

HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEETING, 3RD DECEMBER, 2007

Present – Councillors Zaman (Chairman), Clare, J. Rothwell, A.S. Walsh, D. Wilkinson and R. Wilkinson.

Lay Members

Mr. R. Hughes

Mr. F. Fletcher

Also in Attendance

Mr. S. Jordan	-	Head of Housing Strategy and Quality Assurance
Mr. I. Ankers	-	Director of Housing Services
Ms. C. Riley	-	Housing Services Business Manager
Mrs. M. Horrocks	-	Housing Quality Assurance Manager
Mrs. V. Ridge	-	Principal Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Lord and Woodward.

Councillor Zaman in the Chair.

27. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Policy Development Group held on 26th November, 2007 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

28. FIT FOR THE FUTURE – PLACES – FINAL PROPOSALS

The Chief Executive, Bolton at Home, submitted a report which put forward proposals on how the future of Housing Services would be accessed by customers and where staff would deliver the services from.

By way of background, members were informed that Bolton at Home currently provided its core landlord services from 14 neighbourhood offices around the Borough, however, it was felt that a review was needed to be undertaken into how housing services could retain and potentially increase the number of access points for customers whilst reducing the number of staff bases.

Members were advised that to assess the geographic intensity of demand for landlord services a framework had been developed based on the LIFE model.

The life model looked at the statistics for an area and then graded its presence in an area based on the intensity of services as either 'lead', 'influence', 'follow' or 'exit'.

The report outlined the process which had been used to collate and analyse the information and the factors which had been included. From this, hotspots were defined and the results identified areas which were most in need of the core landlord function.

Members were also advised that housing services recognised the importance of local access and that, for some customers, a physical location was essential. Consequently, Bolton at Home did not want to reduce provision in this area and also consultation had suggested that customers wanted access in the local area. Therefore, strong partnerships with the Council had been further developed around one stop shops, access points, access channels and service availability, details of which were provided in the report.

In terms of the future of neighbourhood offices, using the research gained, eight Housing Management Zones had been developed where there was a need to intensify the level of management. Consequently, the following proposals were put forward for each of the neighbourhoods, as follows:-

- 1) the relocation of the Blackburn Road staff into the Prince Street office following the relocation of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team;
- 2) the relocation of the staff from Horwich to Johnson Fold;
- 3) in the short to medium term, the relocation of Higher Deane Team to Pikes Lane Medical Centre. However, a medium to long term arrangement was being explored as part of Phase 2 that more closely located services within the Deane 'hotspots';
- 4) the Farnworth and the Kearsley Team would co-locate with the Farnworth West (New Bury) Team. However, in order to facilitate the co-location of the three teams, the Farnworth Inclusion Team would be relocated to the Highfield office;
- 5) it was proposed that the Great Lever office remain in its current position;
- 6) it was proposed that the Tonge Moor office remain in its current position; and
- 7) the Westhoughton team, in the short to medium term would continue to operate as a One Stop Shop, however, it was proposed to review the location of the Westhoughton Office in

partnership with Bolton Council in the medium to long term.

With regard to the financial implications, the review would realise significant ongoing savings. Some of these had been recycled to support the development of the anti-social behaviour centre and the remainder equated to approximately £40,000 a year.

In terms of the next steps, it was felt that the proposals would allow greater freedom and flexibility to deal with the next stages of the review, which would include:-

- shared services;
- the debate between co-location/integration and the full access points offer;
- the outcomes of the regeneration review;
- the capacity for business expansion or service improvement; and
- the future of service delivery.

Representatives from BATRA expressed concern regarding the findings of the review and stated that tenants were not convinced that the proposals would result in an increase in housing officers being more visible on housing estates.

Members also felt that if the proposals were implemented then a monitoring report after twelve months should be submitted to the Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee outlining the progress made.

It was agreed that the report be noted and that a meeting be held between Bolton at Home and BATRA to look at the concerns regarding the issue of service standards and visibility.

(The meeting started at 8.30 a.m. and finished at 9.25 a.m.)