

# Minutes 20 May 2014

## MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**  
held on Tuesday 20 May 2014 at 2.15pm

**Present Councillors:** Mrs E M Andrews, E J Berry (substituting for Cllr W J Daw), P J Heal, R F Radford, Mrs J R Rendle, P F Williams and R Wright

**Apology Councillor:** W J Daw

**Also Present** R L Stanley

**Councillor:**

**Also Present**

**Officers:** N Sanderson (Head of Housing and Property Services), C Fry (Housing Services Manager), C Yandle (Internal Audit Team Leader), R Hewson (Principal Accountant) and S J Lees (Member Services Officer)

1 **CHAIRMAN - ELECTION** (Cllr E J Berry, Chairman of the Council, in the Chair)

**RESOLVED** that Cllr P J Heal be elected Chairman of the Group for the municipal year 2014/15.

Cllr Heal took the Chair

2      **VICE-CHAIRMAN - ELECTION**

**RESOLVED** that Cllr W J Daw be elected Vice-Chairman of the Group for the municipal year 2014/15.

3      **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.


4      **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 March 2014 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

5      **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (Recording 2 minutes and 53 seconds)**

The Chairman had no announcements to make:

6      **PERFORMANCE AND RISK (Recording 3 minutes and 4 seconds)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report  [Minute 6 \[137kb\]](#) of the Head of Communities and Governance (HCG) providing an update on performance against Corporate Plan and local service targets within its remit for the 2013/14 financial year, together with an update on the key business risks.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The percentage of 'Decent Council Homes' being a moveable target;
- The slippage on the amount of time to re-let had occurred because of operational issues partly due to paternity leave. The Manager was reviewing performance in this area and a weekly meeting of the Void Team was now taking place;
- The number of affordable homes delivered was disappointing but there would be homes coming through in respect of St Andrews Street in Tiverton, Fir Close Willand and other homes recently granted planning permission;

- The average number of days to re-let was noted as 20; this could be further broken down and more analysis provided to the Group should they wish to receive it verbally;
- The amount of rent which was lost through voids was currently reported to the Housing Managers;
- It was confirmed that 'MiSpace' dealt with the Planned Maintenance contract and the Council's internal Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) dealt with repairs to void properties and preparing them for re-letting.

The Chairman requested that thanks and congratulations from the Group be passed on to rent collection team and also noted that the percentage of properties with a valid gas safety certificate was now 100%.

Note: \*Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes;

## 7 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN FOR 2013/14 (Recording 22 minutes and 7 seconds)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report  [Minute 7 \[25kb\]](#) from the Head of Finance presenting the revenue outturn figures for the financial year 2013/14.

The Principal Accountant highlighted the key figures within the report:

- There had been a saving of £145k due to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) not needing to borrow as much from the General Fund;
- An additional income amount of £62,556 had not been budgeted for and this had taken the HRA from a small deficit position to a surplus;
- There had been £246,612 income received and transferred to the Renewable Energy Fund;
- The General HRA reserve was now sitting at £2,198,000 but much of this may be needed in the future given the uncertain financial times;


Discussion took place regarding:

- The termination fees involved when residents wanted solar panels removed, this was calculated at approximately £10k per household;
- Once solar panels were removed they could be connected to the national grid again but they would not qualify for the Feed In Tariff as they would have already been registered once;
- The technology in relation to solar panels was advancing all the time;
- The contract with Anesco allowed for panels to be removed once in 25 years to allow for roof repairs;

- Miscellaneous Income needed to be listed out in more detail in future;

Note: \*Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

## **8 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (Recording 39 minutes and 37 seconds)**


The Group had before it a report\* [Minute 8 \[331kb\]](#) from the Head of Housing and Property Services advising Members of the new Housing Revenue Account Asset Management strategy 2015 - 2020. He outlined the contents of the report explaining the Strategy gave the Housing Department some milestones to identify where it was spending money year on year and also gave them the ability to identify where the projected spend would be. He further explained that a stock condition survey had been undertaken in 2010 on every Council owned property. This resulted in an ability to provide a 5 year rationalised capital expenditure programme and a 30 year capital works programme.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that the draft Asset Management Strategy for 2015 - 2020 be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr P F Williams and seconded by Cllr Mrs J R Rendle)

Note: \* Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.


## **9 RIGHT TO BUY SALES AND ONE FOR ONE REPLACEMENT (Recording 55 minutes and 19 seconds)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a briefing paper\* [Minute 9 \[21kb\]](#) from the Head of Housing and Property Services informing members of the impact of the Governance increase in the cap of the Right to Buy discount from the 2 April 2012 and the subsequent usable receipts received from this for replacement housing.

Clarification was provided regarding the 'Buy Back Scheme' in that it had always been a condition of a tenants contract that they gave the Council the opportunity to buy back a property after it had previously been sold, however, until the government changed the subsidies in relation to this the Council had not been able to maximise this opportunity.

Note: \*Briefing paper previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

10      **DEVON HOME CHOICE ISSUES RELATING TO BAND E & LOCAL CONNECTION (Recording 1 hour, 2 minutes and 10 seconds)**

The Group had before it a report  [Minute 10 \[168kb\]](#) from the Head of Housing and Property Services. At the last meeting of the Group, Members had asked for a debate regarding Band E on the Devon Home Choice (DHC) scheme and whether or not this housing authority should maintain a list of cases where there is no housing need. They also sought a discussion relating to other flexibilities introduced by the Localism Act 2011 in relation to the allocation of social housing; in particular the introduction of a residency test.

The Housing Services Manager outlined the contents of the report highlighting that the Council worked with other local authorities, including Plymouth and Torbay, to allocate social housing using the Devon Home Choice (DHC) scheme. She commented that if arrangements for the allocation of homes were to change the Registered Social Landlords had expressed an opinion that they would like to be consulted. Also careful consideration needed to be given to the effect of any changes on other districts within Devon.

Through the allocations process there was evidence that some people in Band E had reasonably high incomes and could possibly be able to buy or rent in the private sector. Concluding that this needed careful analysis the Group:

**RESOLVED** that a working group of PDG Members and officers be established to discuss the statistics in relation to the number of housing applications in Band E for the next six months and report back to the PDG with their findings and any recommendations. The PDG Members to join the working group were identified as Cllrs P J Heal, Mrs J R Rendle and P F Williams.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs J R Rendle and seconded by Cllr P F Williams)

Note: \* Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

11      **START TIME OF MEETINGS**

It was **AGREED** that meetings of the Group continue to start at 2.15pm for the remainder of the municipal year.

12      **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING - 15 JULY 2014**

The following matters were suggested for the next meeting:

- Financial Monitoring
- Monitoring of income levels with Band E
- Review the Downsizing Scheme
- Housing Business Plan
- Interim report from the Band E Working Group
- Verbal report on care Services

(The meeting ended at 3.30pm)

**CHAIRMAN**