

**A MEETING OF THE HOUSING BOARD
WAS HELD ON 17 JUNE 2009**

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

It was reported that, in accordance with Standing Orders, notice had been received that Councillor Wright would replace Councillor Mrs Cully for this meeting.

Also in attendance: Tenant Representative – Mrs Jan Carter

7 APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Searle) and Councillors Bradley, Mrs Cully and Mrs Mudie.

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Allen declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item 8 (Garage Review) in that any decision he made at the Housing Board meeting would not affect any decision he made as a Member of the Regulatory Board.

9 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings held on 4 March and 14 May 2009 be approved and signed by the Chairman as true and correct records.

10 DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

11 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

PART II

12 PROPERTY DESIGNATIONS

Consideration was given to the report of the Housing Services Manager which sought to:

- a) Rationalise the classification of elderly designated properties in the Councils ownership;
- b) Create a 'mature let' category and recommend where this is applied;
- c) Comply with Government guidance on the criteria for elderly designation and Right to Buy exemptions;
- d) Correct previous anomalies of property designation; and
- e) Bring property designations in line with current letting practice.

Members were advised of amendments to the Appendices of the report.

In answer to Members' questions and concerns, the designations of properties were clarified. Members were advised that not enough properties had been available for young people due to their previous designation for over 40s or elderly residents. Ground floor flats would be designated for the elderly, with first floor flats being designated for the over 40s.

Concern was expressed that some properties had insufficient noise insulation between the floors as Members had received complaints of noise nuisance. However, it was felt that issues of noise nuisance were not confined to specific age groups, so the fact that residents of over 40 years of age were living above elderly residents would not necessarily lead to this type of problem.

Government guidance was specific that properties designated for the elderly had to be within 800 metres of a shop selling bread and milk. There was concern that this would not be a significant factor to the active elderly and that sufficient properties should be available to these residents.

It was recognised that property designation was a complex issue and the recommendation of the report that a further review be carried out in 2011 was welcomed by Members. The flexibility to be able to let properties and not have them remain empty was considered of primary importance.

In answer to a Member's question concerning the age difference between men and women indicated in Appendix 5 of the report, the Borough Solicitor advised that this planning condition would have been put in place prior to the European Court's ruling on age equality. Any change to this condition was a matter for the Regulatory Board to consider.

RESOLVED: That approval be given for:-

- a) the removal of the elderly designated status from dwellings which are far from local amenities and which do not comply with Right to Buy exemptions (listed at Appendix 1) of the report;
- b) the incorporation of Appendix 2 of the report into the existing Allocations Policy defining elderly designated lettings in Section 2(4)(c) of the current Policy, and mature lets in Section 2(4)(e) of the current Policy;
- c) a further review of elderly designated properties to be conducted in 2011 and a further report to be brought to this Board; and
- d) the Housing Services Manager to identify a way forward for these properties in conjunction with the Development Services Manager.

13 LOCALITY HOUSING OFFICER UPDATE AND LPSA2 (LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES AGREEMENT) REWARD MONEY

Consideration was given to the report of the Housing Services Manager which updated the Housing Board on the successful LPSA pilot scheme involving partnership between Hampshire districts and Hampshire County Council. The report also made spending

proposals for reward money due from the successful pilot.

Members were advised of the background to this scheme. The scheme had been devised to provide a more comprehensive housing and support service for 16/17 year olds and care leavers. In the past there had been a lack of engagement between children's services and housing services and this liaison would be undertaken by the Locality Housing Officer.

The flowchart shown at Appendix A to the report was explained to Members in more detail. Members fully supported the scheme and the increased co-operation between agencies which would lead to swifter intervention with families encountering difficulties and, therefore, a better outcome for potentially homeless young people. Concern was expressed that a lack of funding in the future could jeopardise its continuation. It was noted that the reward money had been distributed evenly to the Districts without consideration to areas, such as Gosport, with greater instances of deprivation compared with other parts of Hampshire.

Members were advised that the performance of the scheme would be under continuous review and a further report would be brought to the Board in a year's time.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- (a) Note the contents of this report;
- (b) Approve the following items of expenditure:
 - I. £4,000 per year, over three years (£12,000 total), to be applied to Lettings Team staffing budgets to cover the Locality Housing Officer existing on-costs;
 - II. £5,865 per year, over three years (£17,595 total), to be applied to Lettings Team staffing budgets to cover the Visiting Officer existing costs of work associated with customers with assessed housing and care needs;
 - III. £4,000 per year, over three years (£12,000 total), grant payable to Hampshire County Council, to enable variation of Locality Housing Officer contract for the purpose of work with Gosport Children's Services and associated agencies;
 - IV. £60,000 to be held on account for the purpose of future funding of a Family Support Service, subject to further Housing Board approval before any draw-down of finance; and
 - V. £6,942 to be held on account for the purpose of improving the existing Gosport and Fareham Supported Housing Panel scheme, subject to further Housing Board approval before any draw down of finance.

14 GARAGE REVIEW

Note: Councillor Allen declared a non prejudicial interest in this item and remained in the meeting room for the discussion and voting thereon.

Consideration was given to a report of the Housing Services Manager which provided a further overview on the condition of Housing Services owned garages and proposed an action plan for investment and development of garage sites.

Members were advised that the final sentence of paragraph 5.2 should read as follows:-

“This virement is feasible as a consequence of £300,000 of the MRA being brought forward by the Department of Communities and Local Government to be funding brought forward from 2010-11.”

Members commended the consultation process that had taken place with Ward Councillors which had resulted in a comprehensive review of Council owned garages. Some concern was expressed about the development of sites following the demolition of garages. Members were assured that the decision making process on future development still had some way to go and that reports would be brought to the Policy and Organisation Board and the Regulatory Board before final decisions on individual sites were made.

Members stated that many Council owned garages were in such a poor state of repair that residents could not use them and so had rented garages from the private sector. Therefore, the figures for Council owned garages currently rented out did not reflect possible future demand should the garages be repaired or rebuilt. It was noted that garage rents were a significant source of revenue for the Council.

RESOLVED: That:

- a. the contents of the report be noted;
- b. the Garage Action Plan as detailed in Appendix B of the report be agreed;
- c. the rent framework (subject to Full Council approval in 2010) as described in paragraph 2.9.4 of the report be agreed.

15 REVISED COUNCIL DWELLING RENTS 2009/10 UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Housing Services Manager which updated the Board on the outcome of the consultations undertaken by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Subsidy Determination and of any impact on the HRA.

RESOLVED: That it be noted that there were no adverse impacts on HRA balances following the publication by DCLG of the actual HRA Subsidy Determination.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and concluded at 7.20 pm.

CHAIRMAN