

**COUNCIL**

**MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2014**

**MINUTE FOR CONFIRMATION**

**CABINET**

**WEDNESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2014**

**88. Housing Revenue Account - Rents and Charges 2014/15  
(Minute for Confirmation)**

The Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery), and the Board Director, Service Delivery submitted a joint report concerning the proposed budget for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2014/15, including proposals for rents, service charges and support charges for 2014/15.

Councillor Richard Hurley, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery), presented the report and explained how the report set out the context and background to the proposed Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2014/15, and the reasons for the proposed changes in the levels of rents and services charges. He explained how the likely underspend on the HRA this Financial Year would be used to mitigate damage to tenants' homes and estate infrastructure resulting from the recent adverse weather.

The Head of Housing Services referred to the outcome of the consultation that had taken place with tenants groups, the Housing Advisory Forum and other stakeholders on the proposals for the HRA and rents and charges.

Councillor Des Moffatt referred to the Labour Group's view on the proposed HRA Budget and on what it believed was a more appropriate level of increase for Council rents.

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, referred to the financing of the HRA and on how the level of Council rent affected the amount that the Council had available to invest in improvements to the Housing stock and tenants' homes. He commented on the position of Housing Debt and the effect of this for investment in Swindon's Housing stock. He advised that those tenants in receipt of Benefits would have any increase met through an increased Benefit payment.

Councillor Hurley explained the reasons why he supported the recommended increases in rents and service charges. He reiterated the importance for tenants of the Council seeking to invest in the Council's housing stock. 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 proposed average rent for Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

dwelling for 2014/15 of £79.23 per week (52 week basis), which is an increase of 3.7%, be approved. (This will be an average increase of £2.82 per week (52 week basis) and the range of increases is set out in paragraph 3.12 of the joint report.

- The Board Director, Service Delivery seek authority from the Secretary of State to extend the permission for the use of the Housing Revenue Account for payments to the Council's tenants under the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme, to enable any underspend on the 2013/14 budget of £420,000 to be used in 2014/15, as detailed at paragraphs 3.17 of the joint report.
- The housing related support charges for 2014/15 and service charges for 2014/15, as outlined in Appendix 2 of the joint report of the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery), and the Board Director, Service Delivery, be approved.
- Leaseholder service charges set for 2014/15 as shown in Appendix 3 of the joint report, be approved.
- Based on the proposals set out within the joint report the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) proposed budget for 2014/15, as shown in Appendix 4 to the joint report, be approved and that the HRA Repairs Budget and Funding be approved as shown in Appendix 5 to the joint report.
- The draft Three-year capital projects and planned maintenance programme be approved at an indicative funding level of £16.8m (2014/15 prices) per annum for each of the years 2014/15 through to 2016/17 as set out in Appendix 6 to the joint report.
- Rents charged on General Fund properties be on the same basis as HRA properties resulting in an average increase of 3.7% and the rents and charges for the David Murray John Apartments, as shown in Appendix 7 to the joint report, be approved.
- Rents charged for plots at the Hay Lane Residential Gypsy Site be increased by £1.74 per week (3.7%) to £48.74 per week (52 week basis) and the rents for work-pens (small lock-ups), as shown in Appendix 7 to the joint report, be approved.
- The charges for Private Sector Leased (PSL) accommodation for those accepted as homeless, as outlined in Appendix 7 to the joint report, be approved.
- Any underspend on the 2013/14 Housing Revenue Account be earmarked to fund additional works resulting from the abnormal amount of rainfall, commencing as soon as possible.

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