

## **A MEETING OF THE HOUSING BOARD**

**WAS HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2008**

The Mayor (Councillor Gill)(ex-officio), Chairman of Policy and Organisation Board (Councillor Cully)(ex-officio) (P), Councillors Allen, Ms Ballard, Burgess (P), Champion (P), Mrs Cully (Vice Chairman) (P), Foster, Foster-Reed, 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 and Hook would replace Councillors Foster and Rigg for this meeting.

### **33 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of The Mayor (Councillor Gill), Councillors Allen, Foster and Rigg.

### **34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **35 MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2007 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

### **36 DEPUTATIONS**

There were no deputations.

### **37 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no public questions.

## **PART I**

### **38 COUNCIL DWELLING RENTS 2008/2009**

The Board considered the report of the Housing Services Manager (a copy of which is attached in the Minute Book as Appendix 'A') which considered the Board's revised 2007/2008 budget and the 2008/2009 budget for the Housing Revenue Account and made recommendations on rent levels for next year.

Officers explained that the Government was planning a major restructure of Council dwelling rents to achieve convergence with private sector rents by 2016/17. Members were concerned about the considerable pressures on tenants and the Council which included inflation, restricted pay awards and the reduction in Government grants.

The average national council dwelling rental increase was 7-8%, more than that proposed by this Council. Members considered there was no option but to recommend increases of 5.37% for Council dwelling rents and 5% for garage rents because of the pressures outlined above.

RECOMMENDED: That with effect from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008:

- (a) The average weekly Council Dwelling rents increase by 5.37%; and
- (b) Garage, carports and parking lot rents increase by 5.00%.

## PART II

### 39 HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2007

The Board considered the report of the Housing Services Manager (a copy of which is attached in the Minute Book as Appendix 'B') informing Members of the key findings of the 2007 Housing Needs Assessment and to note the issues that were presented for the development of the Housing Policy by this Assessment.

Following a Member's question it was explained that the reason the 2007 Housing Needs Assessment covered a smaller number of households as compared to a similar survey in 2003 was that it had been possible to use existing statistical data and information.

Members welcomed the consultant's comments regarding a higher level of preference for two bedroom rather than one bedroom units. Reference was made to a previous DTZ housing market survey for South Hampshire which appeared to favour one bedroom units. Officers explained that the assessments from the two consultants were likely to work in tandem.

RESOLVED: That Members of the Board note the key findings and recommendations of the 2007 Housing Needs Assessment which would be used to develop policy on future Housing Strategy.

### 40 PARTNERING ARRANGEMENT (REACTIVE REPAIRS) PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered the report of the Housing Services Manager (a copy of which is attached in the Minute Book as Appendix 'C') reporting to Members progress of the Partnering Arrangement for the delivery of day-to-day and the voids service.

Officers explained the background to the figures, that standards would continue to be monitored and that regular updates to Housing Board members were planned as part of the performance management regime.

It was clarified that the increase in response times to 24 hour emergency calls could be due to more accurate time recording on behalf of the current contractor. The difference in any event was very small, a matter of 2 hours longer to complete.

Members requested that attention be given to those residents who had been dissatisfied with the overall repairs service and that the higher costs associated with two of the benchmarked costs should be further investigated.

Members were pleased with the progress that had been made in providing the right service to tenants and at the same time achieving benefits and savings.

RESOLVED: That Members note the key findings of the review.

#### **41 HOUSING GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2008/2009**

The Board considered the report of the Housing Services Manager (a copy of which is attached in the Minute Book as Appendix 'D') the purpose of which was to consider the Board's revised 2007/08 and 2008/09 budgets, including the Board's fees and charges for 2008/09 and capital programme, and to recommend thereon to the Policy and Organisation Board for inclusion in the Council's overall budget proposals.

RESOLVED: That the Board recommends to the Policy and Organisation Board its requirements for the Revenue Budget (revised 2007/08 and estimate 2008/09); the Fees and Charges for 2008/09 and the Capital Programme 2007/08 to 2012/13.

The meeting commenced at 6pm and concluded at 6.26pm

CHAIRMAN