

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING**

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by Councillor Steve Wylie as Cabinet Member for Housing at his decision meeting held on Tuesday 14 July 2009 at 4.00 pm in the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

Also in attendance were Councillors Jim Fleming and Jim Patey as Opposition spokespersons.

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

There were no declared interests.

### **18 Accreditation of Private Landlords and Letting Agents (AI 2)**

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HOUSING STANDARDS MANAGER)

Alan Cufley reported this was the first time that such a scheme had been launched in the city, which marked a broadening of earlier schemes, for which there would be an administrative fee charged. Bruce Lomax had presented this to the Portsmouth and District Landlords who had been supportive of the scheme. Councillor Patey requested that recommendation 2 could be widened to allow for involvement of the group spokespersons in discussions regarding the annual review. This was agreed to by Councillor Wylie.

#### **DECISIONS:**

##### **The Cabinet Member for Housing**

- (1) agreed to the administration charge for the accreditation scheme;**
- (2) gave delegated authority to the Head of Community Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Opposition Spokespersons, to review these costs on an annual basis and make changes accordingly.**

### **19 Sustainable Communities Programme Update (AI 3)**

(TAKE IN REPORT BY CORPORATE INITIATIVES MANAGER)

Hazel Hine presented her report which used the John Pounds Development as an exemplar and she explained the re-branding of the Housing Carbon Challenge to a new more accessible title of 'Greener Homes'.

#### **DECISIONS:**

##### **The Cabinet Member for Housing**

- (1) noted the updates on the reviews of the John Pounds Development and the Housing Carbon Challenge Action Plan;**

- (2) noted the comments made about the good practice already being demonstrated in Community Housing and Local Authority Housing;
- (3) approved the retitling of the Action Plan to the “Greener Homes Strategy” as set out in Appendix 4;
- (4) agreed that the strategy and its associated action plan be discussed, developed and implemented in association with external partners, including the Housing Strategy group of the Local Strategic Partnership and that further reports on progress should be brought forward to future meetings;
- (5) noted that funding for external resources is being investigated and that appropriate grant applications will be submitted, as set out in this report, including those seeking external funding for staff resources to support the objectives of the Greener Homes Strategy;
- (6) agreed that joint projects and funding applications to support the objectives of the Greener Home Strategy should be pursued with other partners, including Portsmouth University;
- (7) agreed that expenditure of £125K in accordance with the proposals set out in this report and attached Financial Appraisal be approved in principle, subject to the following:
  - Authority to approve schemes within the approved expenditure above be delegated to the Head of Community Housing and Head of Financial Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing.
  - All schemes must have a Financial Appraisal approved by the Section 151 Officer
- (8) approved the Financial Appraisal.

#### **19 Housing Investment Programme (HIP) 2009/10 to 2015/16 (AI 4)**

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

Peter Pennekett presented his report and reiterated the involvement of the residents’ representatives who had attended many meetings and given their suggestions during the compilation of the detailed report. He made reference to the City Council’s Corporate Capital Strategy, the ring-fencing of capital receipts which should include the right to buy and he stressed that this programme was based on the assumption the receipts would remain within the HIP. He also expanded on the assumption of unsupported prudential borrowing and the cut in spending that resulted for this (Appendix 5 gave details of the reductions). He also thanked Owen Buckwell and Alan Cufley’s teams for their input into the production of the programme. Alan Cufley

stressed the need for the Members of the Council to be informed of the effects of use of receipts within housing finance to the benefit of residents to ensure good quality homes for all. Councillor Patey raised a question regarding the relaxation of government guidance on council house building and Councillor Wylie undertook to share information with the Opposition Spokespersons when he was in a position to do so. Councillor Wylie also was grateful for the input of the officers and of the residents, in the production of this extensive programme which was reiterated by Councillors Patey and Fleming,

#### **DECISIONS:**

- (1) The revised 2009/10 programme set out in Appendix 4 and the associated capital financing set out in Appendix 3 be approved in the sum of £28.4 million.**
- (2) The programmes of £30.3 million, £29.3 million, £24 million, £23.7 million, £24.5 million and £25.2 million for the six financial years 2010/11 to 2015/16 be approved for use in providing information to the Government as required.**
- (3) The Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix 6 and the Budget Principles shown at Appendix 2 be approved.**
- (4) That for the purposes of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance) (Amendment) Regulations 2003 the City Council resolve to spend £20 million on affordable housing in both 2009/10 and 2010/11. Furthermore that the capital receipts arising in each year from the disposal of surplus HRA assets be used 100% for the provision of affordable housing or regeneration.**
- (5) The Head of Community Housing be given delegated authority in consultation with the Strategic Director responsible for financial administration (S.151 Local Government Act 1972) to approve arrangements for the joint City Council and Housing Corporation Programme for 2009/10 to 2011/12.**
- (6) Authority be delegated to the Strategic Director responsible for financial administration (S.151 Local Government Act 1972) to alter the mix of capital funding sources used to finance the HIP to maximise the resources available to the Council.**
- (7) That all the residents and officers involved in the process be thanked for their work.**

#### **20 Council Housing Rent Reduction (AI 5)**

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

Peter Pennekett presented his report which represented the first reduction in rents since the late 1970's. He explained the background to the timing of the response to the government's announcement made in May with the need to

ensure that housing benefit adjustments were taken into account hence the rent reduction was due to take effect in October. Councillor Wylie wished to thank the residents for their successful campaign that had been taken to 10 Downing Street. Councillors Patey and Fleming were welcoming of the reduction in rent, however Councillor Fleming felt this should be a cautious welcome when there would be larger rises to come and understood the difficulty caused to officers with the changing government guidelines. Councillor Wylie invited comments from the residents' representatives who were present who felt that there was a danger that Portsmouth residents would be disadvantaged with the redistribution of debt from other local authorities. James Hill reported that the rent reduction would be communicated to residents through House Talk and there would be the necessary legal notification to all residents.

#### **DECISIONS:**

**The Cabinet Member for Housing agreed that**

- (1) with effect from 5 October 2009 the average weekly rent for Council homes should be reduced from £69.79 to £67.03;**
- (2) that, with effect from 5 October 2009 the average weekly rents for mobile homes should be reduced as set out in Appendix 3 of the report;**
- (3) the reduction in the proposed HRA deficit for 2009/10 from £1.3m to £1m be approved;**
- (4) the success of the campaign to abolish the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System and retain all receipts from sales of housing assets be welcomed;**
- (5) the City Council continue to campaign for the cancellation of housing debt.**

#### **21 Dates of Decision Meetings of the Cabinet Member for Housing**

**DECISION that the decision meetings take place on 16 September, 10 November, 2 February and 16 March 2010 with briefing meetings on 2 September, 27 October, 19 January and 2 March.**

The meeting concluded at 4.55 pm.

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Councillor Steve Wylie  
Cabinet Member for Housing