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**GREAT YARMOUTH COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD**

**15 October 2008 – 5.00 pm**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor Peck (in the Chair); Councillors Blyth, Cook, Cunniffe, S Hacon and Linden, Mr R King (Tenant Board Member), Mr B Poyser and Ms L Seward (Independent Board Members).

Mr D Gilbert (Director of Community Housing), Mr D Frowde (Technical Director of Community Housing), Mr S Baker (Housing Support Services Manager), Mr R Read (Tenancy Services Manager), Mr M Kemp (Housing Finance Manager), Mr R Gregory (Neighbourhood Manager) and Mrs C Webb (Senior Member Services Officer).

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr M Bowles and Mrs J Cosaitis.

**2. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of 3 September 2008 were confirmed.

**3. MATTERS ARISING**

**(i) Fuel Poverty**

The Technical Director reported that, as a result of a series of meetings held by Community Housing and interested partner agencies to discuss possible solutions to alleviate fuel poverty, it had been suggested that this group should broaden into a wider forum.

A report had been presented to Cabinet and as a result, the Corporate Fuel Action Group had been formed, which would be chaired by Councillor Peck. This Group would tackle fuel poverty issues across the Borough and hopefully involve more partner agencies, for example, the PCT.

**(ii) Northern Parishes Information Tour**

It was reported that the proposed information bus tour of the northern parishes would take place on 18 and 19 November 2008.

**4. ROLL OUT OF LOCALITY WORKING ACROSS GREAT YARMOUTH**

Rob Gregory, Neighbourhood Manager for South and Central Yarmouth updated Board Members on the roll out of Locality Working across the Borough

RESOLVED:

That the Board noted the report.

#### 5. **BUDGET OUTTURN 2007/08**

The Housing Finance Manager presented the Housing Revenue accounts for 2007/08.

The Director of Community Housing reported that District Audit were currently auditing the 2007/08 accounts and this exercise would verify their accuracy, in particular the year-end balance.

RESOLVED:

That the Board noted the report.

#### 6. **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Director of Community Housing and the Technical Director presented the Performance Indicator information for the first half of the year.

With regard to the percentage of rent payments made by direct debit, a Member suggested that Community Housing formulate an incentive scheme to encourage more tenants to pay their rent payment by direct debit.

The Housing Finance Manager reported that at the present time, only one direct debit payment date was available and that he was looking at extending the number of payment dates available. He reminded the Board that approximately 66% of rent payments were reliant on housing benefit but that he was prepared to look at an incentive payment scheme.

RESOLVED:

That the Board noted the report.

#### 7. **BUDGET MONITORING 2008/09**

The Housing Finance Manager presented the Budget Monitoring Report for the second quarter of the 2008/09 financial year, highlighting those areas where there were variations in excess of £10,000 between the profiled budget and actual expenditure. None of these was giving cause for concern but the budget would, of course, continue to be closely monitored.

RESOLVED:

That the Board noted the report.

#### 8. **HOUSING FINANCE MANAGER'S REPORT**

The Housing Finance Manager updated the Board on progress against the objectives contained within both the Housing Finance Service Plan and the Value for Money Workbook. He also reported that the credit crunch had seriously impacted on the available capital receipts (from Right to Buy) for the current year's housing major works programme.

The Service Delivery Working Groups had been launched today and the Housing Property Manager, the Capital Projects Manager and the Housing Finance Manager would be facilitating the Finance and Capital Programme Service Delivery Working Group.

Civica, the electronic document management system, had been successfully introduced within the Rents Section during May 2008 and was currently used to drive daily processes, for example, processing a direct debit mandate for rent payment.

RESOLVED:

That the Board noted the report.

## 9. TENANCY SERVICES RESTRUCTURE

The Tenancy Services Manager reported the proposals for a restructure of Tenancy Services. In recent months, two posts in Tenancy Services - Housing Environmental Services Manager and Tenant Participation Co-ordinator – had become vacant. This had created an opportunity to consider whether the current management arrangements provided the best structure with which to meet the challenges.

The current structure had served Tenancy Services well in driving through a number of improvements, notably to environmental management and tenant participation. However, after assessing the challenges and opportunities, a number of changes to the structure were being proposed, in particular:

- a third area housing manager
- integrating the housing caretaking service within the area housing offices
- redefining the role of the Housing Environmental Services Manager
- portfolio responsibilities for the area housing managers
- Deleting the post of Tenant Participation Co-ordinator.

These changes would bring a number of benefits, including increased management capacity, more robust performance management, neighbourhood based teams under the leadership of an area housing manager with responsibility for involving tenants and bringing improvements in service delivery. These changes would have a limited impact on the staffing budget.

RESOLVED:

That the Board endorsed the report.

## 10. TENANT BOARD MEMBER ELECTION

Mr R King, Tenant Board Member, declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in this item.

The Tenancy Services Manager reported the proposed changes to the eligibility criteria and the procedure for the selection of Tenant Board Members.

- The report proposed that both current and future Tenant Board Members were allowed to remain Members of the Tenants Forum and to hold executive positions in their own tenants and residents association.

- In order to maintain some separation between the Community Housing Board and the Tenants Forum and to avoid conflicts of interest, it was proposed that Tenant Board Members would be ineligible to hold the position of Chair or Vice Chair of the Tenants Forum.
- Elections for Tenant Board Members would take place once a year in May and all tenants who were eligible to stand for election to the position of Tenant Board Member should be allowed to do so without being subject to short-listing by the Board.

RESOLVED:

That the Board endorsed the report.

#### **11. GREAT YARMOUTH AND GORLESTON IN BLOOM 2008**

Councillor S Hacon informed the Board that the residents of the Sheltered Housing Schemes were well represented in this year's Great Yarmouth and Gorleston In Bloom competition.

The Tenancy Services Manager, who had attended the Awards Ceremony on behalf of Community Housing, reported that he had been impressed by the efforts made by the Sheltered Housing Schemes and individual tenants.

As a result, Community Housing was investigating how they could extend tenant involvement in the In Bloom competition through tenant participation.

Councillor S Hacon reported that she would be liaising with Rob Gregory, Neighbourhood Manager for South and Central Yarmouth, to see how they could work in partnership to promote the In Bloom competition at a neighbourhood level.

#### **12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Housing Finance Manager informed the Board of the Council's investment in the Icelandic Bank which had gone into receivership. There were no immediate implications for the Housing Revenue Account and the Council anticipated that the investment capital would be recovered.

#### **13. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS**

The Director of Community Housing reported that, since the last meeting of the Board, there had been no occasions when he had exercised his delegated powers to waive financial standing orders.

#### **14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Community Housing Board would take place on Wednesday, 26 November 2008 at 5.00 pm.

#### **15. CLOSURE OF MEETING**

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm.