

Minutes 18 March 2014

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on Tuesday 18 March 2014 at 2.15pm

Present Councillors: P J Heal (Chairman), Mrs E M Andrews, W J Daw, R F Radford, Mrs J R Rendle and R Wright

Also Present Councillor: R L Stanley

Also Present Officers: N Sanderson (Head of Housing and Property Services), R Hewson (Principal Accountant), C Fry (Housing Services Manager), C Yandle (Audit Team Leader) and J Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

Declaration

of interest of

Councillor:

Member	Minute No	Type of Interest
J R Rendle	61	Personal
R Wright	61	Personal

56. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.


57. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 January 2014 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

58. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked Allocations Team Leader Fran Custance for her 27 years' service to the Council and wished her luck in her new career with Devon and Cornwall Police.

59. PERFORMANCE AND RISK (00 hours, 01 minute, 35 seconds)

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report*  [Minute 59 \[140kb\]](#) of the Head of Communities and Governance providing Members with an update on performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for 2013/14 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

The Audit Team Leader explained that there were no areas of concern to report

Discussion took place regarding:

Delivery of Affordable Homes: This area was shown as well below target but the Head of Housing and Property Services explained that this had been due to the economic climate, which was now improving. He anticipated that this target would be met in the future and that work had now started on several developments within the District.


The Audit Team Leader **AGREED** to change the colours that indicated whether or not targets had been met, due to problems reading the reports in black and white.

The Audit Team Leader explained that a Scrutiny Working Group had been put in place and had met to look at Performance Management. The working group had looked at which Performance Indicators were being reported to meetings and had requested that each PDG look at their own area, to identify which Indicators they wanted reported to the Group.

It was **AGREED** that the Policy Development Group continue to receive a report containing all of the Key Performance Indicators listed, but that the Cabinet receive the shorter list agreed by the Scrutiny Working Group.

Note: - Report previously circulated, copy attached to signed minutes.

60. **FINANCIAL MONITORING (00 hours, 11 minute, 02 seconds)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report*  [Minute 60 \[169kb\]](#) of the Head of Finance detailing financial monitoring for the ten months to 31 January 2014 in respect of the services within this PDG's remit.

The Accountant explained that there were no significant areas to report but explained that the Housing Revenue Account was showing a variance of £392K in savings to the repairs service. This was due to the repairs team taking on more work, such as adaptation works and major works.

It was **AGREED** that the Head of Housing and Property Services report to the next meeting a three to five year Asset Management Plan.

There was a total forecast saving of £743K resulting in a Housing Revenue Account reserve of £2.7 million. Savings had been made by efficiencies, performing well and good management. Some projects had not yet come into fruition and the funding for those may be required in the future.

Future plans could include building new homes to replace those purchased under Right to Buy. New incentives from the Government had seen an increase in the number of homes bought and the number was expected to


exceed 25 by the end of the financial year. A proportion of the money raised from Right to Buy could be used to 'buy back' council properties.

It was **AGREED** that the Head of Housing and Property Services bring a report to the next meeting of the Group regarding Right to Buy, how much money there was and what to spend it on.

Grant funding had been received to bring homes to 'decent homes standard' and this work was ongoing.

Note: - Report previously circulated, copy attached to signed minutes.

61.HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY (00 hours, 27 minute, 17 seconds)

The Group had before it a report *  [Minute 61 \[3Mb\]](#) from the Head of Housing and Property Services, providing Members with information regarding the Homelessness Strategy. The Officer explained that the Council had a statutory obligation to review and update the Homelessness Strategy at least every five years. He also explained that due to the fact that the strategy contained figures it would always be slightly out of date from the time that it was written, for example numbers on waiting lists changed all the time, but that the strategy was accurate at the time of writing.

Discussion took place regarding:

Band E applicants; It was **AGREED** that the Head of Housing and Property Services bring a report to the next meeting of this Policy Development Group to debate Band E and whether those applicants should be on the housing waiting list.

Night Shelter; The Head of Housing and Property Services informed the Group that Officers became aware of those sleeping rough through communications with organisations such as CHAT, Street Pastors and Devon County Council. The Council currently had a property which it could use if the weather meant that accommodation needed to be provided to the homeless, but this needed further investigation as the property concerned would soon be converted.

The Strategy referred to potential additional pressures on working peoples budgets when Council Tax Benefit changed in April 2013. This needed to be changed to say 'had' rather than 'will'.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that subject to the wording change being agreed, the draft Homelessness Strategy be adopted.

(Proposed by Cllr W J Daw and seconded by Cllr R Wright)


Cllr Mrs E Andrews requested that her abstention be recorded.

Notes: i) Report previously circulated, copy attached to signed minutes;

ii) Cllr Mrs J R Rendle declared a personal interest as she was a landlord in Tiverton;

iii) Cllr R Wright declared a personal interest as he was a Trustee of the Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT).

62. DECANT POLICY (01 hours, 03 minute, 30 seconds)


The Group had before it a report*  [Minute 62 \[54kb\]](#) of the Housing Services Manager for Members' consideration. The Officer explained that there would be times when the Council had to ask tenants to move from their home either temporarily or permanently for health and safety reasons. This was so that improvements, repairs or development works could take place. This was known as decanting and the Council needed a policy relating to this to ensure that all such cases were treated in the same way.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the draft Decant Policy be adopted.

(Proposed by Cllr W J Daw and seconded by Cllr R Wright)

Note: - Report previously circulated, copy attached to signed minutes.


63. LOCAL AUTHORITY BENCHMARKING REPORT (01 hours, 15 minute, 50 seconds)

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report*  [Minute 63 \[38kb\]](#) of the Head of Housing and Property Services informing the Group how the Housing Service year-end performance for the financial year 2012/13 compared to that of other housing providers.

The Head of Housing and Property Services explained that the written report formalised the verbal information that he had given to the Group at the last meeting. There had been no change to the information

Note: - Report previously circulated, copy attached to signed minutes.

64. CHAIRMANS ANNUAL REPORT

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a draft report*  [Minute 64 \[13kb\]](#) by the Chairman on the work of the Group since May 2013. A final copy of this report would be submitted to Full Council on 30 April 2014.

Note: - Report previously circulated, copy attached to signed minutes.

65. IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING - 20 May 2014

In addition to the items already listed in the work programme, the following items were requested for the next meeting:

Three to Five Year Asset Management Plan

Right to Buy

Housing Band E

Financial Monitoring

Performance and Risk

(The meeting ended at 3.37pm)

CHAIRMAN