

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Steve Wemyss, at his meeting held on Tuesday, 24 January 2017 at 5.30 pm at the Executive Meeting Room - The Guildhall

Present

Councillor Steve Wemyss (in the chair)

Councillor Stephen Morgan
Councillor Tom Wood

11. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Spokesperson Councillor Stuart Potter sent his apologies that he was unable to get away from work and Councillor Gemma New apologised that she was unwell and unable to attend to observe. Councillor Stephen Morgan apologised for his late arrival, due to train delays.

12. Declaration of Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

13. Housing Pets Policy at Roslyn House, Southsea (AI 3)

David Sambells, as Area Housing Manager, presented the report on behalf of the Director of Property & Housing Services. He explained the background with Roslyn House having been a no pets block before 2005 and the challenge to this in 2015 after which surveys of the residents there had been undertaken. The second, telephone survey had been undertaken to ensure a better response, and this had resulted in 30 of the 54 tenants (including leaseholders) wanting a no pets policy for the block, representing 55.6% for this to be reinstated (27.8% against and 16.6% no response). He reported that during the consultation the other issues that had arisen were: what would happen to the existing pets (2 cats, 2 dogs) who could stay but not be replaced, and visiting pets which would be tolerated if they were well behaved but could not stay overnight. It was also noted that assistance dogs and guide dogs are permitted (this is already stated in the policy) but that there is more suitable permanent accommodation available within the Council's housing stock which would be offered to people with assistance/ guide dogs.

A deputation was made by Mr Mitchell as a resident of Roslyn House, who spoke in favour of the proposed change to a 'no pets' policy there. He stated that the general assumption had been that this was a no pets policy and one tenant had allergies and there had been nuisance caused by animals, with barking for long periods and fouling of the communal area to the detriment of the garden. This had led to the 47 signature to the Council.

Councillor Wemyss, as Cabinet Member for Housing, apologised for the delay in bringing forward this report, and supported the recommendation to designate Roslyn House a no pets block. He did however feel it would be hard to enforce a restricting on visiting pets but asked that if there were further problems that this be brought to the attention of the Housing Service so steps could be taken to address this.

Councillor Tom Wood, as Spokesperson, agreed that this was a reasonable way forward.

DECISION: that Roslyn House be listed as a 'no pets' block in the Appendix attached to the Local Authority Housing Pets Policy.

14. Council Housing Budget 2017/18 (including rents and charges) (AI 4)

Nick Haverly, Finance Manager, introduced the report on behalf of the Director of Property & Housing and the Director of Finance and Information Services. The report laid out the proposed setting of rents and charges for the 2017/18 financial year. He explained the central government's rent policy which meant a reduction of 1% p.a. and that service charges were at levels of full cost recovery. Tenants and leaseholders had been consulted via PCC's Housetalk magazine and had been invited to attend residents meetings, and he thanked those who had participated in this process. The appendices to the report gave full details of the proposed changes to rents and charges.

Councillor Wemyss, as Cabinet Member, thanked Nick Haverly and his team for their hard work in preparing the budget and for the consultation with residents. He felt that due to government policy there was little discretion in setting the rents and the charges were at a level of cost recovery.

Councillor Tom Wood and Stephen Morgan agreed that there was little room for flexibility and that resident engagement remained important to this process, including the meeting with the Residents' Consortium. Councillor Wemyss recognised that there had been less feedback this year due to the rent reduction, however residents were aware that there would be less opportunities for schemes from this budget.

Councillor Wemyss wished to add a further resolution to carry on the work from his proposal last year to set aside £50,000 for additional parking spaces to be provided for tenants (with a mix of schemes such as verge hardening) therefore he wished this year for a budget of up to £250,000 to be found to extend this parking provision.

DECISIONS: The Cabinet Member for Housing approved the following:

(i) All rents and charges to be effective from 1st April 2017 or such other date as determined by the Director of Property and Housing Services in consultation with the Director of Finance and Information Services.

- (ii) Dwelling rents for 2017/18 to be set as in accordance with Central Government's Social Rent Policy.¹**
- (iii) General Service charges for 2017/18 to be set at this meeting as set out in this report, and in accordance with Appendix 5.**
- (iv) Sheltered Housing Service charges for 2017/18 to be set at this meeting as set out in this report, and in accordance with Appendix 6.**
- (v) Laundry charges for 2017/18 to be set at this meeting as set out in this report, and in accordance with Appendix 7.**
- (vi) Heating charges to be set in accordance with Appendix 8.**
- (vii) Garages and parking site rents as shown on Appendix 9 be approved and authority to let garages at reduced rents where demand is low be delegated to the Director of Property and Housing Services in consultation with the Director of Finance and Information Services.**
- (viii) Revenue budgets for 2016/17 and 2017/18 as set out in Appendix 3 be approved and authority given to the Director of Property and Housing Services in consultation with the Director of Finance and Information Services to amend the budgets to reflect the latest available information prior to finalising budgets for 2017/18.**
- (ix) The relevant Managers be authorised to incur expenditure in 2017/18.**
- (x) The forecast Revenue Budgets for 2018/19 to 2020/21 as set out in Appendix 3 arising from the proposals contained in this report, be noted.**
- (xi) The Cabinet Member requested that up to £250,000 be made available within the Housing Revenue Account to be used to fund suitable parking schemes to provide additional parking in the Housing Area Estates.**

The meeting concluded at 6.05 pm.

Councillor Steve Wemyss
Cabinet Member for Housing

¹ The average rent decreases were set out in Appendix 4 of the report