

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND TACKLING HOMELESSNESS**

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness held on Wednesday, 18 September 2024 at 4.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

### **Present**

Councillor Darren Sanders (in the Chair)  
Councillor Raymond Dent

#### **49. Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Spencer Gardner and Councillor Rajah Ghosh tendered their apologies.

#### **50. Declarations of Members' Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **51. Approving Portsmouth City Council's Allocations Policy**

Shane Galvin, Head of Housing Needs, Advice and Support presented the report, the purpose of which was to present Portsmouth's policy for allocating social housing, which sets out the arrangements for allocating housing accommodation within the meaning of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, which includes:

- The selection of applicants to be offered tenancies by Portsmouth City Council.
- Nominations to tenancies offered by private registered providers of social housing.

#### Members' Questions

In response to Members' questions, officers clarified:

- Where any problems with a property was impacting on an individual's health or disability, either mental or physical, an assessment would be carried out based on their individual needs and the level of impact and they would be allocated a level of priority based on that assessment.
- Dynamic adjustments are adjustments to the percentage of homes reserved based on the current demand, current homelessness demand and whether they are existing tenants or not. The percentages are then adjusted according to that analysis. The aim was that it should make it easier for certain types of groups to be allocated a home.
- The start date of 20 November was to allow some mechanics to be rolled out such as IT and working practices and to allow time to contact those households currently on the housing register to inform them how the changes would affect their application.

### Chair's Comment

The Chair stated that the new policy was about making it easier for people who were homeless to be allocated a home and to ensure people live in the right home. The new policy would provide roughly 20% more home moves than currently exist over the next two years and whilst it would not solve everybody's housing problems it would have a significant benefit for people in the city.

### **DECISION**

**The Cabinet Member approved the council's new Allocations Policy (Appendix 1) and associated banding scheme (Appendix 2) to be effective from 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024.**

#### **52. Bunting Gardens, Havant - Council Housing Development**

Patrick Leggett, Head of Capital Projects, presented the report, the purpose of which was to update on the capital spend of £1.494m from the Wecock Farm (Infill) capital scheme, which was added to the capital programme on 8 March 2021. The spend would deliver 3 four-bedroom, eight-person new council house dwellings at Bunting Gardens within the Wecock Farm estate, Havant. Approval was being sought to build the houses to Passivhaus standard, in line with approved energy efficiency standards for new council homes approved in March 2021.

### Members' Questions

In response to Members' questions, officers clarified:

- The design standards allow for a WC or shower room on every floor of the properties, and these have been future proofed with drains in accordance with Building Regulations Approved Document Part M4(2) should they need to be converted to wet rooms in the future.

### Chair's Comment

The Chair noted this was an example of Portsmouth City Council's commitment to building more homes and greener homes. This would often mean building to Passivhaus standards where possible but that would not always be the case. He stated it was essential that the residents of the Passivhaus buildings were fully informed on how to utilise all the elements of the building to ensure maximum benefit in energy efficiency and cost savings.

### **DECISION**

**The Cabinet Member:**

- 1) Noted that Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Expenditure of £1.494m had been approved by the Director of Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer), under Financial Rule B.11, to deliver 3 new council housing dwellings at Bunting Gardens, subject to consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness on the requirement for them to be built to Passivhaus standard;**

**2) Approved for the Bunting Gardens development to be built to Passivhaus standards.**

**53. Update on Portsmouth City Council's Home Ownership Policies**

Mark Fitch, Head of Local Authority Housing, presented the information only report, the purpose of which was to update the Cabinet Member on the Home Ownership Policies following the recent stock transfer from Clarion Homes; to ensure that all aspects of the new Consumer Standards introduced in April 2024 would be met, with respect to Home Ownership products and for the Cabinet Member to note that the Right to Buy (RTB) policy and the Shared Ownership (SO) policy had been recently revised or written.

Members' Questions

There were no questions

Chair's Comment

The Chair stated he was delighted at the response to Portsmouth City Council taking over the Clarion properties which had been positive for the residents. He noted the council were particularly interested in shared ownership as the council would like to try and assist people in their home ownership aspirations.

**The Cabinet Member noted the report.**

**54. Water Hygiene Policy**

Steve Groves, Head of Building Maintenance, presented the report, the purpose of which was to seek approval from the Cabinet Member for a new Water Hygiene policy that outlined the approach to manage water systems to help reduce the risk from legionella and other bacteria in all council Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets only, including residential dwellings and sheltered schemes.

Members' Questions

In response to Members' questions, officers clarified:

- All contractors were aware of the process for managing Legionella in void properties and any opportunities were taken to remove any 'dead legs'. Contractors had an obligation to make sure they regularly flushed through systems in void properties that had been empty for a period of time to ensure there was no stagnated water in the system.
- The policy related to communal water systems and checking communal water tanks that were in the roof spaces or communal areas so there was no need to go into individual properties. Officers noted that individual properties were naturally flushing through by virtue of people living in the property so there was little likelihood of any stagnated water being present.

### Chair's Comment

The Chair noted the policies had been through the Policy Focus Group which was essential to ensure the people on the receiving end of the policy implications had an input into them. He noted this policy was designed to ensure everybody was safe in their homes.

### **DECISION**

**The Cabinet Member:**

- 1) Approved the Water Hygiene Policy and asked the Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services to implement the policy on 1 October 2024;**
- 2) Approved the implementation and communication plan for the updated policy.**

#### **55. Rent & Service Charge Setting Policy for Housing Revenue Account owned Social Housing**

Mark Fitch, Head of Local Authority Housing, presented the report, the purpose of which was to present and approve a new Rent & Service Charge Setting Policy for the HRA owned social housing.

### Members' Questions

There were no questions.

### Chair's Comment

The Chair stressed that this item was not for setting the rent and service charges but was just for setting out the parameters within which they could be set.

The Chair referred to paragraph 3.7 of the report. He stated he expected the Government to continue the policy of capping rent rises at the Consumer Index plus 1% and that the indications were this would be for the next 10 years which allowed a certain amount of certainty. He also noted the proposal of past governments to reduce rents by 1% each year meant the council could not maximise the amount of money spent on improving peoples' homes but that was a government regulation and were the parameters within which the council could work. He requested that the CPI plus 1% policy be put into the relevant policy once formal clarification had been received from the Treasury.

The Chair hoped that policy would be extended to the private rented sector.

### **DECISION**

**The Cabinet Member approved the new Rent & Service Charge Setting Policy (Appendix A) for the HRA owned social housing.**

#### **56. Repairs and Maintenance Policies Update**

Steve Groves, Head of Building Maintenance, presented the report, the purpose of which was to update the Cabinet Member of the review of a

number of Repairs and Maintenance policies to ensure they meet the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing, Consumer Standards and to seek approval for the updated policies. He outlined the key changes in each policy.

#### Members' questions

There were no questions.

#### Members' comments

There were no comments

#### Chair's comment

The Chair noted the 9 policies and stressed the importance of having particular scrutiny on things such as damp, mould and fire safety. He stressed it was important that all policies should reflect and incorporate the findings from the Grenfell enquiry.

The Chair was particularly impressed with the focus group feedback

### **DECISION**

#### **The Cabinet Member:**

- 1) Approved the updated Repairs and Maintenance policies and asked the Housing Neighbourhood and Building Services to implement the new policies on 1 October 2024 (Appendix A - K).**

#### **57. Approving Portsmouth City Council's Safeguarding Policy for the Housing Needs, Advice & Support Service**

Mike Swann, Commissioned Support and Safeguarding Manager, presented the report, the purpose of which was to update about the processes and approaches taken by officers in the Housing Needs, Advice & Support (HNAS) service to meet its statutory safeguarding obligations and to seek approval to implement a new Safeguarding Policy for the HNAS service.

The policy set out the following:

- The key overarching principles which inform the service's work, as embedded in the relevant legislation, and its commitment to them.
- Identification of the key safeguarding roles and responsibilities of specific officers in the service, including the senior management team and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL.
- The recruitment, induction and training processes for all staff which support the principles and requirements of the policy.
- Identification of different types of abusive and neglectful behaviours, which may require a safeguarding response from officers in the service.
- The processes in place which HNAS staff will follow to report and escalate safeguarding concerns, and how it will work with partner agencies as necessary to meet its safeguarding responsibilities.

#### Members' questions

In response to Members' questions, officers clarified:

- Hard copies of the policy would be available through the service on request.

Chair's comment

This important policy codified the normal practice and ensured that residents are kept safe which was crucial. The liaison with the two safeguarding boards and partnerships ensured continued good practice.

**DECISION**

**The Cabinet Member approved the new Safeguarding Policy (Appendix A - HNAS Safeguarding Policy) and asked the Housing Needs, Advice and Support service to implement the new policy with immediate effect.**

**58. Meeting the Housing Regulation Act and Housing Standards - update report.**

Nicola Clannachan, Head of Housing, Community Services presented the information only report, the purpose of which was to:

- Update on changes to the housing standards as of 1 April 2024 and the Regulator for Social Housing's inspection regime.
- To provide an update on the actions taken by Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services in response to legislative change, as agreed in the last update report February 2024.
- To update on the tenant satisfaction measures results submitted to the housing regulator in June 2024 and resultant actions to be taken by the service.
- To update on the complaints self-assessment submitted to the Housing Ombudsman in June 2024 and resultant actions to be taken.
- To highlight the annual report for 23/24 which had been sent to all residents and leaseholders in the summer edition of House Talk magazine.
- To update on the self-assessment against the consumer standards.

There were no member questions or comments

Chair's comment

The Chair noted the reason for the report was to remain open with residents so they understand what is going on in the service. Many of the year end statistics were very good.

The Chair was looking forward to improvements around complaint handling and anti-social behaviour.

The Chair noted there were 8 organisations directly mentioned in the Grenfell enquiry as having contributed to that tragedy and stated those organisations, once the public procurement rules change, should not be contracted with at all by Portsmouth City Council.

On a positive note, the Chair highlighted the new Somers Orchard as an example of community engagement showing how people's lives can be transformed through active engagement with residents.

**DECISION**

**The Cabinet Member noted the report.**

The meeting concluded at 5.07 pm.

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Councillor Darren Sanders  
Chair