

Report to: Council

Agenda
Item

Meeting Date: 13 November 2012

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairman's Report –
Councillor Olwyn Luckley**

Since the last report to Council, the Panel has produced two Task and Finish Group reports.

One Group examined the relationship between the Community Centres and the City Council. Their report makes it clear that there are difficulties that have developed recently in the relationship.

The Group made five recommendations in their report, which if carried out, the Panel believe will contribute to bettering the relationship with the Centres and ensure that the considerable financial and maintenance support provided for the Centres, results in the social return that the needs of our communities require.

The second Task and Finish Group, which consisted of two members from the Environment and Economy Panel and one from Community, examined proposals for the future management of the Allotments.

The proposals laid out new ways of delivering the service and suggested three options. One, being that the management should be transferred under licence to a not for profit organisation. A second that this service should be delivered by the Green Spaces' team and the third, the Allotment Associations take up self management.

After a thorough examination of the subject, the recommendations of the Group were that the Associations should be given the opportunity to self manage their sites. In

regard to the small allotments, for whom a constituted association could prove impossible to form, how to address their needs should be considered by the Executive,

The third option, for the allotments managements to be transferred to a not for profit organisation the Group felt was perhaps an arrangement to be considered at some time in the future.

The full Panel met on the 11th October. Two questions asked by a member of the public and the Panel's answers can be found in the Minutes.

In examining the report submitted regarding the Localisation Support of Council Tax, the Panel supported the decision that the Council's LSCT scheme for the next financial year should be identical to the DWP's Council Tax Benefit Scheme and that consideration should be given to the financial implications of the local scheme during the first operational year and the position reviewed for subsequent years.

The Panel requested that a further update on the LSCT Scheme be submitted to the meeting of the Panel in November.

The Panel scrutinized the City Council's Tenants' Strategy which is presently the subject of a three month consultation with a publishing date of 15th January 2013.

Questions arose in regard to under occupancy rules about which the answers were that application of the policy would be for local providers to determine.

Questions were asked in regard to homelessness and private bed and breakfast use. We were informed that there had been a reduction in the use of private landlords this year, presently no one was in bed and breakfast accommodation and the Homelessness Section had increased the resources in the prevention team, who focus on working with partners and agencies to prevent homelessness. Following the questioning, the Panel endorsed the Tenants' Strategy as laid out in the report.

The Panel welcomed the representatives of the YMCA to discuss the first six months occupancy of the Shaddon Gate Resource Centre. The range of activities taking place in the Centre was considerable. Six volunteers had been recruited and were already enabling the activities to extend into the early evening. Room hire had generated a significant amount of revenue and 20% of the Centre's footfall was from local residents. The Panel requested that they continue to monitor the Centre and performance information will be contained in the standard quarterly Performance Reports.

The report on Executive Savings Proposals was discussed but the Panel required more information and asked for a further report to come to it when the information is available.