

A MEETING OF THE HOUSING BOARD

WAS HELD ON 13 JUNE 2007

The Mayor (Councillor Gill)(ex-officio), Chairman of Policy and Organisation Board (Councillor Cully)(ex-officio), Councillors Allen (P), Ms Ballard (P), Burgess (P), Champion, Mrs Cully (Vice Chairman), Foster (P), Foster-Reed (P), Mrs Mudie (P), Rigg and Mrs Wright (Chairman) (P).

Also in attendance: Tenant Representative – Mrs Janne Carter.

It was reported that, in accordance with Standing Orders, notice had been received that Councillors Carter, Hook and Wright would replace Councillors Champion, Mrs Cully and Rigg for this meeting.

5 APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received from The Mayor (Councillor Gill)(ex-officio), Chairman of Policy and Organisation Board (Councillor Cully)(ex-officio) and Councillors Champion, Mrs Cully and Rigg.

6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

7 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings held on 7 March and 17 May 2007 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

8 DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

9 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

PART II

10 NEW DELEGATIONS UNDER THE HOUSING ACT 2004

The Board considered the report of the Housing Services Manager (a copy of which is attached in the Minute Book as Appendix 'A') which sought to formally delegate powers contained within the Housing Act 2004 to the Housing Services Manager.

Officers responded to Members' questions regarding the scope of the proposed delegated powers to the Housing Services Manager. It was explained that enforcement powers available to the local authority would be used in instances where the landlord refused to repair a property but the powers could not be used in relation to owner/occupied properties. Part 4 of the Act related to Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs). These orders could entail holding a separate property tribunal. Regarding additional

control provisions for residential accommodation to determine whether a survey or examination of a property was necessary, it was confirmed that this piece of legislation was designed to ensure the safety of tenants and might not include areas such as roof aerial maintenance. The Borough Solicitor confirmed that the Government was delegating powers to local authorities under this piece of legislation.

RESOLVED: That:

- (i) the recommended delegated powers to the Housing Services Manager as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report and contained within the Housing Act 2004 be approved; and
- (ii) the Policy and Organisation Board (27 June 2007) and Council (11 July 2007) be recommended to approve the delegation of powers to the Housing Services Manager as contained within the Housing Act 2004.

11 BEST VALUE SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW

The Board considered the report of the Housing Services Manager (a copy of which is attached in the Minute Book as Appendix 'B') which brought before Members the conclusions of the Best Value Sheltered Housing Working Group review and consultation with residents.

The Assistant Branch Secretary of Unison, addressed the meeting with regard to Unison's involvement with staff within the Sheltered Scheme Service. Discussions had centred on cleaning costs of communal areas and residential and non-residential staffing issues. Unison congratulated the Working Group and officers on the successful conclusion of this process.

Members were pleased that two bedroom units were being planned into redevelopments; it was hoped that new building designs would avoid any 'nooks and crannies' to minimise the potential for crime. When decanting residents, Members were in favour of consideration being given to residents' wishes to return to the same area or to be permanently re-housed elsewhere. Members were concerned that a recent News article had worried residents but it was confirmed that no press release had been issued by the Council.

Members welcomed the report and the valuable contribution made by the Working Group to initiate improvements. Following Members' questions regarding the source of finance for investment and redevelopment of the schemes, the Financial Services Manager explained that funding would come exclusively from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), within the HRA business plan.

RESOLVED: That:

- (i) officers be instructed to work with an appointed Housing Association Partner or Partners to deliver detailed re-development plans for subsequent consideration by the Housing Board for The Leisure, Rogers House and Agnew House, including management options by the Housing Association Partner and/or the Council. Also that any re-development plans be subject to full consultation with the Ward Members for the particular schemes, with the views of Ward

Councillors being included in the subsequent re-development report;

- (ii) officers be instructed to identify alternative solutions for the future of Behrendt House and that any future solutions be considered in consultation with the Trade Union and be approved by the Housing Board;
- (iii) the retention of and investment in Alec Rose & Slocum House, Fortune House, Gloucester House and Woodlands House be approved and that investment in these schemes is programmed within the annual investment programmes approved by Members;
- (iv) amending charges for guest rooms to £5.00 and £7.50 per night be approved, depending on the facilities on offer at the specific schemes, and that any increase in guest room charges be linked to annual average rent increases;
- (v) officers be instructed to examine the cleaning costs for each scheme as part of a Best Value process;
- (vi) a policy of providing scooter spaces/recharging facilities and buggy stores into any new scheme development, where feasible, be approved and that further approval be given to re-charging electricity to users of Mobility Scooters. Charging for storage spaces to be in line with charges for car parking bays.
- (vii) when Sheltered Scheme Managers' accommodation becomes vacant, officers be instructed to explore ways to utilise the released accommodation and that any existing staff moving from tied accommodation be re-housed on a like for like basis.

12 HOMELESSNESS GRANTS TO EXTERNAL BODIES 2007/08

The Board considered the report of the Housing Services Manager (a copy of which is attached in the Minute Book as Appendix 'C') which sought approval of the proposed grants to Gosport Citizens Advice Bureau; Housing Aid Centre, Rowner; Accommodation Resource Centre and the expansion of the Supported Lodgings Scheme.

Members were informed of an amendment to the report in that the Council's Best Value Performance Indicator for the prevention of homelessness in 2006/07 now stood at 6 (228 households) per 1,000 households in the district.

In response to Members' questions it was explained that officers were working to increase capacity for young homeless people as there is a lack of alternative accommodation for them in the Borough; this was borne out by the relatively high number of homeless identified in 2006/07.

Members were assured that although inappropriate allocation/s had recently been made, no precedent had been set as each case was considered on its own merits. Officers confirmed that procedures had been put in place to avoid future instances occurring; however current tenancy agreements could not be rescinded. The Housing Services Manager explained that the current Choice Based Lettings scheme was under review and the planned new points system would be presented to a future Housing Board meeting.

Members were concerned as to what the funding sources were for the proposed grants and emphasised the need to be clear and to monitor expenditure on comprehensive information. Officers gave an explanation of the planned funding sources for the grants including the domestic violence alarm service and travelling time for the Housing Aid Centre at Rowner. After further discussion Members were in favour of deferring the decision on the grants until the next Housing Board meeting to allow time for officers to prepare a detailed analysis of sources of funding for these grants.

RESOLVED: That consideration of the grants be deferred to the next meeting of the Housing Board, such report to also include information justifying the outreach service request to fund travel time.

13 HOUSING EDITORIAL PANEL REVIEW

The Board considered the report of the Housing Services Manager (a copy of which is attached in the Minute Book as Appendix 'D') which proposed a change in title for the 'At Your Service Panel' and which set out terms of reference for the new Housing Editorial Panel.

The Chairman considered it important to change the name of the Panel as this would enable consideration to be given to other Housing Services' publications.

RESOLVED: That:

- (i) the title of the 'At Your Service' Panel be amended to the Housing Editorial Panel; and
- (ii) the terms of reference for the new Housing Editorial Panel set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report be approved.

The meeting commenced at 6pm and concluded at 6.47pm

CHAIRMAN