

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Jennie Brent, at her meeting held on Tuesday, 23 January 2018 at 5.00 pm at the Executive Meeting Room - The Guildhall, Floor 3

Present

Councillor Jennie Brent (in the chair)

Councillor Stuart Potter

1. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Stephen Morgan MP (due to parliamentary business) and Tom Wood (due to travel delays) and also James Hill, Director of Property & Housing.

2. Declaration of Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

3. Mobility Scooter Storage Policy (AI 3)

David Mearns, Assistant Housing Manager, presented the report of the Director of Property & Housing. He explained the background, with the increase in use of mobile scooters and the advice received from the Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service that these could not be stored in communal areas due to the fire risk presented. These could be stored in individuals' properties. A survey had been conducted identifying 67 scooters stored in communal areas in both sheltered and general needs accommodation. The value of using these was appreciated and therefore the storage issue was being investigated, with a surveyor proposing works in some blocks to provide safe storage areas that meet the requirements of Fire Safety Regulations. The identified works were estimated to cost £82,000 from existing maintenance budgets. A consultation process was taking place with residents until the end of March. A full Equalities Impact Assessment would also be undertaken.

Councillor Morgan had submitted a question regarding the visits to residents, asking as people with mobility scooters can sometimes be the most vulnerable in society, could the council also consider speaking to local voluntary and community organisations to advocate on behalf of users and residents? They may provide additional insight to inform the council's policy on this and the charging. In response David Mearns undertook to widen the consultation in this way, and there would be a further report on the matter of proposed charges.

Councillor Potter asked whether Patterdale House in Paulsgrove would be included in the survey; David Mearns confirmed that it was planned that all

residents with mobile scooters would be contacted, but that residents do not have to notify the Council that they own a scooter. It was suggested that contact was made with the Paulsgrove Housing Office.

Councillor Brent, as Cabinet Member for Housing, asked about problems of storage in corridors and what action would be taken if a resident refused to move their mobility scooter from an unsafe communal area? David Mearns responded that if this occurred the resident would be spoken to about the policy and options, but that they had so far experienced co-operation with residents understanding the associated fire risk, therefore no such difficulties were expected. The rise in ownership and liaison with the Hants Fire & Rescue Service had meant the need to review the situation and bring forward a policy.

DECISIONS - the Cabinet Member for Housing:

- (1) Agreed the adoption of the Mobility Scooter Storage Policy for Local Authority Housing stock (see Appendix 4 of the report) with immediate effect;**
- (2) Noted the further piece of work to review the charging of mobility scooters and costs.**

4. Pets Policy at Wingfield Street (Nos. 1-71 odds) (AI 4)

David Mearns, Assistant Housing Manager, introduced the report of the Director of Property & Housing, which recommended the amendment to the current policy which would allow residents in 1-71 (odds) Wingfield Street to keep either 1 cat or 1 dog. This had been brought about by a petition request, and the subsequent survey had resulted in a vote of 23:12, showing a clear majority in favour of the proposed change.

The ward councillors had also been contacted by letter and Councillor Stephen Morgan MP had contacted the Cabinet Member for Housing to indicate that he had not received any objections and that he gave his support to the recommendation.

Councillor Stuart Potter supported the proposal and asked about the provision of suitable waste bins in the area and how dog fouling would be dealt with. David Mearns reported that there are 2 suitable nearby locations for dog walking with appropriate bins, at Buckland Park and by Westminster Place. If any complaints about nuisance were received, the Area Housing Office staff would look into these and speak to owners, and if fouling was on the highway the community wardens would get involved.

Councillor Jennie Brent, Cabinet Member for Housing, asked if other blocks had changed their designation and what responses had been received to the letter sent out in October. David Mearns reported that 12 months ago Roslyn House had opted to change to become a 'no pets' block. The responses to the October letter had been from the originator of the petition and another resident had raised concern informally regarding possible nuisance issues.

DECISION: The Cabinet Member for Housing agreed that Wingfield Street (Nos. 1-71 odds) be listed as a 'pets' block in the Appendix attached to the Local Authority Housing Pets Policy.

5. Council Housing Budget 2018/19 (including rents, fees and charges) (AI 5)

Nick Haverly, Finance Manager, introduced the report on behalf of both the Director of Property & Housing and the Director of Finance & Information Services, setting out proposed rents and service charges, the opportunity for borrowing and the impact of fire safety measures. He referred to the national government policy for rent setting, which meant a 1% reduction for the forthcoming financial year. Service charges had to be set at a rate to reflect full cost recovery. In the areas of commercial activity he was proposing a 4% increase to increase income to the Housing Revenue Account. Heating charges were to be frozen for another year.

The proposals had been circulated to tenants and leaseholders via the House Talk publication. Mr Haverly thanked all the staff involved and the residents for their participation via the Residents' Consortium. Maria Cole, a member of the Residents' Consortium was present and had attended these meetings.

Councillor Potter was supportive of the recommendations at a time of financial restrictions.

Councillor Stephen Morgan MP had submitted a question regarding the appropriateness of reducing service charges to residents when building work on properties and communal areas were being undertaken. In response Nick Haverly reported that service charges were not impacted by works to communal areas but that in cases where disruption is experienced, discount on rents can sometimes be offered to affected residents.

Councillor Jennie Brent, as Cabinet Member for Housing, was conscious that the proposed blanket increase of 4% for garages and parking charges did not necessarily reflect demand. She was aware that demand for parking spaces and garages is already very low in Leigh Park and a 4% increase might actually reduce the number of users and therefore reduce the income received. There was also a need to encourage those travelling into the city to use the Council's Park and Ride facility. She was keen to see that those who need a car parking space close to their home are not financially penalised for doing so. Therefore she asked the effect of the charges being amended to:

- Increase all Local and Leigh Park charges by 1%
- Increase all other Non-local parking by 10%

Nick Haverly estimated that those changes would increase the parking and garage income by £43,000 per year, compared to the current year. Councillor Brent wished to amend the parking and garage charges in recommendation (vii) in this way, due to the benefit there would be for local tenants, the need to

encourage non-local users to use the park and ride facility, and recognising the various parking demand issues.

DECISION -

The Cabinet Member for Housing approved the following:

- (i) All rents and charges to be effective from 1st April 2018 or such other date as determined by the Director of Property and Housing in consultation with the Director of Finance and Information Services.**
- (ii) Dwelling rents for 2018/19 to be set as in accordance with Central Government's Social Rent Policy (with the rent reduction summarised in Appendix 4).**
- (iii) General Service charges for 2018/19 to be set at this meeting as set out in this report, and in accordance with Appendix 5.**
- (iv) Sheltered Housing Service charges for 2018/19 to be set at this meeting as set out in this report, and in accordance with Appendix 6.**
- (v) Laundry charges for 2018/19 to be set at this meeting as set out in this report, and in accordance with Appendix 7.**
- (vi) Heating charges to be set in accordance with Appendix 8.**
- (vii) Garages and parking site rents as shown on Appendix 9 be amended so as to**
 - Increase all Local and Leigh Park charges by 1%, and**
 - Increase all other Non-local parking by 10%**
- (viii) Revenue budgets for 2017/18 and 2018/19 as set out in Appendix 3 be approved and authority given to the Director of Property and Housing in consultation with the Director of Finance and Information Services to amend the budgets to reflect the latest available information prior to finalising budgets for 2018/19.**
- (ix) The relevant Managers be authorised to incur expenditure in 2018/19.**
- (x) The forecast Revenue Budgets for 2019/20 to 2020/21 as set out in Appendix 3 arising from the proposals contained in this report, be noted.**

The meeting concluded at 5.40 pm.

Councillor Jennie Brent
Cabinet Member for Housing