

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of a Meeting of the Housing Review Board held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 9 March 2017**

#### **Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 2.30pm and ended at 4.35pm.

#### **\*59 Public Speaking**

There were no questions raised by members of the public. The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

#### **\*60 Minutes**

The minutes of the Housing Review Board meeting held on 12 January 2017 were confirmed and signed as a true record. Victor Kemp requested that the minutes be amended as he was not in dispute with the Council, although he had made a request for his property to be adapted.

#### **\*61 Declarations of Interest**

Mike Berridge: Personal interest - family member lives in a Council owned property and a housing tenant.

Cllr Ian Hall: Personal interest – family member lives in a Council owned property and uses Home Safeguard.

Victor Kemp: Personal interest – housing tenant and had made a request for his property to be adapted – this request had not yet been resolved.

Cllr Jim Knight: Personal interest - family member lives in a Council owned property and another family member lives in a housing association property.

Pat Rous: Personal interest - housing tenant.

#### **\*62 Urgent item and exclusion of the public**

There was one urgent item that would be considered under part B of the agenda after the public (including press) have been excluded.

#### **\*63 Forward plan**

The Strategic Lead, Housing, Health and Environment presented the forward plan and advised Members that the forward plan acted as a reminder of agenda items to come forward to future meetings. Members were reminded that they could add further issues to the next forward plan by informing either himself or the Democratic Services Officer.

**RESOLVED:** that the forward plan be noted.

#### **\*64 Housing White Paper – Fixing our broken housing market**

The Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment's report set out the main elements of the Housing White Paper published in February, setting out the Government's thinking in respect of national housing policy for the future. The four principle themes of the White Paper were:

- Planning for the right homes in the right places
- Building homes faster
- Diversifying the market
- Helping people now

There had not been sufficient time for a detailed analysis but officers would be undertaking this in order to produce a response by the May deadline. The Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment reported that the paper had received mixed reactions. However it

demonstrated a strong motivation to improve the housing market and recognised that there was no single answer to the problems in the housing market. The Council's response to the White Paper would be presented at the next Board meeting.

**RESOLVED:** that the Housing Review Board note the contents of the Housing White Paper.

**\*65 Homelessness reduction bill**

The Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment's report set out the contents of the Homelessness Reduction Bill and some of the implications for the Council's duties and approach to early intervention and prevention. Although the contents of the Bill had not yet been passed into law, preparations could be made for the changes in anticipation of more onerous homelessness duties being enacted. There were likely to be greater resource implications for the Council and starting preparations early would help to quantify what the likely impact would be on existing services and to identify additional resources required. It was noted that the driving factor behind the Bill was a desire to improve the position for single homeless people.

**RESOLVED:** that the Housing Review Board note the contents of the Housing Reduction Bill.

**\*66 Establishing a Local Housing Company for East Devon District Council**

The Board considered the report of the Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment, which had been presented to, and agreed by, Cabinet the previous day. The report set out the business case for setting up a Local Housing Company to be wholly owned by the Council with the purpose of providing a range of housing including in the general market (outside the Revenue Account) and to generate a profit to provide income to the Council's general fund. The report also covered the purpose, benefits, legal position, risks, and considerations of operating a Local Housing Company, and specifically what this housing delivery vehicle could do that the Council were currently unable to do. The outline business case considered how the Local Company could operate, its objectives, and set out due diligence considerations.

It was noted that the Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment would report back to the Housing Review Board and Cabinet, at appropriate times.

Some concern was expressed about the membership of a sub-committee of the Cabinet, to be called the 'Housing Company Sub-Committee'. The Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment explained that the purpose of this was to allow the company to operate in an agile way and not to get caught up in local government bureaucracy.

**RESOLVED:** that the Housing Review Board note the Cabinet decision.

(Councillor Jim Knight, Christine Drew and Victor Kemp abstained from voting)

**\*67 Alternative models for building repairs and maintenance service**

In January the Board approved the appointment of consultants to scope, appraise and advise on a procurement approach which could lead to alternative service delivery options for the repairs and maintenance of tenants' homes. The report of the Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment provided an update on the project which had been initiated through a launch meeting and workshop event to appreciate the current service arrangements, key service drivers, performance indicators and appetite for change.

Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment advised that a final report would be presented to the Housing Review Board which would recommend a procurement strategy to follow and a preferred service delivery option.

**RESOLVED:** that the progress of the alternative models for building and repairs maintenance service be noted by the Housing Review Board.

**68 Charging private users of sewage treatment**

The Board was presented with a report which requested an increase to the charges of private users of sewage treatment plants to ensure all the Council's costs were covered, from April 2017, in line with service charges to leaseholders.

**RECOMMENDED:** that Cabinet agree that private users of sewage treatment works are charged at a 15% management fee on top of the amount charged for the actual costs incurred.

**\*69 Update on OPENHousing implementation**

The report of the Housing Needs and Strategy Manager brought the Housing Review Board up to date with the progress on the implementation project for Capita's OPENHousing system. It noted what had worked well, the issues faced and recent audit findings. A SWAP audit had identified some areas where project management could be improved and these good practice recommendations would be taken into phase 2 of the project. There was also the need to ensure that financial controls were effective and the system integrated with the Council's accounting system, Cedar.

**RESOLVED:** that the Housing Review Board note the progress on the implementation of the OPENHousing System.

**\*70 Quarterly performance indicator report – quarter 3 2016/17**

Consideration was given to the report of the Information and Analysis Officer which detailed selected indicators measuring performance across the housing service. Monthly performance reports to Cabinet were also used to highlight particular performance issues alongside Systems Thinking style capability charts showing key end to end times for voids and tenancy commencement to first rent payment for new tenancies.

The Board thanked the housing service staff for their hard work and high performance.

**RESOLVED:** that the performance of the housing service be noted by the Housing Review Board.

**\*71 Housing Revenue Account financial monitoring report 2016/17 and HRA Business Plan update**

The Board was presented with a summary of the overall financial position on the Housing Revenue Account, HRA Capital Programme and the Business Plan for 2016/17 at the end of month nine (December 2016).

Regular monitoring was intended to highlight any areas of concern or unforeseen expenditure in the HRA and associated capital programme, enabling corrective action to be taken as required. Any variances would be reflected in the Business Plan.

Current monitoring indicated that:

- The Housing Revenue Account Balance would be maintained at or above the adopted level.
- The position on the HRA Business Plan remained healthy.

The Board's attention was drawn to the number of affordable homes that had been purchased and it was noted that the Council were always looking for properties coming onto the market that could be let at affordable rents. The Board also noted the amount that was required for Social Services adaptations.

**RESOLVED:** that the variances identified as part of the HRA revenue and capital monitoring process up to month nine and the HRA Business Plan update be noted by the Board.

**\*72 Housing Review Board annual report**

Members were asked to note the annual report of the Housing Review Board which highlighted the achievements and detailed the work undertaken by the Board over the last year.

**RESOLVED:** that the annual report of the Housing Review Board be noted.

**\*73 Date of the next Housing Review Board meetings**

The Board noted the provisional dates of the HRB meetings for the forthcoming civic year:  
Thursday 8 June 2017 – 2:30pm, Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth  
Thursday 7 September 2017 – 2:30pm, Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth  
Thursday 2 November 2017 – 2:30pm, Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth  
Thursday 11 January 2018 – 2:30pm, Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth  
Thursday 8 March 2018 – 2:30pm, Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth

**\*74 Exclusion of the public**

**RESOLVED:** that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt and private information (as set out against each Part B agenda item), is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing the item in private session (Part B).

**\*75 Tenancy at Otterton**

The Landlord Services Manager briefed the Board on the current position regarding a tenancy in Otterton in light of representations from some neighbours and Council members.

**RESOLVED:** that the Housing Review Board note the details of the case and action taken so far.

**Attendance list**

**Present:**

Cllr Pauline Stott (Chairman)  
Cllr Megan Armstrong  
Cllr Ian Hall

Cllr Jim Knight  
Cllr Brenda Taylor

Co-opted tenant members:  
Pat Rous (Vice Chairman)  
Mike Berridge  
Victor Kemp

Independent community representatives:  
Julie Bingham  
Christine Drew

Officers:  
Sue Bewes, Landlord Services Manager  
Emma Charlton, Housing Projects Officer  
Danielle Furzey, Housing Options Manager  
John Golding, Strategic Lead - Housing, Health and Environment  
Andi Loosemoore, Rental Manager  
Andrew Mitchell, Housing Needs and Strategy Manager  
Mike Purcell, Interim Property and Asset Manager  
Jane Reading, Tenant & Communities Section Leader  
Giles Salter, Solicitor  
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

**Also present:**

Cllr Jill Elson, Portfolio Holder – Sustainable Homes and Communities  
Cllr David Barrett  
Cllr Bruce de Saram

**Apologies:**

Angela Bea, tenant  
Joyce Ebborn, tenant

Chairman ..... Date.....