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GREAT YARMOUTH COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

3 September 2008 – 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Linden (in the Chair); Councillors Blyth, Cook, Cunniffe and Hacon, Mr M Bowles, Mrs J Cosaitis and Mr R King (Tenant Board Members), Mr B Poyser (Independent Board Member).

Mr D Gilbert (Director of Community Housing), Mr D Frowde (Technical Director of Community Housing), Mr S Baker (Housing Support Services Manager), Mr C Durrant (Housing Property Manager), Mr C Dove (Capital Projects Manager) and Mrs C Webb (Senior Member Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Peck.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 23 July 2008 were confirmed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

With regard to minute number 10, the Technical Director reported that he would liaise directly with the Member involved regarding the secure gating issue at Harry Miller Court.

4. HOUSING PROPERTY MANAGER'S REPORT

The Housing Property Manager circulated copies of his report to the Board. The report set out the progress against the service objectives which had been achieved as detailed in the Housing Property Management Service Plan. These service objectives were achieved via the cyclical works programme, the responsive repairs programme and the major works programme.

The programmes included works to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, improve energy efficiency of dwellings, meet tenant aspirations and the Decent Homes Standard and reduce future maintenance costs. Additional objectives included undertaking stock condition surveys, maximising income from external sources, establishing an asbestos database and preparing for the switchover from analogue to digital TV communal aerial installations.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

5. HOUSING MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME 2008/09 DELIVERY

The Capital Projects Manager reported that, after only five months of the financial year, the majority of the major works projects were either completed, on site or about to start on site and he was confident that, by the end of the financial year, the target of 100% spend on the capital programme would be reached.

The Capital Projects Manager gave a brief resume of the progress which had been achieved with the various projects and made particular reference to the pilot scheme for the installation of air sourced heat pumps to ten dwellings in the northern parishes.

The Capital Projects Manager also reported that the reduction in funding for this year's programme meant that three of the projects had been deferred to next year but it was planned to have the design and procurement stages completed in good time to ensure a start on site in April 2009.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

6. IMPACT OF ESCALATING FUEL COSTS

The Technical Director (Community Housing) updated the Board regarding discussions which had taken place with partner agencies to try to help tenants cope with escalating fuel costs.

The information booklet which had been produced by Community Housing had been delivered with the tenants' newsletter. This gave information and tips on how to save energy and contained information on how tenants could obtain two free low energy light bulbs.

The Technical Director explained the rationale regarding the installation of air sourced heat pumps as a pilot scheme. He reported that, for each kilowatt of energy put into the system, three kilowatts of energy were obtained.

Regular meetings had been held with partners during July and August and the next meeting would be held tomorrow.

Renewables East were offering potential funding for ten further air sourced heat pumps and had also requested information to enable them to consider funding the provision of a mains gas supply to a settlement within two kilometres of an existing mains gas supply.

The Energy Advice Bus would be on the road in October 2008 to offer advice to the tenants in the northern villages to ensure that they were aware of the ways to use their energy efficiently. Community Housing had received publicity in a recent copy of the Eastern Daily Press regarding the pilot scheme for the installation of the air sourced heat pumps and would shortly be approaching the Great Yarmouth Mercury in order to publicise this initiative further.

RESOLVED:

That the Board noted the report.

7. RESPONSIVE REPAIRS PARTNERSHIP

The Technical Director (Community Housing) updated the Board regarding the re-tendering of the Responsive Repairs Contract which would come into force on 1 October 2008. This was an important service to tenants and the Technical Director reported the process which had been undertaken to identify and secure a partnering contractor.

The contract had been awarded to Norfolk County Services, subject to a ten day standstill for the unsuccessful tenderers to challenge the decision. The Technical Director reported that, by working closely with NCS, a significant improvement would be achieved in the responsive repairs service.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8. REVIEW OF HOUSING FINANCE

The Director of Community Housing presented to the Board a position statement produced by the Local Government Association in conjunction with various other organisations in respect of the Government's review of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System.

The Director of Community Housing also circulated a letter which had been prepared by Waverley District Council in response to the review. Waverley District Council had requested that other likeminded Councils, which had retained their housing stock, should endorse the letter, prior to its being presented to the Government.

RESOLVED:

(i) That the Board noted the Local Government Association report regarding the Government's review of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System.

(ii) That the Board endorsed the letter written by Waverley District Council.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A Member reported that Government had recently indicated that social housing was at the top of its agenda and asked whether there was any way that Community Housing could apply for funding from the Government to build affordable Council houses once again.

The Director of Community Housing reported that the information published by Government would be scrutinised over the coming weeks, including an assessment of the likely impact on any proposals of the Housing Subsidy Scheme.

Members were hopeful that Council houses could once again be built, but were mindful that these new homes could be sold under the Government's Right to Buy Scheme.

10. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Community Housing Board would take place on Wednesday, 15 October 2008 at 5.00 pm at Maritime House, Marine Parade, Great Yarmouth.

11. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7.35 pm.