

Extraordinary Council – 28 September 2006

Minutes of the meeting of **Extraordinary Council** held on **28 September 2006** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs M J Webster

Cllr R A Amner	Cllr T Livings
Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr Mrs R Brown	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr P A Capon	Cllr P K Savill
Cllr Mrs T J Capon	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr J P Cottis	Cllr Mrs M A Starke
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr J Thomass
Cllr Mrs S A Harper	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr K H Hudson	Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr C A Hungate	Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins
Cllr Mrs L Hungate	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs H L A Glynn, T E Goodwin, K J Gordon, A J Humphries, J R F Mason, Mrs J A Mockford C G Seagers, D G Stansby and Mrs C A Weston.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
R J Honey	- Corporate Director (Internal Services)
G Woolhouse	- Corporate Director (External Services)
J Pritchard	- Housing Manager
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

323 HOUSING STOCK TRANSFER OFFER DOCUMENT

Council considered the report of the Corporate Director (External Services) on the proposed housing stock transfer offer to be made by the Council to its tenants.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Jenkins, of Bircham Dyson Bell Solicitors, to the meeting. Mr Jenkins was in attendance to introduce the document to Members of the Council.

The Leader of the Council thanked all those Members and officers who had contributed to the process. Reference was made to the fact that the offer document contained all the elements that tenants would wish to see included. What was being offered by the Council would ensure that while tenants' rights and interests would be fully safeguarded, all tenants would also benefit from

significant ongoing investment in their homes and improved services, but only if the transfer went ahead. The Council would have a binding contract with the Rochford Housing Association covering all these matters. If anything, there were more advantages for tenants in the proposed new arrangements.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to tenants' rights, Mr Jenkins confirmed that, after transfer, tenants would become 'assured tenants' rather than 'secure tenants'. In real terms, tenants would be treated exactly the same after transfer as before the process. Tenants, after transfer, would be asked to sign a new tenancy agreement which could only be changed with their consent. Under the present arrangements, the District Council could change tenancy terms at any time, without requiring tenants' consent.

In response to an enquiry relating to the content of the offer document, officers advised that it would be translated into a more user-friendly format, in plain English, with pictures. Every effort would be made to visit all tenants in their own homes in order to give them an opportunity to ask questions and obtain any information they might require. The offer document would also be made available, on request, in different formats, including a audio, Braille and different languages. A DVD/video was also being made available to all tenants aimed at explaining the transfer process. In addition, tenants would be able to seek completely independent external advice on the document.

Officers confirmed, in response to a Member query, that a press release had already been issued, but that further press releases would also follow.

Members considered that there would also be merit in formally briefing local newspaper editors on the housing transfer offer to tenants as part of the process.

A Motion was moved by Cllr T G Cutmore and seconded by Cllr P F A Webster that the officer recommendations be endorsed.

On a requisition pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 16.4, a recorded vote was taken on the Motion as follows:-

(For) (27) Cllrs R A Amner, Mrs P Aves, C I Black, Mrs R Brown, Mrs L A Butcher, P A Capon, Mrs T J Capon, J P Cottis, T G Cutmore, J E Grey, Mrs S A Harper, K H Hudson, C A Hungate, Mrs L Hungate, T Livings, C J Lumley, Mrs J R Lumley, R A Oatham, J M Pullen, P K Savill, S P Smith, Mrs M A Starke, M G B Starke, J Thomass, Mrs M J Webster, P F A Webster, Mrs B J Wilkins.

Against (0)

Abstentions (0)

Resolved

- (1) That the draft offer document be approved for circulation in accordance with DCLG guidance.
- (2) That final authority be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to approve any minor changes to the Council's proposals following receipt of any representations from tenants during the stage 1 period.
- (3) That a further Extraordinary Council meeting be convened to consider and agree any significant changes to the Council's proposals, to be included in the stage 2 notice, following receipt of representations from tenants during the stage 1 period.
- (4) That officers proceed to ballot the Council's secure and introductory tenants at the stage 2 period.
- (5) That the Electoral Reform Society be engaged to undertake administration of the ballot. (CD(ES))

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm.

Chairman

Date