



Customer Opinion Panel Minutes
Wednesday 30th November 2016 – Council Chambers

Gosport Borough Council

James Hill – Housing Services Manager
Julie Smith – Head of Operational Services
Elaine Bastable – PCC Housing Options
Steve Groves – PCC Asset Management

Denise Hudson – Resident Involvement Officer
Sam Downing - Resident Involvement Officer

Guests:

Mr P Batty	Ms S Bellerby	Mrs T Bott	Mr T Bott
Mr K Burns	Ms M Cook	Mr T Gale	Ms L Hay
Ms S Greenwood	Ms M Griffin	Ms R Hill	Mr B Hudson
Ms S Kimbley-Brown	Ms V Manton	Mr J Mardle	Mr B Pullen
Mr B Sherman	Ms L Smith	Ms V Twyman	Ms R Walker
Ms A Yates			

Apologies:

Mrs S Spelzini	Mrs D Corbett	Mrs P Grant	Ms J Rowe
Ms J Light	Mr Bedford	Ms J Perry	M B Wakefield

1.	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <p>Denise Hudson opened the meeting and gave introductions.</p>
2.	<p>Housing Review</p> <p>James Hill (Housing Services Manager) introduced himself and co-presenters from Portsmouth City Council, Julie Smith (Head of Operational Services), Elaine Bastable (Housing Options Manager) and Steve Groves (Asset Manager).</p> <p>James gave a presentation on the Housing Services Review Update (please see attached). He explained that the recommendations are proposals at this stage and welcomed feedback. Final proposals will be delivered mid-late January 2017.</p> <p>James explained that the Interim Housing Services Manager, Stuart Palmer carried out a review on the Housing Services earlier this year. The proposals did not take into account the new relationship with Portsmouth City Council (PCC) because at the time the review was carried out; the shared management proposals with Portsmouth City Council had not been agreed. James and Stuart met in April and discussed the review proposals; Stuart advised that they would have looked different if the shared management arrangement had been in place.</p>

James reassured the group that the previous review and all feedback have been taken into account.

James explained how the roles of the Senior Management Team would fit in the proposals.

PCC has a similar make up of stock to Gosport Borough Council (GBC), they both have council housing stock, mobile home sites etc., just on a larger scale, he felt the fit between PCC and GBC housing is perfect

James stressed that the agreement with PCC is shared management and not a merger or takeover. PCC understand that Gosport is its own council and will remain a separate council and services to residents will not be cut as a result of these proposals. Having shared management will give GBC a stronger presence in Hampshire and we will become the largest social housing provider in Hampshire. James stated that he has not copied PCC's model or Stuarts review and confirmed that he has spent time assessing what Gosport Borough Council and its tenants need.

James stressed that the proposals were in no way a judgement on any individual or team.

James and the Senior Management Team all agree with the initial feedback that COP members gave following the proposals given at COP by Stuart Palmer.

As part of the review, it is felt managers should be spending more time with staff in the workplace to understand the issues they face and the actions they need to take to improve services.

It is essential that there will be good managers and leadership as a result of the review.

Senior Management Proposal

James described the current staff structure and explained the proposed new structures. He introduced Julie Smith as the proposed Head of Housing who will be based at GBC practically speaking full time and supported by Steve Groves and Elaine Bastable to provide strategic support and oversight of Property and Housing Options.

The revised senior management structure sits alongside the plans to ensure there are strong operational managers in post and improved delegations.

Housing Options

Elaine Bastable presented the Housing Options proposals. The purpose of this team is to give appropriate advice, assess housing need and provide accommodation, giving fair access to all social housing. Please see the enclosed structure chart.

The new approach would focus on the two core functions and create more generic roles and working. All would be based in GBC. The proposal included a recommendation that GBC purchase 'enabling' support from PCC as and when needed. Enabling informs developers of the requirements for social housing and is something that is required from time to time.

Property Services

Steve Groves presented the Property Services proposals. Currently there are three teams that work within Property Services but they all work independently of each other. Both operational and day to day services will be kept in Gosport and Steve will remain at PCC in a strategic role. Building Surveyors will remain at Gosport. Please see the enclosed structure chart.

Steve also outlined areas recommended for GBC to purchase. Like the enabling in housing options these are in areas where services are required from time to time and GBC would gain better value for money through a purchasing arrangement.

Housing Operational Services

Julie Smith presented the Housing Operational Services proposals. The current system is fragmented and not customer focussed. Work between the Housing Officer Team and Income Recovery Team is not joined up which can sometimes result in a conflict in advice given to customers. A generic role would help give tenants a single point of contact for ASB, rent and tenancy management issues. Resident involvement would be retained as will roles which look after communal areas. A Neighbourhood Services Manager would coordinate cleaners, 'estate wardens' and forge strong links to Streetscene services.

There will be no reduction in service for customers and this part of the service will move towards a neighbourhood management model. The service will be more focussed on customers. Proposed smaller patches will enable staff to have more contact with customers. Please see the attached structure chart.

Summary and next steps

James summarised all the proposals and advised that we currently are in a consultation period and a final set of proposals will be given after 23rd January. Until then we will continue business as usual.

James gave the good news that the Energy Services will become a shared service with PCC and they are looking to provide a range of services including installing solar panels on the roof of four sheltered schemes and the Town Hall.

James referred back to some questions that COP had posed to Stuart Palmer,

- Will there be less staff – James confirmed that the plans did mean that there would be approximately, 12 full time equivalent less posts but

- that this wouldn't mean fewer services for GBC residents.
- Will COP continue – James confirmed that there were no plans to change the COP meetings and they would continue to provide a useful forum for engagement. James did say that there would be an opportunity to refresh the purpose of the meeting.
 - Will COP get further feedback - James confirmed that the next COP will be in February, where an update on the review will be given.

Questions and Answers

Below are some questions raised and answers given:

Q. Will solar panels be installed on all of the sheltered blocks?

A. Initially they will be installed on four schemes and the Town Hall, it is hoped that panels could be further installed elsewhere in the future.

Q. Who pays the wages for the Agency and Temporary staff?

A. All wages are paid from the rental income; we have agency and temporary staff currently. The proposals will be to move to having permanent GBC staff.

Denise Hudson gave a view from the staff and her sense that whilst there were anxieties there was also a sense of excitement about the proposals and these proposals will improve customer service.

Peter Batty commented that approximately seven years ago there was a huge problem with communication between teams at GBC. Peter is pleased with the proposed plans and commended the Senior Management Team for the work that they have carried out.

COP members generally felt that the proposals look good on paper.

Q. Why is there no hierarchy from Gosport here tonight?

A. James explained that both he and Julie are part of GBC. James is both the Housing Service Manager and a Chief Officer; Julie is the GBC Head of Operational Services. They have signed a legal agreement that binds them to work to the GBC constitution.

Q. Where do the Senior Management Team loyalties lie?

A. The legal agreement required them to take decisions in the best interests of GBC whilst covering the work of the Housing Services Manager and Head of Operational Services.

James has asked that any comments or questions are fed back to either Denise or Sam on either Freephone 0800 328 6958, 023 9254 5686 or email rit@gosport.gov.uk. Alternatively please fill your answers or any comments and questions on the attached form and send in the prepaid envelope provided.

The feedback on the proposals will be considered as the final set of proposals is formed.

Some questions to consider include:

	Do the proposals go far enough? Have we missed anything out? Will services for residents improve?
3.	Date of next COP 15 th February 2017

Distribution:-

Attendees, HSH, Chairman of Community Board, Housing Spokesmen, Group Leaders,
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