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MEETING	EXECUTIVE MEMBERS FOR HOUSING & ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES AND ADVISORY PANEL
DATE	17 MARCH 2008
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS HOGG (CHAIR), SUE GALLOWAY (EXECUTIVE MEMBER), SUNDERLAND (EXECUTIVE MEMBER), BOWGETT, FRASER, HORTON, TAYLOR, WISEMAN, MRS MILDRED GRUNDY (CO-OPTED NON-STATUTORY MEMBER) AND MS PAT HOLMES (CO-OPTED NON-STATUTORY MEMBER)

#### **56. 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.

Councillor Hogg declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 9 (Financial Support to the Voluntary Sector 2008/09) owing to his fathers contact with the Alzheimer's Society and a general interest, as his mother was a resident of Morrell House.

Councillor Fraser declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 (Gas Servicing Future Procurement) as a member of the retired section of UNISON.

#### **57. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That the Press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Annex A to agenda item 7 (Gas Servicing Future Procurement) on the grounds that it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), which is classed as exempt under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Section 100A of the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

#### **58. MINUTES**

In response to an issue raised under Minute 48 (Minutes), Officers provided a further update on their enquiries concerning the rent position of tenants of Discus bungalows. Officers confirmed that they had now contacted all 15 residents to try and ascertain their position in relation to receipt of benefits. Of those 9 had not wished to share their details, 1 would be entitled to benefits, 1 may be entitled, 2 required further investigation and 2 were definitely not entitled to assistance. It was agreed to keep a watch on those tenants not in receipt of benefits and keep members updated on the final position.<sup>1</sup>

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Executive Members and Advisory Panel, held on 14 January 2008, be approved and signed by the Chair and Executive Members as a correct record.

Action Required

1. To update members on the final position in relation to the LE rent position of the Discus bungalow tenants.

**59. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

It was reported that nobody had registered to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme, on general issues within the remit of the Panel.

**60. RESULTS OF THE 2007 ANNUAL HOUSING SATISFACTION SURVEY**

Members considered a report, which provided the results of the Annual Housing Services Monitor (AHSM), a postal survey of City of York Council tenants undertaken during November 2007. Officers gave a presentation, which detailed the headline results from the survey:

- Overall satisfaction with the housing services had increased to 88%
- 88% of tenants described the council as a 'very good' or 'good' landlord
- 87% were very or fairly satisfied with the condition of their home
- 83% were satisfied with the repair and maintenance service
- 70% felt that the Council's housing service took account of their views when making decisions

Details of the results had been issued in a press release in January 2008 and a presentation was to be made to the York Federation on 20 March. It was reported that encouragingly there had been significant improvements in tenant satisfaction overall.

As the main area of concern to tenants appeared to be repairs an end-to-end review of the responsive repairs service, using systems thinking principles was now underway. Work was also to be undertaken on staff training together with the updating of procedures to ensure that staff were in a better position to deal with enquiries.

Members agreed that staff had worked hard to bring satisfaction levels back up to those of 2002/03, which it was felt had in part been due to the restructure of housing services.

Pat Holmes stated that the Federation were concerned that there were a number of areas, which did not have Residents Associations, causing difficulties in keeping tenants informed. Certain Members felt that there was now less support for tenants associations through neighbourhood management. The Executive Member for Housing confirmed that there was a need to provide assistance with resident's interaction, including the involvement of younger people and possible daytime meetings. The

Executive Member also congratulated all staff on the excellent results and on the 50% survey return rate.

Pat Holmes confirmed that she had now stood down from the Federation and that it would be last Panel meeting attended by the co-optees.

#### Advice of the Advisory Panel

- i) That the Executive Member be advised to note the results of the 2007 Annual Housing Services Monitor together with the proposed actions.
- ii) That Mrs Mildred Grundy and Ms Pat Holmes, the co-opted non-statutory members, be thanked for their attendance and valuable input into meetings of the Advisory Group.<sup>1</sup>

#### Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To improve satisfaction levels of tenants with the Housing Service.

#### Action Required

1. Letter to thank the co-optees for their work on the Panel. LE

### **61. HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION CHANGE**

Members considered a report, which presented proposals regarding the adoption of a policy for the replacement of focal point fires to customer homes. Officers reported that the Authority had no direct policy in operation governing the choices available for customers when focal point fires were replaced.

It was reported that there were still specific requests for replacement gas fires but that the longer-term impacts of these installations often contradicted the Council's responsibilities to value for money and sustainability. In view of this members were asked to consider the following options:

- Option 1** - Do not fit any new focal point fires.
- Option 2** - Replace all fires with electric
- Option 3** - Give customer's choice

In answer to members questions Officers confirmed that tenants were able to choose their energy supplier and that they would examine bulk purchasing of energy for tenants. They also confirmed that tenants were offered 4 types of electric fires in a choice of colours.

The Executive Member confirmed that the Energy Advice Centre were able to advise tenants on fuel options, how to save money, energy and the environment.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

- i) That the Executive Member agree Option 2 to adopt a policy to replace all focal point fires with electric in customers homes as set out in paragraph 9 of the report.<sup>1</sup>
- ii) That Officers investigate with suppliers bulk purchasing arrangements for energy, including any legal implications, and email members the results of their enquiries.<sup>2</sup>

Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: As electric fires offer value for money, are efficient and reduce health and safety risks for customers.

Action Required

- 1. To implement the policy to replace all focal point fires with electric in customers homes. LE
- 2. Officers to investigate with suppliers the bulk purchasing of energy for tenants and email members the results of their enquiries. LE

**62. GAS SERVICING FUTURE PROCUREMENT**

Officers stated that it appeared that this procurement report, which recommended amendments to the Housing Repairs Partnership to include the whole of the gas servicing in the city, had to be considered by the Executive, under the Council's Constitution.

Members were asked to note that this report would be considered at the Executive meeting on 25 March 2008.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

The Executive Member to note that this report, detailing the procurement exercise for the future direction of the gas servicing and maintenance service for council dwellings, is to be considered at the Executive meeting on 25 March 2008.<sup>1</sup>

Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To secure service quality and value for money on behalf of the council's tenants.

Action Required

1. This report will be considered at the Executive meeting on LE  
25 March 2008.

**63. FORMER TENANT ARREARS - WRITE OFF**

Consideration was given to a report, which sought agreement to write off a number of former tenants arrears, as detailed in Annex A of the report.

Officers confirmed that the district auditor required existing balances to be examined and uncollectible debts to be written off each year. It was also reported that these arrears had a significant affect on the additional contribution made each year within the Housing Revenue Account towards bad debts.

**Option 1:** Maintain these Former Tenants Arrears on accounts. 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 of October 2002.

**Option 2:** Write the debts off on the understanding that, if necessary, they can be reinstated at a later date.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member agree Option 2 to write off former tenants arrears of £30,209.95 as detailed in Annex A of the report.<sup>1</sup>

Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: This is for financial reasons, in line with the recommendations of the audit report.

Action Required

1. To write off former tenants arrears of £30,209.95 as LE  
detailed in Annex A of the report, on the understanding that  
if necessary they can be reinstated at a later date.

**64. FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR (HOUSING & ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES) 2008/09**

Consideration was given to a report which presented requests received from local organisations for financial support in 2008/09 together with the criteria for the awarding of financial support.

Officers reported that the budget for financial support for the voluntary sector had been set at £70,530 for social services and £8,630 for housing

related services. Applications had been received from the 7 social care organisations, outlined below, and 1 housing organisation, details of which were set out in the report.

<b>Organisations (Social Services)</b>	<b>2008/9 Proposed Award OPTION 1</b>	<b>2008/9 Proposed Award OPTION 2</b>
York Community Furniture Store	£10,000	£10,000
York Blind & Partially Sighted Society	£20,036	£20,036
York Deaf Society	£5,000	£5,000
York Mind	£8,660	£8,660
Alzheimer's Society	£3,580	£3,580
Remap	£300	£300
Independent Care Group (ICG)	£15,000	£15,000
Provision for small One-Off grants during financial year	£7,954	£7,954
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£70,530</b>	<b>£70,530</b>

<b>Organisations (Housing)</b>	<b>2008/9 Proposed Award OPTION 1</b>	<b>2008/9 Proposed Award OPTION 2</b>
Citizens Advice Bureau (Bond Guarantee Scheme)	£8,630	£8,630

<b>Totals for Social Services &amp; Housing</b>	<b>£79,160</b>	<b>£79,160</b>
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Members were informed that over the next twelve months a review was to be undertaken of the strategic relevance and outcomes delivered by services funded through this financial support. This was with a view to integrating Financial Support Agreements within overall commissioning budgets.

Following further discussion members then considered the following options:

**Option 1** – To award Financial Support as indicated in the table above to all organisations on one year Service Level Agreements

**Option 2** – To award Financial Support to all organisations as detailed in the table above on one year Service Level Agreements with the exception of The Independent Care Group and the York Blind & Partially Sighted Society where it is proposed that Three Year Agreements are awarded.

#### Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Members agree Option 2 to award Financial Support, as outlined above.<sup>1</sup>

#### Decision of the Executive Members

**RESOLVED:** That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To continue financial support to the voluntary sector.

Action Required

1. That financial support be awarded to the voluntary sector LE  
as outlined in Option 2 of the report.

CLLR SUE SUNDERLAND  
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING

CLLR SUE GALLOWAY  
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

CLLR CHRIS HOGG,  
Chair of Advisory Panel  
[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 5.50 pm].