

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY

15 January 2013

Present:

Councillor Shiel (Chair)

Councillors Branston, Bowkett, Choules, Clark, Dawson, Donovan, Laws, Morris, Mottram, Payne and Tippins

Apology:

Councillor Mitchell

Also present:

Strategic Director (MP), Strategic Director (KH), Assistant Director Economy, Assistant Director Environment, Housing Needs Manager, Leisure Facilities Manager and Member Services Officer (HB)

In attendance:

Councillor RM Hannaford - Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Involvement
Councillor Sheldon - Portfolio Holder for Environment and Leisure

In attendance – Parkwood Leisure

Darren Parrott - Assistant Regional Director
Stephen Hughes - General Manager

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2012 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

2 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

3 Parkwood Leisure Management Contract

The Chair welcomed Darren Parrot, Assistant Regional Director and Stephen Hughes, General Manager of Parkwood. Their presentation covered the contract terms, outlined the monitoring arrangements, enlarged on challenges and concerns, outlined Parkwood's investments/joint investments and set out successes and plans for the future. This was year two - October 2011 to September 2012 - of a ten year contract.

The Parkwood representatives responded as follows to Members' queries and comments on both the presentation and the report of the Assistant Director Economy on the performance of the Parkwood Leisure Management contract for year two:-

- classes for the disabled were held at the Riverside and a mini Olympics event had been held at the centre in the summer. It was hoped to extend these opportunities and funding support had been obtained in the past for such activities from Active Devon and Sportivate;
- customer attendance had increased at the Riverside by 31% (54,000) in year two of the contract, mostly attributable to an enlarged gym. The increase in incidents and accidents reported at the Pyramids was attributed to improved reporting procedures;
- responding to a Member, who referred to a complaint from a member of the public in respect of the Riverside pool and changing rooms, it was reported that a dedicated cleaner for the pool changing rooms had been engaged. Many comments were received relating to environmental issues and, specifically, air and water temperatures. Customer perception of the temperature of a swimming pool differed according to age, type of activity etc;
- the Council was responsible for major repairs and structural issues with Parkwood responsible for internal maintenance;
- bids for capital improvements were made in competition with the 84 Parkwood leisure centres nationwide;
- issues previously raised regarding the wearing of arm bands and access at the Riverside were being addressed, the new door entry security system having temporarily malfunctioned over the Christmas period;
- satisfaction levels were highest at the Northbrook Golf Course at 92% and the Wonford Sports Centre at 94% and lowest at the Pyramids at 63%. At the latter, humidity problems had been caused by a malfunctioning air handling unit which was reaching the end of its working life and cosmetic improvements had been made to the ladies' changing room. Customers would be asked to express a preference on the layout of the men's changing rooms for improvements here also;
- promotion included a half page advert in the Express and Echo, an improved website, internal promotions in the centres, a company Facebook facility and mail-outs to Exeter residents; and
- the Excite Card scheme offered no admission charge and advanced bookings at the leisure centres and was available to customers. It was agreed that additional promotional activity was needed to increase take up of the card and its benefits.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report and presentation, thanked the Parkwood representatives for their presentation and noted that issues would be further progressed at forthcoming meetings of the Parkwood Leisure Services Working Group.

4 Devon Joint Health and Well Being Strategy

The Chair welcomed Ian Tearle, Head of Health Policy, Directorate of Public Health, NHS Devon. He explained the national and local health commissioning structures and detailed the NHS National Commissioning Board Local Area Teams covering Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and Cornwall and the two Clinical Commissioning Groups of North, East and West Devon and South Devon and Torbay.

Local authorities had a new statutory duty to take steps to improve the health of their local population and to develop holistic solutions to health and wellbeing. They were also required to establish Health and Wellbeing Boards and publish a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and employed Directors of Public Health as strategic leaders for public health and inequalities locally. The services local authorities were required to commission were listed, those of sexual health, national child measuring programme, NHS Health Checks, protection of the health of the population and provision of public health expertise to NHS Commissioners being mandatory. The four themes of the Joint Health and Well Being Strategy which clustered priorities identified following consultation were:-

- a focus on families;
- healthy lifestyle choices;
- independence in older people; and
- social capital and building communities.

Ian Tearle responded, as follows, to Members' comments and queries:-

- the Shadow Health and Well Being Board included three County Councillors – the Portfolio Holders for Adult Social Care, Families and Post 16, Resources and Children, Health and Well Being and West Devon Councillor James McInnes who represented the eight Districts. The new Board, a Statutory Committee of the County Council, would meet from 1 April 2013 and a review of membership would occur after the County elections in May. A broader spectrum of representatives could be an outcome, although it was likely that the body would remain a small and strategy focussed group rather than increase its membership to some 30-40 members, as existed elsewhere;
- with regard to future Board responses to pressures to cut services (such as the recent threat to the domestic/sexual abuse service), it was acknowledged that the Board was not an executive body with a budget and that the true test of its effectiveness would be its ability to challenge and influence commissioning patterns. An example would be to ensure a balance between resources committed to reactive treatment services in particular in the Acute Hospital setting and support for preventative measures; and
- Members welcomed the proposals for local engagement through developing relationships with the Eastern locality team and engagement networks such as Healthwatch and Patient Representation Groups and sought continued feedback and data provision at ward level. Exeter SHIP already provided a prioritising and monitoring role and City Council services possessed health and well being roles through housing, leisure and environmental health.

See NHS Devon website for Devon Health and Well Being Strategy.

www.devonhealthandwellbeing.org.uk

The Chair thanked Ian Tearle for attending.

ESTIMATES, CAPITAL BIDS AND FEES AND CHARGES 2013/14

5 Community - General Fund - Estimates/New Capital Bids/Fees and Charges

The Strategic Director (MP) presented the report on the Community Revenue Account Estimates and Fees and Charges, which outlined the strategic framework within which the estimates had been prepared, changes in accounting practices which affected all budgets and gave detailed reasons for major changes in the

Management Unit estimates. A detailed schedule of the capital programme for Community was also attached to the report.

As the provision of waste containers to new households and the replacement of damaged or missing containers imposed a considerable cost to the Council, it was proposed that a fee be charged in certain circumstances for their replacement. Prices were weighted in order to encourage residents to use a smaller container, reduce their waste and recycle more. In some scenarios, wheeled bins would continue to be provided at no charge.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the draft Revenue Estimates for 2013/14, the proposed Capital Programme and Fees and Charges for further consideration by Executive.

(Report circulated)

6 Community - Housing Revenue Account - Estimates/New Capital Bids/Fees and Charges

The Strategic Director (KH) presented the report on the Housing Revenue Account Estimates and Fees and Charges, which outlined the strategic framework within which the estimates had been prepared, changes in accounting practices which affected all budgets and gave detailed reasons for major changes in the Management Unit estimates. A detailed schedule of the capital programme for Housing was also attached to the report.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the draft Revenue Estimates for 2013/14, the proposed Capital Programme and Fees and Charges for further consideration by Executive.

(Report circulated)

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY EXECUTIVE

7 Housing Rents 2013/14

The Housing Needs Manager presented the report recommending a rent increase for council dwellings from 1 April 2013.

An increase was proposed reflecting a general inflationary increase of 3.1% together with a convergence factor to reflect the number of years to rental convergence. The draft subsidy determination was based upon convergence by 2015-16. The rent increase, on average, would be 6%.

The current Government guidelines were that service charges should only be increased by RPI plus 0.50%. For 2013/14 this equated to an increase of 3.1%.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report and recommended Executive to:-

- (1) approve a rent increase by an average of 6% from 1 April 2013 which includes a general inflationary increase of 3.1% together with the phased introduction of the Government's rent restructuring proposals;
- (2) approve a service charge increase of 3.1% with the exception of those charges set out below:-

- (a) 2.5% increase in respect of cleaning communal areas in line with anticipated rises in cleaning contract costs;
 - (b) 0% increase in respect of communal electricity at Weirfield House;
 - (c) 0% increase in respect of water at Magdalen Gardens; and
 - (d) 14% increase in heating in respect of Toronto House due to the rises in both consumption and gas costs (heating system programmed to be replaced during 2013/14); and
- (3) an increase in garage rents of 3.1%.

(Report circulated)

8 Tackling Homelessness

The Housing Needs Manager presented the report updating Members on the flexibilities created by changes to Homelessness Legislation made as part of the Localism Act and to seek Members' approval on the proposed use of these new flexibilities.

Members were anxious to ensure that, in offering short term tenures of private sector properties to the homeless, those receiving the offer were both appropriate and willing recipients. They were reassured that housing officers would deal with each case sensitively and that private sector offers would, as far as possible, be for those desirous of such accommodation. Those cases which were more appropriately suited to social housing would be directed to that sector. It was also confirmed that only landlords who met the Council's criteria were involved, that is, those on the Extralet scheme. With regard to proposals for utilising vacant University accommodation blocks to house the homeless, it was the intention for a third of the units to be made available temporarily to the homeless before moving on to other affordable rented accommodation and for the remaining two thirds to be offered to young couples and young single people.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report and requested Executive to:-

- (1) approve the use of the new flexibilities, as set out in the report;
- (2) agree that, whenever a suitable private property becomes available and, as long as the property offered is suitable, it is used to make an offer regardless of the households' cause of homelessness or household composition. Whenever a private property becomes available the Council will usually seek to offer it to the most recently accepted homeless applicant to minimise disruption to those who have been waiting longest, are settled in temporary accommodation and are closest to receiving an offer of permanent affordable housing however, where this is not appropriate, the offer in respect of each case will to be judged on its merits and at the discretion of the case officer; and
- (3) agree that officers monitor the use of the flexibilities and report back to this Committee in 12 months.

(Report circulated)

MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY

9 Housing Related Complaints

The Housing Needs Manager presented the report advising Members of changes to how Exeter City Council would treat housing related complaints following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 and setting out the way landlord services must deal with complaints.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report

(Report circulated)

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 8.00 pm

Chair