

SPECIAL COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 28 MAY 2009

PRESENT:- Councillors Roderick Bluh (Chair), Brian Mattock, David Renard, Derique Montaut, James Grant and David Wood (Deputy).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fionuala Foley (Vice-Chair) and Stan Pajak.

Councillors Peter Greenhalgh and Keith Williams attended the meeting in respect of Minute 32.

1. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

2. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2009, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. Public Question Time

No public questions were asked under Standing Order 28.

4. Housing Revenue Account - Revised Rents for 2009/10

The Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Adult Social Care and the Director of Housing and Leisure submitted a joint report concerning an announcement of the Government on 6th March 2009, regarding Housing finance and guideline rent increases, that had the impact of requiring this Council to reconsider the level of rent increase it had agreed at its meeting on 23rd February 2009 (Average Rent of £69.80 per week – 6.2% increase).

Councillor David Renard, Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Adult Social Care, welcomed the Government's announcement of a reduction in the proposed guideline rent increase because of the impact of the current recession, and explained that full details of the proposals were still awaited. However, he believed the timing of the announcement was unfortunate, as most Housing authorities would have by then already agreed their rent levels for 2009/10, and there would now be additional costs to the Housing Revenue Account associated with the introduction of the revised rents. He referred to the impact of the proposed changes in Housing finance and the revised guideline rent for individual rent levels in Swindon.

Resolved – That, on behalf of the Council, and subject to the formal confirmation of the Government:

- (a) The proposed average rent for Housing Revenue Account dwellings for 2009/10 of £69.80 per week (48 week basis), be reduced to £67.75 per week (48 week basis), to bring it in to line with the 3.1% increase proposed

by the Government's revised rent restructuring guidance issued in March 2009.

- (b) Rents charged on General Fund properties be reduced in line with the reduction in the average rents for Housing Revenue Account dwellings (3.1%).
- (c) Rents charged for plots at the Hay Lane Residential Gypsy Site be reduced by £1.00 per week to £38.00 per week (52 week basis).

5. The Modernisation of ICT infrastructure

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Corporate Services, the Group Director, Business Transformation and the Head of ICT submitted a joint report concerning the provision of additional Capital funding to support the procurement of a 'Microsoft Enterprise Agreement' and the associated hardware and implementation costs, in order to overcome software licence compliance issues, improve ICT System reliability and replace life-expired software and equipment, and to support the delivery of the Council's proposed New Ways of Working Programme.

Councillor Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Corporate Services, and Councillor Peter Greenhalgh, Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Transport and Strategic Planning, expressed their support for the proposal and referred to the significant impact that it would have on the effective operation of the Council, and the development of new ways of working.

Resolved – That the Special Committee on behalf of the Council:

- (a) Approves an additional Capital investment of up to £1.98m for the purchase of a Microsoft Enterprise Agreement and associated hardware and implementation costs.
- (b) Notes that the repayment of the initial Capital investment and additional running costs, will be accommodated within the overall Business Case for the New Ways of Working initiative, which is to be reported to the Cabinet on 10th June 2009.
- (c) Authorises the Director of Law and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Head of ICT, to enter into an agreement with Microsoft and their Large Account Reseller, on such terms as he may consider necessary to protect the Council's interests.