

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
Housing and Central Services Committee
4 March 2008**

Councillor Julie Searle (Chairperson)
Councillor Gavin Ayling (Vice-Chairperson)

*Councillor Brian Boggis
Councillor Robert Dunn
Councillor Carol Eade

Councillor Carl English
*Councillor Keith Fayers-Morrissey

Absent*

HCSC/606/07-08 Declarations of Interest / Substitute Members

Councillor Liza McKinney declared her substitution for Councillor Keith Fayers-Morrissey.

Councillor Neil Parkin declared his substitution for Councillor Brian Boggis.

Councillor Robert Dunn declared an interest as a member of West Sussex County Council.

HCSC/607/07-08 Questions and Statements by the Public

Members of the public were invited to ask questions or make statements about any matter for which the Council had a responsibility or which affected the district.

Mr Antony Morris of Shadwells Court spoke in relation to the items on the agenda regarding Sheltered Housing. He asked the Committee to give their urgent attention to the protection of the Sheltered Housing services and wardens and to agree to write to West Sussex County Council expressing the Council's concerns, as per recommendation 2.2 of agenda item 10.

He also congratulated Sheltered Housing wardens, scheme managers, relief managers and housing staff for their hard work and performance under the pressures placed on them. He asked Members to consider their own expenses under the new Cabinet and Leader system before making any cost saving job cuts.

Mrs Ella Hutt of Brighton Road spoke in relation to agenda item 8 regarding Kingston Beach Village Green. She was pleased to note that at discussions on 12 February 2008 the Committee had agreed that the proportion of land that would be deregistered would be limited to 544m². She queried whether this figure was correct and whether it included the footprint of the current lifeboat station or Shoreham Port Authority land.

The Chairman confirmed that 544m² is the additional Village Green land that will be taken by the new lifeboat station.

Mr Peacock of Williams Road asked whether the Council had made any decision regarding the use of land at Williams Road for affordable housing.

The Chairman clarified that this item was due to be discussed later in the meeting.

HCSC/608/07-08 Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved that the Minutes of the Committee held on 22 January 2008 and 12 February 2008 and the Staff Appeals Sub Committee held on 22 November 2007 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

HCSC/609/07-08 Items Raised under Urgency Provisions

None.

HCSC/610/07-08 Adur Consultative Forum Minutes

The Committee noted the minutes of the Adur Consultative Forum held on 28 February 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 5.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Adur Consultative Forum held on 28 February 2008 be noted.

HCSC/611/07-08 Prince Charles Close Community Hall

Before the Committee was a report by the Head of Housing Management, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 6.

The Head of Housing Management introduced the report which updated the Committee on progress made regarding the lease of Prince Charles Close Community Hall. This followed discussions at the meeting on 20 November 2007 at which the Committee instructed officers to pursue the lease of the building to one of the current users.

The Committee were pleased to note that the local playgroup, as main current user of the hall, had expressed an interest in the lease and asked to be kept up to date with progress on this item.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

HCSC/612/07-08 Development of Council Owned Land for Affordable Housing - Proposals for Land at Williams Road

Before the Committee was a report by the Head of Housing Need and Environmental Health, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 7.

The Head of Housing Need and Environmental Health introduced the report noting that this matter had previously been deferred to allow the Committee to undertake a site visit and meet with local residents. He drew the Committee's attention to the concerns raised by local residents at this meeting, as set out in paragraph 3.6 of the report. He also noted that there are currently 1585 households on the Council's housing register and 83 families in temporary accommodation awaiting new homes such as those proposed at this site. He asked the committee to balance the concerns of local residents against the needs of the District and noted that Members could expect similar local opposition to proposed development at alternative sites.

Members acknowledged their duty to those on the housing register but felt that, in the light of the concerns raised by existing residents, the site at Williams Road was not suitable for housing development.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the lack of new developments of family homes in the District. The Head of Housing Need and Environmental Health replied that this is an issue as 50% of households on the housing register are families. He noted that the Council, as the land owner, has more control over the type of development which may be suitable for the site at Williams Road, rather than that which may be more profitable and that the proposal was for approximately 6 family homes.

The Chairman of Adur Consultative Forum (ACF) expressed concerns regarding the lack of alternative sites in the District for development for affordable housing and the implications for those on the Council housing register. She commented that the objections raised for this site could be repeated for other proposed developments.

The Committee felt that some of the concerns raised by local residents were valid and specific to this particular site. It was felt that green space within this deprived ward was particularly important.

Members agreed that the site at Williams Road was not suitable for development and should not be disposed of to Worthing Homes for the purposes of affordable housing.

Resolved that the land at Williams Road is not to be disposed of to Worthing Homes for the purposes of affordable housing.

HCSC/613/07-08 Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm for ten minutes to allow the Chairman of the Committee to look through the plans for the new lifeboat station at Kingston Beach.

HCSC/614/07-08 Kingston Beach Village Green Replacement

Before the Committee was a report by the Head of Corporate and Legal Services, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 8.

The report set out a deferred decision from the meeting of the Committee on 12 February 2008 and asked the Committee to determine an area of land to replace the Village Green at Kingston Beach, in light of the decision on the land at Williams Road made earlier in the meeting.

In response to the query raised earlier in the meeting, the Chairman noted that the report does not make clear whether the area of land specified as 544m² is in addition to that occupied by the lifeboat station building. She noted that, in any case, the piece of land under consideration is larger than 200m² and therefore the Council must allocate an area of land as a replacement for the Village Green.

The Committee agreed that the Council's priorities in this matter were, firstly, to ensure that the RNLI had provision for a suitable lifeboat station and, secondly, that the remaining land at Kingston Beach not incorporated into the new lifeboat building remain as Village Green. It was reiterated that Members wishes were to only deregister that portion of Village Green land required for the new building and that no additional provision should be made for the roadway or car park.

Members then discussed the options available for replacement land. It was felt that the suggestion put forward for Southwick Beach was not suitable as it was not easily accessible to Kingston Buci residents. It was proposed that the land at Williams Road, as discussed under the previous agenda item, would be the most appropriate option. This was agreed.

Resolved that the portion of Village Green land at Kingston Beach which will be used for the new lifeboat station building be deregistered and that replacement land at Williams Road be registered as Village Green.

HCSC/615/07-08 Supporting People Update

Before the Committee was a report by the Head of Housing Need and Environmental Health, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 9.

The Head of Housing Need and Environmental Health introduced the report which gave a six monthly update on developments on Supporting People in West Sussex. He noted the main issues outlined in the report: the requirement for a new member representative; the 1.9% inflation uplift on all contract sums; and the removal of the ring fence requirement for Supporting People grants.

The Committee thanked Councillor Eade for her involvement in the Supporting People Commissioning Body and thanked the Head of Housing Need and Environmental Health for his support.

It was noted that the Member appointment to the Commissioning Body would be considered at Annual Council in May 2008. It was agreed that Members and the ACF should continue to receive updates on Supporting People issues, through the Members Bulletin or the new cabinet structure, as appropriate.

Resolved

- (i) that, in principle, the future member representative on the West Sussex Supporting People Commissioning Body from May 2008 will be the relevant Cabinet Member or appropriate Policy Advisor;
- (ii) that the contents of the report be noted;
- (iii) that members be kept updated and advised of issues arising from the Supporting People programme through the Members Bulletin and / or to full Cabinet or the appropriate Cabinet Member as required, with the involvement of Adur Consultative Forum as appropriate.

HCSC/616/07-08 Supporting People Review / Sheltered Housing and Community Alarm Services

Before the Committee was a report by the Head of Housing Management, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 10.

The Supported Housing Services Manager introduced the report, noting two minor errors: paragraph 3.3 should read "...for one year until the end of *March* 2008." and secondly, there being no further meetings of the Committee scheduled, paragraph 4.5 should read "...be deferred to *later in the summer...*". The report advised Members of changes to the contracting processes for Supporting People services and the affects of this decision.

The Committee expressed support for the valuable service provided by Sheltered Housing in Adur and agreed that concerns should be expressed to the County Council regarding the proposed changes and their implications, as set out in recommendation 2.2.

The Chairman of ACF commented that the ACF supported the views of the Sheltered Housing Advisory Review Panel (SHARP) on this matter and the recommendations in the report. She expressed concerns regarding the implications of an open tendering process for the Supporting People contract and noted that the Council may not be able to compete in the tendering process if the area is widened beyond that of the District.

Members suggested that the wording of recommendation 2.3 be strengthened and agreed that the letter to West Sussex County Council be signed by the Leader and copied to the local MP, to maximise its impact.

Resolved

- (i) that the contents of this report and the implications for the future of support services in sheltered housing be noted;
- (ii) that officers be instructed to write a letter to West Sussex County Council, to be signed by the Leader of the Council and copied to the MP, to express concern at the threat to this Council's sheltered housing and community alarm services, and dissatisfaction with the proposed review and procurement timetable and to urge them to offer contract tenders on a District basis;
- (iii) that the temporary posts at Seaview Court and Avon Court be extended until the end of September 2008.

HCSC/617/07-08 Countywide Procurement of Community Alarm and Telecare Services

Before the Committee was a report by the Head of Housing Management, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 11.

The Supported Housing Services Manager briefly introduced the report which asked for Members approval in principle to create a consortium with other Community Alarm partners in order to strengthen the position to bid for a countywide contract. She noted the value of the Community Alarm service in reducing hospital bed blocking and providing income for the General Fund and commented that the service had immeasurable benefits for its users.

The Committee asked for reassurance that the development of this initiative would not disrupt the current Community Alarm service. The Supported Housing Services Manager replied that she was confident that there would be no impact on the current service. Members agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

Resolved

- (i) that the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) that the proposal that Adur's Community Alarm service forms a consortium with its WESCAP partners to bid for the West Sussex countywide telecare contract from 2009/10 be agreed in principle.

HCSC/618/07-08 Choice Based Lettings

Before the Committee was a report by the Head of Housing Need and Environmental Health, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 12.

The Head of Housing Need and Environmental Health introduced the report which advised the Committee on the progress of the new regional Choice Based Lettings scheme since its introduction in July 2007. He noted that the scheme had not increased void re-let times. He explained that there would be more research into the use of the scheme by different users and its affects on waiting times in due course.

The Committee noted that the scheme had had a relatively promising start and asked officers to look further at why some parties had not yet used the system to bid for properties.

The Chairman of ACF commented that she felt the scheme needed to be in operation for a longer period before it could be fully evaluated. She queried the processes in place to encourage tenants in larger properties to downsize, noting that she had been made aware of incidences in which such tenants had been discouraged. The Head of Housing Need and Environmental Health replied that he would look into the matter.

Members felt that the new scheme was fairer and more open and thanked housing staff and the Head of Housing Need and Environmental Health for their hard work in its implementation. It was agreed that the report was comprehensive and that no further reporting was required on any of the issues raised. Members asked to be updated on the progress of the scheme on a six monthly basis.

Resolved

- (i) that the development to date of the Sussex Homemove Choice Based Lettings system in Adur since its introduction in July 2007, as outlined in the report, be noted;
- (ii) that there are no matters within the report requiring further reporting;
- (iii) that the progress and development of the scheme be reported to Members on a six monthly basis.

HCSC/619/07-08 BVPI 78a and 78b

Before the Committee was a report by the Chief Executive, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 13.

Members were pleased to note further improvements in this performance area and agreed that no further action or reporting was required.

Resolved

- (i) that the outturn figures for BVPI 78a and 78b for the third quarter of 2007/08 be noted;
- (ii) that no further action is required based on these outturn figures;
- (iii) that no further reporting is required for these performance indicators unless performance declines.

HCSC/620/07-08 Rate Relief Applications

Before the Committee was a report by the Director of Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 14.

On the advice of the Legal Services Manager all members of the Committee declared a personal interest in application 2, as a professional acquaintance of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Ropetackle Centre, the local MP.

The Committee discussed each application for rate relief in turn and considered the officer's recommendations based on the scoring system set out in the report. It was agreed that the levels of mandatory and discretionary rate relief for application numbers 1, 3, 4 and 5 be set as per the officer advice and as set out in Annexes 2, 3 and 4 of the report.

With regard to application number 2, Members proposed that a level of discretionary rate relief be granted to match that granted for other local Community Centres, for reasons of consistency. This was agreed.

In relation to application number 6, the Interim Head of Financial Services explained that in February 2005 the Committee had agreed to grant a staged reduction in rate relief for this organisation ending in 2007/08. It was proposed that 12.5% rate relief be granted for 2008/09 and reduced to zero the following year. The Committee noted that the organisation had balances of over £5,000 and would not suffer financial hardship if the relief was withdrawn as planned. It was therefore agreed to grant the officer recommendation of 0% rate relief for 2008/09.

Resolved

- (i) that the accounts which qualify for mandatory rate relief as set out in Annex 2 of the report be noted;
- (ii) that the levels of discretionary rate relief be agreed as per the officer advice and as set out in Annexes 2, 3 and 4 of the report, with the following amendments:
- (iii) that application number 2 be granted 80% mandatory rate relief and a level discretionary rate relief to match that granted for other local Community Centres.

HCSC/621/07-08 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting from the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12 A to the Act indicated against the item.

HCSC/622/07-08 Extension of Contract with Top Level Forms (Paragraph 3)

Before the Committee was a report by the Director of Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 16.

The Head of Business Transformation introduced the report which proposed an extension to the contract to maintain and improve e-government facilities on the Council's website until March 2009 and asked for Member approval in line with the Contract Procedure Rules. He noted that discussions were in progress on the provision of a shared contract arrangement with neighbouring authorities from April 2009 to reduce costs.

Members noted that budget provision was already in place for this extension and agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

Resolved

- (i) that it be noted that this report is submitted in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules 22.1 (iv) – Exceptions – which requires any proposed extension to an existing contract to be approved by/reported to the Committee responsible;
- (ii) that an extension to the contract with Top Level Forms until 31st March 2009 be approved, so that that the firm can continue the development of Adur's electronic forms, (for external and internal processes), support e-payment and continue web-hosting the service.

HCSC/623/07-08 Write Offs (Paragraph 3)

Before the Committee was a report by the Director of Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 17.

The Interim Head of Financial Services briefly introduced the report. Members considered the debts set out in the report and reluctantly agreed that the monies were not recoverable and approved that the debts be written off.

Resolved that the accounts submitted in schedules A, B and C of the report be approved for write off.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8:55pm, it having commenced at 7:00pm.

Chairman