

**A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY BOARD
WAS HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2017 AT 6PM**

Subject to approval

The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Hook) (ex-officio), Councillor Hook (ex-officio), Councillors Mrs Batty (P), Bateman (P), Burgess (P), Earle (P), Mrs Huggins (P), Hylands (P) Mrs Jones (P), Miss Kelly (P), Mrs Morgan (P), Murphy (P), Ronayne (P), Scard (P), Mrs Wright, Wright (P)

It was reported that in accordance with Standing Order 2.3.5, Councillor Mrs Cully had been nominated to replace Councillor Mrs Wright for this meeting.

22. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs Wright.

23. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY BOARD HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2016

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Community Board held on 16 November 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Councillor Mrs Batty declared a pecuniary interest in respect of item 6 of the agenda and advised the Board that she would remain in the room but take no part in the vote or debate of this item.

25. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

26. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

PART I

27. BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE AND COUNCIL DWELLING RENTS 2017/2018

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer and Housing Services Manager which considered the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan including the revised 2016/2017 budget and the 2017/2018 budget including recommendations on rent levels for next year.

The report also provided Members with an update on the latest information with regard to policy changes that impacted on local authority housing services.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the Council purchasing further properties this year, the Chairman of the Board confirmed that the Council had purchased two ex-council houses and were looking at the budget to possibly purchase more going forward.

A Member raised concerns with the proposed rent increase of garages in line with inflation and stated that garages were not being let due to the high costs. It was further advised that the same garages were featured on the choice based letting scheme.

A Member raised concerns with regards to the Council no longer having an income recovery team and the potential escalation of arrears and debt. The Housing Services Manager clarified that the income recovery function would still be retained but undertaken by housing officers working more generically.

A Member welcomed proposals for funds to be transferred to the major repairs reserve and asked that balconies in need of repair be made a priority. The Chairman advised that the surveying of balconies was currently being undertaken.

RESOLVED: That the Community Board recommend to Council that:

- a) The revised HRA Business Plan extract (Appendix A) and associated 2016/17 Revised Budget and 2017/18 Budget (Appendix B) is agreed
- b) That Council Dwelling rents decrease by 1% (an average of £0.83 per week), continuing the four year deduction programme as detailed in the new national rent policy introduced in April 2016.
- c) The rent for older style garages be increased in line with inflation, as agreed in the Garage Renewal Strategy.
- d) To Increase the presently approved HRA Capital Programme by £875k (as in 2.3b).

PART II

28. HOUSING SERVICES REVIEW

Consideration was given to a verbal update from the Housing Services Manager.

The Chairman welcomed Julie Smith and Members were advised that Julie would be managing Housing Services when James resumed his role back in Portsmouth.

The Housing Services Manager advised Members that on the 15th November 2016 he presented a set of proposals to the Housing Services Teams. For clarity it was advised that the Housing Service teams affected were Housing Options, Housing Management (operational services) and Property/Asset Management Services.

Members were advised that the proposals achieved three key outcomes:

- 1) The shared management arrangement between GBC and PCC for the Housing Services,
- 2) A revised structure for the Housing Services, and
- 3) Some shared specialist services

Members were advised that the core housing services remained in Gosport whilst exploiting shared specialist services. The proposals provided strong strategic and operational leadership. The proposals would achieve a stronger, resilient and flexible structure, with no reduction in services to customers, and at a reduced cost.

It was proposed that a Head of Housing would be in practical terms be full time and based in Gosport.

Members were advised that a key feature of the new structure was the movement towards greater generic working to support improved customer contact.

Members were advised that a formal consultation had been entered into from 18th November 2016 which ended on the 3rd January 2017.

The Housing Services Manager advised Members that the timing of the Board had meant that only a verbal update could be provided however a briefing had been

arranged for Members next week to discuss the proposal in further detail.

Members were advised that the broad feedback themes that emerged were for example:

- Concern about the movement from specialism towards generic working
- Feedback on the proposals
- Service development ideas
- Process questions
- Structure/roles

Members were advised that once the End of Consultation document was presented the focus would turn to the implementation of the change and supporting the service to embed the new structure.

Members were advised that there was a significant level of change and would require careful planning and change management to ensure that the core services continued to be delivered and customer service was maintained.

Members were advised that an implementation plan with the key steps would be published in early February 2017 and the officers were confident that the key structural changes could be implemented within this financial year.

The Housing Services Manager advised that there would be a continued commitment to clear communications with stakeholders and ward members to ensure that everyone was helped to navigate to the contact points as they change.

Following a question from a Member the Housing Services Manager clarified that there were changes to the services arising from the feedback but that these were not fundamental changes to the original proposals.. It was further advised that these changes would be discussed at the briefing meeting arranged for Members, but that this information could not be given until the service had been informed.

Following a question regarding how the shared responsibility would benefit customers who had previously been passed from pillar to post between the departments. The Housing Services Manager advised that there would be more generic working and that roles were being designed to deal with the typical demands from customers of the service and having one point of contact would reduce the issue of being passed from pillar to post.

Members welcomed the changes proposed and felt that the review undertaken had been conducted professionally and openly, with staff having been given the opportunity to share ideas and relay their fears.

29. ANY OTHER ITEMS

There was no other business.

The meeting concluded at 18:17

CHAIRMAN