

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

RECORD OF THE DECISIONS taken by Councillor Steven Wylie as Cabinet Member for Housing, at a special meeting held on Monday 8 February 2010 at 9.30 am.

Also present

Councillor Jim Patey (Spokesperson)

4 Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 1)

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Dealing with Empty Residential Property (AI 2)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING)

Alan Cufley presented this report explaining that bringing back empty properties into use was an ongoing issue, which needed to be addressed. He highlighted the need to fully utilise the housing stock in the city and to take action to prevent the detrimental effects that empty properties can have on neighbourhoods within the city.

Alan referred to the success of the empty properties campaign, which had been in operation for a number of years and explained that recent changes in legislation now provided an opportunity to adopt a fresh approach in order to re-energise the campaign.

DECISION:

The Cabinet Member agreed to recommend to the Cabinet that the Dealing the Empty Residential Property document be adopted.

6 Telecare (AI 3)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY STRATEGIC DIRECTOR)

Mark Bushnell introduced this report which sought approval to amend the pricing structure of the telecare service. A professional market research company had been engaged to investigate the size of the potential market, to advise on a pricing structure and on the best methods of marketing the service.

Charges for the service had not been increased since 2006. Changes to the pricing structure were now necessary to ensure the sustainability of the service. Therefore, it was proposed to raise charges with effect from April 2010. The new pricing structure aimed to provide a level of price protection for existing customers, raising the price for new customers and introducing a new higher rate for those customers with a higher level of dependency.

DECISIONS:

That the Cabinet Member for Housing:

- (1) note the report;**
- (2) agree that authority to approve a Telecare pricing structure for next financial year be delegated to the Head of Community Housing and Head of Financial Services in consultation with the Cabinet members and opposition spokespersons for both the Housing and the Health and Social Care Portfolios.**

7 Council Housing Budget for 2009/10 and 2010/11 (AI 4)

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

Mr Pat Stoddart made a deputation on behalf of the elderly residents living in Portsmouth's Sheltered Housing Schemes requesting that the night cover service in all seven of Portsmouth City Council's 2.5 sheltered housing schemes be re-instated to the 'sleep-in' arrangement previously provided.

Peter Pennekett presented this report explaining that its purpose was to recommend changes to Council housing budgets, rents and other charges, debt repayment, the grant to the John Pounds Community Trust and to give authority to managers to incur expenditure in 2010/11.

Peter explained that the late decision by the Government to reduce the amount payable to them in 2009/10 by £1.5 million led to average rents rising by 5% in April 2009 but then reducing by 4% in October 2009. The effect of this was that whilst the actual increase in rents between March & April 2010 would be 5.3% for Option 1 & 3.4% for Option 2 as shown in Para 9.17 Table 1, the increase in average rents would be 3.2% and 1.3% respectively as in Table 2. In fact for Option 2 the average rent for all dwellings of £69.31 at April 2010 would be less than the average rent at April 2009 of £69.79.

Peter added that he was also seeking authority for the HHM and HFS in consultation with the cabinet member, opposition spokespersons and residents' representatives to respond to the Government's "offer" to allow councils to take on extra debt in exchange for ending payments to the Government under the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System and retaining all receipts from the "Right to buy" sales.

DECISIONS:

That:

- (1) All new rents and charges to be effective from 5th April 2010 or such other date as determined by the Head of Housing Management (HHM) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services (HFS).**

- (2) Dwelling rents and the General Charge for next year be approved as set out under Option 2 in Para 9.14 of the report as follows:**
- **Rent increase average of 3.4% or £2.28 per week per dwelling.**
 - **General Service Charge increases of 14p/week for dwellings receiving a lower level of services and 74p/ week for dwellings receiving a higher level of services such as cleaning & grounds maintenance as set out on Appendix page 13.**
- (3) Mobile home site rents as shown on lines 3 to 5 of Appendix page 15 be approved. Consultation with residents to be undertaken to determine a method of setting increases in rents to reflect inflation to apply for the 5 financial years starting April 2011.**
- (4) Garage and parking site rents as shown on Appendix page 15 be approved and authority to let garages at reduced rents where demand is low be delegated to HHM in consultation with the HFS.**
- (5) The Sheltered Housing Service Charges and Supporting People Charges as detailed in Appendix page 16, columns G, H, K, L & M be approved. A consultation process to be undertaken to determine the nature of, and consequent charges for, the night service for Category 2.5 residents.**
- (6) Heating charges be approved as set on Appendix page 18.**
- (7) Authority be delegated to the HHM and HFS in consultation with residents' representatives, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Opposition spokespersons to respond to Government consultation setting out the "offer" to take on extra debt in exchange for ending HRASS payments to Government and retaining all receipts from "Right to Buy" sales.**
- (8) The grant to the John Pounds Community Trust be set at £39,000 for 2010/11 and to rise annually thereafter using the "RPIX" measure of inflation for September of the preceding year.**
- (9) Revenue budgets for 2009/10 and 2010/11 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 2010/11.**
- (10) The relevant Managers be authorised to incur expenditure in 2010/11.**
- (11) Repayment of debt to be calculated annually as described in this report.**

8 Housing Investment Programme (HIP) 2009/10 to 2015/16 (AI 5)

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

This item was withdrawn for consideration at this meeting and the Cabinet and Council meetings of 8th and 9th February as the Housing Investment Programme was subsumed within the capital report to council on 9th of February. There will be a separate report back with more details to the March decision meeting for the Cabinet member for Housing.

The meeting concluded at 10:55am.

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Councillor Steven Wylie
Cabinet Member for Housing

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