

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

SPECIAL MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2006

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING (HOUSING TRANSFER CONSULTATION CO-ORDINATOR)

HOUSING TRANSFER ISSUES

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor G Garner)

Executive Summary

Councillors are asked to :-

1. Sign off the Housing Transfer Offer Document
2. To authorise procedure to stage one of the Housing Transfer Ballot procedure.

1. Background and Considerations

1.1 Members are aware that the Housing Service, supported by advisors and directed by Corporate Director Jeremy Thornberry, has been consulting tenants to consider transfer of the Council's housing stock to a new Registered Social Landlord, Deane Housing. So far we have sent out leaflets, newsletters and other written material to all of our tenants to explain:-

- 1) Why the Council has chosen this path
- 2) The £1.85m shortfall in funding per annum if we are required to keep services as they are and meet the Government's "Decent Homes" standard.
- 3) The cuts required to services and jobs to close the funding gap
- 4) How tenants' rights are protected
- 5) What the benefits of transferring to Deane Housing would mean to tenants.

1.2 This literature has been supported by staff, Councillors and Deane Housing Shadow Board members attending many different events from coffee mornings to steam rallies, "door knocking", static stands in supermarkets and a mobile trailer visiting many villages and estates. Staff are now visiting tenants missed in the first round of door knocking. There has also been press coverage of the consultation procedures. All staff have been kept updated through meetings, newsletters and information from their managers.

- 1.3 During the consultation we have kept figures, a very rough guide, to record what staff believe tenants are saying based on the information received so far from the door “knocking process” (figures attached), but the main aim was to ensure that all tenants knew about the Housing Transfer Consultation and understood why the Council was consulting staff. The “door knockers” opinions were 27% in favour of transfer, 12% against, 44% undecided, 12% not known and 5% unlikely to vote. This is a very rough guide.
- 1.4 Since the meeting of the Political Leadership Group and Executive on 22 August we have received little relevant advice, but by the meeting on 13 September, we should have the results of a survey by SMSR, which should help inform members. Information will be relayed at the meeting.
- 1.5 Most other advice would indicate that we are at a quite normal position strategically at this stage in the housing transfer consultation procedure and that it is only when tenants have had time to read the offer document, see the DVD/video and consider the summary that views become more realistic.
- 1.6 We aim to have further market research carried out in the third week following the release of the offer document which will give a more accurate forecast of the tenants’ intention at ballot. Should it be necessary we could stop the ballot then, but councillors need to bear in mind that our consultation has been based on the slogan “You Decide”, meaning the tenants decide at ballot. They could therefore feel cheated if a ballot is not held.
- 1.7 At the same time we prepared a draft offer document. This has been scrutinised by the Executive, Housing Review Panel, Deane Housing Shadow Board, the Tenants Forum, advisors and housing managers. The Tenants Panel supported by Aldbournes, the independent tenants advisors, have worked very hard on this document, giving up most of their own time. I am grateful for their commitment. All their proposals have been considered, costed and added to the offer document whenever feasible.
- 1.8 In conjunction with the offer document a DVD/video and summary pamphlet are being prepared.

2. Conclusion

- 2.1 After much consultation, advice and hard work by all concerned the offer document is now complete and ready to be signed off. (copies available on 13 September).
- 2.2 Members must now decide whether the Council should take the next step towards balloting the tenants on transferring the housing stock to Deane Housing or not. The next step is “stage one”; issuing each tenant with their copy of the offer document, DVD/video and summary. At the same time staff will door knock again to ensure all tenants understand the promises contained in the offer document, with SMSR carrying out market research to clarify tenants’ understanding and likely voting position.

2.3 Further special meetings of the Executive and Council will be held on Monday 13 November 2006, when the Council must decide whether or not to proceed to ballot. This is subject to the decisions being made on 13 September.

3. Recommendations

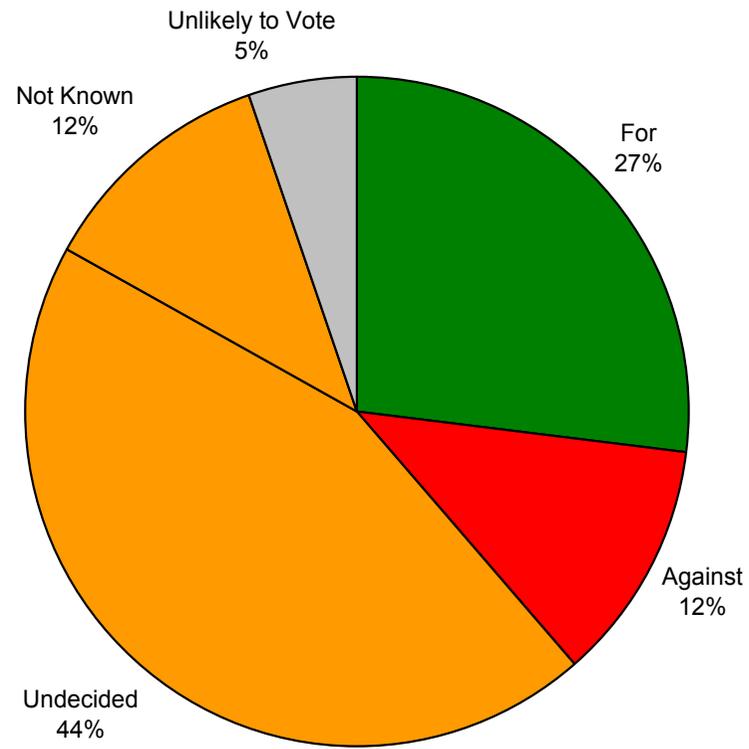
1. The Executive agrees to “sign off” the offer document.
2. The Executive agrees to proceed to stage one of the ballot process.

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Analysis of Door Knocking Campaign

Follow Up Action Required		Officer Opinion of Tenant View on Transfer		Outcome	
None	5168	For	1337	Successful	4930
Revisit	1694	Against	575	Out	1719
Phone	32	Undecided	2217	Declined	269
Letter	7	Unlikely to Vote	257		
Fact Sheet	14	Not Known	580		
Appointment	3				
	6918		4966		6918

Visiting Officers Opinion of Tenant View on Transfer



Tenants Areas of Concern About Housing Transfer

