

MINUTES OF HOUSING COMMITTEE HELD ON

2 July 2009

7.30pm – 8:10pm

PRESENT

COUNCILLORS

Lee Dangerfield (Chairman)

Shona Johnson (Vice Chairman)

Sarah Jane Dangerfield

Bob Davis

Lesley Rideout

Clive Souter

John Strachan

ALSO PRESENT

David Carter

Simon Carter

CO-OPTEEES

Ms M Mackenzie (Leaseholder)

Mr B McKenzie (Tenant)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 5 March 2009 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Tenant Representation on Housing Committee (Minute 58)

The Committee noted that a report on this matter had been rescheduled from September 2009 to March 2010 as part of a wider review/consultation being led by the new Tenant Services Authority of national housing standards.

4. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

(i) Written Questions

A copy of the written public questions and the Chairman's responses is attached at Appendix A of these minutes.

(ii) Petitions

None.

5. **NON-CONTENTIOUS BUSINESS**

RESOLVED that the following items on the agenda would be taken as non-contentious:

Item 7 – Committee Forward Work Plan.

Item 9 – Housing Service Standards.

6. **COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN**

RESOLVED to note the Committee Forward Work Plan.

7. **DRAFT HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Committee received a report on the draft Housing Asset Management Strategy (HAMS) providing an up to date framework for the Council to prioritise its activities and resources to engage with and influence partners and funding mechanisms.

RESOLVED

(a) to approve the draft Housing Asset Management Strategy for further consultation with partners, including Tenants and Leaseholders;

(b) that the outcome of the consultation, together with any proposed amendments to the Strategy, would be reported back to the Committee in September 2009.

8. **HOUSING SERVICE STANDARDS**

The Committee received a report updating the service standards for Housing Services to improve the quality of services, increase tenant satisfaction and enhance customer care.

The Committee placed on record its thanks to Officers and the Tenant and Leaseholder representatives for the extensive work undertaken in reviewing the review set of service standards.

RESOLVED to approve the Service Standards and Ward Inspection Protocol, as detailed in Appendix 1.

9. **SHELTERED HOUSING OUTREACH SERVICE**

The Committee received a report proposing a new charging structure for the Outreach Support Service provided by the Council for older people living in Harlow.

RESOLVED to introduce charges for a weekly Outreach Support Service (as detailed in paragraph 10 of the report) with an implementation date of 1 August 2009.

10. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

11. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

APPENDIX A

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Q1. Question from Mr Hoad

What steps are taken to ensure the information provided on a property in Harlow Homefinder is a 100% correct?

Reply from the Chair of the Committee

The Council makes every attempt to provide full and accurate information in respect of property details included in the adverts placed in Harlow Homefinder.

Adverts are placed as quickly as possible after a property becomes vacant in order to minimise any delays in re-letting properties.

The advertisement for a void property is raised following an initial inspection of a property which is prior to any further in depth investigations having been completed, for example, electrical testing.

All prospective tenants are invited to attend an accompanied viewing and it is at this point they can raise any factors associated with the property.

Q2. Question from Mr Hoad

Why is there not a different tenancy agreement for former sheltered housing properties let as general housing?

Reply from the Chair of the Committee

There is no requirement for a specific tenancy agreement for sheltered housing lettings. Any specific restrictions, inclusions, and exclusions are dealt with through the allocations policy and process.

Q3. Question from Ms Bull

Due to recent changes in housing regulations, councils can now bid for social housing grant.

Will Harlow Council be putting a bid for social housing grant, pre or post the Government housing review to build new Council homes?

Reply from the Chairman of the Committee

The Council has carefully considered the recent Government proposals for accessing social housing grant, and will not be placing a bid at this time as the current proposals would have a significant negative financial impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and consequently the services offered to tenants.

The Council is actively lobbying the Government on support for building new council housing and will be carefully considering its options after the Government has announced its conclusions on the review of the HRA financing and subsidy system, which is due shortly.

Q4. Question from Mr Patrick

Due to recent changes in housing regulation councils can now retain capital receipts from future new build council homes.

Can we be assured this Council will ring fence the monies from receipts to replace all sold homes?

Reply from the Chair of the Committee

As stated in reply to the previous question, the Council is awaiting the Government's financing review and until such time is not able to assess the benefits or implications of the Government's proposals for new build council homes.