



**Customer Opinion Panel Minutes**  
**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014 – Council Chambers**

**Gosport Borough Council**

Denise Hudson	-	Resident Involvement Officer
Sam Downing	-	Resident Involvement Officer
Tim Hoskins	-	Head of Housing Finance
Sam Foster	-	Principal Benefits Officer
Nicky Thomas	-	Lettings Team Leader
Mark Johnson	-	Head of Property Services
Elsbeth White	-	Housing Officer
Roz Weaver	-	Housing Officer

**Guests:**

Mr & Mrs W Wilkinson	Mr L Leader	Mr J Mardle	Mr & Mrs C Walder
Mrs R Hill	Mrs S Greenwood	Mrs L Smith	Mrs P Ripley
Mrs V Twyman	Mrs R Walker	Mrs M Gorgon	Mr D Redford
Mr B Wakefield	Mrs P Morris	Mr B Hudson	Mr P Batty
Mrs P Grant	Mr K Burns	Mr R King	Mr K Drummond
Mr J Cattle	Miss S Bellerby		

**Apologies:**

Mrs P King	Mrs A Barnes	Miss J Anders	Ms J Rowe
Miss S Wright	Mr C Brunt	Mrs S Spelzini	Mrs M Griffen
Mrs J Brown	Mr & Mrs P Watson	Miss J Reed	Mrs J Atkinson
Mr E Withers	Mrs Dodd	Mrs Carter	Mrs W Burnett
Mrs Hardy	Mrs J Carter	Ms A Clayton	

		<b>Action</b>
1.	<p><b>Welcome and Introduction</b></p> <p>Denise Hudson opened the meeting and gave introductions.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Tim Hoskins – Business Plan</b></p> <p>Tim Hoskins, Head of Housing Finance gave a presentation on the Business Plan (please see appendix 1).</p> <p><b>Questions raised:</b></p> <p><b><i>What contingency plans are there for damage to properties caused by the storms?</i></b></p> <p>There are provisions within the budget to cover this type of damage. We also have insurance as well as funding from central</p>	

	<p>government which can be applied to in extreme circumstances.</p> <p><b><i>How come so much money was spent on the refurbishment of Agnew House and Barclay House and why wasn't this money spent on improving council housing?</i></b></p> <p>It costs the Council more to house people in temporary accommodation such as B&amp;B which can cost up to £1000 per week therefore it is more cost effective to build accommodation.</p> <p>Tim went on to explain that GBC have fewer properties as many have been sold under the Right to Buy Scheme therefore we need accommodation provision such as Agnew Family Centre and Barclay House. In the future we hope to build new homes to replace those that have been sold.</p> <p>We are spending more money on our properties by installing new bathrooms and kitchens and replacing roofs etc. Mark Johnson will go into more detail when he gives the Asset Management update.</p> <p><b><i>If you have sold properties then why aren't you re-building to replace these, especially as there are so many people waiting to be housed?</i></b></p> <p>Historically the government would retain the majority of the receipt and there was no ring-fence on the remainder. In April 2012 the Government reinvigorated the RTB scheme. They confirmed that receipts generated outside of the self-financing agreement could be retained for reinvestment in new affordable rented housing.</p> <p>GBC has subsequently entered into an agreement with the government and are currently in discussions to start a programme of building during 2015/16.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Sam Foster – Changes to the Welfare Reform</b></p> <p>In January 2013 Sam Foster, Principal Benefits Officer gave a presentation on the Welfare Reform, she attended the COP today to give an update on the Welfare System (please see appendix 2).</p> <p><b>Questions raised:</b></p> <p><b><i>What is working age?</i></b></p> <p>Working age is anyone who has not reached the age for State Pension Credit.</p> <p><b><i>Why are so many letters sent from the Council Tax and Benefits departments identical and repetitive?</i></b></p>	

	<p>The Government legislation states what information Council have to send out: on the content and number of letters and reminders that they need to send re benefits. Where GBC have a local scheme for Council Tax they did have to send out a large number of letters as part of their consultation process.</p> <p><b><i>There was an article in The Daily Mail regarding a loophole in the bedroom tax – can you explain what this was about?</i></b></p> <p>Yes there is currently a loophole; if a resident has been in the same property for 16 years and have claimed benefit for 16 years without a break they would have been exempt for 52 weeks from April 2013 to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. Benefits are encouraging people to come forward if they fit this category as we will consider a claim for financial compensation.</p> <p><b><i>Is Local Council Tax Support included in Universal Credit?</i></b></p> <p>No, the Local Council Tax Support is funded by the individual councils whereas the Government funds the Universal Credit.</p> <p><b><i>Is Universal Credit paid monthly?</i></b></p> <p>Yes</p> <p><b><i>What plans are there for people who have issues with budgeting?</i></b></p> <p>Yes, there is something called Safeguarding, which will assist those people who are identified as having problems budgeting e.g. due to mental, physical health issues</p> <p>Sam encouraged anyone who is having problems with their benefits to make contact with the Benefit Department as they are all approachable and are there to help.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Nicky Thomas – Changes to the Allocations Policy</b></p> <p>Nicky Thomas, Lettings Team Leader gave a presentation on the changes to the Allocations Policy (please see appendix 3). The Allocations Policy needed to change as previously approximately 60% of people on the Housing Register would never have been housed. Under the new policy we can only help house people who have a local connection to Gosport and a Housing Need. Those residents who are under occupying are encouraged to down size as are assisted in a move by being awarded more points. To date, we have helped 26 people who were under occupying a council property to move.</p> <p><b><i>If someone is classed as Homeless, do they have to have a</i></b></p>	

	<p><b><i>local connection?</i></b></p> <p>Yes, they can have local connection through homelessness and it can also be their housing need.</p> <p><b><i>Could the Allocations Policy criteria be considered as discrimination?</i></b></p> <p>Each application is assessed on a case by case basis for example of someone had a previous conviction but has since proved their behaviour has changed or the conviction was spent, then they could still be considered for housing.</p> <p><b><i>Do you need to include your earnings on the application form?</i></b></p> <p>Yes, as well as including this information you also need to include any savings or capital on the application form.</p>	
5.	<p><b>Mark Johnson – Asset Management Update</b></p> <p>Mark John, Head of Property Services gave an update on Asset Management (please see appendix 4).</p> <p>In 2012 Savills (independent surveyors) carried out an independent survey on 20% of our housing stock, since April 2013 a further 10% of surveys have been carried out by a newly appointed surveyor.</p> <p><b>Questions raised:</b></p> <p><i>Why has so much money been invested in Barclay House?</i></p> <p>Homelessness in the UK is rising and expected to continue to do so, it is important that Gosport is prepared; this is why we have invested so much into Barclay House and Agnew family centre.</p> <p><i>Has there been any savings since the hostels have been built?</i></p> <p>Yes, we will not be spending out on B&amp;B accommodation.</p> <p><i>Has the other work that Kier carry out been affected by the refurbishments?</i></p> <p>Day to day repairs have not been affected by this work but there has been a delay to some of the planned programmes which include new bathrooms and kitchens, we are however likely to catch up by the end of the year.</p> <p><i>Do the void turnaround times include voids in sheltered schemes?</i></p>	

	<p>Addendum to the meeting: Yes, sheltered schemes voids are included in the figures for turnaround times</p> <p>Mark said that there has been a significant underspend on our stock in previous years, we may need to adjust our planned programmes for the new financial year once the bad weather has finished and we have been able to assess any damage.</p> <p><i>How many times are Kier having to go back to carry out repairs in the hostels and who pays for these damages?</i></p> <p>There haven't been many instances of re-occurring repairs in the hostels.</p> <p>Addendum to the meeting: As with our council properties, the hostel occupant causing the damage is recharged. An element of the rent paid to live in the hostel is to cover incidental damage.</p> <p><i>If Kier have to go back to a job more than once, is this classed as another job or is it part of the first job?</i></p> <p>Yes, it is classed as a new job. What is monitored is if we have cause to return to a job already completed then this would be classed as a "recall" so that all involved can learn from why we didn't fix first time and had the need to return to the job.</p>	
6.	<p><b>Date of next COP</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2014</b></p>	

**Distribution:-**

Attendees, HMT, Chairman of Community Board, Housing Spokesmen, Group Leaders, Web Site

# GBC HOUSING SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN

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## Housing Services Business Plan

- The business plan is produced in order to set out the overall aims and objectives for the housing service as a landlord with over 3,000 properties.
- It outlines the council's approach to the management of the housing stock and the strategic direction for the delivery of quality services in a sustainable environment.



## Housing Services Business Plan

The business plan is divided into six sections as detailed below:

1. Strategic direction
2. Consultation
3. Background
4. Assets
5. Resources
6. Equality and diversity



## Strategic Direction

- This sets out the issues that influence the business plan at a national, regional and local level.
- Indicates how the plan supports the delivery of the council's corporate priorities and wider housing objectives.
- Examples of this would be:
  - Reviewing of the council's assets to ensure value for money in service delivery and the best use of land (Asset Management Strategy)
  - Improve the provision for homeless customers in the borough (Agnew and Barclay House refurbishments)



## Consultation

### Why consult?

- As a council tenant or leaseholder you have the right to be consulted on all matters affecting your tenancy or the housing services you receive. We will consult you about changes that will affect your home and community.

### How have we consulted?

- Housing Reform Events carried out in 2011 and COP meeting carried out January 2012 and AYS newsletters



## Background

- HRA self financing became reality in April 2012.
- GBC borrowed £57m to buy itself out of the National Housing Subsidy system. GBC was paying approx £3.5m per annum to a central Government pot.
- Under self financing rules, all income collected through rents is retained by GBC.



## Assets

- Traditionally GBC has been very effective at ensuring that available investment was targeted at achieving the decent homes standard.
- Under self financing, long term asset management planning is essential to manage the risks of self financing.
- A 25 year asset management plan has been produced after conducting a detailed stock condition survey.



## Resources

- The move to self financing has enabled an increase in resources available for GBC. As part of the move to self financing, a 30 year financial model was prepared which details future income, expenditure, debt analysis and stock changes as well as inflation and investment rates.
- Planned investment in existing stock has increased from £5.8m in 2011/12 to a budgeted spend of £7.3m in 2014/15.
- In addition there has been an investment of over £2.2m on the upgrades to Agnew and Barclay House.



## Equality and Diversity

- GBC is committed to the equal treatment of everyone and the eradication of discrimination.
- In summary:
  - To eliminate discrimination on the grounds of race, disability and gender
  - Eliminate discrimination on physical, sensory or mental impairment.
  - Promote equal opportunity.
  - Promote good relations between people from different groups.
  - Take steps to account for disabilities even when that involves treating a disabled person more favourably.



Any questions?



# An update on Welfare Reform

February 2014

## Where are we?

- 10 months in to the changes introduced by the Welfare reform Bill published 3 years ago, on February 16<sup>th</sup> 2011
- How has this affected our constituents who claim financial assistance via the Benefit Section?
- How has it affected the Council?

## Intentions

...”The Reform should protect the most vulnerable, in particular pensioners – and support improved work incentives to be delivered through Universal Credit”

## Changes expected...

- Council Tax Benefit to be abolished and replaced by a Local Scheme – Local Council Tax Support
- Social Rent Restrictions
- The Benefit Cap
- The merging of the 6 main benefits in to one - Universal Credit
- Changes to some other Benefits e.g. Disability Living, Employment & Support Allowance, etc

## Changes introduced 2013

- Council Tax Benefit was abolished and replaced by Gosport's own scheme – Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)
- Social Rent Restrictions
- The Benefit Cap
- Changes to other Benefits e.g. Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payments, Employment Support Allowance
- Not Universal Credit in our area

## LCTS

- A Local Scheme for Working Age customers; affects anyone of working age
- Not those of State Pension Credit Age; which mirrors the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme (except where the partner receives Income Support, Income based Job Seekers or Income related Employment Support Allowance)

## LCTS

- Customers of working age now have to contribute towards their bill
- Even if they are entitled to 'full' support, they still have to pay a top-up towards it
- Customers still question this new scheme as not used to contributing

## Social Rent Restrictions

- Social Rent Restrictions (*The Bedroom Tax*)
  - 556 cases affected upon introduction
    - 269 Council tenants
    - 287 Housing Association tenants
  - 506 currently affected; albeit different tenants
  - 45 customers move into work, increased income; so no longer claiming benefit/support
  - 26 GBC tenants have been moved
  - Others are meeting the shortfall

## The Benefit Cap

Benefits taken into account for the cap: -

Bereavement Allowance	Widowed Parents' Allowance
Carer's Allowance	Guardian's Allowance
Child Benefit	Child Tax Credit
Housing Benefit	Incapacity Benefit
Income Support	Jobseekers Allowance
Maternity Allowance	Widow's Pension
Severe Disablement Allowance	Employment & Support Allowance (except where the support component is awarded)

## The Benefit Cap

- Introduced later, in July 2013
  - Administered by Department for Work and Pensions & Applied as a deduction to Housing Benefit
- 25 families affected currently
- Those who require assistance have sought help via the network of support available to them
- GBC Benefits, GBC Housing, Job Centre plus and other organisations

## Universal Credit

- Expected October 2013 - delays
- A new working-age benefit to replace: -
  - Working Tax Credit
  - Child Tax Credit
  - Housing Benefit
  - Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
  - Income-related Employment & Support Allowance

## Universal Credit

- Current view is that plans will see new claims to existing benefits closed during 2016.
- Most of the existing benefit claimants will be moved over to Universal Credit during 2016 and 2017.

## What else?

- Job Seekers Allowance - Claimant Commitment
  - A new agreement
  - A record of the responsibilities people need to accept in return for receiving Universal Credit, it includes the consequences of not meeting them.
  - Approach to get JSA claimants into work quicker
- Introduced in Gosport 9<sup>th</sup> December 2013

## Claimant Commitment

- ...a new 'personal contract' between the state and claimant, with rights and responsibilities
- ...will need to fulfil the terms and conditions of their agreement, based on their personal circumstances.
- This will ensure that work always be the best choice for individuals and families'

## Claimant Commitment

The rollout of the claimant commitment aims to ensure claimants:

- Are clear about the requirements they must meet
- Recognise they must do all they reasonably can to find work
- Take responsibility for getting themselves into work
- Have a detailed plan of action in place that they are committed to following
- And are coached and supported to ensure they are taking the right action (at the right time).

## Anything else?

- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
  - New claims for PIP from anyone aged 16-64
  - Reassessment of current claimants will commence October 2015
  - All existing claimants will have been invited to claim for PIP by October 2017

## Anything else?

- ESA
  - Conversion from Incapacity Benefits to Employment & Support Allowance
  - Full conversion expected to be complete by March 2014

## As always...

- Multiple changes in Legislation
- Varying groups affected; some overlap
- Confused, concerned customers

...We are here to help.



## Allocations Policy - November 2013

Customer Opinion Panel – 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014



## Customer Consultation

- There were 4 main changes to policy
  - Local Connection criteria
  - Housing Need criteria
  - Suitable Tenants
  - Financial Resources
- An online Survey was created for customers to complete
- Over 500 customers took part



## Local Connection

- 84% of customers agreed that the Housing Register should only be open to customers that have local connection to Gosport.
- Local Connection is now defined as:
  - Being a current Resident of Gosport for 2 or more years
  - Have immediate family that resides in Gosport for 5 or more years
  - Works in Gosport in permanent job for 16 hours + per week
  - Serving Member of the Armed Forces
  - Has been accepted as Homeless



## Housing Need

- 55% of customers agreed that the Housing Register should only be open to customers that have a Housing Need
- Housing need is defined as:
  - Being bedroom deficient
  - Having a medical or welfare need that's affected by your current home
  - Under Occupying a social housing tenancy
  - A priority move through MRP or Move on
  - Unfit Housing – determined by Environmental Health
  - Has had a homeless duty accepted by this Council

## Suitable Tenants

- 87% of customers agreed that customers that have been assessed as unsuitable tenants should be excluded from the Housing Register.
- An unsuitable tenant is defined as:
  - Someone with housing related debts
  - Those with criminal convictions for offences that adversely affect others.
  - Those with ASB orders, contracts or Injunctions
  - Someone who owns or has the rights to a property that they do not live in.
  - Those that have the financial resources to resolve their own housing

## Financial Resources

- 18% of the customers surveyed said the new levels for financial resources were too high, 11% said they were too low and 71% said they were just right.
- The new levels suggest that customers with £16,000 savings and an income as stated below will now be blocked from the Housing Register:
  - A household income of £31,000 for a 1 bed property
  - A household income of £45,000 for a 2 bed property
  - A household income of £56,000 for a 3 or more bed property



## Policy Changes

- On the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2013, The Community Board made decision to amend the Allocation Policy following the results of the customer consultation.
- Over 2500 applicants were removed from the Housing Register as they did not meet the new criteria, leaving approximately 1500 registered for a property.
- Tenants that are no longer eligible for the Housing Register are being advised to move through Homeswapper.

Gosport Borough Council  
Housing Services

**Asset Management - Budgetary Update  
13-14 & Forecast for 2014-15**

Mark Johnson – Head of Property Services  
January 2014



## Content

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## Key Drivers

- 30 Year Business Plan – (Formulated to support HRA settlement)
- Savills, Stock Condition Survey 2012 – 20% Actual, 80% Cloned. Validated and enhanced by 'In-House' resource (currently up to nearly 30% actual)
- Sector good practice
- Compliance
- Tenant scrutiny in accordance with HCA expectations, guidance and regulation.
- Efficiency savings and innovation through the long-term 'Partnering' arrangement with Kier Services



## 2013-14 Update

- £5.45m Budget for Repairs, Maintenance & Planned works (Approx 85% Kier 15% Other). Excluding Barclay House refurbishment.
- All objectives for 2013-14 on track to be achieved, except for over cladding of St Johns, which was always subject to appropriate ECO 'match funding'. Now deferred to 2014-15. Saving used to bolster Responsive Maintenance budget
- Robust monitoring by both GBC & Kier give confidence that budget will not be exceeded.
- Barclay House refurbishment Phase 1 complete and in use - November 2013. Phase 2 on track to be complete and in use by end of March 2014. Overall project anticipated to be within budget.





## Budgets 2013-2015

BUDGETS	Proposed 2013-14	Projected 2013-14	Proposed 2014-15
Revenue	£3,000,000	£3,200,000	£3,455,000
Capital	£2,450,000	£2,250,000	£3,230,000
Totals	£5,450,000	£5,450,000	£6,685,000



## Revenue Budget - Key Factors

- Increased Responsive Repairs budget to reflect demand trends over past 5 yrs (No increase in Responsive Repairs budget since 2006)
- Void Budget significantly increased in anticipation of additional voids in 2014-15
- Creation of Major Responsive Repairs category
- Separation of Gas Repairs and Gas Servicing Budgets for monitoring purposes
- Re-tendering of External Painting & Communal Area Redecoration Contract 2014-21



## Performance 2013-14 – Revenue Works

Performance - Revenue Works	2012/13 Out Turn	2013/14 Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year to Date
% Emergencies Completed Within Target (See OOH)	99.00%	100%	95.50%	99.50%	100.00%		99.55%
% Urgent Completed Within Target	95.20%	97%	97.50%	95.00%	98.95%		97.54%
% Routine Completed Within Target	97.50%	97%	98.50%	98.50%	97.16%		97.09%
% completed on 1st visit (See OOH)	92.20%	90%	92.50%	94.00%	95.50%		94.05%
Average Cost per Job	£169.94	£150.00	£155.01	£155.55	£111.48		£135.10
Customer Satisfaction (Average score out of 10)		8.50	8.95	9.40	9.24		9.2
No. of homes without a valid Gas Safety Certificate	9	15	10	6	0		N/A
Average Cost Voids	£1,798	£2,000	£1,272	£1,557	£1,615		£1,672



## Revenue – Breakdown 2014-15

2014-15 Revenue Spend	Budget
Responsive Repairs (Inc Gas and Major Responsive)	£1,841,000
Voids (Inc Home Imp/Dec Vouchers)	£660,000
Bulk Waste	£80,000
Structural (Inc Garage Rebuild and Misc. Demolition)	£105,000
Estate Improvements (Inc Tenant led Fencing & OAP Redecs)	£86,000
Cyclical (Inc Gas Servicing, Ext. Painting, Compliance)	£683,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,455,000</b>



## Performance 2013-14 – Capital Works

Performance - Capital Works	2013/14 Out Turn	2013/14 Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year to Date
Edison Renewals	25	89	27	27	22		76
Edison Renewals	121	95	40	19	15		72
Bedford Upgrades (Renovs)	87	44	18	14	12		44
Heating Upgrades	79	80	19	14	12		45
Customer Satisfaction (Average score out of 10)		8.50	8.64	8.75	8.45		8.25



## Capital Budget - Key Factors

- Investment programme informed by Savills stock data, local knowledge/validation and agreed component lifecycles
- Demand – eg Aids & Adaptations
  - Additional £70k per annum allocated to 'Major Adaptations' over next 3 years to assist in reducing current backlog
- Energy Efficiency (eg External Wall Insulation)
- Sheltered Scheme Improvements
- Remedial work following severe weather experiences winter 2013/14
- Arising special projects



## Capital Breakdown 2014-15

2014-15 Capital Spend	Budget
Leases (Surveys & Removals)	£100,000
Fire Risk Assessment (inc Associated Works)	£75,000
Disabled Aids & Adaptations (inc Major & Minor)	£300,000
Contingent Major Repairs (inc Professional Fees)	£70,000
Energy Efficiency (inc External Wall Insulation)	£500,000
Grass Capital (inc additional Parking & Env Imps)	£45,000
Roofworks (inc Gutters/Fascias)	£180,000
Windows & Doors	£90,000
Kitchens & Bathrooms	£350,000
Electrical Upgrades	£180,000
Heating Upgrades	£450,000
Sheltered Scheme Improvements	£350,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,230,000</b>



## Next Steps

- Ratification of High-Level 2014-15 Budget Proposals by the relevant Board and Full Council (Feb/Mar 2014)
- Issue of draft 2013-14 budgets to Kier and GBC Colleagues
- Confirm actual spend for 2013-14 (Year End Figures April/May 2014)
- Confirmation of budgets for 2014-15 to Kier and Colleagues
- Carry out ½ Year Review to ensure spend is on track
- Begin budget planning for 2015-16 (October/November 2014)



## Questions

