

HOUSING CABINET

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by Councillor Steve Wylie as Cabinet Member for Housing at his decision meeting held on Tuesday 31 January 2012 at 4.00 pm in the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

Also present was Councillor Jim Patey, opposition spokesperson.

1 Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 1)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

2 Portsmouth Housing Market – Summarising Latest Trends (AI 2)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING)

It was noted that there continued to be a low volume of housing sales but there had been a slight rise of 1.3% in house prices for Portsmouth which was at variance with the South East Hampshire trend.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Housing noted these trends as the background for Portsmouth City Council's involvement in the city council's housing market along with its commissioning and delivery roles.

3 Strategic Plan for Housing 2011-15 (AI 3)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING)

Councillor Patey asked regarding the 30% affordable housing quota in developments at a time when people are not buying houses; he asked if these were then being offered to the local authority? It was reported that the local authority needed to keep pace with the ever increasing demand for affordable housing and there was an additional demand where people are finding it hard to get into the private housing market. Homes could be taken on but only if they were of a suitable standard. Councillor Wylie thanked Alan Cufley, Nigel Baldwin and the whole team for this report and was aware of the work that had been undertaken by them.

DECISIONS: the Cabinet Member for Housing

- (1) Acknowledged the consultation responses on the draft Strategic Plan which will be substantially published in the full Equality Impact Assessment**
- (2) gave delegated responsibility for incorporating responses as necessary and publishing the strategic plan to the Head of Community Housing & Regeneration.**

4 Resources for New Affordable Housing in Portsmouth (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING)

This report provided a situation report following the Home and Communities Agency's reduction in the level of funding available. Alan Cufley suggested amending recommendation 2(c) to reflect the involvement of the Cabinet Member for Housing in the meetings that he would set up with the main providers of affordable housing.

DECISIONS the Cabinet Member for Housing:

- i) Noted the reduced resources available for developing affordable housing**
- ii) Confirmed the aspiration to continue to develop new affordable homes**
- iii) Requested that the Head of Community Housing & Regeneration arrange meetings with the main providers of affordable housing, to also be attended by the Cabinet Member for Housing.**

5 Council Housing Budget for 2012/13 - (The Housing Revenue Account and Rents) (AI 5)

(REPORT BY HEAD OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND
CHIEF OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION
(SECTION 151 OFFICER))

Nick Haverly presented this report and was pleased that this is the first budget under the self-financing regime which would enable better planning for council housing maintenance programmes. He wished to thank the tenants and their representatives for their attendance at all the budget consultation meetings and the involvement of officers within Housing Management and Financial Services. It was reported that the two rent options within the report were both at less than the government recommended levels and were lower than any other increase proposed by the other Hampshire housing authorities.

Councillor Wylie took into account the consultation exercise with residents who had indicated that they were in favour of the 4% increase (Option 2) and he did not see that the government recommended level would be affordable for tenants. He stressed that whilst some residents had favoured a 0% increase, the authority was not able to set a deficit budget as there was a need to look to the future maintenance of housing stock. Revised wording for recommendation (xiii) was approved.

DECISIONS that the Cabinet Member for Housing approved the following:

- (i) All new rents and charges to be effective from 2nd April 2012 or such other date as determined by the Head of Housing Management (HHM) in consultation with the Chief Officer responsible for Financial Administration (Section 151 Officer).**
- (ii) Dwelling rents and the General Charge for the next year be approved as set out under Option 2 in paragraph 9.5 of the report as follows:**
 - (a) rent increase average of 4% or £2.88 per week per dwelling, individual rents to be calculated as described in paragraph 9.3 of the report.**
 - (b) General Service Charge changes as set out in appendix 9 – No increase for dwellings receiving fewer services and an increase of £1.50 per week for dwellings receiving a higher level of services such as cleaning.**
- (iii) Mobile home license fees as shown on Appendix 10 be approved. Future years licence fees will continue to rise in line with the average of the “RPI” 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 10 be approved and authority to let garages at reduced rents where demand is low be delegated to HHM in consultation with the Chief Officer responsible for Financial Administration (Section 151 Officer).**
- (v) Sheltered Housing Service Charges and Supporting People Charges as shown on Appendix 11 be approved.**
- (vi) Authority was given to the Head of Housing Management in consultation with the Chief Officer responsible for Financial Administration (Section 151 Officer) to set charges for staff who are resident in council housing as part of their job at a full cost level and to implement increased charges to tenants over a period of time where appropriate, with heating Charges to be set in accordance with Option 3 in Appendix 12.**
- (vii) Revenue budgets for 2011/12 and 2012/13 be approved and authority given to the HHM in consultation with the Chief Officer responsible for Financial Administration (Section 151 Officer) to amend the budgets to reflect the latest available information prior to finalising budgets for 2012/13.**

- (viii) The relevant Managers be authorised to incur expenditure in 2012/13.**
- (ix) Authority be delegated to the Head of Housing Management & the Chief Officer responsible for Financial Administration (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to review the method used for setting General Service Charges.**
- (x) Authority be delegated to the Head of Housing Management & the Chief Officer responsible for Financial Administration (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and resident's representatives to produce an HRA Business Plan, including an Asset Management Plan, to be presented to Members at a later date.**
- (xi) Authority be delegated to the Head of Housing Management & the Chief Officer responsible for Financial Administration (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to review the level of funds available for the provision of new council homes across the City, as part of the production of the HRA Business Plan.**
- (xii) Note that consultation with tenants on the impact of Welfare Reform and the universal credit will take place during 2012/13 with a view to making representations to Central Government.**
- (xiii) Note that representation continues to be made Officers and Members to allow Portsmouth City Council to take advantage of the Public Works Loan Board special reduced rate of borrowing for self financing buyouts, including any remedies that may be available.**
- (xiv) Authority be delegated to the Head of Housing Management & the Chief Officer responsible for Financial Administration (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to set the rents and service charges for the tenants of the former Locally Based Hospital Units at Avenue and Hamilton Houses for 2012/13 and future years.**
- (xv) Note that the Head of Housing Management & the Chief Officer responsible for Financial Administration (Section 151 Officer) formally respond to Government's consultation paper on changes to the Right to Buy rules.**

Councillor Wylie then thanked all those involved in the consultation process and in the preparation of the report.

INFORMATION ITEM

6 The Energy Act 2011 - Green Deal (AI 6)

(TAKE IN INFORMATION REPORT BY HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING)

It was noted that Councillor Eleanor Scott as Cabinet Member for Environment had amended the recommendation before her at her recent portfolio meeting to reflect member involvement and for officers to actively pursue partnerships in the city and there would be a further report to her in July to look at the options available. Councillor Wylie was concerned that those in most need were helped such as with measures like the energy meter payments.

The meeting concluded at 4.50 pm.

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Cabinet Member for Housing