

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Friday, 15 January 2016**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND HOUSING RENT SETTING 2016/17
(REVENUE AND CAPITAL)**

The Committee considered the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Housing Rent Setting for 2016/17 which was being presented as part of the budget consultation process. The report, a revised version of which was circulated, reflected the latest proposals contained in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, which was the primary financial planning tool for delivering the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard *Plus* (CHS+).

The following issues were raised in relation to the report and its appendices:

- The Committee was advised that under the original Carmarthenshire Homes Standard programme all work requested by tenants had been completed;
- In terms of sewage charges it was pointed out that where properties were not connected to the mains sewage, and this was particularly the case in rural areas, tenants could apply for assistance to ensure appropriate arrangements were in place. The Head of Public Protection agreed to check that no tenants were paying Welsh Water excessively for any arrangement;
- It was clarified that service charges primarily related to sheltered housing schemes and flats and the Head of Public Protection agreed to circulate Members with a breakdown of the service charges. Tenants automatically received a breakdown;
- Concerns were expressed over the possible impact of the rent increases proposed particularly where tenants were not in full time employment and/or had to pay for school transport;
- Rents charged by Housing Associations were currently in the region of £8.00-10.00 per week above the Council's charges but the Welsh Government wished to see a move towards one level charge over about 5 years;
- The Director of Corporate Services, in response to a query, agreed to circulate members with details of the long term loans raised to fund the exit from the HRAS [Housing Revenue Account Subsidy];
- It was agreed that a more appropriate description of Table 2 in the report would be 'Properties achieving target rents per year'. Officers agreed to circulate Members with a more detailed explanation of Table 2;
- The Committee was advised that income from the sale of any Council houses was crucial in meeting the need for housing throughout the County.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse the report and the following proposals to the Executive Board:

- **To increase the average housing rent by 2.97% (£2.27) per dwelling per week as per WG Social Housing Rents Policy. This will produce a**

sustainable Business Plan and continue to achieve & maintain CHS+ and is supported by DCHS Steering Group;

- **To continue with maximum progression of £2, for rents below target, until target rents are achieved;**
- **To increase garage rents to £8.75 per week (from £8.50 in 2015/16) and garage bases to £2.20 per week (from £2.15 in 2015/16);**
- **Apply the service charge policy to ensure tenants who receive the benefit from specific services pay for those services;**
- **To increase charges for using our sewerage treatment works by 2.97%.**