

**CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE**

**6 December 2011**

Attendance:

Councillors:

Coates (Chairman) (P)

Cooper (P)

Stallard (P)

Other invited Councillors:

Collin (P)

Pines (P)

Scott (P)

Tait (P)

Thompson (P)

TACT representatives:

Mr A Rickman & Mrs J Steventon-Baker

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1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 22 September 2011 (less exempt minute) be approved and adopted.

2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Collin declared a personal (but non-prejudicial) interest in actions taken or proposed in Reports outlined below where there was joint working with the County Council, because of his position as a County Councillor. Should a conflict of interest arise he would indicate on the item and then leave the room.

3. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) REVISED BUDGET 2011/12**  
(Report [CAB2261\(HSG\)](#) refers)

During discussion, the Head of Landlord Services confirmed that Area Housing Officers liaised with the Council's Landscape Team as to which budget was most appropriate to deal with issues related to HRA open spaces.

RESOLVED:

That the revised HRA Budget for 2011/12 as set out in Appendix 1 and 2 to the Report, be approved.

4. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REFORM AND BUSINESS PLANNING FOR 2012/13**

(Report [CAB2260\(HSG\)](#) refers)

The Committee noted that the Report would also be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 December 2011 and at The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 January 2012.

Mr Rickman referred to the likelihood of higher rents causing difficulties for tenants, as rent re-structuring still applied despite the other changes to financing arrangements. He also asked about the impact of the Government's recent announcement on increasing the Right to Buy (RTB) discount. The Head of Landlord Services indicated that the self financing payment of £157.393m had been assessed on existing levels of RTB sales. However, the Government would soon consult on the RTB changes including their proposals for settling debt on sold properties and for their replacement.

During discussion, the Head of Landlord Services explained that the self-financing arrangements would allow for a small scale programme of Council new build; however its extent could only be finalised once all other housing programmes of work had been prioritised and resourced. It was also clarified that the Council had a number of priority areas of work to deal with deprivation in some areas in the District. The HRA would fund a discretionary revenue contribution to these projects.

The Head of Finance advised that the model utilised for the repayment of the debt based at 3.8% over 30 years was reasonable. This had been utilised to develop priorities and to devise strategies and programmes of work within the business plan. The Council's Treasury Management Advisors were also helping to develop an appropriate Treasury Management Strategy for the Council. A Cabinet Informal Policy Group (IPG) would consider all these matters in more depth and it was agreed that the information presented to the IPG should be made available to all Members.

In response to questions, the Head of Landlord Services advised that it was preferable for the Council to resource a balanced programme of stock repairs and new-build projects over 10 years. To carry out a programme of enhanced repairs to existing stock from the outset of the new arrangements might deplete resources to the extent that a new-build programme might not be able to take place for some time.

The Head of Strategic Housing explained that the Council would continue to work in partnership with Housing Associations to deliver affordable housing schemes, however these might be subject to new affordable tenures and fixed terms tenancies proposed by the Government. It was likely that there would be some instances where it might be preferable for the Council to work directly with some communities to develop new-build Council homes within their areas.

**RESOLVED:**

**1 That the Committee recommends to Cabinet the key priorities to be considered both in the development of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and HRA budget for 2012/13 as set out in 8.2 of this report.**

**2 That the Committee recommends to Cabinet that it supports proposals for the establishment of a programme of Council new build housing, and determines the possible extent of the programme required over the Plan period.**

**3 That the Committee recommends to Cabinet that the Head of Finance and Head of Landlord Services be authorised to prepare any technical response to the HRA Self Financing Determinations consultation that they consider to be necessary.**

**4 That, in view of the proposed significant changes of approach following the introduction of Self Financing, the Committee recommends to Cabinet that The Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked for its views on the development of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and HRA budget for 2012/13.**

5. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – 2012/13 RENT SETTING AND BUDGET PRINCIPLES**

(Report [CAB2262\(HSG\)](#) refers)

The Committee noted that the Report would also be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 December 2011.

Acknowledging that the proposed increase in rents were likely to be challenging for some tenants, the Head of Landlord Services reminded the meeting that the Council continued to offer assistance and advice for those who may be experiencing difficulties. A large percentage of tenants were also in receipt of Housing Benefit and this would cover the majority of the increase in many cases. Members were also reminded that the Council's rents still remained lower than comparator Registered Social Landlord rents in the area.

The Head of Landlord Services also reported that Council owned garages were near to full occupancy and that they generally remained in high demand. Their important contribution of a revenue stream to the Council was also acknowledged.

**RESOLVED:**

**That, the Committee recommend to Cabinet and to Council:**

- 1 That the Head of Landlord Services be authorised to implement the housing rents increase for 2012/13 in line with the Government guideline, as set out in paragraph 2 of the report, resulting in an overall average increase of 7.34%.**
- 2 That garage rents be increased by 5.6% in line with the inflation provision included in the increase for dwelling rents.**
- 3. That all service charges continue to be based on actual costs incurred, but that combined increases for rent and service charges for existing tenants be subject to a maximum increase of 6.1% + £2.17 and the Head of Landlord Services be authorised to implement the changes.**

**6. CURRENT HOMELESSNESS ISSUES**

(Report [CAB2259\(HSG\)](#) refers)

The Committee noted that the Report would also be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 December 2011.

The item had not been notified for inclusion on the agenda within the statutory deadline. However the Chairman agreed to accept the item onto the agenda as a matter requiring urgent consideration in order to allow the matters contained within the Report to be determined without further delay.

The Head of Strategic Housing clarified that those clients who sought the Council's advice on housing issues did not necessarily eventually present themselves to the Council as homeless. The importance of preventative measures against becoming homeless were emphasised as well as support programmes to assist homeless clients to secure permanent accommodation as soon as possible. The Council continued to investigate opportunities to utilise its own stock as temporary accommodation where this was appropriate.

The Head of Strategic Housing indicated that the County Council were now seeking savings of 10% (rather than 16% indicated in paragraph 4.3 of the Report). However, representations could still be made to the County Council, because of the adverse impact locally.

In response to a query from a Member, the Head of Landlord Services indicated that new proposals were under consideration for the future of empty accommodation at White Wings, Denmead and a report would come forward in due course.

**RESOLVED:**

**That, the Committee recommend to Cabinet:**

**1 That Barnes House and 27 Eastgate Street be used as temporary accommodation for homeless households and that the decision be reviewed in 12 months.**

**2 That a 12 month fixed term post be created to assist in the management of the extra temporary accommodation and helping residents move on to permanent accommodation using Homelessness Prevention Funding.**

**3 That the Head of Strategic Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Strategic Housing and Landlord Services commission the Rough Sleepers Pilot with the Trinity Centre using the funding of up to £120,000 provided by the Communities and Local Government Department.**

**4 That the Council undertake a feasibility study of the provision of a “wet shelter”.**

**5 That representations be made to the County Council about the scale of cuts proposed to the Excluded Persons supporting people funding.**

**7. RENEWABLE HEAT PREMIUM PAYMENT SOCIAL HOUSING GRANT OFFER**

(Report [CAB2264\(HSG\)](#) refers)

The Head of Landlord Services advised that the procurement exercise for the project could be amended so that it did not exclude the use of photo voltaic solar energy, if this was suitable for the properties under consideration.

**RESOLVED:**

**1. That approval be given to proceed with the renewable energy installations as set out in the Report.**

**2. That project costs of £306,000 be approved to be funded by up to £138,000 external government grants with the balance to be taken from the existing Planned Maintenance programme.**

**3. That approval be given in accordance with Contract Procedure Rule 2.4 a) to allow the Head of Landlord Services to seek 3 quotations from suitable specialist contractors for the supply and installation of 10 wood fuelled boiler systems, without inviting tenders in accordance with Contracts Procedure Rules 9, 10, 11 and 12.**

8. **REVIEW OF SHELTERED HOUSING**

(Report [CAB2265\(HSG\)](#) refers)

The Head of Landlord Services advised that feedback from tenant consultation would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

It was also acknowledged that additional investment might be required at re-designated schemes to make them more suitable for general needs housing e.g. additional parking requirements.

RESOLVED:

1. That the informal feedback from sheltered tenants be noted.
2. That the second phase of the consultation exercise with the tenants in sheltered housing be approved.
3. That the Supported Housing Informal Policy Group be asked to consider the sheltered scheme designations and make recommendations to the next meeting of Cabinet (Housing) Committee.

9. **ESTATE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

(Report [CAB2267\(HSG\)](#) refers)

The Committee congratulated officers on the progress and achievements of the programme to date.

RESOLVED:

That the progress and achievements of the Estate Improvement programme be noted, that the Programme continues to be funded in 2012/13 and provision is made in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for its continuation in future years.

10. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.
2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.



12. **PROCUREMENT OF AN ASSET MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE SOLUTION**  
(Report CAB2263(HSG) refers)

The Committee considered a Report that proposed acquisition of an asset management software solution (detail in exempt minute).

13. **CARE AND SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS IN EXTRA CARE HOUSING**  
(Report CAB2266(HSG) refers)

The Committee noted that the Report would also be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 December 2011 and the Personnel Committee on 24 January 2012.

Councillor Collin declared a personal and prejudicial interest as he was a Hampshire County Councillor and the County Council was the authority responsible for commissioning extra care services for residents. He left the room and did not participate in consideration of the item.

The Committee considered a Report that proposed changes to the Council's care and support arrangements in extra care housing (detail in exempt minute).

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 1.25pm