

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**MONDAY 15 AUGUST, 2011 AT 4.00 P.M.**  
**IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK**  
**PART 1**

PRESENT: Councillors:

Holder, M.J. (Chairman)  
Bernard, J.D. (Vice-Chairman)

Allen, F.W.C.	Jones, Ms. J.L.
Beddows, J.	Williams, B.
Grocott, M.R.	Williams, Mrs. P.

The Chairman thanked the former Chairman Councillor B. Williams for the work he and the Committee previously undertook in respect of the Housing Policy Development Committee.

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies

**2. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members**

There were no declarations of interests declared.

**3. Minutes**

AGREED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 March, 2011 be approved as a correct record.

**4. Department for Communities and Local Government Consultation Paper – Implementing Social Housing Reform**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Corporate Director (Enclosure 4.1 – 4.13 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Housing presented the report and indicated that the DCLG were undertaking pilot schemes with a number of social housing landlords in respect of the 'Tenant Cashback Scheme'.

He commented that a further report would be forwarded to the Committee once the results of the pilot schemes were known.

He then referred to Annex 2 of the report and asked Members if they had any questions or comments in respect of the 'Draft Directions to the Social Housing Regulator – Consultation Questions and Comments'.

A Member referred to Enclosure 4.10 Question 2 of the report and raised concern regarding the minimum tenure for tenancies given that currently it was 5 years. She also commented that short tenancies may have a negative impact on families with young children.

The Head of Housing advised that the original provision was a minimum term of 2 years. However the government now considered that the 2 years was restrictive and therefore 5 years was proposed, although exceptions could still be made in specified circumstances.

The Member asked what would happen after the 5 year fixed term tenancy. The Head of Housing referred to Enclosure 4.9 and the 'clear and accessible tenancy policy' had to be formulated and adopted by social housing landlords. He also commented that if the policy would specify the circumstances where a tenancy would not be renewed (for example, if a household was now able to purchase a dwelling) and that the policy had to include an appeal procedure.

Members then discussed the cost of purchasing homes, the safeguarding of existing tenancies and tenancy agreements.

A Member raised concern that the Council was not stringent enough on tenancy agreements in respect of nuisance neighbours and tenants gardens, and questioned whether it was a good idea after a 12 month introductory tenancy to then offer a 5 year tenancy.

The Head of Housing advised the Committee that there were no proposals to stop introductory tenancies and it was the Council's decision as to whether to adopt a policy which determined whether new tenants were granted secure or fixed term tenancies. He however indicated that there could be advantages of having fixed term tenancies for young people. He also advised that the Courts would be very reluctant to give the Council possession of a property due to the state of the garden, and the tenant would be given every opportunity to put the problem right.

Members referred to Enclosure 4.11 and had reservations regarding the 'Tenant Cashback Scheme'. Concerns were expressed that this could cost a lot of money and questioned who would carry out the work.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the Council would be required to adopt a scheme but could formulate a scheme in accordance with local circumstances.

A Member raised concern that the system could be open to abuse by tenants carrying out their own repairs based on the time taken to complete them.

The Head of Housing advised that it was understood that a principle of the scheme was that the work carried out by either the tenant or the tradesperson had to be more cost effective than if the Council carried out the work, and that any cost savings would then be shared.

AGREED:

- (A) That the draft directions to the Social Housing Regulator on proposed changes to certain social housing regulatory standards be noted.
- (B) That the Head of Housing following consultation with the Chairman of the Housing Policy Development Committee and the Housing Portfolio Leader be authorised to formulate a draft response on the proposed housing regulatory standard changes for submission to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

## **5. Housing Priority Delivery Plan – Annual Performance Report**

Consideration was given to the Housing Priority Delivery Plan – Annual Performance Report.

Members noted the Housing Priority Delivery Plan – Annual Performance Report

## **6. Disposal of Vacant One Bedroom Bungalows – Policy Review**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Corporate Director (Enclosure 6.1 – 6.9 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Housing reported that further to information contained within the report a further bungalow was sold last week and that it was expected that a further 3 would be sold in the next few months.

The Chairman raised concern with the selling of the Council's housing stock; but referred to the estimated capital receipts of £1.5 million which would be generated as a result of sales.

A number of Members referred to the current lettings policy and the restrictions in renting out the bungalows to younger people, and questioned whether the criteria should be re-considered.

The Head of Housing advised that the current lettings policy on bungalows meant that applicants over the age of 60 or with certain medical conditions were be eligible. He explained that consideration had previously been given to young people being considered for bungalows; but as a result of concerns regarding the different lifestyles of both age groups the idea had been rejected. He also commented on the current eligibility criteria and advised that a report would be considered by Cabinet in September which proposed reducing the age limit to 55.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Head of Housing indicated that some of the properties did not fall under the disposal policy however; he indicated that 6 bungalows were currently empty which would cost around £7,500 each to update.

A Member referred to Enclosure 6.3 of the report and the disposal of certain 'lower demand' bungalows and asked if they would sell. The Head of Housing advised that it was the type of bungalow that was in less demand due to issues with parking or the size.

**AGREED:**

That Cabinet on 15 September, 2011 be recommended that the Council continue with the current bungalow disposal policy but 'cap' the number of sales to an average of five bungalows a year over the next five years, from 2012-13 onwards.

## 7. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Consideration was given to the Report of the Corporate Director (Enclosure 7.1 – 7.25 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Housing presented the report and advised that Cabinet on 21 July, 2011 had approved the initial HRA Business Plan outlined in the report for consultation.

The Chairman referred to Enclosure 7.5, which outlined in the initial business plan proposals to introduce an external curtilage programme and asked if properties with fencing which adjoined public open space would be included as part of the programme.

The Head of Housing explained that such properties would be included; but that provision of divisional fencing between gardens were not included due to the cost.

A Member referred to Enclosure 7.4 and the debt repayment and asked if the Council could make capital payments each year.

The Head of Housing advised that whilst this had long term advantages, modelling had shown that it created a funding deficit during years 1 to 10 of the plan. As a result, there would be problems maintaining the Council's housing stock to Decent Homes Standard and the additional works referred to at Enclosure 7.6 such as the provision of a shower option as par of the bathroom replacement programme would not be offered.

The Head of Housing explained that the debt repayment would become effective from year 6 with interest only payments being made during the first five years. The repayment strategy aimed to maximise funding during the first 5 years of the plan in order to fund a programme of works which would bring the Council's housing stock to an improved standard.

A Member referred to Enclosure 7.4 and asked how many more pre-reinforced concrete (PRC) dwellings required remedial action.

The Head of Housing reported that following the structural reinforcement of the Reema houses on the Moss Estate and the Cornish houses in the Rowley Close area, and the demolition of the Remma flats on the Moss estate that the Council would have addressed the problems associated with all its PRC dwellings. It was further reported that the financial provision for the above actions had been included in the initial HRA Business Plan.

AGREED:

- (A) That the initial Housing Revenue Account Business Plan is noted.
- (B) That Cabinet be recommended to consider as part of a 'draft' Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, bringing forward the:
  - (i) Re-introduction of the bathroom replacement programme to the third quarter of year one, from year 3 in the initial Business Plan
  - (ii) Enhancing the bathroom replacement programme specifications through

the provision of a 'shower option'.

- (iii) Providing external lights to the remaining dwellings without this facility as part of the electric upgrading programme

## **8. Proposed Work Programme – 2011/12 Municipal Year**

Consideration was given to the Work Programme for 2011/12.

Members discussed the proposed work programme and agreed that the following additional items should also be included:-

- Monitoring of the gas maintenance contract
- Affordable housing
- Evaluation of the solar panels pilot project
- Anti-social behaviour policy (including Police involvement) (It was requested that the review of anti-social behaviour was considered as soon as possible)

It was agreed that as a result of these additional items, a further meeting was required and it was therefore proposed that the meeting be held on Wednesday 23 November, 2011 at 4.00 p.m.

AGREED:

- (A) That the Proposed Work Programme for 2011-12 including the additional items, be agreed
- (B) That an additional meeting of the Housing Policy Development Committee be arranged for Wednesday 23 November, 2011
- (C) That the Head of Housing be authorised to amend the work programme to take account of the additional items and further meeting.

## **9. Visit to Vine Court Extra Care Scheme**

It was confirmed that a visit would take place to the Vine Court Extra Care Scheme on Thursday 8 September, 2011 at 11.30 a.m.

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CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 5.40 p.m.