



Minutes of the meeting of the SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2006 at 7.30PM

**Present:** Councillor Campbell (Chair)  
Councillors Drewett, Latham, Long and Gerella

**Officers:** P Wharfe (Director of Housing Services), J Boothroyd (Overview and Scrutiny Manager), C Powell (Overview & Scrutiny Officer) and L Sung (Senior Committee Manager)

**Also Present:** Councillor I Henderson and J Marling (Housing Forum Representative – Lakes Estate)

**Apologies:** Councillors Gerella and Latham

**Number of Public Present:** 2

**SC06 MINUTES**

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the Social Care and Housing Policy Development Committee held on 7 June 2006, be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**SC07 AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND THE LINKS WITH SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**

The Committee received a presentation from Pam Wharfe (Director of Housing Services) on the key issues relating to affordable housing and the links with sustainable communities. The Committee had considered this issue to be one of its priorities for its work programme for 2006/2007.

The Director of Housing Services reported on the current situation in Milton Keynes, the changes to be implemented and the challenges for the future. The results of the Housing Needs Study in 2003 had influenced the Local Housing Strategic Partnership vision for 2004 which was to provide “well maintained, comfortable homes in safe and attractive neighbourhoods, where people choose to live”. This vision had been the basis for the Housing Strategy and the Community Strategy which have shaped planning policies on affordable housing.

The Director of Housing Services provided the Committee with examples of current affordable housing provision which had been grouped together on estates and provided examples of proposed future developments which would provide mixed developments by size and tenure.

The changes underway in housing which have a direct impact of how sustainable communities are created include:

- A 'systems thinking' re-think of the way housing works
- Increase in choice of housing provided to individuals from none to some
- A level of control to individual housing problems

The Committee received details of the in-migrating and out-migrating community in Milton Keynes and some concern was expressed regarding the number of young people aged between 15-25 leaving the area. The Committee was mindful that the provision of a university to the area could change this trend and attract more young people to the area.

The results of a commissioned housing needs assessment had identified that the requirement for affordable housing would be 13% social rented, 15% intermediate housing and 72% market housing which indicates a higher level of need for social rented homes which is currently at a level of 5%.

The challenges faced by Milton Keynes were:

- What should be done about existing communities and how can they be made sustainable
- How should the Council deal with BME communities and their housing needs
- How should the Council deal with the 'work' element for communities with low employment
- How should the Council deal with areas where the community is not very sustainable e.g high volatility/movement around homes in multiple occupation
- Should the Council change its emphasis and focus to the supply of private rented accommodation

The Committee raised some concerns about sustainability of some of the existing housing estates:

- The number of properties owned by a small number of people
- A number of key-worker properties are left vacant
- The number of homes in multiple occupation (HMO's)

The Committee raised other issues in respect of housing need and sustainable communities:

- Shared ownership does not fully meeting housing need

- The level of housing choice available to individuals bearing in mind the level of housing demand
- Current public transport provision unable to cater those who work shifts or have early or late start times
- The number of young people migrating from Milton Keynes and the need for low-rent housing

The Committee welcomed the report from the Director of Housing Services who reported that the Government was currently considering widening the definition of key-worker to attract a wider base to those eligible for key-worker housing.

The Committee considered current development in Bletchley to be piecemeal with little co-operation between developers to consider development as a whole leading to a number of small housing developments unable to meet local housing need or provide affordable housing for those on low incomes. The Committee noted the threshold and percentage of affordable housing that should be provided on any development.

The Committee suggested that a 're-balancing' was required and that the development of social housing in one area would not provide a sustainable community

The Committee decided to consider these issues in parallel with the next item of business before making any further comment on a way forward.

## **SC08 UPDATE ON HOMELESSNESS**

The Committee received an update from Pam Wharfe (Director of Housing Services) on the Homelessness Service in Milton Keynes which provided the Committee with data on:

- Ethnicity and homelessness
- The average number of households in temporary accommodation
- The average length of stay in temporary accommodation
- The number of homeless households accepted for re-housing
- How the Council intends to meet Local Public Service Agreement Targets

The Director of Housing Services informed the Committee that the Council was moving towards a system of earlier prevention of homelessness and working with a local lettings agency to find properties in the private rented sector as an option for homeless households.

The Director of Housing Services predicted that there would be less than 366 households in temporary accommodation by the end of the year.

The Committee raised issues on

- The help provided to tenants with mental health problems and prevention of homelessness
- The impact of cuts in the supporting people budget
- Prevention of homelessness of victims of domestic violence
- Homeless young people and funding of the Youth Housing Network
- Working with partners to keep people in their homes and providing options for tenants
- How a high turnover of tenancies in some areas impact on the community

RESOLVED –

1. That a 3 Member Review Group be established to consider the issues raised by the Committee and in particular:
  - Provision of mixed development estates and how this method ensures sustainable communities.
  - Re-balancing of communities and the provision of social housing throughout estates rather than concentrated in one area or estate.
  - The role of private rented properties in achieving sustainability and how much emphasis should be placed on social rented housing in respect of affordable housing provision.
  - Proposed planning and development of sustainable communities.
  - To consider what model should be used by Milton Keynes and to look at other areas where deprived areas have become more sustainable.
  - To consider comparative data for those areas considered sustainable and those estates that are considered to be less successful.
2. That the membership of the Review Group be agreed as Councillors Campbell, Drewett and Hoyle.

**SC09**

### **PROGRESS OF THE REVIEW GROUP ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE STRATEGY FOR OLDER PEOPLE**

Councillor Nigel Long reported on the progress of the Review Group which had been established to work on developing the Quality of Life Strategy for Older people.

The Group had met once and had agreed its work programme and objectives. The next meeting of the Review Group would be on 4 October 2006 to consider transport issues and the following meeting would be held on 18 September 2006 to consider rural challenges. Other areas for consideration were delivering services to the elderly

and marginalization and these would be considered at future meetings as yet to be confirmed.

The Review Group would be producing an interim report due in November 2006 with a final report and outcomes due in January 2007.

RESOLVED –

That the progress of the Review Group on the Quality of Life Strategy for Older People be noted.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.55 PM