

CABINET MEETING**Tuesday, 25th March, 2014**

Present:-

Councillor (Chair)

Councillors	Blank	McManus
	Gilby	Russell
	King	Serjeant
	Ludlow	

Non Voting	Brown	Huckle
Members	Hill	Martin Stone
	Hollingworth	

*Matters dealt with under Executive Powers

**182 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

Councillor Ludlow declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No. 189, as a Council tenant who had benefited from a recent home insulation programme.

183 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Burrows.

184 MINUTES**RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 11 March, 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

185 FORWARD PLAN***RESOLVED –**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

186 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2014-2017 (R100)

The Communications and Marketing Manager submitted a report of a new Internal Communications Strategy, for the period April 2014 to April 2017.

The need for a strategy had been identified as a key project in the Council's 2013/14 Corporate Plan. The aim was to keep staff and Members well informed, and to facilitate two-way engagement, both up and down, and across the organisation.

External factors influencing the strategy's preparation included:

- Increasing public expectations of the Council
- demographic changes in Chesterfield
- public policy changes
- cuts to public sector spending.

Delivery of the new Corporate Plan for 2014/15 setting out the Council's vision, aims, priority projects and values would be reliant on good internal communications, as would implementation of the Great Place: Great Service transformation programme.

The Internal Communications Strategy would be monitored and evaluated through annual employee surveys, the use of electronic voting devices at team meetings, and feedback at corporate briefings.

The Strategy would then be updated in response to the results from these methods of consultation with staff.

***RESOLVED –**

That the Internal Communications Strategy 2014-17 be referred to Full Council for approval.

REASONS FOR DECISION

1. To improve internal communications.

2. To help deliver the Corporate Plan aim to 'value and develop our staff to reach their full potential'.

187 **LOCAL OFFERS TO TENANTS 2014/15 (H000)**

The Housing Service Manager – Customer Service Division submitted a report on the Local Offers to tenants for 2014/15, which would form part of the Council's Annual Report to tenants, as required by the Homes and Communities Agency. These Offers had been drawn up in response to the outcomes of a consultation event with tenants.

The Annual Report to tenants includes information on past performance (in 2013/14) as well as Local Offers (service improvements) for the next year (2014/15).

The proposed local offers included:

- use of social media to promote Housing Services
- internal decoration of 'hard to let' properties
- additional drop-in session at On the Move
- promotion of the Adaptation Service
- use of mobile office to enable tenants to report Anti Social Behaviour and contact Estates Services
- increase the number of Tenancy Support Workers
- direct referrals to Careline service using mobile devices.

Reference was made to the provision of a Housing App, to facilitate communication between tenants and Housing staff. It was suggested that the timetable of estate visits by the mobile Housing office be advertised more widely, to ensure that its presence in neighbourhoods achieved their full potential.

It was suggested that gardens should also be put into good order, as an additional measure to the offer relating to the internal decoration of 'hard to let' properties.

***RESOLVED –**

That the Local Offers to tenants for 2014/15 be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure compliance with the requirements of the Homes and Communities Agency.

188 LOCAL AUTHORITY MORTGAGE SUPPORT SCHEME (LAMS) UPDATE (H000)

The Housing Service Manager – Business Planning and Strategy submitted a progress report on the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS), and sought approval to amend the maximum level of the loan to which the indemnity provision could be applied, to increase take-up.

At Minute No.0208 (2012/13) Cabinet had resolved to recommend to Council that the LAMS be adopted, and this was resolved at Council Minute No. 0086 (3). The scheme was launched in May 2013.

Progress had been much slower than anticipated, with only 14% of the indemnity supplied by Lloyds Banking Group having been taken up. Analysis by Sector Treasury Services had compared the take up of the Chesterfield scheme with one being offered by Derbyshire County Council. The main difference between the schemes was in the maximum level of the loan offered.

It was also noted that the Government's Help-to-Buy scheme offered similar assistance to the local authority LAMS, although at a higher cost to the mortgage applicant. The Government scheme had been given a higher profile through national marketing.

It was proposed that the maximum loan size for the Chesterfield LAMS be raised to enable applications to be made for a wider range of properties.

It was also suggested that promotion be undertaken through social media, the local press, Council publications and the Council's website, and that estate agents be encouraged to make their clients aware of the LAMS option.

Contact centre staff would also be given further training to ensure that they dealt with enquiries about LAMS effectively. And Members of Council briefed so that they could inform their constituents about LAMS.

***RESOLVED -**

1. That the limited progress of the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS) be noted.
2. That the proposal to raise the maximum loan size to £142,500 be approved, so that applicants would be able to consider properties up to the value of £150,000, and to match that of the Derbyshire County Council-wide LAMS scheme. This would raise the maximum indemnity for an individual property from £24,000 to £30,000.
3. That a new round of publicity for the scheme be carried out.

REASONS FOR DECISION

1. To increase the speed of take up of the LAMS.
2. To contribute to the delivery of the actions in the Barriers to Housing Supply Action Plan.
3. To contribute to the Council's Corporate Aims - to make Chesterfield a thriving borough, and to improve the quality of life for local people.

189 APPOINTMENT OF GREEN DEAL/ECO PARTNER (H000)

The Housing Service Manager – Business Planning and Strategy submitted a report seeking authority to procure a contractor/partner, through the East Midlands Efficiency Framework, to supply, fit and 'bring Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding' for external wall insulation to Wimpey No Fine Housing Stock within the Borough, across all tenures.

In 2013 ECO and Green Deal were introduced by the Government to replace similar previous schemes. The objective was to oblige energy companies to invest in domestic energy efficiency improvements, through ECO. The scheme was targeted at low income and vulnerable households.

The ECO scheme included three strands: Carbon Savings Communities (CSCO), Carbon Savings Obligation (CSO) and Affordable Warmth.

During the tender process, contractors would be asked to bring ECO funding to fund the work needed to improve energy efficiency, including external insulation.

The Council would also contribute funding, from its 2014/15 Housing Capital Programme, and the Home Repair Assistance Loan Scheme.

Members were also advised that the Derbyshire-wide Local Authority Energy Partnership would be separately bidding for grant funding from the Department Climate and Energy Change, to assist private home owners in meeting the costs of energy efficiency improvements in non-traditional built homes that were hard to heat. If the bid was successful, this would be another source of funding for work needed on homes in Chesterfield.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the Housing Manager – Business Planning and Strategy be authorised to carry out an open tender process, utilising the East Midlands Efficiency Framework (EEM) and in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, to procure a contractor/partner to supply, fit and 'bring funding' for external wall insulation programmes to Wimpey No Fine Housing Stock within the Borough across all tenures.
2. That the costs associated with the supply and fit of external wall insulation to the Council's housing stock are met from the 2014/15 Housing Capital Programme.
3. That a further report be brought to Members to update them on the outcome of the tender process, the levels of funding that can be achieved through ECO and the number of properties that can be improved.

REASONS FOR DECISION

1. To contribute to meeting the Council's Corporate aim 'To improve the quality of life for local people' by improving the quality of housing in the Borough.
2. To contribute to improved performance against the Key Performance Indicator NI158 (% Decent Council Homes).

3. To contribute to the actions set out in the Council's Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Plan.