

## **COUNCIL MEETING - 20 JULY 2004**

### **RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL** **COUNCILLOR GARNER - HOUSING SERVICES**

#### **COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK OPTIONS**

The Council is required to carry an Options Appraisal of its housing stock and consider the best option for the stock within its over arching Housing Strategy.

The Stock Option Appraisal began in 2003 with the first report to Members being submitted in August, providing a detailed overview of the work required. Since then there have been regular updates to every Tenant's Forum and Housing Review Panel of the work being undertaken and the progress being made.

The Appraisal process was split into two main parts being:

Phase A - Financially based. Officers and the Council's Specialist Help - PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) led on this process and this was completed in December 2003. Subsequently PWC have undertaken further work primarily to:

- a) Amend the financial model to take account of the external stock validation survey work undertaken;
- b) To consider the impact on non-housing services within the Council if some form of externalisation took place;
- c) Examine the experience of other Councils who have undertaken an Options Appraisal;
- d) Undertake a Risk Register for all the four options;
- e) Provide an updated briefing session to Members in April of this year to take account of b) to d).

Phase B - Consultation based. Officers and the Independent Tenants Advisor TACT@DOME Consultants (DOME) led on this process. A fundamental element of DOME's work was facilitating the Insight Group - a working group of tenants. An Interim Report was presented to the Housing Review Panel in June and their work has now reached a conclusion.

Key to both Phase A and B, has been the involvement of the Officer Working Group and the Steering Group. Their main purpose has been to guide, steer and approve the work being undertaken and pass their recommendations onto the Tenants Forum and Housing Review Panel, which in turn feeds into the Executive and ultimately Full Council.

Throughout this entire process Officers have liaised with the Community Housing Task Force and the Government Office South West.

The stage has now been reached where the final pieces of information have been provided that will enable an informed choice to be made for the preferred option for the future management of the Housing Service.

A full report, circulated to all Members, was considered by the Housing Review Panel at its meeting on 6 July 2004. Both the Tenant's Forum and the Housing Review Panel have recommended that a "Whole Stock Transfer" solution be investigated now, leading to a tenants ballot.

The Executive will not meet to consider this matter until 13 July, which is after the publication of Council Summons. The recommendation of the Executive will therefore be circulated separately to members.

It is therefore **RECOMMENDED** that Council consider the various recommendations made and make a choice for its preferred option for the future management of the Housing Service.

**Councillor G Garner**

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 20 JULY 2004**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR GARNER – HOUSING SERVICES**

Members will be aware of the very busy time in housing over recent months including Housing Best value Review, CPA and Housing homeless families. Your Council has performed well in all of these areas and rest assured, these successes will continue to be monitored and built upon.

The Housing Stock Options Appraisal has now reached a crucial stage and is the subject of a separate section within this Council document. Tonight members will be asked to decide whether or not we move to the next stage which will be to undertake a major consultation exercise involving all of our tenants leading to a tenants ballot, the tenants will therefore decide who they want their landlord to be. Given the scale and importance of this exercise, arrangements will have to be made to organise such a large scale, in depth consultation process. The tenant consultation proper will therefore not start until 2004 and will take about twelve months.

On a lighter note, members will also be aware that I like to take advantage of being able to inform them of activities within housing that I hope are of general interest:

#### **DEANE DLO helping youngsters choose their career.**

For several years now Deane DLO has been pleased to be able to offer placements for Work Experience, over one or two weeks duration, to many pupils of local schools and one day-a-week basis to some college students from both SCAT and Bridgwater College. The placements are offered within all of the building trades (Bricklaying, Carpentry & Joinery, Plumbing, Painting and Electrical) as well as some benefiting from placements within the Horticultural and Nursery Sections.

The pupils are required to write to their chosen “employer” requesting the placement and are then “interviewed” before they commence, where it is explained to them that they will be required to satisfy certain conditions including starting earlier than school times, working a full day and bringing their packed lunches ..... which is in itself a challenge to many!

This experience allows the pupil to decide whether or not their chosen career is the right one for them. The majority of the pupils have ended their week or fortnight experience with us saying that they had enjoyed themselves fully, gained a lot from the knowledge of the workforce and did not realise the extent of the works undertaken by the Council. Most important of all though is the fact that they felt happy with their choice of career.

However, a few have left saying that they did not realise what was really involved in their choice and didn't fully enjoy the experience. We are always quick to advise them that it is better to realise that their choice is possibly wrong at an early stage and change their minds accordingly, so, either way, it is usually a positive outcome at the end of the Work Experience.

Whilst we tend to receive more boys than girls, particularly in the Building Section, we have had a few girls attend for Work Experience in the Horticultural Section and they find the Nursery a very interesting place to work.

It is very rewarding when, a couple of years later, you may find yourself interviewing & selecting one of the pupils you gave work experience to; in fact we currently employ ex placements in our Building Section.

We have received many Work Experience “Certificates of Appreciation” from the various schools and pupils, and we hope that the little part we have played in their career path has helped them on their way.

**Councillor Greg Garner**