

HOUSING COMMITTEE

7 November 2013

7.00 pm – 9.05 pm

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud

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Minutes

Membership:

Councillor Mattie Ross (Chair)	P	Councillor Liz Peters	P
Councillor Chris Brine (Vice-Chair)	P	Councillor Gary Powell	P
Councillor Philip Booth	P	Councillor Frances Roden	P
Councillor Gordon Craig	P	Councillor Emma Sims	P
Councillor Paul Hemming	P	Councillor Tom Williams	A
Councillor Brian Marsh	P	Councillor Debbie Young	P

P = Present A = Absent

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Miranda Clifton

Councillor Geoff Wheeler

Officers Present:

Strategic Head (Tenant Services)

Housing Advice Manager

Head of Housing Contracts

Tenancy Manager

Business Accountant HRA

Performance & Improvement Manager

Head of Housing Management

Democratic Services Assistant

Invited Guest:

Sandra Mutton, Chair of Stroud Council Housing Forum

HC.033

APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Tom Williams.

HC.034

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

HC.035

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meetings held on 19 September 2013 and 2 October 2013 are confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to an addition to Minute HC.031 as

follows; it was agreed to review the energy efficiency of the new build after one year.

HC.036**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

None received.

HC.037**BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2013/14**

The Business Accountant HRA presented a forecast of the outturn position against the Committee's revenue budgets and capital programme for 2013/14. Members were informed that the performance of the HRA was exactly where it should be and was on target. The report identified the requirement to seek approval for a virement of £50,000 from the Tenancy Management budget to cover the cost of Tree Works in communal areas. The budget had allowed for expenditure of £75,000 to purchase new IT hardware and software. However, the contract had been postponed pending satisfactory security arrangements and the allocated budget would be carried forward to 2014/15.

Members were informed that there had been an increase in sales of homes under right to buy, the previous year's figure of 22 sales would be exceeded by the year end. The increase in available discount had made the scheme more attractive.

In respect of the Capital Budget, Members were assured that the budget was on target, it was recognised that there may be some risks to the budget and it was agreed to provide a briefing report on possible risks to the Committee. Questions were raised as to the high level of major void repairs. It was reported that this was, in part, due to some tenants not wanting their homes to be upgraded and when the properties became available, the properties were then updated. Also, Members were informed that the Council had not previously had the necessary finances to undertake major works on a large scale until the introduction of Self Financing.

RESOLVED

- (a) To approve the virement as set out in table 4.**
- (b) To note the outturn forecast for the Revenue budget and the Capital Programme for 2013/14.**

HC.038**TENANT SERVICES DECANT POLICY**

The Tenancy Manager explained that the existing Policy had now been updated to reflect the new allocations policy introduced by the Localism Act 2011, together with the development programme for new and refurbished Council housing.

The Policy had been discussed previously at the Stroud Council Housing Forum (SCHF) and some amendments had been made to the document. It was acknowledged that the report did not specifically identify the input from SCHF and it was agreed that the consultation and feedback box to the report should provide more information on the feedback given.

RESOLVED

To approve the reviewed Policy.

HC.039 **SELF FINANCING PRESENTATION**

The Strategic Head of Tenant Services presented an update on the initiatives arising from self-financing. The presentation highlighted the improved way of working which had provided the Council with a higher level of investment to invest in its housing stock. Stroud District Council was the largest landlord in Gloucestershire and the £71m investment over the following five years would play a key role in the Council's jobs and growth agenda.

The report did identify potential challenges to the programme brought about by the changes in right to buy. In particular, the increase in discounts and a reduction in the qualifying period. There were also restrictions on how much of the receipt could be spent on new build properties and equally important, how much the HRA could borrow. The Council, through the LGA had been putting its case to central government for changes to allow a higher level of receipts to be used for new build.

Members welcomed the report and recommended that work begins to identify the programme for the following five years.

RESOLVED **To note the report.**

HC.040 **TENANT SERVICES COMPENSATION POLICY**

The Performance and Improvement Manager presented the report which sought the Committee's approval to proceed with the implementation of the Policy. Members were informed that the report had been discussed by the Stroud Council Housing Forum and some amendments had subsequently been made. Members were assured that the levels of compensation would be incorporated in all new contractors' agreements.

RESOLVED **To approve the Tenant Services Compensation Policy.**

HC.041 **SHELTERED HOUSING PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT**

The Head of Housing Management presented a progress report on the Sheltered Housing project. The requirement to review the service had been brought about by several factors, including changes to funding, demographic changes to provide an excellent service within an affordable budget and to provide a new service to a wider community of elderly people in the district. The County Council had confirmed that in October 2014 the basis of funding would change to support hours and not the number of sheltered units, and the level of support would be time limited to six weeks per case.

The presentation outlined the five phases of the project including workshops and consultation leading to a project sign off in March 2014. The initial consultation process had generated a very high response rate from residents with 804 responses received.

RESOLVED **To note the report**

HC.042**WORK PROGRAMME**

In addition to the issues identified in the work programme, Members discussed the level of representation from residents in sheltered housing. Officers advised Members that in addition to area meetings, every sheltered housing scheme held meetings with its residents. These were very democratic and all residents had the opportunity to be involved in the process for reviewing the service. The Strategic Head of Tenant Services suggested that a future report to the Committee could focus on the achievements within the service over the past twelve months incorporating the current position with USAP. This report would be for information purposes and to be noted.

RESOLVED

To agree the Committee's work programme, subject to the addition of the following item for a future meeting:

- **Report to detail achievements within Tenant Services for information purposes.**

HC.043**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

None received.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

Chair