
MEETING	EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND ADVISORY PANEL
DATE	6 MARCH 2006
PRESENT	COUNCILLOR SUNDERLAND (Executive Member), COUNCILLOR JAMIESON-BALL (Chair), COUNCILLOR HORTON (Opposition Spokesperson and Advisory Panel Member), COUNCILLORS BLANCHARD, FAIRCLOUGH, HILL, KIRK and LIVESLEY
IN ATTENDANCE	PAT HOLMES (non-voting co-opted member of Advisory Panel) Honorary Alderman Jack Archer
APOLOGIES	MILDRED GRUNDY

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. No interests were declared.

66.† EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following:

Annex 3 to Agenda Item 8 (Report on the Future of Discus Bungalows) on the grounds that it contains information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). This information is classed as exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972.

67. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Executive Member for Housing and Advisory Panel, held on 6 February 2006 be approved and signed as a correct record.

68. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Barry Ward, Chairman of the Residents Association registered to speak on the Report on the Future of the Discus Bungalows (Minute 72) and referred to an article in the Evening Press regarding the Councils proposals for the properties. He indicated residents broad support for the proposals outlined in the report although concern was expressed in relation to paragraph 26 if it resulted in an increase in density on the site and a loss of green space. Clarification was requested in relation to paragraph 45 which referred to capital costs. He asked members to agree to the redevelopment option, as residents felt that refurbishment was not a viable option and requested Members support the provision of bungalow style housing on the sites.

69. FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS 2006/07 (HOUSING)

Members considered a report that presented requests received from local organisations for financial support in 2006/07, together with details of criteria for grant aid.

Officers reported that applications for financial support had been received from York Citizens' Advice Bureau (Bond Guarantee Scheme) and York Nightstop.

Members were informed that York Nightstop budgets had been examined and that 25% of it was allocated to "contingency and contribution to reserves". The Charity had therefore been recommended to re-examine this contingency allocation.

Advice of the Advisory Panel:

That the Executive Member agrees the proposed request for Financial Support from York Citizen's Advice Bureau and that the Citizens Advice Bureau be offered a one year Service Level Agreement.

Decision of the Executive Member:

RESOLVED:	That the Advice of the Advisory Panel as set out above be accepted and endorsed.
REASON:	To support requests for financial support to voluntary organisations for 2006/07.

70. REVIEW OF THE WAY FORMER TENANTS ARREARS ARE DEALT WITH FOR HOMELESS APPLICANTS.

Members considered a report that set out details of a pilot incentive scheme on the repayment of former tenant arrears in the case of current homeless applicants.

Officers updated that paragraph 2 of the report required the addition of the words 'are allocated' prior to the words 'to homeless households' in the eighth line and in paragraph 4 the amendment of the figure of 'average debt' to £1893.61.

Members were then presented with the following two options

Option 1

1. To introduce an incentive payment scheme to encourage accepted homeless applicants to pay former arrears owed to the Council by contacting all accepted homeless applicants with former arrears and agree a payment plan based on this new incentive.
2. That if customers make regular payments as agreed in the payment plan over a continuous 6 month period the Council will reduce the customers debt by the equivalent of 50% of what they have paid.
3. That this scheme is piloted for a 12 month period and monitored to assess success of both rates and recovery costs.

Option 2

To continue with the existing arrangements which may result in a potential a risk that we will be unable to meet the ODPM's target of reducing the overall numbers of customers in temporary accommodation by 50%.

Advice of the Advisory Panel:

- (i) That the Executive Member be recommended to agree the introduction of a pilot incentive scheme on the repayment of former tenants arrears in the case of current homeless applicants.
- (ii) That a follow up report be submitted to the EMAP meeting after a 12 month period to analyse the results and if appropriate the scheme be adopted on a permanent basis.

Decision of the Executive Member:

RESOLVED:	That the Advice of the Advisory Panel as set out above be accepted and endorsed.
REASON:	To update the Executive Member and progress work in this area.

71. WRITE OFF OF FORMER TENANT BALANCES.

Members considered a report that requested agreement to write off a number of former tenants arrears.

In answer to Members questions Officers detailed the process involved in tracing individual tenants.

Members were then presented with the following two options

Option 1

Maintain these Former Tenant Arrears on account, this would lead to an increase in the bad debt provision and would go against good practice as commented on in the Housing Inspectors report in October 2002.

Option 2

Write the debts off on the understanding that if necessary they can be re activated at a later date.

Advice of the Advisory Panel:

That the Executive Member be advised to approve option 2 writing off former tenants arrears totalling £33,942.62 as detailed in the report.

Decision of the Executive Member:

RESOLVED:	That the Advice of the Advisory Panel as set out above be accepted and endorsed.
REASON:	To progress work in this area.

72†. REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF THE DISCUS BUNGALOWS

Members considered a report, which presented options and costs regarding future proposals for the discus homes on sites at St Anne's Court/ Horsman Avenue, Regent Street and Faber Street/Richmond Street, York.

The bungalows had been constructed during 1975/76 using non traditional building methods and most of the fabric of the properties, except for the concrete base and the steel frame were made from products containing asbestos. It was pointed out that the homes were safe to live in but tenants were made aware that their homes contained asbestos and that they should contact the authority for advice before making any alterations to their homes.

Officers outlined details of the consultation undertaken with residents, in connection with the proposals, which showed that 90 households said they would be prepared to move, 6 households said that they would not move and 2 were undecided. Officers also confirmed that they were happy to work with residents regarding the type of properties that would be erected on the sites and that they would report back to Members with redevelopment proposals in a design brief.

In answer to Members questions Officers confirmed that the representative panel involved in the selection of a development partner, referred to in the recommendation, would include senior housing staff, the Executive Member for Housing, Ward Members and residents representatives. They also indicated phasing of the works would be examined to limit moves wherever possible.

Officers clarified that the reference in the recommendations to residents being given priority transfer status would commence from the scheduled implementation of the new Allocations Transfer Policy on 1 April 2006.

Members were presented with the following four options

Option 1 - Retain the status quo

Doing nothing is not an option as the homes do not meet statutory standards, they will have to meet decent homes standard by 2010 and this cannot be done with out substantial investment and disruption for residents.

Option 2 - Refurbishment

The properties could be refurbished to a modern standard and all the asbestos removed. This would result in 100 bungalows for older people being retained by the council. Alternatively a reduced number could be retained and refurbished.

Option 3 – Redevelopment

Demolition of the bungalows and redevelopment of the sites would give an opportunity to build new homes that meet the housing needs and aspirations of current residents, and local people in the future. There is high housing need in the city with the latest housing needs survey estimating that 954 additional affordable homes are required annually to meet that need. Redevelopment would provide an opportunity to develop additional housing at a time when development opportunities for affordable housing in the city are limited.

Option 4 – Disposal

There is demand in York for land to be developed for housing. If the sites were sold on the open market the value would be substantial. The council's Affordable Housing Policy requires that 50% of homes built on residential sites should be affordable, however the mix, type and tenure would have to be negotiated with the developer.

Advice of the Advisory Panel:

That the Executive Member be advised to approve:

- (i) The redevelopment option, as set out in paragraph 26 (Option 3), with a minimum of 100 homes for older people. A further report on the detail of this option will be brought back to Members in approximately 12 months following further consultation with residents
- (ii) The appointment of a Project Manager (PO3-6) on an initial 2 year contract to lead the redevelopment for the council
- (iii) The selection of a development partner, the criteria for which is to be decided by a representative panel
- (iv) Not to let any further properties on the sites; that residents are given priority transfer status from the implementation of the new allocation policy and are eligible for home loss and disturbance payments from that date; that void properties are monitored on a regular basis

Decision of the Executive Member:

RESOLVED:	That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.
REASON:	To progress work in this area.

CLLR SUNDERLAND
Executive Member

CLLR JAMIESON-BALL
Chair of the Advisory Panel

The meeting started at 5.00pm and finished at 6.15pm.