



Minutes of the Housing Policy Development and Review Panel

*Minutes of a meeting held on 13 September 2012
at the Civic Offices, Fareham*

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs M E Ellerton
(Chairman)

Councillor D M Whittingham
(Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Miss S M Bell, N R Gregory, T G Knight and Mrs K K Trott.

Also Present: Councillor B Bayford, Executive Member for Housing (Minute 7)

1. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence made at this meeting.

2. MINUTES

It was AGREED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Policy Development and Review Panel held on 19 July 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record ([hsg-120719-m](#)).

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made no announcements at this meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

6. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2012/13

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community and Streetscene which invited members to review the Panel's Work Programme for 2012/13 (copy of report [hsg-120913-r01-mge](#) circulated with the agenda). Members' were asked to note that the Tenancy Strategy item has now been deferred to the meeting on 15 November 2012.

It was AGREED that the Panel's work programme for 2012/13, as set out in appendix A attached to the report, be approved.

7. WELFARE REFORM – UPDATE

(Minute 7 of 15 September 2011 refers)

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Finance and Resources which gave an update on the progress of the Government's reform of welfare, the implications of the Council and the impact on residents currently living in social housing and the private rented sector and receiving assistance towards their rent and Council Tax. (copy of report [hsg-120913-r05-cqu](#) circulated with the agenda).

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Bayford addressed the Panel during discussion on this matter.

Members were referred in particular to the proposals for the introduction of a locally run Council Tax Support Scheme and reminded that an all member briefing session on this topic was taking place on Thursday 27 September 2012, prior to the meeting of the Scrutiny Board. It was intended seek the approval of the Scrutiny Board and Executive to a draft proposed scheme prior to a period of formal consultation in October 2012. . Taking account of the consultation responses, formal adoption of the scheme would be made by Full Council, to meet the deadline of 31 January 2013. Details were also provided about the implications arising from the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) and recent indications by the Department of Work and Pensions that Local Authorities may now have a greater role in the delivery of UC than previously expected.

The Panel discussed the report at some length and asked questions, made comments and observations about the information contained in the report. It was acknowledged that the significant changes arising from welfare reform required a lot of work to be undertaken by the Benefits Service.

It was AGREED that:-

- (i) the Panel note the content of the report; and
- (ii) the Head of Revenues and Benefits and her team be thanked for the work undertaken.

8. REVIEW OF THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community and Streetscene accompanied by a presentation from the Senior Housing Options Officer, which set out the progress made in delivering the Council's Homelessness & Housing Options Strategy and the proposals for the use of the Homelessness Prevention Grant for the financial year 2013-2014 (copy of report [hsg-120913-r02-eti](#) circulated with the agenda).

Officers were asked a number of questions concerning information contained in the report and Action Plan progress report, (Appendix A). It was noted that the total figure in the table on Page 7 was incorrectly shown as £150,000. The correct figure should be £115,000.

The Senior Housing Options Officer was thanked for his informative presentation.

It was AGREED that the Executive be advised that in the Panel's view:-

- (a) the amendments to the 2012-13 action plan be approved;
- (b) the proposals for the use of the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2013-14, as set out in paragraphs 7 to 12 of the report, be approved, and;
- (c) the Director of Community and Streetscene be requested to explore the possibility of using unallocated funds from the Homelessness Prevention Grant, to provide or retain adequate staffing levels to assist in reducing homelessness.

9. COLLINGWOOD HOUSE - UPDATE

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community and Streetscene which provided an update on progress being made with the redevelopment of Collingwood House and summarised the outcome of the (copy of report- [hsg-120913-r04-afi](#) circulated with the agenda).

It was AGREED that the Panel note the good progress made to redevelop Collingwood House.

(The meeting started at 6:00pm
and ended at 7.48pm)