

# COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 7 January 2003 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Doody (Chair); Councillors Butler, Byrd, Copping, Mrs Edwards, Harris, Kent and Mrs McFarland.

Mr George Dunkley (Warwick District Tenant and Leaseholders User Group).

Mr John Laverty (Warwick District Tenant and Leaseholders User Group).

Miss Rachel Hodgetts (Warwick District Federation of Tenants and Residents Association (Federation 2000)).

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Boad (Housing Services Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Kohler (Customer and Community Services Portfolio Holder)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms Flanagan, Shilton, Talbot and Mr Wheatcroft.

## 700. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

### Minute Number 707 - Executive Agenda Item Number 5 - Discretionary Rate Relief Budget Allocation - 2002-2003

Councillor Boad declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item because he was the Chair of the Ocean Drop In Centre Management Committee, and he left the meeting room when the item was considered.

Councillor Copping declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item because of his work for the Leamington Football/Rugby Club, and he left the meeting room when the item was considered.

Councillor Doody declared a personal interest in this item because various organisations within his ward were effected.

(Councillor Harris declared a personal interest prior to the consideration of this item.)

Councillor Kohler declared a personal interest in this item because he was a member of the Warwick District Racial Equality Council.

Councillor Mrs McFarland declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item because she was a Trustee of the Warwick Percy Estates Community Projects Ltd, a Director of the Warwick District Racial Equality Council, and

## **COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

Afro-Caribbean Project, and she left the meeting room when the item was considered.

### **701. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 5 November and 3 December 2002 having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **702. THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN FOR HOUSING BENEFIT**

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Andrew Jones, Benefits Manager.

Mr Jones referred to a recently published Government document entitled "Building Choice and Responsibility: A Radical Agenda for Housing Benefit" which set out proposals for the reform of the Housing Benefit scheme.

The Government's objectives were that Housing Benefit should reduce the barriers to work, ensure that people on low incomes could afford a decent home which meets their needs, give tenants more choice and extend their responsibility for paying rent, and provide a better quicker service, based on simpler, clear rules, whilst making fraud more difficult to commit.

To achieve these objectives, the reforms were to concentrate on four broad areas - a simple, fairer system, a better service to claimants and fewer barriers to work, clear standards and increased accountability, and reducing the incidents of fraud and abuse of the system.

During his presentation, Mr Jones referred to the way in which the proposed reforms would affect the way the Council provided its Benefits Service and the possible implications for service delivery.

Following questions from Members, the Chairman thanked Mr Jones for his informative presentation.

### **703. HOUSING OPTIONS - INDEPENDENT TENANT ADVISOR (ITA) PROJECT PLAN**

The Committee considered a report from the Tenants Panel and PEP outlining the Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) Project Plan. The plan was attached as an appendix to the report.

On 24 April 2002, the Council had agreed that the decision on housing options should be deferred until more information could be presented on the following key issues - stock condition, the views of the tenants, the impact of the options on the tenants and on the Council as a whole. On 27 May 2002, the Executive had approved a comprehensive programme to enable more information on the above issues to be provided in order to facilitate a decision by July 2003. The programme had included the appointment of an ITA to assist in the consultation process.

## **COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

The tenant and leasehold representatives had been involved in the design of the brief and had received ITA selection skills training from TPAS. In October 2002, Priority Estates Project (PEP) were appointed and would be required to increase the level of tenant/leaseholder participation, consult on the housing options and undertake a survey to gain tenant views.

**RECOMMENDED** that the report be noted.

### **704. HOUSING OPTIONS - PROJECT PLAN**

The Committee considered a report from Housing setting out the key actions to be undertaken in the next 12 months in relation to housing options. A copy of the list of key actions was attached as an appendix to the report.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

### **705. WORK PLAN 2002/2003 AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER PRIORITY AREAS**

The Committee considered a report from Policy Services updating the their work plan for the year and monitoring the progress against the Portfolio holder priority areas. It had been agreed to consider the Committee's work plan as a standing item on each agenda. The current work plan reflected items raised by the Committee and was attached as an appendix to the report. The Executive had agreed priorities and work programmes for each Portfolio holder at its meeting on the 25 June 2001. The relevant priorities and work programmes for the Portfolios covered by the Committee were appended to the report.

**RECOMMENDED** that

- (1) a progress report on the work programmes, with specific reference to the items shown as "on-going" be incorporated into the work plan, and
- (2) the report be noted.

### **706. EXECUTIVE MEETING MONDAY 9 DECEMBER 2002**

The minutes of the Executive held on 9 December 2002 which came within the remit of the Committee was submitted for information and scrutiny.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be noted.

### **707. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORT)**

The Committee considered the items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Monday 13 January 2003, which came within their remit. As a result the following comments were made for forwarding to the Executive.

## **COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

### Agenda Item Number 4 (B) - Notices of Motion

The Committee considered the notice of motion together with agenda item no. 5.

### Agenda Item Number 5 - Discretionary Rate Relief Budget Allocation - 2002/2003

The Committee supported the action as outlined in paragraph 11.5(a) of the report - i.e., a supplementary estimate be approved for 2002/2003 and recurring additional resources be made for subsequent years. It also noted that the scheme was to be reviewed in the near future.

(Councillor Harris declared a personal interest in this item because he was a member of the Bath Place Community Venture and Management Committee and the Warwick District Racial Equality Council).

### Agenda Item Number 6 - Provisional Local Government Settlement and Budget 2003/2004 and 2002/2003 Revised

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 7 - Approval of Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2002/2003 Revised and 2003/2004 Estimates

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 8 - Stock Management Best Value Review - Final Reports and Improvement Plan

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report and placed on record their thanks to those who had been involved in its production.

### Agenda Item Number 10 - Warden Call Maintenance Contract

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 14 - Draft Cultural Strategy

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 15 - Restructure of Parks and Recreation Section

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 16 - Refurbishment of Edmondscote Athletics Track, Leamington Spa

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report.

## **COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

### Agenda Item Number 18 (A) - Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) - Top Up Funding for Coventry Road, Baginton Development

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 18 (B) - Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) - Pipers Lane, Kenilworth

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 18 (C) - Refurbishment of King Henry VII All Weather Pitch

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 18 (D) - General Report Benefits Take Up Campaign

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 18 (E) - Rural Initiative Scheme - Eathorpe and Wappenbury Village Hall

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 18 (F) - Rural Initiative Scheme - Racing Ahead

The Committee supported the allocation of £3,000 but felt it should be met from the Community Plan budget.

(The meeting ended at 8.00 p.m.)