

A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY BOARD

WAS HELD 4 FEBRUARY 2013

The Mayor (Councillor Dickson) (ex-officio) (P), Chairman of the Policy and Organisation Board (Councillor Hook) (ex-officio) (P), Burgess (P), Carter C K, Mrs Cully (P), Edgar (P), Foster-Reed (P), Henshaw (P), Mrs Hook (P), Hylands (P), Kimber (P), Mrs Morgan (P), Murphy (P) and Mrs Wright (P).

32. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies received.

33. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY BOARD HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2012

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings of the Community Board held on 26 November 2012 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations

36. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

PART I

37. BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE AND COUNCIL DWELLING RENTS 2013/2014

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer and the Housing Services Manager which considered the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan including the revised 2012/2013 budget and the 2013/2014 budget including recommendations on rent levels for next year.

Members were advised that the draft budget book for the Capital Programme for 2012/2013 to 2016/2017 had not yet been finalised. Members were circulated an extract detailing the draft capital programme for 2012/13 to 2015/16. In answer to a question by a Member regarding the increase of void costs, Members were advised that this was partly due to applicants bidding on properties and then declining the offer.

The Board was further advised that an increase in the demand for repairs had also subsequently increased costs.

In answer to a Member's question the Board were advised that the monitoring of works to void properties was in place, and that spot checks were periodically carried out.

Clarification was sought by Members as to the definition of the rent groups. The Board was advised that Rent Group A reflected a secure tenancy whereas Rent Group B was a non secure tenancy.

Clarification was sought as to when the redevelopment of Barclay House would take place as Agnew House was at full capacity. Members were advised that the work to Barclay House was to be to a similar standard as that at Agnew House. It was also confirmed that whilst there was not yet an anticipated start date, works would be carried out in phases to bring the property back into an improved habitable condition.

Members welcomed the proposal and it was advised that the re-structure of the rent policy had not changed since 2012. Members further stated that it was now a priority to be free of housing subsidy, invest in the homelessness, improve stock and reduce the risks whilst ensuring demands were met.

RECOMMENDED: That Council approve:

- a) the revised HRA Business Plan (Appendix A to the report) and associated 2012/13 Revised Budget and 2013/14 Budget (Appendix B to the report);
- b) in line with national guidelines, the average weekly Council Dwelling rent increases on average by £4.02 per week; and
- c) an increase in rent for older style garages in line with dwelling rents, as agreed in the Garage Renewal strategy.

PART II

38. TENANCY STRATEGY AND TENANCY POLICY

Consideration was given to a report of the Housing Services Manager which sought approval for the Council's Tenancy Strategy and the Council's Tenancy Policy for management of the Council's housing stock.

Members were advised that there was an error on page 6/1 and 6/2 of the report in reference to the tenancy policy at Appendix B, and that this should read Appendix C.

In answer to a Members question, the Board was advised that credit checks would be carried out on applicants, but that applicants would not be excluded on the basis of overly onerous referencing. It was also confirmed housing associations would not be required to seek deposits or rent in advance, but that the housing associations only needed to 'have regard to' the Council's wishes.

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A Member sought clarification on the categories ABC referenced on page 6/15 of the report. The Head of Operational Services advised that there was a range of categories in place that were adapted to specific requirements. The Board was advised that further clarification would be sent to Members showing the definitions of the categories.

A Member sought clarification as to the procedure should a flexible tenancy be terminated and the procedure if occupants refused to leave the property. It was confirmed that procedures were in place and that a Court Order could be obtained.

In answer to a Members question the Board were advised that consideration would be given during the review of the Allocations Policy as housing need is reflected if a family is in unsuitable housing at the end of a flexible tenancy.

A Member raised concerns about the renewal of a flexible tenancy if the property was overcrowded and questioned how the new policy would help in an overcrowding situation. The Housing Services Manager advised that circumstances would be considered and reviewed within the 'Allocation Policy'.

A Member queried whether the new policy would take into consideration the right of succession if a parent passed away. Members were advised that the right of succession under the proposed policy would no longer be available in these circumstances however; Members were also advised that until consideration had been given to each case the occupants could remain in the property.

A Member questioned the results of the on-line survey carried out on the summary of responses to consultation on the tenancy strategy at Appendix B of the report. Concern was expressed that not everyone was proficient in the use of the website and some people did not have access to the internet.

Members were advised that the questionnaire been made available on the Gosport Borough Council webpage and noticeboard and had also been circulated to staff, registered housing providers and statutory and voluntary groups.

Members welcomed the proposals for the new changes, acknowledged that the questions raised were justified and thanked the officers involved for their hard work and response.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve:

- a)** the Tenancy Strategy 2013-2018 as set out at Appendix A of the Housing Services Manager's report; and
- b)** the Tenancy Policy as set out set out in Appendix C of the Housing Services Manager's report.

39. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

The meeting ended at 6:35p.m.

CHAIRMAN