

Decent and Affordable Homes Policy Development Group

Chairman's Report March 2014

The PDG has once again had a busy year of meetings which has seen it involved in discussions on a great many subjects which affect our ability to provide a high standard of housing service, which quite rightly our tenants expect and hopefully receive.

It is pleasing to see that members of the Scrutiny Improvement Group (SIG) have attended some of our meetings, their input through their own meetings has also provided very useful information in our decision making process and it is hoped that this will continue.

During the year we have seen the completion of the building of a number of local authority houses at Well Parks in Crediton, the first we have built for many years. These affordable homes are a much needed and welcome addition to our housing stock.

Our housing teams continue to work proactively to ensure that our tenants have access to a highly rated housing service, their emphasis on prompt rent payment has paid dividends which are shown in the arrears figures we are now achieving. This is something we must work diligently on as ongoing changes in the Benefit System could impact on this severely

Our maintenance department have been effective in meeting the ever increasing need to reduce costs, whilst continuing to maintain a service to our tenants at a very high level. This will be an ongoing challenge as we face decreasing budgets but we remain confident that our management teams and workforce will sustain the level of service going forward.

This year has seen our committee meeting being recorded for access by our tenants and the general public, can I thank the committee members for their efforts in maintaining the protocols expected for this system to be effective.

As Chairman my sincere thanks must go to all committee members, to our cabinet member for housing Cllr Ray Stanley for his regular attendance and all his assistance and guidance.

To Nick Sanderson , Head of Housing and all his dedicated team for all their hard work in providing information to allow us to make recommendations and decisions, and their continued hard work in reducing rent arrears, maintaining quick turnarounds on voids and repairs.

To the Head of finance and his team, especially Rod Hewson who has attended all our meetings for the clear and understandable way they have keep the committee up to date with finances.

Also thank you to other Officers who throughout the year have attended meetings

and provided information that we have requested

And finally my personal thanks are extended to Sarah Lees and Julia Stuckey for there ever present assistance in producing reports, agendas and providing updates in a clear and concise format.

I look forward to working with you all as we move into a new year of meetings to face the challenging times ahead .

Peter Heal
Chairman.

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Chairmans Report

Policies approved by the PDG:

Budget

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet acceptance of the contents of the report and that rents be increased by an average of 4.7%.

Care Services Review

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

- i) The Council does not provide a Housing Support Service to sheltered housing tenants after April 2015, or September 2014 if a satisfactory arrangement cannot be agreed with Devon County Council;
- ii) The Council continues to provide the Lifeline Alarm service for tenants and private customers;
- iii) Service charges are introduced for Council tenants who receive the Lifeline Alarm service;
- iv) Repairs services are made available to private customers.

Introductory Tenancy Policy

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the draft strategic Tenancy Policy be adopted.

Gas Safety Policy

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that subject to the inclusion of the wording 'the tenant would be charged costs if court action was taken' and that 'servicing must be carried out by law every 12 months', that the draft Gas Safety Policy be adopted.

Review of Cash Incentive Scheme

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the following changes be made to the scheme:

- (a) the amount payable in each downsizing case be reduced to a maximum of £1250;
- (b) the grant be payable to those Council tenants who were downsizing to alternative accommodation belonging to another Registered Provider within Mid Devon.

Housing Service Aids and Adaptations Policy

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that it recommends to Council that the above policy be adopted.

Targeted Support Service Delivery and Charging Procedure

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the Targeted Support Charging Procedure and Pricing Structure be approved.

Other Issues discussed:

Performance and Risk

Tenancy Services Business Plan

Tenants Housing Complaints

Devon Home Choice

Well Parks

Tenancy Home Checks

New Homes Bonus

Community Safety Partnership – Anti Social Behaviour

Financial Updates

Review of Tenant Involvement Arrangements

Rent Arrears 'Traffic Light' letter Initiative

Programme of Planned Maintenance

Budget