

HOUSING CABINET

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by Councillor Steven Wylie as Cabinet Member for Housing at his decision meeting held on Tuesday 1 February 2011 at 12.00 pm in the Guildhall, Portsmouth. Also in attendance was Councillor Jim Patey, opposition spokesperson.

1 Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 1)

There were no declarations of members' interests and no apologies for absence.

2 Sheltered Housing – Night Service at Category 2.5 (CAT 2.5) Schemes (AI 2)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY THE HEAD OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT)

David Mearns presented the report and stressed that a very thorough consultation process had been undertaken by the Resident Participation Team, and they had looked in detail at the equality implications. The officers' recommendation reflected the wishes of the residents and the requirements of the equalities impact assessment.

A deputation was then made by Mr Ron Smith of Ian Gibson Court who asked how the decision on the Night Service would be implemented and how staff would be employed and he thanked Bill Moody and the Resident Participation Team for the proper way they had carried out the consultation this time. A second deputation was made by Patricia Banks representing her mother who was in Ian Gibson Court. She was concerned that the mobile unit could not always undertake this job as when there had been snow they had not been able to go to the north of the city and she queried whether a change to the service was allowed within the Category 2.5 Schemes which required someone on site 24 hours.

In response David Mearns reported that on agreement of the recommendation, officers would be looking at implementation of the service within each of the seven CAT 2.5 schemes as current arrangements were providing a good service and they wanted to ensure that there was stability in arrangements and ensure that the night service would meet the requirements of the residents within the context of the recommendation. Councillor Jim Patey was delighted that there had been a reversion, to scheme similar to that which had operated before as there had been a lot of concern created by the review which he also felt had been a costly exercise. He felt the residents would now feel more comfortable and would be happy with this outcome and he was glad that the council was not losing a service that it could proud of for its elderly residents.

Councillor Wylie welcomed David Mearns' undertaking to continue to work with residents regarding the implementation of the service, which now with the changes in the European Union rules, was more of an awake service and in reaching his decision to agree to the recommendation he was mindful of the City Council's equalities duties (including those of Section 49a of the Disability Discrimination Act).

Councillor Wylie wished to thank Bill Moody and David Mearns and their teams for their consultation exercise and the residents for their participation.

DECISION:

The Cabinet Member for Housing, in view of the overwhelming support of the CAT 2.5 residents for Option 2 (on-site presence every night in each of the seven schemes), agreed to the implementation of Option 2 and the consequent necessary funding and charging arrangements.

3 Council Housing Budget for 2011/12 (AI 3)

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

Peter Pennekett introduced the report and thanked the tenants' representatives for their time in attending the meetings which had helped to shape the report. He also thanked Nick Haverly and Owen Buckwell and their teams for their involvement. The biggest outstanding issue was regarding self-financing with no government announcement being made so the effects were not yet known.

Pat Stoddart made a deputation and circulated a copy of a letter he had written to the Chief Executive in which he outlined his concern that there had not been proper consultation on the rent options and he felt that not enough people knew where their money was being spent and they needed to have an informed choice. He felt there is a legal duty to consult secure tenants and he did not believe this was the case.

Allie Hager then addressed the Cabinet Member in support of the play areas which allowed children to play in a safe area and many didn't have gardens and it gave them access to trained staff to talk to. Parents would also go along and she hoped the play areas would be retained and run even better under the Housing Service.

Philip Hudson then spoke also in support of the Housing funding of the play areas. As a resident of Buckland he was involved with the Buckland Adventure Play Site, which is in an area of many flats and small houses giving a safe play area with many exciting challenges offered to the children and the chance to meet Police officers and Community Wardens. The play schemes also offered a range of activities including crafts, cookery, gardening and opportunities to go on trips and camps which may be the only holidays some children would experience.

Peter Pennekett then responded regarding the consultation exercise; articles had been placed in House Talk regarding spending and there were residents meetings to talk through the challenges. He undertook to take Mr Stoddart's letter back to the residents' consortium for further discussion and then to respond to him. He reiterated that there were major changes expected through the government's proposal of self-financing which he hoped would come into effect to ensure that the City Council's maintenance of its housing over the next 30 years. Owen Buckwell wished to clarify that the play areas already came under the Housing Revenue Account and were owned and maintained by Housing and the change within this budget paper was to take over the management of the play areas staff.

Councillor Patey was supportive of most of the report but he did feel that when it came to consultation it would be helpful to have residents' meetings in Paulsgrove, which officers undertook to look into. He indicated that he agreed with the proposals as long as the Housing department was not subsidising areas which did not have a high percentage of a council stock and felt that this should be monitored carefully.

Councillor Wylie as Cabinet for Housing did not like putting rents up and would not increase these at the government recommended level of 7%. He thanked Peter Pennekett and Owen Buckwell and their teams for their hard work and for their efficiencies which ensured that the increase was not at the recommended government level. He was therefore choosing Option 2 with an average increase of 4% to ensure that good housing and good services could be kept.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Housing agreed:

- (i) All new rents and charges to be effective from 4th April 2011 or such other date as determined by the Head of Housing Management (HHM) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services (HFS).**
- (ii) Dwelling rents and the General Charge for the next year be approved as set out under Option 2 in paragraph 9.17 of the report as follows:**
 - (a) rent increase average of 4% or £2.77 per week per dwelling, individual rents to be calculated as described in paragraph 9.15 of the report.**
 - (b) The General Service Charge increases of £0.55 per week for dwellings receiving a lower level of services and £2.12 per week for dwellings receiving a higher level of services such as cleaning and grounds maintenance as set out in appendix page 13.**

- (iii) **Mobile home license fees as shown on Appendix page 15 be approved. Future years licence fees to rise in line with the average of the “RPIy” measure of inflation for the twelve months up to and including the preceding September, with any further increase above this level to be subject to the proper legal processes including consultation with Mobile Home residents.**
- (iv) **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.**
- (v) **Sheltered Housing Service Charges and Supporting People Charges as shown on Appendix page 16 be approved.**
- (vi) **Heating Charges to be approved as set out in appendix page 17 (increase limited to 15% maximum).**
- (vii) **Authority be delegated to the Head of Housing Management & the Strategic Director & Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Head of Legal Services and the Cabinet Member for Housing, to implement changes to the management & funding of Adventure Play Areas within approved HRA & General Fund budgets.**
- (viii) **Revenue budgets for 2010/11 and 2011/12 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 2011/12.**
- (ix) **The relevant Managers be authorised to incur expenditure in 2011/12.**
- (x) **Repayment of debt to be calculated annually as described in this report.**

Recommendation requiring approval by the City Council:

- (xi) **Authority be delegated to the Head of Housing Management and Strategic Director & Section 151 Officer, in consultation with resident’s representatives and the Cabinet Member for Housing, to implement Self Financing for council housing, including any necessary borrowing required.**

The meeting concluded at 12.40 pm.

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 Councillor Steven Wylie
 Cabinet Member for Housing