

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL



17 DECEMBER 2012 - 2.30PM

PRESENT: Councillor Chambers (Chairman), Councillor Miscandlon (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Booth, Mrs Bucknor, Cornwell, Hodgson, Scrimshaw, Stebbing, Sutton and Swan.

OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Butcher, Clark, Cotterell and Murphy

OFFICER IN ATTENDANCE: Jane Bailey, Lottie Boast, Richard Cassidy, Anna Goodall, Dan Horn, Phil Hughes and Alan Pain

OS24/12 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 12 November 2012 were confirmed and signed subject to the following amendments:

- Minute number OS21/12, Localism, bullet point 1.

The last sentence should read, The office of Fair Trading regulate other financial establishments that are lending money such as pawn brokers, and at this time Fenland are not planning to licence these, however this is a good point and something that will be looked into.

- Minute number OS22/12, bullet point 12.

In addition, Councillor Booth asked how much would a council tax bill be increased by if the shortfall were to be added. Rob Bridge stated that if the shortfall were to be added to the council tax bill it would increase them by 3%. Councillor Booth asked at what figure a referendum would be triggered. Rob Bridge stated that 2% would trigger a referendum.

Councillor Scrimshaw highlighted the fact that he was disappointed that a response to a question from the meeting on 12 November 2012 was not received until 14 December and only after he had called to follow this matter up.

*** FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL ***

OS25/12 UPDATE FROM RODDONS HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Christopher Smith - Regional Operations Director at Roddons Housing Association and Brenda Reynolds - Chairman of Roddons Board attended the Meeting for this Item.

Christopher Smith presented an update from Roddons Housing Association. He thanked members for the invitation and opportunity to update the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that in her capacity as a District Councillor she has made many service requests on behalf of residents, and not one has ever been refused so far. She offered her thanks to Roddons for all their help, and went on to explain that when

visiting the Waterlees area there is a huge change in the properties with many improvements being made. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the Money Matters Service is going to be an important service to local people, and asked if this service is going to be expanded? Christopher Smith confirmed that the Money Matters Service is being expanded, following a successful award from the Big Lottery Fund a Money Matters Team will be based in Edinburgh Drive in Wisbech. This will be a base from where staff can support and work with residents more closely in the Wisbech area;

2. Councillor Mrs Bucknor commented that there are various acronyms included in the report without an explanation for their meaning. She asked what is the meaning of OBS. Christopher Smith apologised and informed the panel that OBS is an over bath shower;
3. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the Anti Social Behaviour Service Review has now been completed, and asked when the panel could have sight of the results of this review. Christopher Smith agreed to provide this information to be circulated to the panel;
4. Councillor Cornwell stated that with regards to the promise of 500 new affordable homes, which looking at the figures are on track to be delivered, but at least 2 of the schemes are on sites that have been decommissioned. He asked if these are included in the figure of 500. Christopher Smith confirmed that there will be 500 new properties net;
5. Councillor Chambers asked how confident Roddons are of reaching this target within the timescales. Christopher Smith informed the panel that Roddons with the backing of the Circle Anglia Central Development Team are very confident of reaching this target on time, there are many variables on this type of project but funding has been secured;
6. Councillor Hodgson stated that he regularly attends the Tenants and Residents Association meetings in Wisbech where there are often issues raised of ASB involving children. He believes that visiting schools and talking to children will help. He stated that he appreciates that ASB involving residents is a more complex situation and asked if the processes can be moved on any faster when dealing with these issues. Christopher Smith informed members that Roddons make every effort to resolve issues with residents and cases of eviction as reported in the press happen as a last resort, Roddons decided to undertake a significant level of press coverage as a deterrent. The speed of the proceedings are bound by the law, and when these issues overlap with criminal behaviour Roddons work very closely with the police;
7. Councillor Hodgson asked how long the process takes. Christopher Smith stated that the exact timescale varies from case to case as there are many aspects that are taken into account, but generally for serious cases overlapped with criminality the process will take 6 to 8 weeks;
8. Councillor Chambers asked what the outcomes of the review of the ASB Action Plan were. Christopher Smith stated that the review highlighted that Roddons provide a good service with a few areas that could be improved on. He agreed to provide the report to be circulated to the panel;
9. Councillor Booth stated that looking at the figures in the report with regards to the 500 new affordable homes, there appears to be a shortfall of 110 units, and yet Roddons are still confident of delivering within the timescale. He stated that in his experience this is a very tight timescale and asked if Roddons have sites identified. Christopher Smith stated that Roddons have an ongoing programme of planning and negotiations to secure sites;
10. Councillor Booth asked for confirmation that Roddons are confident that the units will be delivered and to timescale. Christopher Smith confirmed that the units have to be ready and the contractual agreement says that they will be, if Roddons fail to meet the contractual agreements they will have difficulties with FDC and The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The Circle Group and HCA work closely and they are satisfied with the progress so far;
11. Councillor Miscandlon asked if there are plans to extend the Money Advisory Centre into other towns. Christopher Smith stated that there are no plans to extend the project at this time. The base at the Edinburgh Drive site is a pilot project and will run for 12 months, if the pilot is successful Roddons may look at extending the project into other towns. Wisbech was chosen for the pilot due to high deprivation statistics. Roddons are also aware that they hold

- 40% of their housing stock in Wisbech but their office is based in March;
12. Councillor Miscandlon asked if Roddons were working with Rural CAB. Christopher Smith confirmed that Roddons were working closely with Rural CAB;
 13. Councillor Scrimshaw asked for an update on the apprenticeship programme at Roddons. Christopher Smith stated that last year Roddons converted 6 entry level posts onto the apprenticeship scheme, 3 of the 6 are now permanently employed by Roddons and the other 3 people are employed elsewhere. This was a very successful initiative and is being renewed again this year;
 14. Councillor Scrimshaw asked if the £10,000 promised for improvements to sheltered schemes has been fulfilled. Christopher Smith confirmed that all have been delivered, a range of improvements have taken place including, refurbishment of communal lounge, improved kitchen facilities and outside areas improvements;
 15. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked that with regards to new developments are Roddons looking at modern and cost effective forms of heating homes. Christopher Smith confirmed that solar PV materials have been installed where possible and most of the development programmes include air source or ground source heating. He informed members that the Circle Group are also talking with energy suppliers, looking at possible deals to bring down the unit costs with bulk buying schemes;
 16. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she had seen roof work going on that did not have solar PV panels. Christopher Smith agreed, stating that it is not possible for all stock to benefit from this type of installations, but where possible they are included;
 17. Councillor Mrs Bucknor offered her thanks to Brenda Reynolds, stating that she works hard to relay the views of Roddons Tenants;
 18. Councillor Booth asked why Roddons feel that they should re-invent themselves when they are achieving so much. Christopher Smith confirmed that Roddons do need to re-invent themselves as so much of their work is built around the promises, which were an intrinsic part of the stock transfer process from Fenland District Council. Roddons will redefine themselves moving forward because the services have been successful, Roddons want that to success to continue;
 19. Councillor Booth stated that Roddons are the major provider of social housing in Fenland and asked what plans are in place following the delivery of the promised 500 new units. Christopher Smith stated that Roddons are aware that the enhanced budgeting will finish when the promises finish, which is five years post the housing stock transfer date and there is a housing crisis across the country, there will obviously need to be ongoing communication moving forward;
 20. Councillor Booth asked if Roddons are looking to build another partnership with FDC following the delivery of the promises. Christopher Smith confirmed that Roddons have agreed to look at this and are open to discussion moving forward;
 21. Councillor Sutton asked if Roddons are concerned about the effect of the welfare reform and the scrapping of Council Tax exemptions. Christopher Smith stated that the financial impact will be felt by residents and that is the primary focus at Roddons. There is a discussion about how this will impact Roddons, but the void periods are small so this is not expected to impact too much organisationally, the concerns are resident focussed at this time;
 22. Councillor Chambers stated that from April 2013 the Repairs and Maintenance Services contract will transfer to Kier, and asked what impact this will have on local contractors. Christopher Smith stated that Roddons have been in discussion regarding giving notice to local contractors, although they may be able to sub-contract from Kier. During the tendering stage all local contractors were invited to present a bid for the contract;
 23. Councillor Hodgson stated that at residents meetings it is clear that there is some confusion over the banding system for housing and often people's position on the waiting list changes from week to week. Alan Pain stated that there are some changes to this system moving forward, especially with regards to those from the armed forces, members will have the opportunity to consider the proposed changes. A person's place on the waiting list is defined by the points system, this often changes due to individual needs of applicants and as new

customers come forward;

24. Councillor Hodgson asked if the changes just involved the armed forces. Alan Pain confirmed that the armed forces reference was an example of where adjustments have been made, other changes have also been included;
25. Councillor Chambers asked for more details of the Value for Money Standard self assessment. Christopher Smith stated that this was a requirement of our regulator and it gives examples where Roddons have achieved value for money. The findings were sent to residents as part of the Annual Resident Review. He agreed to provide the report to be circulated to the panel;
26. Councillor Cornwell stated that the Council is going through Core Strategy development and asked if there was anything Christopher Smith wanted to comment on. Christopher Smith stated that looking at the consultancy documents with regards to the Strategy it is pleasing that there is an emphasis that housing has a huge role to play on the economic development of the area;
27. Councillor Scrimshaw asked that regarding planning issues are Roddons ensuring that applications meet the decent homes criteria for this area. Christopher Smith confirmed that Roddons look at the overall environment and focus on that when completing applications. He stated that Roddons properties often exceed the minimum decent homes standards;
28. Councillor Scrimshaw stated that it is reported that that changes to the council tax Roddons could cost Roddons £275,000. Christopher Smith stated that Roddons will be looking at the impact of the decisions made with regards to the council tax changes, and will have to factor that into future plans;
29. Councillor Scrimshaw asked whether empty properties requiring upgrading could potentially impact on revenue. Christopher Smith stated that Roddons are not comfortable having empty properties, so keep these cases to a minimum;
30. Councillor Booth stated that Roddons budgeted £60,000 for the Easy Move Scheme and asked if this budget was fully spent. Christopher Smith confirmed that the full budget has been spent. He explained that it is a voluntary scheme, but when imposed people do not want to move, even if they are under-occupying their house, as to them it is their home. When the legislation changes Roddons believe that more people will take up the scheme;
31. Councillor Booth stated that 407 people will be affected by the under-occupancy penalty and asked if these people have been contacted by Roddons to explain the situation. Christopher Smith confirmed that the people affected have had personal visits where possible, and telephone contact with others. Every single individual affected has received a letter to ensure that they are aware. Roddons are receiving enquiries as we speak with regards to this matter and are encouraging people to come forward with that dialogue so that issues can be resolved;
32. Councillor Booth asked that if all 407 want to take up the scheme and move, do Roddons have enough available units for them to move into. Christopher Smith stated that Roddons do not have that many units available and stated that Government say that the penalty will apply even though accommodation is not available;
33. Councillor Scrimshaw stated that Roddons have small parts of land, and some are not well maintained. He asked if they would consider donating these to the community. Christopher Smith stated that he was not aware of unmaintained land, and that he would want to ensure that Roddons are aware of such issues and have the chance to tackle them before any other dialogue could take place. Councillor Scrimshaw stated that he was referring to land in Parson Drove. Christopher Smith informed members that he would investigate further the issues at this site;
34. Councillor Stebbing stated that there are going to be many residents facing under-occupancy penalties. He asked if the penalty could be frozen if they are prepared to move but there is no smaller property available for them. Christopher Smith stated that Roddons have lobbied Government, but they say that penalties will still apply even if smaller properties are not available for residents to move into;
35. Councillor Hodgson stated that potentially there are people who are overcrowded and are moving into larger accommodation. Christopher Smith stated that this is one area that the

new allocations policy is looking at as there are families looking to move to larger accommodation, resulting in smaller properties becoming available;

36. Councillor Hodgson asked if residents can exchange to a smaller property that is with another housing association. Christopher Smith confirmed that there is a house exchange system and residents are able to exchange with people in other housing associations. Roddons are heavily promoting this and will look to provide assistance where possible;
37. Councillor Miscandlon asked if Roddons are making it clear to tenants the consequences of under-occupancy. Christopher Smith confirmed that Roddons are making it very clear that the shortfall will have to be paid by the tenant;
38. Councillor Booth asked if Roddons would consider looking to develop smaller units with the need to downsize in mind. Christopher Smith confirmed that this is something that the Circle Group are looking into in light of the welfare reforms, however developers have a preference to build larger accommodation

Brenda Reynolds stated that she :

- has been the Chairman of the Roddons Board for 6 years and feels that she is lucky as a tenant in that position.
- is very proud to be the Chairman and of everything that the Board have achieved;
- believes that Roddons have the best interest of their tenants with everything they do;
- offered her thanks to FDC, on behalf of the Board, for a great working relationship over the years;
- is grateful to the Councillors that have attended the meetings and supported the board;
- knows that this is a strong team effort, and looks forward to close partnership working in the future;
- understands that the 5 year promises are coming to an end and that Roddons will face challenges, but is confident that partnership working in the future will be the key to achieving new targets;

Brenda Reynolds offered her thanks to FDC, Christopher Smith and the Roddons Board; she also thanked members for inviting her to attend the meeting today.

(Councillor Sutton declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that he is a landlord in the fenland area)

(Councillor Booth declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that he is a member of Parson Drove Parish Council and they are working with Roddons in respect of affordable housing)

(Councillor Scrimshaw declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that he is a member of Parson Drove Parish Council and they are working with Roddons in respect of affordable housing)

OS26/12 OLDER PEOPLE ACTION PLAN

Sandie Smith - Strategic Development Manager - Adult and Social Care attended the Meeting for this Item.

Sandie Smith presented an update from Cambridgeshire County Council on issues and projects ongoing in the County.

Members asked question, made comments and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked for more information on the Reablement Project, and the Community Navigators, as these are both good ideas, but she stated that she has not heard of them before, and information about them would help her to help local residents. She

explained that previously she had made a lot of phone calls to find answers. She stated that this is very important and can make such a difference to people lives, but is concerned that older people will not make use of the online approach, and stated that if she did not know how to find this type of information and to obtain access to health facilities, how would an older person. Sandie Smith agreed that this is a very important issue, the Community Navigators are new in post and you will be getting more information about them and their work. Richard Cassidy stated that the Community Navigators scheme presented an opportunity to strengthen information and access to service for older people and compliment existing Fenland initiatives such as Golden Age. A meeting had recently been held with the local organiser for the Community Navigator scheme and the important role FDC members can bring to help to work with local volunteers was emphasised by officers, as members know their residents and areas well;

2. Councillor Booth stated that the report refers to action plans; he confirmed that he was not aware of the action plans and felt that there should be just one action plan, so that it is clear who is doing what, as partnership working should be joined up more. Councillor Butcher agreed. Richard Cassidy stated that it is the areas that we can work together that will work well in the partnership. The County Health and Wellbeing Board has adopted a plan that will bring an action plan next year, one of the 5 areas targeted will be older people, and this will be the key piece of work for this area. That will be adopted by April 2013, and members might want to programme this in to review next year;
3. Councillor Cornwell asked once the Health and Wellbeing Board have developed the main action plan how will Fenland fit into that, members need to understand how Fenland fits into the overall picture. Councillor Butcher stated that the County Council are responsible for many of the actions that we cannot take control of. It is important that our local partners feed into the main board so that Fenland has input;
4. Councillor Cotterell stated that he is concerned that there is a huge difference between rural and urban living, the difference between living in a village compared to living in Wisbech needs to be carefully considered when looking at the needs of Fenland as a whole. He stated that we are an aging population and he is concerned that people are not going to understand the changes;
5. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that we should be encouraging partners to play their part. She stated that an area in Wisbech was in the top 20% of the most deprived areas, and this is now in the top 10%, we need to encourage partners to look at health in the wider context, to look at the problems in this area with access to health, this must be acknowledged and recognised to move forward. Councillor Butcher stated that there are projects in place to help people to get to doctor and hospital appointments including the FACT bus and Car Share Schemes, Fenland are always looking at ways to improve access to health issues. There is currently a pilot scheme working with the NHS Ambulance Trust looking at access from March and Wimblington to Doddington. There are also difficulties for families who need to visit people who are inpatients in hospital, these issues are being worked on all the time;
6. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked how is this being looked at. Councillor Butcher stated that it is a difficult situation and although help and assistance is offered to patients, their visitors are another issue altogether, Community Car Schemes are good but expensive if used often, officers talk to bus companies to ensure that they understand the needs of the people, Fenland are constantly working on these issues;
7. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if officers are aware how many people are travelling from Wisbech to Addenbrooke's Hospital, as without statistics like this there is no argument that we need better provision. Transport and access to health are so closely linked, if we are going to be talking to bus companies we need to back up our requests with figures that show that there is a need. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that it would be easy to arrange for a group of students to ask people as they entered the hospital where they had travelled from. Councillor Butcher stated that as far as he is aware there are no statistics, and would be happy for students to assist with the collection of this data. Councillor Cotterell stated that the hospital themselves can provide these statistics; they know where everybody is travelling in from. He added that even if people have their own transport and are able to get

to hospital appointments, they then have the issue of paying for parking, and for people who have to make regular trips this is a major issue too;

8. Councillor Stebbing agreed that transport is an issue when looking at access to health, he stated that a family who lived in Outwell could not get to hospital and back on the same day using public transport to visit a child who was an inpatient, these are issues that need to be taken very seriously;
9. Councillor Cornwell stated that this debate is confirming what was said earlier, not one part of the system can solve the issues, there needs to be an over-arching action plan. He agreed that information is available about patient flow, GP's can also be asked for this type of data. GP's know what is going on locally, they will be part of the process and will feed into the health and wellbeing boards. He stated that he believes that we need to go through the first stages of the new boards and take the elements from the action plan section by section, looking at it from a Fenland point of view;
10. Councillor Miscandlon stated that people living in Turves have no public transport services at all. Councillor Butcher stated that Turves residents get a better service from FACT than they did from the previous public transport providers;
11. Councillor Booth stated that looking at the Older Person Action Plan he does not think that the targets are challenging enough. He stated that there has been more than 1 Golden Age Fair, the report does not represent what we are achieving. Councillor Cotterell stated that Councillor Booth is referring to Golden Age Surgeries not Fairs, he stated that Fairs are much bigger events that are supported by 40 or 50 outside bodies. Councillor Booth thanked Councillor Cotterell for this clarification, and stated that if this is the case we should have a target around Golden Age Surgeries too as this is not being reflected in the action plan;
12. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the Older People Action Plan refers to 'getting from A to B' case studies and asked if officers have an update on these case studies. Alan Pain stated that these case studies were launched in September 2012 and the outcomes will be looked at in the early part of 2013;
13. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if there are any plans of action following this project. Councillor Butcher stated that the plan of action was to implement the A to B case studies, initial public feedback has been good but if it is not working we will need develop another action plan. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if the panel can be updated with the progress of this action plan before the end of the financial year. Councillor Butcher agreed;
14. Councillor Stebbing stated that he did not think that providing a transport booklet would provide solutions to local issues. Councillor Butcher stated that he was not involved in the development of the booklet, but fully supported the project. The booklet was developed so that people can see the options available and how to make contact;
15. Councillor Chambers asked how the transport project is coordinated. Alan Pain stated that Councillor Owen has been heavily involved in the working group which involves partnership working from County Council, bus companies and health representatives;
16. Councillor Cornwell asked if patients are represented on the working group. Councillor Butcher stated that that he did not think that patients were represented, but that this would be a good idea. Alan Pain agreed to feedback comments from this meeting to the working group;
17. Councillor Chambers asked for clarification of an isolated older person as referred to in the action plan. Councillor Butcher stated that rural living can feel isolated, some people move into rural areas because they choose to be isolated, but when their family have grown and moved away, that isolation brings issues for older people. Sandie Smith stated that the issues of isolation often come up, Community Navigators will use information that is already known about people like assisted bin collection lists, they will knock on doors and talk to people and get to know the residents and the situations that they are in. Councillor Butcher stated that District Councillors know their wards and the people living there very well and should feed into this project;
18. Councillor Booth stated that the action plan refers the disabled facilities grant target of 90% of residents who feel that the help we have given has helped to improve their health or

wellbeing ,currently the figures are 89% so this target is not being met. The target of 70 homes adapted to assist vulnerable disabled residents was at 39 at the end of October 2012. He asked how confident we are of meeting this target. Dan Horn stated that he takes the point made by Councillor Booth, these programmes are currently in progress and are overall officers feel that they are inline to meet the targets set;

19. Councillor Booth asked if we are on target to recruit 28 timebank volunteers. Dan Horn stated that we are hopeful that this target will be met and due to a delay with personnel the contract has been extended to the end of June 2013
20. Councillor Booth stated that the action plan does not reflect the fact that there is a delay. Dan Horn stated that the project progress box is shaded orange to reflect the delay, but takes the point onboard that the facts might not be clear;
21. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that with the older persons health and wellbeing at the forefront of the Core Strategy she is surprised that there are not many targets set for next year, and asked if it comes down to funding. Alain Pain stated that with so much partnership working we need to take into account their stages of resourcing and budgets. He explained that much of the work for next year will take place when partners have a clearer picture of their budgets in the new year;
22. Councillor Booth stated that the Warm Homes target of 100% of residents who feel the help we have given has helped to improve their health or well-being has been met, but feels that in practice there will be one or two people who will not be satisfied with this service in the future for some reason;
23. Councillor Booth stated that he recently received a complaint with regards to assisted collection of refuse. It seems that when the crews change this service suffers, and this is an important service to residents. He suggested that we should have a target in place to monitor the service. Councillor Mrs Bucknor agreed. Richard Cassidy stated that there is an Assisted Collections Policy, we monitor complaints and our response to those complaints and this is reported on by Street Scene. He confirmed that he is happy to look at issues that have been reported directly to members if they pass the details on to him.

(Councillor Sutton declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that his wife works as part of a multidisciplinary team in the NHS)

OS27/12 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Future Work Programme 2012/2013 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- The Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting due to take place on 22 April 2013 has been rescheduled to 15 April 2013 as the Council Chamber is required for Elections purposes;
- Councillor Chambers stated that the Older People Action Plan should go back on the work programme. Richard Cassidy stated that this would need to be after April 2013 to include an update from County Council;
- Councillor Booth suggested that the panel look at the complaints process at the Council.
- Councillor Chambers stated that Councillor Melton has agreed that a focus group from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel should look at the outside body's representation, and agreed to update the panel when he had more information.

Members agreed the Future Work Programme 2012/2013 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, subject to the amendments agreed above.