was agreed that monitoring and development of the Action Plans aligned to each of the six themes of the document would be ongoing, and that two of the six themes would be considered by the Policy Development Committee each year between 2007 and 2009, with an interim review of the whole Action Plan in 2010 (the interim review will now be subject to the outcome of local government reorganisation).
- 4.2 At its meeting on 11 March 2009 the Committee considered the last of the six themes to be reviewed over the three year period between 2006/2007 and 2008/2009, "Health, Social Care and Safety". The Action Plan was discussed by the Committee, which concluded that fair progress had been made over the last year on undertaking the actions under the Housing theme, considering that the input from the Health Service and PCT had not been as high as would be required for a full update on those actions which rely on partners to progress, although officers gave an assurance that steps had been taken by the PCT to establish closer liaison with the Borough Council.

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