

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Steve Wylie, at his meeting held on Tuesday 3 February 2009 at 4.00 pm in the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

Other Councillors Present

Councillor Mike Park }
Councillor Jim Patey } Group Spokespersons

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

There were no declarations of members' interests.

2 John Pounds Developments, Portsea (AI 2)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY CORPORATE INITIATIVES MANAGER,
COMMUNITY HOUSING)

Hazel Hine presented her report which gave a progress update since the previous report and expanded on work to review the progress of the scheme and work which needed to be put in place for its future sustainability. The Cabinet Member for Housing thanked all involved, particularly Hazel, for their hard work over many years towards this successful project which had brought great benefit to the local community. He hoped that there would be a continued evaluation of the local needs to see where gaps still existed. Councillor Patey suggested that there be promotion of the Community Centre at Paulsgrove within the project there.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Housing

- (1) approved the Action Plan attached at Appendix 3 of the report;**
- (2) noted the arts and wellbeing project linking Portsea and Paulsgrove (Appendix 3, Section 7);**
- (3) noted the update on capital expenditure and legal issues in the Action Plan (Appendix 3, Section 1).**

3 Housing Carbon Challenge Group Action Plan Update (AI 3)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY CORPORATE INITIATIVES MANAGER,
COMMUNITY HOUSING)

Hazel Hine presented her report. The report set out the progress since the last report and the work which was currently being undertaken with the help of external sustainability specialists to review the Housing Carbon Challenge Action Plan over the next 3 months and look at the implications of sustainability requirements on planning policy, including house numbers. It was stressed that this was also an important part of the council's corporate sustainability strategy. The next couple of months might see the start of

workshops of external stakeholders. Alan Cufley corrected paragraph 10 regarding the Equality Impact Assessment to delete the words “as this is a review of existing charges”. Councillor Patey commented that wind turbines might not be popular and asked about investigations into other options for generating energy. It was stressed that a range of options was being considered, of which wind turbines was only one, including solar power.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Housing

- (1) noted the update, including the current review of the Housing Carbon Challenge Group Action Plan;**
- (2) noted the resourcing issues are yet to be finalised for the satisfactory development and implementation of the HCCG Action Plan and that a further report will be made at a later decision meeting of the Cabinet Member for Housing.**

4 Annual Review of Charges Made for Mandatory Licensing, Enforcement Action and Non-Mandatory Inspections (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HOUSING STANDARDS MANAGER,
COMMUNITY HOUSING)

Bruce Lomax presented his report which set out the annual review of charges made by the Housing Standards Team. Alan Cufley stressed that the charges and their method of calculation were transparent and were comparatively low when compared to other authorities. This allowed the City Council to work with landlords to make improvements to properties rather than penalising them financially.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Housing –

- (1) agreed the increase in the fee to be charged for all licence applications under Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004 submitted, as shown in Appendix 1 of the report, from 1 April 2009;**
- (2) agreed the increase in the charges made for undertaking enforcement action with regard to Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004, as shown in Appendix 2, from 1 April 2009;**
- (3) Agreed the increase in the charges made for undertaking non-mandatory inspections from £130 to £132 from 1 April 2009;**
- (4) gave delegated authority to the Head of Community Housing to make any changes as a result of the City Council’s local pay review and the local government national pay award for 2008/09 in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Opposition Spokespersons.**

5 Portsmouth's Housing Market and the Economic Downturn (AI 5)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING)

Alan Cufley presented the report and noted that Portsmouth had been a lead authority for the new Mortgage Rescue Scheme. He confirmed that since the report had been written the government had guaranteed certain bank lending from April 2009. Councillor Park found it a useful report and Councillor Patey asked that there be regular updates on housing application numbers, which could be an information item on the Members' Information Service every few months.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Housing –

- (1) noted the current situation with the housing market in Portsmouth;**
- (2) noted the Government's current and proposed policy initiatives to stimulate national and local housing markets;**
- (3) endorsed the current market-related activities by the City Council and seeks a further report from the Head of Community Housing on other proposals and support when details have been clarified with the Government, the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), and other partners.**

6 Council Housing Budget for 2009/10 (AI 6)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC DIRECTOR AND SECTION 151 OFFICER)

Peter Pennekett presented the report and advised that in the current very difficult economic climate both officers and members wanted to try and ease the financial burden on residents of increasing rents and charges wherever possible. Normally rent increases are effectively set by the amount PCC have to pay to the Government via the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System (HRASS) which would require a rent increase of about 7%. However the Government are undertaking a review of Housing Finance including the HRASS and all indications are that the outcomes of the review, likely to take effect from April 2011, would be more favourable for Portsmouth than the current arrangements.

Financial modelling over 30 years, assuming that the current HRASS arrangements continued unchanged, showed that with a rent increase at 5% the Council could afford to manage and maintain council homes for 10 years before balances ran out, whilst setting a higher rent increase would extend the period beyond 10 years. However given the importance of helping residents during the difficult times over the next year it is considered worth setting rents at 5% and taking the small risk that the outcomes of the Government's review would be less favourable for Portsmouth, rather than more favourable as expected.

He reported on the involvement of the Residents Consortium for which the feedback had been to go for the lower of the two options put forward with rents increased by 5%, General Charge by 4% and heating charges capped at 15%. He reported on progress on the campaign for Fair and Local Housing Finance with the involvement of Mike Hancock MP who was organising a deputation at 10 Downing Street on 25 February, with David Willetts MP also in attendance, for residents to hand over their petition. There was also ongoing close work with Waverley Council on this issue.

Peter Pennekett thanked the residents and said that he, Owen Buckwell and Alan Cufley were very grateful for the vital contribution made by their participation in the budget process. Councillor Park supported the tenants' choice and hoped that the HRASS changes materialised.

DECISIONS:

- (1) all new rents and charges be effective from 6 April 2009 or such other date as determined by the Head of Housing Management (HHM) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services (HFS);**
- (2) Dwellings Rents and the General Charge for the next year were set at the meeting at 5% and 4% respectively;**
- (3) Mobile home licence fees to rise by 5% in line with the "RPI all items" measure of inflation for September 2008 as shown on Appendix page 16;**
- (4) Garage & parking site rents as shown on Appendix page 16 be approved and authority to let garages at reduced rents where demand is low be delegated to HHM in consultation with the HFS;**
- (5) Sheltered Housing Service Charges & Supporting People Charges as shown on Appendix page 17 be approved;**
- (6) Heating increase to be set at the level limited to 15% in accordance with the option in Appendix page 19;**
- (7) The Council continue working with residents and other councils to achieve "Fair & Local Housing Finance" via the Government's review of Housing Finance;**
- (8) Authority to bid to the DCLG to bring forward Major Repairs Allowance from 2010/11 to 2009/10 be delegated to HHM in consultation with the HFS;**
- (9) Revenue budgets for 2008/09 & 2009/10 be approved and authority given to the HHM in consultation with the HFS to amend the budgets to reflect the latest available information prior to finalising budgets for 2009/10;**
- (10) The relevant managers be authorised to incur expenditure in 2009/10;**

- (11) **Repayment of debt to be calculated annually as described in the report.**

7 Housing Investment Programme (HIP) 2008/09 to 2014/15 (AI 7)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT,
HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING AND STRATEGIC DIRECTOR AND
SECTION 151 OFFICER)

Peter Pennekett presented his report and reiterated the significant change to earlier drafts of the report was that Somerstown Phase 1 of the scheme was now included in the HIP with an allocation of £3M and there was a separate report going to the full Cabinet regarding this project. He also reported on discussions with Havant Borough Council regarding sites in Leigh Park for which the capital receipts would be used where there was an allocation for housing purposes.

Councillor Steve Wylie thanked all the residents who had been involved in the whole process, Peter Pennekett and his team and Alan Cufley and Owen Buckwell and their departments.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that –

- (1) **the HIP programme as set out in Appendix 4 be approved in the sum of £22.5M and £28.7M respectively for 2008/09 and 2009/10;**
- (2) **the programmes of £36.4M, £24.5M, £25M, £26M and £26.5M for the five financial years 2010/11 to 2014/15 be noted;**
- (3) **the Prudential Indicators for the Housing Revenue Account set out in Appendix 6 be approved;**
- (4) **that for the purposes of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance) (Amendment) Regulations 2003 the City Council resolve to spend £20M a year on affordable housing between 2008/09 and 2010/11 and that the Capital Receipts arising each year from the disposal of HRA assets be used 100% for the provision of capital investment in affordable housing or regeneration schemes;**
- (5) **that £3M of General Fund capital receipts be allocated to the Housing Investment Programme and used to finance the Somerstown Phase 1 HUB scheme;**
- (6) **authority be delegated to the Head of Financial Services to alter the mix of capital funding sources used to finance the HIP to maximise the resources available to the Council.**

The meeting concluded at 5.25 pm.

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Councillor Steve Wylie
Cabinet Member for Housing