

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Steve Wemyss, at his meeting held on Tuesday, 14 July 2015 at 5.30 pm at the Executive Meeting Room - The Guildhall

Present

Councillor Steve Wemyss (in the chair)

Councillor Stuart Potter
Councillor Yahiya Chowdhury
Councillor Matthew Winnington

11. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

12. Declaration of Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interests.

13. Hawthorn Crescent Balconies (AI 3)

Steve Groves, Asset Manager presented the report on behalf of the Head of Property and Housing which set out the £1 million investment in the refurbishment work to the 76 properties within eight blocks of flats at Hawthorn Crescent. This would entail the removal of the rotten timber fins (which were large vertical slats) to be replaced with aluminium screening. This would maintain the asset and eliminate a health and safety issue as well as improving the appearance of the properties. There had been consultation with residents in March and they had had an input into the design.

Councillor Wemyss as Cabinet Member for Housing welcomed this report and thanked officers for this.

DECISIONS:

(1) Approval was given to tender the works based on a budget estimate of £1 million, inclusive of fees.

(2) That following a full tender evaluation authority to enter into contract with the preferred bidder be delegated to the Director of Property and Housing.

14. Admiral Blocks Refurbishment (AI 4)

Steve Groves, Asset Manager presented the report on behalf of the Head of Property and Housing. It represented a £1.65 million investment in seven

blocks of flats in the Portsea area affecting 108 properties. This was mainly replacing the roofs where extensive repairs were identified. The opportunity has been taken to install a photo voltaic (PV) panels to the roofs. The scheme was therefore one of maintenance whilst also providing an income stream to the Housing Revenue account.

Questions were raised included by Mr Blackwood of the Resident's Association Consortium regarding the cost to leaseholders and it was confirmed that they would not be paying towards the PV panels but towards the roofing work. Councillor Potter asked regarding the PV usage and it was confirmed that this would give free electricity in the communal areas that would be beneficial to the whole HRA with a pay-back over three years and it was estimated that this could generate an income of approximately £932,000 over 20 years.

Councillor Wemyss welcomed the new opposition spokespersons Councillors Matthew Winnington and Yahiya Chowdhury to the meeting. Councillor Chowdhury asked questions regarding tendering for works and the guarantee of items. It was confirmed that there is a defect liability for a period of one year and the manufacturers have guarantees and it was anticipated that the pitched roof life would be approximately 60 years. Councillor Winnington welcomed the works, the use of the solar panels which he commended. Councillor Wemyss welcomed the report which combined maintenance works with an income generation opportunity.

DECISIONS:

- (1) Approval was given to tender the works based on a budget estimate of £1.65 million, inclusive of fees.**
- (2) That following a full tender evaluation authority to enter into contract with the preferred bidder be delegated to the Director of Property and Housing.**

15. Retaliatory Evictions - notice of motion - Deregulation Act 2015 and the implications to the private rented sector (AI 5)

Bruce Lomax the Private Sector Housing Manager presented the report on behalf of the Head of Property and Housing which had been in response to a Council Notice of Motion. The Deregulation Act 2015 would come into force from 1st October and it was designed to give protection to private sector housing tenants from the less scrupulous landlords. It set out clear steps for works to be undertaken and provided more security for tenants for them to be provided with more safety information by their landlords. There would be implications to the City Council regarding increasing enforcement to protect tenants' rights and to stop landlords' use of Section 21 Eviction Notices.

Councillor Winnington spoke in support of this recommendation which had been brought forward through the Notice of Motion by his group and welcomed the recommendations in full. He asked regarding work taking place with tenants and landlords through associations to raise awareness. In

response Bruce Lomax reported that he is working with the Portsmouth & District Landlords' Association (PDLA) who he had met with the previous night regarding how they approach their tenants and a newsletter was being sent out to 1,500 landlords in the city. This would explain the implications from 1st October and he was also working with letting agents. There is not a tenants' association for private sector housing in Portsmouth currently, but work was also being undertaken with the University as well as the PDLA. An article would be placed in Flagship as suggested and would be published before the 1st October implementation. Councillor Wemyss wished to add a third recommendation to ensure that a review took place as to how the measures had been enforced a year after the implementation date.

The Cabinet Member for Housing:

- (1) Agreed to use Flagship to highlight and publicise legislative changes designed to prevent retaliatory evictions.**
- (2) Asked officers to work with tenants and landlords to practically implement the changes and improvements to tenants' rights on retaliatory evictions when they become law on 1st October 2015.**
- (3) Asked that the use of this legislation be reviewed by the Cabinet Member for Housing or by a scrutiny panel, as soon as practicable after 1 October 2016.**

The meeting concluded at 5.50 pm.

Councillor Steve Wemyss
Cabinet Member for Housing