

**A MEETING OF THE HOUSING BOARD
WAS HELD ON 4 MARCH 2009**

The Mayor (Councillor Kimber) (ex-officio), Chairman of Policy and Organisation Board (Councillor Smith)(ex-officio), Councillors Allen, Ms Ballard (P), Beavis (P), Bradley (P), Mrs Cully (P), Edwards (P), Geddes (P), Gill (Chairman) (P), Mrs Mudie and Philpott (P).

Also in attendance: Tenant Representative – Mrs Jan Carter

40 APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of The Mayor (Councillor Kimber), Councillor Allen and Councillor Mrs Mudie.

41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

42 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings held on 21 January and 4 February 2009 be approved and signed by the Chairman as true records.

43 DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

44 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

PART II

45 PARTNERING ARRANGEMENTS FOR GAS SERVICING AND HEATING AND ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS

Consideration was given to the report of the Housing Services Manager which sought approval to extend the existing partnering arrangements in place for the delivery of gas servicing and heating and electrical installations.

Concern was expressed that, if the partnering arrangements for heating and installation and electrical works were extended for a further 2 years to 2011, the contract would not have been tested on the open market through a competitive tendering process for 9 years. There was less concern at extending the gas servicing partnering arrangements for a further two years as this would be the first extension option on this contract. However, this arrangement would have been in operation for 7 years by 2011, also without going through a tendering process. It was suggested that the contracts be extended for, possibly, a 6 month period, in order that a formal tendering process could be undertaken for the awarding of partnership contracts for gas servicing and heating and electrical installations.

Members noted that the two contracts would end in April 2009 unless extensions were

approved and questioned why a report had not been presented to the Board at an earlier meeting. This would have given time for a tendering process to be undertaken had the Board so desired. Members requested that, in future, reports on contract extension be presented to the Board in sufficient time to enable all alternative options to be considered.

Members were advised that the wish to extend the partnering arrangements was based on the high level of customer satisfaction with the service received and on benchmarking exercises undertaken to ensure value for money.

Members queried whether it would cause operational problems if both partnering arrangements ended at the same time in 2011. Officers advised that it was intended to bring all partnering arrangements in line to end in 2011 so that consideration could be given at that time to awarding a single contract for the provision of all partnering services, thus obtaining the best service and value for money for the Council.

Support was expressed for the high level of service provided by 1st Saxon-Clenmay and for the fact that they were a local firm providing training and jobs for local people.

A motion that the partnering arrangements be extended only until such time as a tendering process had been completed for the awarding of new contracts was proposed and seconded. On being put to the vote the motion was lost on the casting vote of the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That :-

- 1) approval be given for taking up the 2 year extension option of the current partnering arrangement with 1st Saxon-Clenmay for gas servicing until April 2011;
- 2) approval be given for the extension of the current partnering arrangement for heating installations and electrical works until April 2011 with 1st Saxon-Clenmay;
- 3) contract standing order 1.4.1 in respect of (2) above be waived; and
- 4) reports on contract extensions be presented to Board in sufficient time to enable all alternative options to be considered.

46 HOMELESSNESS GRANTS TO EXTERNAL BODIES 2009/10

Consideration was given to the report of the Housing Services Manager which requested approval of the grants for 2009/10 and informed Members of other related grant bids.

Members were advised that certain figures in Appendix 1 to the report were incorrect. The first paragraph of the third column should read, "Calculated as for 2008-09 with an additional £1,891.63 from homelessness grant and £16,997.68 from existing homelessness budgets". The third column "Total from HRA" should read "£3,081.47". The third column "Total from existing homelessness budgets" should read "£16,997.68". The figures contained in paragraph 1a to the Recommendations and in paragraph 1.3 of the report required similar adjustment.

Members were advised that the additional grant to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) would enable the current part time debt advisor to work full time. In addition to the provision of debt advice, this would enable the post holder to provide training on debt management to other CAB staff, thus increasing provision of this vital service during the period of economic downturn.

Officers confirmed that the Service Level Agreement with the CAB included monitoring of the service provided to Council tenants and the potentially homeless. Members requested that a report on the services provided be brought to the Board in 12 months' time.

Members fully supported the provision of debt management advice by the CAB and endorsed the importance of looking after Council tenants in difficult economic times.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the following grants/budgets be approved and funded by homelessness grant (unless otherwise stated):
 - a. Gosport Citizens Advice Bureau, debt service: £31,269.15 of which £3,081.47 to be paid from Housing Revenue Account and £16,997.68 from existing homelessness budgets. The remainder from homelessness grant;
 - o The Housing Services Manager, in consultation with the Housing Board Chairman, be given delegated power to agree a Service Level Agreement in respect of this service;
 - b. Accommodation Resource Centre (Mediation and homeless education service) £6,910;
 - c. Domestic Violence Call Centre monitoring budget: £400.00;
 - d. Domestic Violence (agent installation/removal budget): £1500.00; and
- 2) a report be brought to the Board in 12 months' time on the services provided under the Service Level Agreement.

47 HOUSING REPAIRS PROGRAMME 2009 - 10

Consideration was given to a report of the Housing Services Manager which set out the proposed 2009 – 2010 Housing Repairs Programme and sought the approval of the Board for that programme.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 2.5 of the report which referred to the Department of Communities and Local Government letter offering local authorities the opportunity to bid for advance funding in 2009-10 which would be deducted from the funds allocation in 2010-11. This would enable work to be carried out to achieve compliance with the Decent Homes Standard, for example, replacement boilers which, in turn, could save on repair and servicing costs.

The Housing Services Manager advised that the deadline for putting in a bid for this advance funding was the previous Friday. However, officers could not put in a bid without first obtaining approval from the Board. Therefore, an expression of interest had been submitted and it was hoped that a substantive bid could be made should Board approval be given.

Members were satisfied that Section 3.0 of the report on Asset Management fully complied with the request made at the January 2009 meeting of the Board that a report on Asset Management be brought to this meeting. As this was not reflected in the report title, it was suggested that, for clarity, it be included in the Resolutions for this item.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) approval be given for the proposed 2009 -10 Housing Repairs Programme and the implications for this Council's Asset Management Strategy;
- 2) approval be given for Officers to make a bid for advance funding via Major Repairs Allowance as per paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6 of the report;
- 3) Officers follow the principles [approved at the Housing Board meeting of March 2005] as detailed below:
 - i. Officers be required to seek Board approval to vary the Housing Repairs Programme where work within an identified element of the approved Housing Repairs Programme cannot take place;
 - ii. where urgent works are identified after (approval of the Housing Repairs Programme) for which there is no identified provision, Officers in consultation with the Chair of the Housing Board be permitted to vary the programme for works up to £60,000;
 - iii. where urgent works are identified (after approval of the Housing Repairs Programme) for which there is no identified provision, Officers in consultation with the Chair and Group Spokespersons be permitted to vary the programme for works between £60,000 and £100,000;
 - iv. Officers be required to seek Board approval to vary the approved Housing Repairs Programme where urgent works are identified (after approval of the programme) for which there is no identified provision and the value of these works exceeds £100,000;
 - v. That Officers be required to seek Board approval where work within an identified element of the approved Housing Repairs Programme is going to under or over-spend by more than £100,000;
 - vi. Members be informed of significant variations to the Programme as outlined in (i) to (vi) above, which were relevant to their Ward.

48 HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY 2009 - 2010

The Board considered the report of the Housing Services Manager which advised that a formally adopted Housing Renewal Policy was required in order to implement changes to the home repair and adaptation system.

Concerns were raised that shop premises may well be being lost due to the availability of the conversion grant. Officers explained the conversion grant did not apply solely to shop premises. Officers agreed to provide further information to the Policy and Organisation Board on the following matters:

- 1) examples of when the conversion grant had been given;
- 2) whether the money allocated for conversion grants could be allocated to disabled facilities grants; and

- 3) how the wording of the policy could be made more specific where it refers to suitable properties.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) approval be given for the new draft Housing Renewal Policy for 2009 -2010; and
- 2) recommendation be made to the Policy and Organisation Board (Meeting on 11 March 2009) that the Housing Renewal Policy be formally adopted, subject to further information being provided on the discretionary conversion grants as discussed at Housing Board.

49 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman advised Members that the Garage Review was ongoing.

A vote of thanks was made to the Chairman for his guidance during the Municipal Year.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and concluded at 7.11 pm.

CHAIRMAN