

SPECIAL HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

17TH FEBRUARY 2005

PRESENT	Councillor Gale (Chair) Councillors Mrs Brown, Mrs Burn, Grogan, Mrs Pinkney, Sinclair, Stonehouse, Taylor and Mrs Todd.
ALSO PRESENT	Councillor Mrs Jones (ex-officio) together with R. Curtis and Miss E Stobbs, Customer Panel.
APOLOGY	Councillor David Wilson.
ADVISERS	M. Laing, Director of Housing Services; G. Ridley, Director of Central Resources; D. Milburn, Head of Business Support and Mrs H Wilson, Committee Administrator.

Members were advised that although Councillor Mrs Seabury's name had not appeared on the Agenda as being a Member of the Committee her position had been approved at the Council Meeting on 16th February 2005. She was therefore entitled to full voting rights at the Housing Services Committee and her name would be included on future agendas.

387. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - 2005/2006 BUDGET

Consideration was given to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2005/06 budget, including proposals for rent levels and changes in service.

The Director of Housing Services advised Councillor Grogan that previously reserves had been run down, however, with advice they had increased the balances and would continue to increase them, this complied with best accounting practice.

The Director of Central Resources confirmed that the Council would retain extra income generated from the reduction in void rates.

In response to R. Curtis the Director of Central Resources advised that the County Council budget setting process had no influence over Wear District budget setting process.

The Leader of the Council congratulated the Housing Services Staff on the streamlining and modernising of the Housing Services. She believed that the reason the Housing Revenue Account was in credit and that money had been put into reserves was due to the hard work and determination of officers. She was also pleased with the modest rent rise and that Homeline charges were not to be increased.

Councillor Stonehouse was of the opinion that ability to mainstream the existing Street Warden Scheme was excellent, he believed it showed the Council responding to the Public, Simalto and the Government.

RECOMMENDED unanimously

1. that although individual tenants' rents will vary by differing amounts by application of the Government's rent restructuring formula, average property rents rise by 3.4%;
2. that the draft budget outlined at paragraph 23 and growth items as outlined at paragraph 30 of the report, be approved;
3. that changes to garage rents and other charges as outlined at paragraph 34 be approved;
4. that Homeline charges for Council Tenants be frozen initially but subsequently amended by the Directors of Central Resources and Housing Services under delegated authority, in consultation with the Chairs of Central Resources and Housing Services to subsequently amend the charge from 2004/05 to ensure that the levels are consistent with the increase provided by DCC SPT.

The meeting concluded at 2.20pm

CHAIR