

WEDNESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2013

MINUTE FOR CONFIRMATION

**96. Housing Revenue Account
- Revenue and Capital Investment Budget 2013/14
(Minute for Confirmation)**

The Cabinet Member for One Swindon, Localities and Housing, and the Board Director, Service Delivery submitted a joint report concerning the proposed budget for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2013/14, including proposals for rents, service charges and support charges and the debt for 2013/14.

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for One Swindon, Localities and Housing, presented the report and advised that revised appendices had been circulated at the meeting. He explained how the report set out the context and background to the proposed Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2013/14, and the reasons for the proposed changes in the levels of rents and services charges. He referred to the issue of debt repayment and to the reasons that he was now suggesting that the figure appearing in Appendix 4 "Loan Repayments" should be changed from £8m to £5m and the implications of this for the HRA Budget and investment in the Council's Housing stock. The proposed change was reflected in the revised appendices that had been circulated at the meeting.

Councillor Holland explained the reasons why he supported the recommended increases in rents and service charges. Whilst he recognised that this would cause some hardship for some tenants, he believed the majority would not be badly affected, particularly, the many tenants who were receiving benefits to assist meeting their housing costs. He stressed the importance for tenants and for the Council of seeking to invest in the Council's housing stock now rather than delaying this to sometime in the future with an associated increase in interest payments associated with delayed repayment of debt.

Councillor Holland referred to the consultation that had taken place with tenants and stakeholders and, particularly, to the discussions that had taken place at the Housing Advisory Forum held on 23rd January 2013. He noted the comments made by the Chair of the Housing Advisory Forum and the views expressed by the tenant representatives and Councillors at the meeting. He acknowledged the vote that had taken place at the Advisory Forum meeting and advised that he would seek to amend the draft minute that appeared in paragraph 3.27(3) of the report by deleting the words “some of the members” and their replacement by the words “a vote was taken such that a majority of the”. He hoped that this would clarify the conclusions reached.

Councillor Bob Wright commented on the discussions that had taken place at the Housing Advisory Forum and on alternative ways in which the Council could invest in its Council stock, encourage local jobs and deliver a reasonable rent for its tenants. He believed that the suggestions put forward by his colleague Councillor Moffatt to the Forum and the Cabinet Member were worthy of further consideration. He welcomed the proposal to reduce the level of Loan Repayments but believed

this should go much further.

Councillor Holland noted Councillor Wright's comments and reiterated that he believed the proposed recommendations offered the best outcomes for both the Council and its tenants.

Resolved – That, subject to the confirmation of the Council –

- **The Rents for 2013/14 are increased in line with convergence targets of Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 0.5% plus maximum of £2.00, which will increase average rents for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings to £77.82 per week (52 week basis), an increase of 4.8%. This will be an average increase of £3.59 per week.**
- **The housing related support charges for 2013/14 and service charges for 2013/14, as outlined in Appendix 2(revised) of the joint report of the Cabinet Member for One Swindon, Localities and Housing and the Board Director, Service Delivery, be approved.**
- **Leaseholder service charges set for 2013/14 as shown in Appendix 3(revised) of the joint report, be approved.**
- **Based on the proposals set out within the joint report the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) proposed budget for 2013/14, as shown in Appendix 4 (revised) to the joint report, be approved and that the HRA Repairs Budget and Funding be approved as shown in Appendix 5 (revised) to the joint report.**
- **The provision for debt repayment in 2013/14 of £5m, as detailed in Appendix 1(revised) to the joint report, be approved.**
- **The Council include within its Constitution's Scheme of Delegations an authority enabling the Board Director, Service Delivery in consultation with the Board Director, Resources, Head of Housing Services and the Cabinet Member with portfolio responsibility for Housing, to use the Regeneration and Acquisition fund of up to £1m, to purchase 1and 2 Bedroom accommodation to enable these properties to be included with the Council's housing stock.**
- **Rents charged on General Fund properties be on the same basis as HRA properties resulting in an average increase of 4.4% and the service charges as shown in Appendix 6(revised) to the joint report, be approved.**
- **Rents charged for plots at the Hay Lane Residential Gypsy Site be increased by £2.00 per week to £47.00 per week (52 week basis) and the rents for work-pens (small lock-ups), as shown in Appendix 6 (revised) to the joint report, be approved.**
- **The homelessness contribution, as outlined in Appendix 6 (revised) to the joint report, be approved.**
- **The budgeted 2012/13 Debt repayment of £7,977,300 be reduced to £5m, and the additional funding be transferred to HRA reserves at year end, subsequently to be allocated towards increasing the capital programme for 2013/14 as detailed at paragraph 3.45 of the joint report.**

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.