



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 15 JANUARY 2004 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Draycott - Chair
Councillor Smith – Liberal Democrat Spokesperson
Councillor Allen - Conservative Spokesperson

Councillor Corral
Councillor Keeling

Councillor Karim
Councillor Shelton

Also in Attendance

Christine Cronogue - Leicester Federation of Tenants' Associations

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54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they might have in the business on the agenda, and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

Members declared the following personal and prejudicial interests in the whole agenda:

Councillor Corral	related to a tenant of a Council owned property
Christine Cronogue	tenant of a Council owned property
Councillor Draycott	related to a tenant of a Council owned property
Councillor Shelton	related to a tenant of a Council owned property and his son is employed by the Housing Department
Councillor Smith	tenant of a Council owned property

The prejudicial interests did not apply under the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct, Paragraph 10 (d), and therefore they remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion on the items.

63. DRAFT REVENUE STRATEGY 2004/2005

The Corporate Director of Housing and the Chief Finance Officer submitted a joint report seeking the views of the Scrutiny Committee on the draft revenue strategy for the Housing Department. The report explained that the Cabinet

Link Member had asked the Committee for its views on the draft strategy and asked that the Committee either endorsed the strategy or had any alternative proposals. The strategy document gave details of the key issues, objectives and policy context of the proposals together with details of the reduction and growth proposals. It reported that Cabinet would consider all proposals and submissions before submitting their recommendations to Council.

The Corporate Director of Housing reported on proposed growth items within the draft strategy. These included the neighbourhood nuisance team where a bid for Neighbourhood Renewal Fund money was also planned; a planned increase in the number of Community Development Officers; and a transfer of funding stream from Social Care and Health for the YMCA. Attention was drawn to the proposed changes to funding for SHARP and hostels income. It was felt that the proposed reduced funding for SHARP would have little impact due to the wide range of alternative housing advice services available in the city. It was also stated that hostels operated at an exceptionally high capacity. A reduction in support costs by £20,000 was also identified. It was stated that the proposals had been discussed with the trade unions, who were broadly in support of the plans.

The Committee expressed its disappointment that the proposals relating to the Environment, Development and Regeneration Department that fell under its terms of reference had not been included in the papers for the meeting. It was agreed that these be considered at the special meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 12 February 2004.

With the agreement of the Chair Dave Mitchell of Unison addressed the Committee. Dave Mitchell reported that Unison did broadly support the draft budget proposals for the Housing Department. Some concerns were raised about the proposed efficiency savings and the delay to the Homelessness shelter. He did however explain that within the context of the wider budget proposals Unison was extremely concerned. It was felt the proposed budget cuts to the voluntary sector included in other departments draft revenue strategies would negatively impact on the housing service and place it under additional strain.

Some Members of the Committee expressed concern at the wider implications of the whole Council's budget, in particular with regard to the proposed budget cuts to the voluntary sector. It was felt by some Members that although the Housing Department draft budget was fairly positive it was hard to look at the proposals in isolation.

Councillor Draycot, seconded by Councillor Corrall put the following suggested resolution:

“That the committee does not endorse the draft strategy and the proposals be looked at again and considered at the Special Housing Scrutiny Committee on 12 February”

The matter was put to a vote and lost.

At the conclusion of the meeting the Chair requested that individual members take forward their views.