

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING**

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Steve Wemyss, at his meeting held on Monday, 16 March 2015 at 5.30 pm at the Executive Meeting Room - The Guildhall

### **Present**

Councillor Steve Wemyss (in the chair)

Councillor Stuart Potter, Group Spokesperson

Councillor Darren Sanders was also in attendance.

#### **5. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors David Fuller and David Horne as Group Spokespersons.

#### **6. Declaration of Interests (AI 2)**

There were no declarations of members' interests.

#### **7. The Redress Schemes for Lettings Agents and Managing Agents (AI 3)**

Alan Cufley and Bruce Lomax introduced the report by the Head of Corporate Assets, Business and Standards, which would help tenants to complain about the bad service of letting and managing agents (of which there were over 90 in the city). The agents would be able to use the appeal process if they met the 3 grounds of appeal within 28 days of service of the notice.

Councillor Darren Sanders spoke in support of the proposal and asked which neighbouring Local Authorities would be engaged with; in response it was reported that this was still to be decided.

### **DECISIONS the Cabinet Member for Housing:**

- (1) Approved that the enforcement of this legislation is undertaken proactively by the Private Sector Housing Team (and the income generated from any fines imposed is kept within the Housing Standards budget).**
- (2) Gave delegated authority to the Head of Corporate Assets, Business and Standards to review level of fine imposed dependent on circumstances and representation.**

- (3) **Authorised engagement with neighbouring authorities to discuss the manner in which they will be addressing enforcement of this legislation.**

## **8. Tipton House and Edgbaston House Refurbishment consultants (AI 4)**

Steve Groves presented the report of the Head of Housing and Property Services which sought approval to appoint consultants for a feasibility study for detailed, costed options to be brought back to the Housing Cabinet at the end of 2015.

Maria Cole, a Residents' Consortium representative, who declared that she lived in Edgbaston House, asked if there would be options for heating to be made available separately to the tenants? Meredydd Hughes responded that all options were being explored within the heating and structural feasibility studies. Councillor Sanders then made comment welcoming this ambitious project to address the problems associated with these Somerstown housing blocks and voiced concern on behalf of his group spokesperson, Councillor Fuller, regarding the high cost of these studies. It was reported that these would represent approximately 6-7% of the total project costs.

Councillor Wemyss agreed on the approach being taken, and welcomed the lessons learnt from the refurbishment of Wilmcote House. Whilst agreeing that this was a large investment for the council he felt that this needed to proceed.

### **DECISION the Cabinet Member for Housing agreed:**

- (1) **That approval be given to accept a tender for a lead consultant based on an estimated overall budget of up to £800K for the initial feasibility study, design and management of the scheme.**
- (2) **That following a full tender evaluation, authority to enter into contract with the preferred bidder be delegated to the Head of Housing and Property Services in consultation with the Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer.**
- (3) **That approval be given to spend up to £100K for the initial structural and feasibility report including costed options.**

## **9. Council Housing Maintenance & Improvements and housing IT business software 2015/ 16 (AI 5)**

Meredydd Hughes presented the report of the Head of Housing and Property Services, for which a detailed budget book for the individual areas had been given to the Cabinet Member and Spokespersons, setting out the plans for works over the next year. There would however be some flexibility to allow for projects which may need addressing during the year.

Councillor Potter asked about the planned works on houses in the Paulsgrove area and it was confirmed that the 7 year capital programme would include works on the non-traditional houses there. Councillor Sanders requested information on the spending on Housing IT over the last 5 years, which would be provided to him.

Councillor Wemyss welcomed the sensible planning ahead, which still allowed a degree of flexibility for where more urgent maintenance was required. He would favour small capital projects where the opportunity arose to help relieve pressure on parking for residents in the city.

#### **DECISIONS:**

- (1) The area programmes and allocation of finance for the funding of the Revenue Budgets for repairs and maintenance of dwellings were noted.**
- (2) The capital budgets listed in Appendix B and Appendix C commencing in 2015/2016 were approved and the Local Authority Housing Manager was authorised under Financial Rules, Section B14 to proceed with schemes within the sums approved.**
- (3) The Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer's financial appraisal for the capital programme - global provision was approved.**

#### **10. Delivering Replacement Homes - Phase 2 (AI 6)**

Owen Buckwell as Head of Housing & Property Services presented this report, which sought use of additional capital receipts (through the Right to Buy Scheme) and to seek additional borrowing limits for these new homes in Portsmouth and Havant which would be a mix of houses and flats available at affordable rents.

Councillor Potter asked questions regarding affordable rent levels and the parking provision for the new homes; these would have to meet the planning requirements of each local authority area.

Maria Cole and Adrian Blackwood, on behalf of the Residents' Consortium, both welcomed the provision of new homes, although Maria commented that in Somerstown residents were still expecting houses at the Brook Club. It was confirmed that this would be redeveloped in a future phase.

Councillor Wemyss welcomed this report and the provision of affordable housing. He hoped that more houses could be built in the city, as in Leigh Park, to provide for families. He would therefore support the recommendations going forward to Council on 17 March for approval.

**RECOMMENDED that City Council approve the following:**

- 1) **the following Capital Expenditure amounting to £22.903m:**
  - I. **A development of 67 units (a mixture of flats and houses) on a disused allotment site in Havant at a total cost of £8.119m**
  - II. **A development of 50 units (a mixture of houses and flats) at Kingsclere Avenue at a total cost of £6.059m.**
  - III. **A development of 40 units (a mixture of flats and houses) at Blendworth Crescent as a total cost of £4.847m.**
  - IV. **A development of 8 houses at Holybourne Road at a total cost of £969.400.**
  - V. **A development of 24 flats to be built on the existing Buckland Family centre site at a total cost of £2.908m**
- 2) **to fund the £22.903m of Capital Expenditure, additional borrowing of up to £15.12m over the next 2 years, alongside the funding already approved within the existing capital programme.**
- 3) **that subject to the requirements of recommendation 4, authority be delegated to the Head of Housing and Property Services in consultation with the Head of Finance & S151 Officer to amend the composition and spending profile of the proposed schemes in order to meet planning and design requirements.**
- 4) **that a financial appraisal approved by the Head of Finance & S151 Officer must be completed prior to the commencement of any scheme, that confirms that the proposed scheme remains the most viable option and provides an overall benefit to the 30 year HRA Business Plan.**

At the conclusion of the meeting Councillor Wemyss took the opportunity to thank officers for their hard work, help and support to him during the municipal year and also thanked the Residents Consortium Link Group representatives for their input and involvement. It was noted that Maria Cole would be stepping down from the CLG after 8 years of service.

The meeting concluded at 6.10 pm.

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Councillor Steve Wemyss  
Cabinet Member for Housing

