



# Charnwood

*Leading in Leicestershire*

**INVESTIGATION AND REVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, 13TH APRIL 2005 AT 6.00PM  
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 3, SOUTHFIELDS, LOUGHBOROUGH**

To: Councillors Cowles, Edwards, Fryer, Harris, Houseman, Hubbard (Chair),  
R. Kershaw (Vice-chair), Moore, Pacey, Rodgers, Slater (Vice-chair),  
Snartt, Taylor, Tormey and Yardley

Reserves: Councillors Green, Harley, Lewis, Muldoon and Sutherland  
(for attention)

All other members of the Council  
(for information)

## **AGENDA**

1. APOLOGIES
2. MINUTES

The Committee is asked to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2005, which are enclosed with the agenda for members and reserve members of the Committee.

3. DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL INTERESTS
4. DECLARATIONS – THE PARTY WHIP

### **PART 2 (DELEGATED)**

5. [CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL – CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE PANEL](#)

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, a report of the Customer Service Centre Panel is attached at page 4.

## 6. CABINET FEEDBACK

The item is included on the agenda to enable feedback to be given from the meeting of the Cabinet on 3rd March 2005 in respect of the following three Panels:

- Introductory Tenancies;
- Development of Leisure Facilities;
- Street Cleansing.

## 7. SCRUTINY PANELS

This item is on the agenda to enable the Chairs of Scrutiny Panels to report on progress:

- Difficult to Let Properties;
- Parking Issues in Charnwood.

## 8. WORK PROGRAMME

The current position with the Committee's work programme is attached at page 12. The Committee is asked to consider the programme and any amendments and additions it might wish to propose to the Scrutiny Commission for future meetings. This will enable planning for the next two or three meetings of the Committee to be undertaken, for relevant background information to be prepared and for the attendance of officers and/or others to be arranged.

The Performance and Management Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 22 March 2005, reviewed performance information relating to the Housing Revenue Account for the first 11 months of the 2004/05 financial year. In doing so, it was presented with a summary of the position with rent arrears. That showed an increase in arrears of £38,000 on the corresponding period for the previous year, although the sums for each year were similar in terms of a percentage of the total rent payable.

In response to questions at that meeting, officers commented as follows:

1. Although there was no single reason for the increase overall, some tenants would not apply for benefits or provide the paperwork required to support claims and that resulted in under-recovery.
2. There had been a reduction in staff by 1.5 posts at the time of the last restructuring and the section was also dealing with new work, both of which added pressure on staff to help achieve an improved situation.
3. that, given the factors referred to in 1. and 2. above, maintaining the position at the same relative level as in 2003/04 was an achievement.
4. There was close working with the Benefits team and staff in the Rent Arrears team had been trained by Benefits officers to enable them to assist those who were in arrears claim benefits to which they were entitled, although that still relied on the co-operation of the tenants concerned.
5. Achieving co-operation tended to more difficult with younger tenants.

The Committee concluded that, although the above did not represent a full picture and it was not the Committee's role to go into more detail, the issues identified were causes for concern and suggested that more in depth scrutiny would be appropriate. Therefore, the Committee referred the matter to the Scrutiny Commission as a potential topic for scrutiny by a Panel of this Committee.

At its meeting on 29 March, the Scrutiny Commission was advised of that decision as part of its review of issues arising from scrutiny committees. The Commission in turn asked that the matter be programmed for scrutiny by a panel when there is an opportunity to do so.

At its meeting on 15th February 2005 the Scrutiny Commission requested the Chair to ask the Committee to include the issue of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement within the remit of the Parking Issues in Charnwood Panel.

For the Committee's assistance in programming matters, future meetings of the Committee are scheduled for:

1st June 2005  
13th July 2005  
14th September 2005  
26th October 2005  
7th December 2005  
25th January 2006  
22nd March 2006

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