



Leicester
City Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: 12 JANUARY 2006 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Smith - Chair
Councillor Allen- Conservative Spokesperson
Councillor Bhatti- Labour Spokesperson

Councillor Keeling
Councillor Tessier

Councillor Joshi
Councillor Westley
(for Cllr Lloyd-Harris)

Co-opted Member

Mr. George Narraway - Leicester Federation of Tenants'
Associations

Also In Attendance

Councillor Metcalfe – Cabinet Link Member for Housing

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66. DRAFT REVENUE STRATEGY FOR THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT

The Corporate Director of Housing and the Chief Finance Officer submitted a report which gave details of the draft revenue strategy for the department which Cabinet had requested that Scrutiny comment upon. It was emphasised that the Strategy was still a draft and could be described as 'work in progress'.

It was stated that budgets were expected to remain under pressure for the duration of the three-year Strategy. It was also stated that pressures caused by not being able to meet all of the savings targets identified in the last financial year, the inability to make the Housing Options saving as it had not proved possible to identify and commission a suitable building and increased staff costs due to grading increases meant that the department needed to identify £384,000 of savings in addition to savings required by the three year budget strategy. In addition the department was affected by government cuts in monies for 'Supporting People' and Neighbourhood Renewal funding where

the lack of mainstream funding meant that where grant was cut there must be cuts in service.

The Corporate Director of Housing also advised the Committee that the figures shown under Housing Efficiency Reviews on pages 18, 25 and 35 for reductions in Renewal and Grants should be amended down from £113,000 to £96,000.

Details were given of each of the proposed reduction items and of their likely impacts on service. An Equality Impact Assessment under the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 had been undertaken and the results were given.

In accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 7b Dave Mitchell (UNISON) was invited to address the Committee.

Mr Mitchell stated that he had been briefed on the document and that there was nothing included in the Strategy of which he had been unaware. However he expressed concern that the moves envisaged under the review of Centrally Located Administrative Buildings had not been carried out due in spite of the work completed within the Housing department which was creating a budget pressure for the department and meant that staff had to work in inadequate conditions. He also referred to the success of the home working project and suggested that it was important to keep the situation regarding asylum seekers under review and that he believed that any cuts in future years would seriously affect front line services

Members expressed serious concerns regarding the non-completion of the moves envisaged under the review of Centrally Located Administrative Buildings and the budget pressures and accommodation difficulties this was presenting to the department. In response it was confirmed that the Housing department had completed all the works necessary to complete their moves but delays were occurring in relation to other components of the process due to the complexity of the review. It was also stated that rigorous checks were made of asylum seekers and much work had been done to address incorrect rumours of preferential treatment for asylum seekers in the community.

Members referred to the home working project and the gains in productivity that had been achieved and the potential reduction in costs this could bring.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the revised draft Revenue Strategy be noted; and
- (2) That the concerns of the Committee relating to the non-completion of the moves envisaged under the review of Centrally Located Administrative Buildings (CLABs) and the budget pressures and accommodation difficulties this was presenting to the department be referred to Cabinet and the Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee.

