

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

RECORD OF THE DECISIONS of the Cabinet Member for Housing taken at his meeting held on Tuesday, 23 September 2008 at 4.00 pm in the Guildhall, Portsmouth. Also present were Councillors Mike Park and Jim Patey as Opposition Spokespersons and Councillor Andy Lenaghan as the Portfolio Holder for Health & Wellbeing at Havant Borough Council.

7 Declaration of Members' Interests in accordance with Standing Order No 14 (AI 1)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

8 Private Sector Housing Stock Condition Report (AI 2)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING)

Roy Scanlon introduced his report and summarised the findings of the survey, which had shown that Portsmouth had a disproportionate number of older houses, many fail the Decent Homes Standard, but that there had been positive gains against the old fitness standards in the private sector. Funding is made available through the Housing Investment Programme for this work to help the older and vulnerable residents in the city to improve their thermal comfort levels. During discussion of this item there was reference to the former Vospers units that had remained empty in Paulsgrove for which a forthcoming redevelopment was expected and there would shortly be a press release on this. Members welcomed the introduction of these units for social housing use.

Councillor Park wished to query why an article on the 'Winter Warmth' campaign had not been included in the September issue of Flagship magazine. Councillor Wylie would pursue why this important article had not been included at the most appropriate time to give publicity before the winter. Roy Scanlon reported that there would be an accompanying Roadshow with advice being given by the energy efficiency officers.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member

- (1) noted the results of the comprehensive Private Sector Housing Condition Survey;**
- (2) supported the continued use of innovative and accessible city council funded financial assistance packages to support housing renewal, improvement and refurbishment in the private sector;**
- (3) welcomed the proposal to run a 'Winter Warmth' campaign for 2008/09 to offer advice and practical support to older residents to improve the thermal comfort of their homes.**

9 Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2008 – 2013 (AI 3)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING)

Alan Cufley presented Nigel Baldwin's report and was pleased to report that the number of people found to be homeless in the city had reduced by half over the last five years. In response to a Member's question regarding the accessing of services through the Supporting People programme Alan Cufley confirmed that the Supporting People budget continues to be under significant pressure. Nevertheless the Commissioning Body had recently reviewed the services of a large part of the programme to ensure they remained relevant to the needs of Portsmouth's residents. One outcome had been the successful remodelling of the city council's own Tenancy Support service that will now include private sector residents. In addition, service for longer-term support had also been commissioned. In response to further questions, he explained that there was a requirement on the city council to provide independent housing advice and this was provided through a variety of agencies and partners. Councillor Wylie was encouraging of this partnership approach.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member

- (1) noted the publication of the Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013 on the city council website;**
- (2) supported the work of the Housing Partnership's Homelessness Focus Group as it confirms the Action Plan that will take the strategy forward over the next five years.**

10 Housing Portfolio – Cash Limit Budget Monitoring report 2008/09 (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY STRATEGIC DIRECTOR AND SECTION 151 OFFICER)

Peter Pennekett introduced the report which covered spending on private sector housing only. Projections of the anticipated position at the end of the financial year (31st March 2008) showed an £80,000 overspend against budgets outside the control of managers i.e. homelessness where managers cannot by law limit spending to within available budgets. This was partly offset by a £60,000 underspend against other budgets giving a projected net £20,000 overspend for the portfolio as a whole at the end of the financial year. It was also reported that the current economic climate is very likely to lead to an increase in repossession levels, which would in turn lead to additional costs in tackling the consequent homelessness.

DECISION that the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 4.45 pm.

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Councillor Steven Wylie
Cabinet Member for Housing.