

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING**

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Darren Sanders, at his meeting held on Monday, 9 March 2020 at 4.30 pm at the Executive Meeting Room - The Guildhall

### **Present**

Councillor Darren Sanders (Cabinet Member for Housing)

Councillor Cal Corkery  
Councillor Scott Payter-Harris, Conservative Spokesperson

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

There had been no apologies from councillors, however Councillor Sanders wished to pay tribute to Peter Burton who had sadly passed away, and who had represented the Residents' Consortium for several years and had been a regular attendee at these decision meetings. Councillor Corkery also commented on the respect held for Pete at the Residents' Consortium and joined Cllr Sanders in expressing condolences to his family.

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

Councillor Sanders declared that his mother is a council tenant, but that this would not factor in his decision making and was not a pecuniary interest.

Maria Cole of the Residents' Consortium declared that she lives in Edgbaston House which was mentioned in the maintenance report.

### **8. Resources for Rough Sleepers in Portsmouth (information report) (AI 3)**

This report had been requested by the Cabinet Member to update on the wide range of work taking place by the City Council and voluntary sector since the Rough Sleepers' Strategy had been approved a year ago. The information report was presented by Sara Wiltshire, Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator, summarising the support and resources available in the city.

Cllr Sanders invited an interested resident to speak as she was attending the meeting for this item; deputations are not minuted in full and can be viewed as part of the webcast recording of the meeting here:

<https://livestream.com/accounts/14063785/cabinet-housing-09mar2020>

Maureen Butler raised questions on whether homeless persons were charged for services at the shelters such as laundry and food; it was reported these

were provided free of charge along with other support. Councillor Sanders reported that "alternative giving" was being considered, such as meal vouchers that the public can contribute to rather than give cash direct if they were concerned how their money would be spent.

The Residents' Consortium and CLG representatives Madha Abrams and Maria Cole also raised comments on training opportunities and questions on church involvement and severe weather cover outside of the winter months.

Councillor Corkery asked about the accuracy of numbers, how capacity is accounted when people book and do not turn up, and if a Housing First approach is being taken? Sara Wiltshire explained that the needs of the individual were looked at to see what support is needed.

Councillor Payter-Harris asked how often the adverse weather protocol has been implemented in the last year. It was reported that it was used 3 times over the winter once for cold weather and twice for the storms. With regards to the tracking of individuals using the night shelter they would continue to be looked at when accessing the day services. Councillor Payter-Harris requested that further information on these numbers be sent to him as well as those being refused access. He congratulated the team on the award of government funding of £649k.

Councillor Sanders, as Cabinet Member, was grateful to the work of former councillor Paul Godier for his work and enthusiasm that had been important to the development of these non-statutory services. This had relied on government grants and imaginative ways of working such as doubling warden numbers. The model here was not formally called Housing First but took a similar approach, looking at the needs of the individual. He also thanked the work of the Homelessness Working Group, which was cross party and chaired by Sally Taylor.

The contents of the information report were noted.

## **9. Development of Affordable Homes - Huntsman Close, Havant (AI 4)**

Jo Bennett, Head of Business Relationships, Growth & Support presented the report on behalf of the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services, who explained how the feasibility studies for the best use of the site had resulted in plans for the delivery of 10 flats. Areas of high demand had been looked at and Havant Borough Council had identified a significant need for ground floor wheelchair accommodation. The properties would be energy efficient.

The Residents' Consortium representatives were supportive of this partnership arrangement with Havant BC to provide social housing.

Councillor Payter-Harris asked questions regarding the financing of the £1.9m scheme and the amount of borrowing it would require, which were answered by Wayne Layton, Finance Manager and Alison Cloutman, Supported Housing Business Partner, who explained that the financial modelling was

dependent upon the central government budget announcement to see which funding could be applied for. Councillor Payter-Harris asked to be kept informed about this but welcomed this development.

Councillor Corkery asked about the retention of right to buy receipts, which are used for housing development and regarding environmental standards. Meredydd Hughes, Assistant Director Housing, expanded on the knowledge gained from previous development at Doyle Avenue, which would be used at Huntsman Close. Jo Bennett commented further on the costings, with the high cost per unit reflected the disabled provision. Councillor Corkery wished to see more details of the reduction in carbon emissions in the Integrated Impact Assessment form.

Councillor Payter-Harris asked to be kept informed of progress as he was concerned that there may be delays in the global supply chain. Wayne Layton explained that the report reflected an estimated budget and if there is a need to request further funding a report would be brought back to the Cabinet Member, but that intelligence from other projects had been used, and contingency funding included.

Councillor Sanders, as Cabinet Member for Housing, commented on the council's responsibility as a major landlord in Havant and felt it was right to learn lessons from other projects such as Doyle Avenue. He wanted as many social housing homes and green homes to be provided as possible, and welcomed the partnership work with Havant to help take people off the housing waiting list.

#### **DECISIONS:**

**(1) the Cabinet Member for Housing approved Capital Expenditure of £1.9m, to deliver 10 new affordable housing properties, to be held in the Housing Revenue Account.**

**(2) the Cabinet Member for Housing delegated authority to the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services in consultation with the Director of Finance and Resources & S151 Officer to amend the composition and spending profile of the proposed schemes in order to meet planning and design requirements and also to agree the use of 141 receipts whilst ensuring that the schemes remain financially viable following any necessary changes.**

**(3) the Cabinet Member for Housing delegated authority to the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building to apply for any grant funding to support the scheme.**

#### **10. Council Housing Maintenance and Improvements and Housing IT Business Software 2020/21 (AI 5)**

Meredydd Hughes, Assistant Director Buildings, presented the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings' annual report on the detailed spending plans for each housing area, and was accompanied by Simon Fairbrother, IT Business Manager.

Madha Abrams of the Residents' Consortium was grateful for the chance for the residents to go through the plans in detail each year. Maria Cole asked for more explanation of the annual inclusion of asbestos removal. Steve Groves, Head of Building Maintenance, explained that most of the council's housing stock dated back to 1950s and 1960s so included some asbestos, which was safe in situ but is removed as part of other work undertaken, so this was an on-going project. Maria Cole also asked about the programming of retrofit sprinklers; it was reported that Ladywood House and Handsworth House had been identified as highest priority as the highest 2 council blocks. Residents there would be informed of the progress with tenders about to be sought.

Councillor Corkery asked about the window replacement works in West Leigh; Steve Groves explained these were part of wider works there, including some tile replacement and work on roofs and he would provide Cllr Corkery with further information. With regard to the heating upgrade at Edgbaston House and Tipton House, Meredydd Hughes reported that feasibility studies were taking place for the most appropriate heating (either electric or district heating) and more would be known in the summer. Councillor Corkery also noted much needed investment in the Courts Estate in Landport and was also concerned about the need to provide a decent standard of housing in the Australia Blocks. Councillor Sanders regretted that the central government's policy had meant £12m less to spend on investing in improvements.

Councillor Payter-Harris asked for more information on the ERP ratings of the new heating installations (page 44) and queried the installation of new gas boilers. Meredydd Hughes responded that the previous boilers dated back to 1990s and needed to be replaced. Cllr Payter-Harris also commented on the asbestos removal budget provision (which was typical of annual expenditure) and he welcomed the lift refurbishment at The Ridings, Hilsea.

Councillor Sanders, as Cabinet Member for Housing, asked about the energy efficiency schemes included in the report; this included installation of solar pv and solar battery storage, combined heating and power, and more energy efficient engines were being installed on the Charles Dickens estate (including Pickwick House). Meredydd Hughes reported that he also worked closely with colleagues in the Green & Clean Team, with landscaped areas being improved.

Councillor Sanders was pleased to approve the report and welcomed the work with the Fire Service on the installation of sprinklers. He commended the report which showed that energy efficiency was a key priority in the council's response to the climate emergency.

#### **DECISIONS - The Cabinet Member for Housing agreed:**

**(1) That the area programmes and allocation of finance for the funding of the Revenue Budgets for repairs and maintenance of dwellings be noted.**

**(2) That the capital budgets listed in Appendix B and Appendix C commencing in 2020/2021 be approved and the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services be authorised under Financial Rules, Section B14 to proceed with schemes within the sums approved.**

**(3) That the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer's financial appraisal be approved for the capital programme - global provision.**

The meeting concluded at 6.05 pm.

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Councillor Darren Sanders  
Cabinet Member for Housing