

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Steve Wemyss, at his meeting held on Tuesday, 23 September 2014 at 5.30 pm at The Executive Meeting Room - Third Floor, The Guildhall. The meeting was also attended by Councillor Darren Sanders.

Residents representatives from the consortium were Terry Bryant and Adrian Blackwood for this meeting.

9. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

These had been received from Councillor Fuller, who had requested that Councillor Sanders attend the meeting to represent his group, and from Councillor Horne.

10. Declaration of Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

11. Grosvenor House and Warwick Crescent Refurbishment (AI 3)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY THE HEAD OF HOUSING &
PROPERTY SERVICES)

Steve Groves presented this report which sought approval to go out to tender for an estimated £3.1 million for the works to 54 properties at Grosvenor House and ten in each of the Warwick Crescent blocks (there were no leaseholders within this scheme). The project included the construction of a newly modernised lift tower, structural repairs, new roof, decoration and relocation of bin stores as well as the reconfiguration of the entrance at Warwick Crescent and provision of emergency lighting. He reported that there was a need to decant 14 properties; nine families had already moved out, with 80% of these remaining within the Somerstown area and half of these families had already opted to make their moves permanent they had been given the option to move back. Consultation days and residents' open days had been held. 80% had indicated they were completely in favour of the renovations; some had expressed concern regarding the location of the lift tower.

Questions were then asked, firstly by Councillor Sanders regarding how properties would be allocated after the works had taken place and it was reported that tenants could go back to their previous properties if they wish as it was their residency. Mr Bryant asked the cost of decanting and it was reported that there was a relocation allowance available to help compensate with the expenses involved with moving out and back where they wished to.

Councillor Wemyss as Cabinet Member stressed his regret that the Area Action Plan intention for green open space to be provided in the area through the Single Regeneration Budget had not been realised. He felt this was the right time to undertake these works which represented the best option,

providing significant improvements to these substantial properties and the lifts were in need of expansion. The scheme would provide decent homes for people in the city.

DECISIONS:

- (1) approval was given to tender the works based on an estimated budget of £3.1 million.
- (2) following a full tender evaluation authority to enter into contract with the preferred bidder be delegated to the Head of Housing and Property Services.

12. Review of the Licensing Programmes for Houses in Multiple Occupation in Portsmouth (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY THE HEAD OF CORPORATE ASSETS,
BUSINESS & STANDARDS)

Alan Cufley and Bruce Lomax presented this report which represented a review of the mandatory and additional licensing schemes operating for houses in multiple occupation and included added charges for the mandatory licensing scheme. The report set out the legal precedents that needed to be adhered to. The authority has the right to charge but not to make a surplus so this report set out the adjustment of the fee framework.

Councillor Sanders commented that the authority had to undertake this line due to the court cases, he was pleased to see that the authority was ahead of schedule and felt that this gave tenants in the private sector more security so was supportive of this.

Councillor Wemyss as Cabinet Member for Housing reported that he had been contacted by Mr Sillman and Mr Burns, from the Portsmouth & District Private Landlords Association, who had concerns and misgivings as they felt that good landlords were paying for those who were less scrupulous. He felt that the case law was clear and it was his responsibility to make sure that the city council covered its own costs so he endorsed the report.

DECISION:

The Cabinet Member for Housing approved the new fees for Additional and Mandatory Licensing including the change to the fee structure for a section 257 property which would require to be licensed under the Additional Licensing scheme.

13. Financial Assistance Policy for Private Sector Housing (AI 5)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY THE HEAD OF CORPORATE ASSETS,
BUSINESS & STANDARDS)

Alan Cufley and Bruce Lomax presented this report which reviewed the success of the policy in place for the provision of financial assistance packages for owner occupiers and landlords. This was reviewed each year to ensure the best value for money.

4.2(a) lists the grants and loans to be removed and 4.2(b) - 4.5 made changes to the existing grant structure. Those packages that were not working were being removed and a new deposit loan acting as a short term loan was being put in place.

Councillor Sanders commented that he was delighted with the report and the way forward was felt that it was right to review the effectiveness of the assistance policy which helped those most in need.

Councillor Wemyss as Cabinet Member for Housing felt it was right to review the policies to try to support people to stay in their own homes and felt that there should be flexibility in the future reviews to give consideration to whether the deposit scheme should be a bond rather than a loan. The officers undertook to review the deposit scheme to see how this worked with the landlords and the possibility of changing this to bonds in the future.

DECISION:

That the 2014 Financial Assistance Policy be agreed and implemented from 1st October 2014, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

The meeting concluded at 5.55 pm.

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Councillor Steve Wemyss
Cabinet Member for Housing