

Date: 1 September 2010
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To: Members of the Housing Review Board
Other Members of the Council for Information
Chairman of the Tenant & Leaseholder Customer Panel
Chief Executive
Corporate Directors

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Dear Sir/Madam,

**Meeting of the Housing Review Board
Thursday, 9 September 2010 at 6.00 pm
Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth**

The above meeting will be held in the Council Chamber at East Devon District Council Offices, Knowle, Sidmouth, to consider the matters detailed on the agenda below.

Yours faithfully,

MARK WILLIAMS

Chief Executive

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting.

- A period of 15 minutes has been provided at the beginning of the meeting to allow members of the public to raise questions.
- In addition, the public may speak on items listed on the agenda. After a report has been introduced, the Chairman of the Committee will ask if any member of the public would like to speak in respect of the matter and/or ask questions.
- All individual contributions will be limited to a period of 3 minutes – where there is an interest group of objectors or supporters, a spokesperson should be appointed to speak on behalf of the group.
- The public is advised that the Chairman has the right and discretion to control questions to avoid disruption, repetition and to make best use of the meeting time.

AGENDA

PART A - Matters for Decision

Page/s

1 Public question time – standard agenda item (15 minutes)

Members of the public are invited to put questions to the Committee through the Chairman.

Councillors also have the opportunity to ask questions of the Leader and/or Portfolio Holders during this time slot whilst giving priority at this part of the agenda to members of the public.

PART A - Matters for Decision			Page/s
2	To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Review Board held on 24 June 2010		4 - 10
3	To receive any apologies for absence.		
4	To receive any declarations of interests relating to items on the agenda.		
5	To consider any items which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be dealt with as matters of urgency because of special circumstances. (Note: such circumstances need to be recorded in the minutes; any individual wishing to raise a matter under this item is requested to notify the Chairman in advance of the meeting).		
6	To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the press) have been excluded. There are two items which Officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.		
7	Housing Review Board Forward Plan	Head of Housing & Social Inclusion	11 – 13
8	Local Offers	Head of Housing & Social Inclusion	14 – 30
9	Tenant Involvement Strategy update	Tennant Participation Officer	31 – 57
10	Tenant Scrutiny – Part III	Tennant Participation Officer	58 – 67
11	Service Restructuring	Head of Housing & Social Inclusion	68 - 74
12	Council Housing: A real future – update and preparations	Head of Housing & Social Inclusion	75 – 85
13	Cash Incentive Scheme for Tenants Under-Occupying Council Homes	Housing Needs Manager	86 – 93
14	Car Parking Improvements – The Green, Littleham, Exmouth	Housing Community Development Officer	94 – 97
15	Housing Community Development (Youth) Report	Head of Housing & Social Inclusion	98 - 107
16	Anti Social Behaviour benchmarking report	Information and Analysis Officer	108 – 112
17	Empty Properties (Voids) Performance	Housing Needs Manager	113 -119
18	The Vice Chairman to move the following:- “that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description set out on the agenda, is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing this item in private session (Part B).”		
PART B - Matters for Decision			
19	Partnering Contractor – Position Update	Para 3 Schedule 12A Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).	Head of Housing & Social Inclusion 120 - 123

PART B - Matters for Decision (cont'd)

20 Gas Servicing Contract

Para 3 Schedule 12A
Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

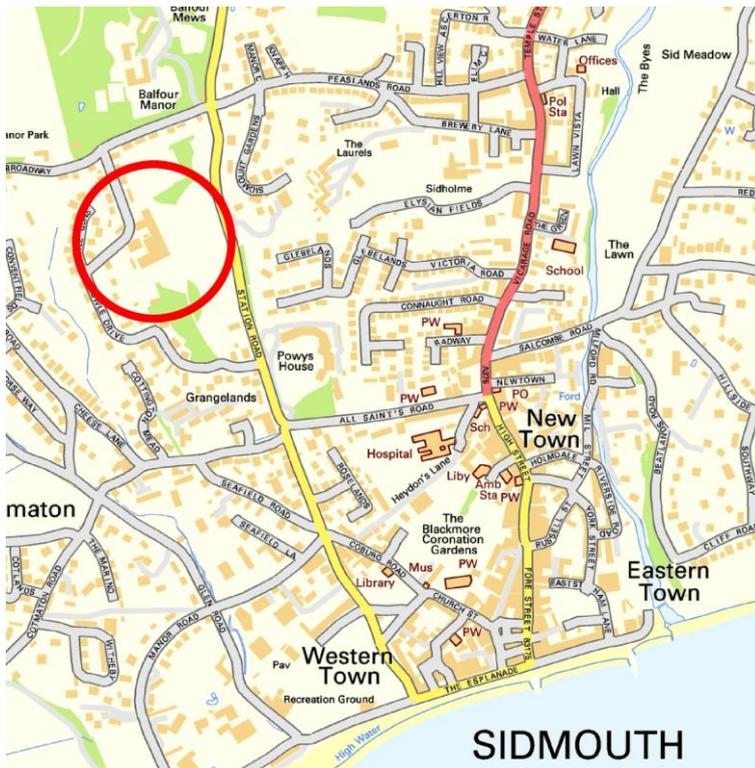
Head of Housing &
Social Inclusion

124 - 129

Members remember!

- ❑ You must declare any personal or prejudicial interests in an item whenever it becomes apparent that you have an interest in the business being considered.
- ❑ Make sure you say the reason for your interest as this has to be included in the minutes.
- ❑ If your interest is prejudicial you must leave the room unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Council's Standards Committee or where Para 12(2) of the Code can be applied. Para 12(2) allows a Member with a prejudicial interest to stay for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business but only at meetings where the public are also allowed to make representations. If you do remain, you must not exercise decision-making functions or seek to improperly influence the decision; you must leave the meeting room once you have made your representation. [Please note -generally speaking you cannot remain for an item in closed session (part B) because the public cannot speak on exempt business – unless a statutory procedure gives them a right to be there]
- ❑ You also need to declare when you are subject to the party whip before the matter is discussed.

Getting to the Meeting – for the benefit of visitors



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From Exmouth, Budleigh, Otterton and Newton Poppleford – 157

The following buses all terminate at the Triangle in Sidmouth, From the Triangle, walk up Station Road until you reach the Council Offices (approximately ½ mile).
From Exeter – 52A, 52B
From Honiton – 52B
From Seaton – 52A, 899
From Ottery St Mary – 382, 387

Please check your local timetable for times.

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The Committee Suite has a separate entrance to the main building, located at the end of the visitor and Councillor car park. The rooms are at ground level and easily accessible; there is also a toilet for disabled users. A hearing loop system will be in operation in the Council Chamber.

Visitors please note that the doors to the civic suite (meeting rooms) will be opened ¼ hour before the start time of the meeting. Councillors are reminded to bring their key fobs if they wish to access the area prior to that time.

For a copy of this agenda in large print, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01395 51754

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing Review Board held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 24 June 2010

Present:

Councillors:

Pauline Stott (Chairman)

Vivienne Ash
Douglas Hull
Jim Knight
Frances Newth

Co-opted tenant members:

Ann Bickham
Ted Brown
Victor Kemp
Christine Morrison
Sue Saunders

Co-opted independent community representative:

Rob Finch
Julie Adkin

EDDC Officers:

Sue Bewes, Housing
Simon Davey, Head of Finance
John Golding, Head of Housing & Social Inclusion
Giles Salter, Assistant Solicitor
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present:

Jill Elson, Portfolio Holder, Communities
Paul Diviani
Vivienne Duval-Steer
Helen Parr
Andrew Moulding

Apologies

Ken Potter
David Cox

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 9.20pm

*1

Chairman's remarks

The Chairman began the meeting by making some comments about the role and purpose of the Housing Review Board. She took the opportunity to publicly, and place on record, the Board's thanks to Ted Brown for his chairmanship over the past year. Under his leadership the Board had progressed in many areas as evidenced in the annual review report. He had tackled the task of chairing the Board with dedication and enthusiasm.

She reiterated the purpose of the Board is to help provide the best service possible for all the tenants of East Devon, because the Board has a genuine concern and interest in the future of the Housing Service throughout our district, and that all on the Board are the trustees of social housing in East Devon.

***1 Chairman's remarks (continued)**

She gave some examples of work undertaken in the past five years, including:

- The Audit Commission Inspection which brought about fundamental changes to the service after careful identification of what it is the Council needed to do and where to improve; these changes have been implemented through debate and sound decision making by the Board;
- the implementation of tenant choice; tenants can now choose their decorations, doors, kitchens and when taking up a secure tenancy; the tenant members have added real value to the process;
- repairs review, communal area cleaning, budgets, an Allocations Policy, Anti social Behaviour Policy, and Rent Collection etc.

She reminded the Board of the important work over the coming months with particular emphasis on the future funding of the Housing service. She invited the Board to join with her in promoting housing in East Devon and stressed that she valued all their thoughts, opinions, input and ideas.

***2 Appointment of Vice Chairman**

Ted Brown nominated Councillor Douglas Hull as the vice-chairman, seconded by Sue Saunders. There were no other nominations. Councillor Hull took the opportunity to thank Ted Brown for his dedicated service as Chairman, in particular his constructive dialogue with officers and showing leadership.

***3 Public Question Time**

Sue Saunders spoke on behalf of the Tenant and Leaseholder Customer Panel. She expressed the Panel's concern at the Council's decision to appoint a Chairman for the Housing Review Board as opposed to the Board electing its own Chairman, stating that the decision had damaged the relationship between the Council and Tenant and tarnished the ideals contained in the Tenant and Council Partnership Agreement. As a result the Panel were intending to take their grievance through the Council's complaint procedure.

Councillor Jim Knight responded with concern that many Councillors, including those on the Board, had worked tirelessly with tenants and would continue to do so.

A point on the constitution wording relating to a political appointment of Chairman would be clarified after the meeting.

***4 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Review Board held on 29 April 2010, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***5 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor/ Officer	Agenda Item	Type of interest	Nature of interest
Councillor Frances Newth	Residents parking permits	Personal	Attends resident association meetings relating to Arcot Park and Lymebourne Park, Sidmouth.

***6 Resident parking permits on Council housing car parking areas at Arcot Park and Lymebourne Park, Sidmouth**

The Chairman, with the agreement of the Board, brought this item forward due to public interest in the issue.

John Golding, Head of Housing & Social Inclusion, presented a report identifying a number of options to overcome the specific car parking problem, including a pilot residents parking permit scheme; and a lockable bollard scheme. It was reported that other areas suffered similar problems, and that taking no action was an option.

The Board debated a number of issues with the options proposed, including:

- Concern over ease of use for lockable bollards, especially for disabled users but also for the elderly or infirm; bollard use would have to be tested fully to ensure that it was feasibly for a disabled user to operate;
- Costs to the tenant of each scheme – the lockable bollard would be a one-off cost which over a five year period would be a cheaper option;
- Schemes for controlling parking on Council land for tenants should be considered across the District, not just for Sidmouth;
- Re-configuring of parking areas had been tried but did not resolve the problem; any commercial vehicles using the area had been targeted but that again only offered a temporary solution;
- Economic benefit in addressing areas across the district if changes had to be made via parking places orders.

- RECOMMENDED:**
1. that resident parking schemes be investigated for all Council owned areas in the District that have identified parking issues and a report brought back to the Board for further consideration;
 2. That full evaluation of a lockable bollard system be made, to ensure that it can be used safely and effectively by any disabled user.

***7 Housing Review Board Forward Plan**

The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion presented the Forward Plan to the Board. The item entitled “Disability Issues – A user’s perspective” would go forward to the next meeting of the Board. Ann Bickham informed the Board that the Downsizing Group had met and a report would come forward to the next meeting of the Board. Quarterly updates on the choice based lettings scheme would be added to the Plan and reported at the next meeting of the Board.

Julie Adkin asked for issues to be addressed over the communication of meeting dates and times, and adequate time to read reports for the meetings.

RESOLVED: that the Housing Review Board forward plan be noted.

8 Council Housing: A real future – assessing the prospectus

The Chairman welcomed Glen Smith from Tribal to present the findings in researching and financial modelling of the government proposal for taking on a proportion of the national housing debt.

8 Council Housing: a real future – assessing the prospectus (continued)

John Golding stressed to the Board that this was a key decision, with implications on the finances of the Council and implications for tenants. This was the most significant housing consideration since the housing stock options appraisal carried out in 2005.

The new coalition government will continue the review, but there was no new detail provided that the proposal to take on a share of the debt would go ahead. Regardless there is a need to review the 30 year business plan for the HRA so the work undertaken by Tribal was valid.

Glen Smith from Tribal gave a brief background to previous work on the 30 year business plan undertaken by Tribal, and the history of the current subsidy scheme for funding the housing service via the Housing Revenue Account. He re-iterated that there was no clear indication on government thinking as yet so the work had been based on the consultation paper issued by the former government.

The problems with the current subsidy system were highlighted:

- Complexity of the system;
- Weak incentives for asset management and debt management;
- Negative subsidy whereby it was likely to show a net gain for the Government in future;
- Likely to be increase in cost of subsidy in future;
- Less money available to spend on service or invest in stock;
- Unable to deliver long term capital investment at higher levels shown with more recent stock condition surveys.

The proposals, in particular relating to East Devon, were explained to the Board:

- Debt allocation for East Devon implied a £79.7m increase in debt;
- 7% discount rate results in a lower debt allocation, intended to provide headroom for providing new homes;
- Base discount rate is 6.5%, which would result in debt increase for East Devon of £83.6m;
- Rents still to be controlled centrally through social rent policy and rent convergence;
- Capital receipt from sale of council houses retained by Council for financing future affordable homes and regeneration.

Glen Smith went on to illustrate four self-financing scenarios, covering 7% and 6.5% discount rates with standard investment per property and with higher investment levels per property; each scenario showed the debt repaid within 30 years as follows:

- 7% discount rate:
 - £77.6m peak debt in 2011/12
 - Repaid in 2027/27 (year 18)
- 6.5% discount rate:
 - £81.5m peak debt in 2011/12
 - Repaid in 2028/29 (year 19)
- 7% discount rate plus £42.25K per property investment
 - £77.6m peak debt in 2011/12
 - Repaid in 2030/21 (year 21)
- 7% discount rate plus £50K per property investment
 - £79.0m peak debt in 2011/12
 - Repaid in 2037/38 (year 28)

The scenarios therefore demonstrated that whilst the concept of taking on considerable debt had risks, the proposal offered more money to invest in the housing stock and could, depending on the scenario followed, be repaid in the life of the 30 year business plan.

8 Council Housing: a real future – assessing the prospectus (continued)

The positive and negative aspects of self-financing were outlined to the Board:

- Positives
 - No more subsidy system and associated restrictions
 - More money to invest in housing
 - Greater certainty for investment decisions
 - Chance to achieve decent homes standard
 - Balanced HRA
 - Local responsibility and accountability
- Negatives
 - Cannot fall back on subsidy/no reliance on grant
 - Large debt to manage
 - Potential for poor decisions to cause financial difficulties
 - Stock transfer less easy – need to generate receipt or grant to offset debt
 - Caps on borrowing/rents

In conclusion, all the scenarios for self-financing offered improved revenue and capital investment compared with the current subsidy system; however the significant additional debt to the Council would require robust treasury and asset management.

The Board made a number of points during the presentation, including:

- Make clear in response to the proposal paper that any changes relating to additional costs or restrictions on income would need further consideration before any support is given;
- Concern if rent were linked to consumer price index rise as opposed to retail price index, as that could have a large impact for the Council;
- That taking on such debt is fully risk assessed; the rate of borrowing would be fixed rather than a variable rate;
- Safeguarding tenants by ensuring good business planning;
- Need to consider, as well as freeing up money for new build, many older properties would need to be assessed in future years to establish if major repair work or rebuild was required;
- The need to consult with tenants over the proposals; although there was no statutory requirement to consult in the present proposal paper. In reality, consultation would occur as part of priority work with tenants;
- If stock transfer should again be considered to a housing association as another option to taking on such a large debt and the associated risks with the debt

The next steps, if the proposals became reality, would be to build on the technical capability of the Council in dealing with asset management, business planning and debt management; as well as a contingency plan for a no change scenario if the subsidy system ultimately ends up remaining in place.

RECOMMENDED: to invite the Portfolio Holder for Communities to respond to the consultation proposals contained in Council housing: A real future, using the information in the report, advice from Tribal consultants, comments fed back from the Housing Review Board, and the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion.

RESOLVED:

1. that the Housing Review Board is in agreement in principle to the concept of self-financing for housing finance; but reserves their position if there are subsequent changes in the proposal;
2. that a copy of the submission to the proposal paper be circulated to the Board and all EDDC Councillors.

9 Sheltered Housing Support Services – Cluster working Model and Single Assessment Process

John Golding presented a report on the proposed series of changes to the way East Devon delivers its Housing Support Service to residents living in sheltered accommodation. The proposals are in line with the Devon County Strategic Review of Older Persons Housing and Support Services, covering a Cluster Working model which is similar to that use by the current health and social care sector.

In response to questions from the Board, John Golding explained the reasoning behind not having Wardens as the first point of contact for support; firstly, the advice to the client is to contact Home SafeGuard via their pendant/button who will assess if an ambulance is required or the mobile support service for a less serious problem; Scheme Managers or Wardens were not always available as a 24 hour service.

- RECOMMENDED:**
1. that the changes for Sheltered Housing Support Services to be delivered via a model known a ‘Cluster Working’ be approved;
 2. that the ‘Single Assessment Process’ as recommended by Devon Supporting People Team to ensure a standardised approach for assessing the support needs of clients in Devon be adopted.

***10 Council Own Build projects - update**

The Board welcomed the positive report giving an update on progress with the 17 new council homes in the District. Sue Bewes, Housing Strategy Manager, thanked the Board for their support in the project, and outlined the expected occupancy dates for the new build properties.

RESOLVED: that the progress on the Council own build projects be noted.

***11 Housing service formal complaints review**

The Housing Strategy Manager presented a report following the Audit Commission recommendation flowing from the inspection of housing management services in relation to complaints about the Housing & Social Inclusion Service. The report reviews the complaints received during 2009/10 in order that learning points can be noted and acted upon. Sue Saunders updated the Board on a complaints seminar she had attended and highlighted how care was needed in treating complaints as an official complaint rather than a service request. Sue Bewes re-iterated her suggestion of analysing complainants to gain more information about distinguishing between the two types of complaint, which the Board were happy for her to undertake.

RESOLVED: that the information on formal complaints relating to the Housing service be noted.

***12 Housing Review Board self-assessment**

The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion’s report presented the results of the Housing Review Board’s recent self-assessment exercise undertaken in April.

RESOLVED: that the Board undertakes another self-assessment session, facilitated by the Council’s Learning and Development Manager, at a date suitable for Board to enable full attendance.

***13 Housing Revenue Account 2009/10 outturn**

The Board considered the report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which presents the outturn income and expenditure for housing landlord activities undertaken during the financial year 2009/10. The report considers the actual income and expenditure against the original budget, and explains any major or significant variances.

Board members discussed the cost of the new build bungalows at Manstone Avenue which had contributed towards a drop in the HRA surplus which would need to be replenished in the following year; however the balancing of providing new accommodation against the HRA budget was a decision already taken by the Board.

RESOLVED: that the 2009/10 outturn statement for the Housing Revenue Account be approved by the Board.

Chairman

Date