

A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY BOARD

WAS HELD 11 MARCH 2013 – 6pm

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

It was reported that In accordance with Standing Orders Cllr Hook had been nominated to replace Cllr CK Carter for this meeting.

40. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs Morgan, Foster-Reed and CK Carter.

41. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY BOARD HELD ON 4 FEBRUARY 2013

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Board held on 4 February 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

43. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

44. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

PART II

45. A REVIEW OF THE GOSPORT SCHEME OF ALLOCATIONS

Consideration was given to a report by the Housing Services Manager which sought approval of the changes required to the Allocations Scheme (Gosport Housing Register) in response to changes in legislation and housing benefit eligibility.

Members were advised that there were no further updates however, appendix B (page 6/6), paragraph A, item 2 of the report had been deleted.

A Member requested further clarification regarding Armed Forces Personnel categories and queried why the words 'suffering from serious illness' were omitted from point 2, page 6/2 of the report.

Members were advised that the categories in place gave additional priority to ex service personnel who meet all three of the conditions: - that they had an urgent housing need, were in a reasonable preference category and met one of the sub headings 1-4 within the legislation.

It was further advised that the wording listed within the report had been taken from the Act and that the legislation included all those that had been in the Armed Services and current serving personal who were injured.

Clarification was sought on the rehousing of tenants who were affected by the changes to Housing Benefit entitlement where there is not a suitable sized alternative property available.

Members were advised that a £134,000 hardship fund would be in place to address situations whereby tenants had difficulty in meeting the additional costs. It was further confirmed that the allocated hardship fund would be means tested and that declarations of income would be scrutinised and each case individually addressed.

Members were advised that significant numbers of tenants to date had elected to remain where they were and find the additional cost. It was noted that the greatest pressure was likely to be for two bedroom homes, however, it was reiterated that the hardship fund would be available and be used wisely to enable support to be offered for as long as possible.

Further to a question from a Member regarding partnership schemes with the private sector it was advised that these changes only related to social housing tenants, as these eligibility criteria were already in place in the private sector. Therefore it was not likely to have any effect and would see no impact in terms of desirability.

A Member queried what actions were being taken for existing and awaiting tenants with mental health issues, difficulties in completing forms; and the ability to cope with stress.

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Members were advised that Housing Services were currently identifying and communicating with affected persons and contacting tenants direct to offer support and assistance.

A Member sought clarification when a property was under occupied and the effect this could have on separated families and the need for extra accommodation on a part time basis. It was advised that no concession had been made in the Housing Benefit provisions for this circumstance. In this situation tenants could apply to join the housing register if a move was their only option.

A Member felt that this new scheme would only affect people on benefits in under occupied properties and was aimed at encouraging people back to work.

RESOLVED: That the following amendments to the existing Scheme of Allocations be approved:

- a) applicants from the Armed Services (as defined in paragraph 2.2 of the Housing Services Manager's report), with existing reasonable preference and an urgent housing need (defined as in receipt of written notification that they must leave their current accommodation within 6 months) be awarded an additional 20 points;
- b) the number of bedrooms a household will be eligible for will be in accordance with Housing Benefit criteria unless there are exceptional medical or social circumstances (to be determined by the Housing Services Manager); and
- c) transfer applicants under-occupying accommodation be awarded an additional 50 points for each under-occupied bedroom based on the revised bedroom criteria provided at Appendix B of the Housing Services Manager's report (section A).

46. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

The meeting ended at 18:30p.m.

CHAIRMAN