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GREAT YARMOUTH COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

23 July 2008 – 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

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

Mr D Gilbert (Director – Community Housing), Mr D Frowde (Technical Director – Community Housing), Mr S Baker (Housing Support Services Manager), Mr R Read (Tenancy Services Manager), and Mrs C Webb (Member Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Ms L Seward.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the 11 June 2008 were confirmed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

With regard to minute number 5, Budget Outturn 2007/08, the Director of Community Housing reported that the Budget had now been finalised.

4. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2008/09

The Director of Community Housing presented the Budget Monitoring Report for the first quarter of the 2008/09 Financial Year. He reported that some of the Budget still needed to be profiled and that this exercise would be completed before the next monitoring report was presented to the Board. Overall, expenditure and income were in line with the Budget forecast and there were no issues to cause concern at present.

RESOLVED:

That the Community Housing Board noted the report.

5. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Director of Community Housing and the Technical Director presented the Performance Indicator report.

RESOLVED:

That the Community Housing Board noted the report.

6. HOUSING MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME 2008/09

The report set out the impact on Great Yarmouth Community Housing of the credit crunch which was affecting the level of Right to Buy sales of Council housing, the potential of spare Housing Revenue Account land for disposal and the knock-on effect on the Housing Major Works Programme for 2008/2009 and future years.

Officers were beginning the process of reviewing the Housing Major Works Programme, reviewing the levels of external borrowing and were also seeking to identify other sources of finance which could be used to support the programme.

Part of this review had led to the identification of Housing Revenue Account land across the Borough which could potentially be sold to generate capital receipts. Such sales could also provide both additional private and social private housing depending on the location and potential sale price.

However, the current economic climate was likely to have an adverse affect on the ability to generate capital receipts from such sales.

RESOLVED:

That the Community Housing Board noted:-

- (i) The impact on the level of Right to Buy sales in the first quarter of 2008/2009 as a result of the credit crunch.
- (ii) The action being taken by Great Yarmouth Community Housing Officers to review the Housing Major Works Programme and the impact of reduced Right to Buy sales and consequently lower capital receipts.
- (iii) The potential of Housing Revenue Account sites which might be available for disposal and generation of additional capital receipts.

7. IMPACT OF ESCALATING FUEL COSTS

The Technical Director gave a précis of the Fuel Poverty meeting which had been held.

The meeting had discussed the issue of fuel poverty and the impact of current soaring fuel prices on tenants.

The Technical Director reported that feedback had been received from both tenants and the Estate Management Team that fuel costs were having a profound effect on tenants and the way which they were using their heating systems. There had been cases where new oil heating systems had been installed and tenants had been unable to use them, as the initial cost to fill the fuel tank had proved prohibitive. This was affecting our elderly tenants in

particular. Other outside agencies had attended the meeting and had agreed to work in partnership to tackle the issue of fuel poverty.

A short Information Guide for our tenants entitled "Keeping Warm in Your Home" had been produced and would be distributed to every tenant within the Borough. The booklet offered basic information on how to keep warm during the winter months whilst saving money on fuel bills. A useful contact list was also included. It had been agreed that this Group would meet frequently.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Community Housing Board noted the report.
- (ii) That the "Keeping Warm in Your Home" booklet be endorsed.

8. TENANCY SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT

The Tenancy Services Manager gave an update on his Service Delivery Plan, which included areas of the Action Plan for Middlegate, improved rent collection, review of the Tenant Participation Compact Agreement and the Tenants' Handbook.

Six Area Housing Panel meetings had been held and to date, the event held at Gorleston and Shrublands had proved to be the most successful. It was proposed that an Area Panel tour would be undertaken in the Rural North on a Routemaster bus. Partner agencies would be invited to attend.

The Tenant Participation Partnership Agreement Monitoring Group had ceased and the first meeting of the replacement Tenants Forum would take place in September. Advertisements would be placed in the Tenants' Newsletter to raise the profile of the Service Delivery Working Groups to encourage tenants to come forward to participate in these. The Tenant Participation Team were working closely with the Neighbourhood Management Board at Middlegate where a Visioning Exercise had recently taken place resulting in an Action Plan which would tackle security, repairs, open spaces, play areas, anti-social behaviour and community participation in the Middlegate area.

Rent collection procedures had also been reviewed and income maximisation had been looked at as part of the work on fuel poverty. A Communications Strategy had also been produced.

RESOLVED:

That the Community Housing Board noted the report.

9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW

The Director of Community Housing updated the Community Housing Board following the publication of the Boundary Committee's report. The Housing Support Services Manager reported that copies of the full Draft Proposal could be supplied to Board Members on request.

RESOLVED:

That the Community Housing Board noted the report.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (i) A Member requested that an Officer investigate reports of anti-social behaviour by youths around the area of Harry Miller Court. Residents would feel safer if the gate to the sheltered housing complex was filled in. The Technical Director agreed to look into this matter.

- (b) A Member requested that the gates in the Pine Green and Elder areas be looked at as they were in need of attention. The Technical Director agreed to look into this matter.

11. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

The Community Housing Board considered the report from the Director of Community Housing regarding the proposed arrangements for reporting cases where he had exercised delegated powers to waive financial standing orders to the Board.

RESOLVED:

That the Community Housing Board noted the report and approved the reporting arrangements contained therein.

12. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meetings of the Community Housing Board would take place on Wednesday, 3 September 2008 at 6.00 pm and on Wednesday, 15 October 2008 at 5.00 pm. The venues would be announced.

13. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.