

USE OF CONTRACTORS WORKING PARTY MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday 3 March 2010 – 6.30 p.m.
Council Chamber

Attendees

Councillors

P Purver (Chairman)

In attendance R Woodward

Officers

Keith Gordon, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Amanda Harper, Head of Housing Management, Chris Lambert, Head of Housing, Andy Nickels, Housing Maintenance Service Manager and Emma Sparkes, Service Manager - Performance & Business Support

1. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors V Richichi, and A Saffell.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor P Purver declared a personal and prejudicial interest as the employee of a company that undertakes a small amount of irregular contract work for the Council.

3. Minutes

The meeting noted the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2010 as a correct record.

Arising from the minutes the Senior Scrutiny Officer referred to responses to questions raised at the previous meeting circulated at the meeting.

A member referred to perceived benefits of employing local contractors including employment during difficult financial times. The Head of Housing informed members that the contract process and fixed cost contracts ensured that the Council achieved the best value for money.

4. Use of Contractors

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented information relating to Legal Services, street Management, internal Audit, Finance and Leisure. He reminded the meeting of the working party's terms of reference and the progress made in meeting them.

In response to Members' questions, the representatives of the Housing Service informed the meeting that;

- Housing repairs were largely covered by council employees but in order to deal with the variation in demand for repairs a contractor was used to cover

the work beyond the capacity of the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO). The DLO currently covered about 80% of the work. Officers were currently exploring ways of increasing that percentage while retaining the flexibility of the use of a contractor.

- It is not always possible to complete necessary works in one visit but this is done whenever possible.
- While every attempt is made to make appointments convenient to the tenant for work to be done, this is not always possible. Officers are investigating ways to improve the appointment system.
- A stock condition survey of 30% of the housing stock was used to indicate work needed across the stock. Extrapolation from the 30% was not always accurate and unnecessary work was occasionally scheduled and not identified as unnecessary until a site visit took place. As additional data was collated the stock condition database and work scheduling became more accurate.

The Head of Housing recognised the benefits of an efficient and effective procurement service that gave confidence to those responsible for employing contractors that contracts were correctly let and offered best value to the Council.

Members' paid tribute to the respect with which the Housing Service received queries from Members and the helpful way in which staff responded.

The meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.