

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO COUNCIL

8TH JULY 2009

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR
OF LAW AND
DEMOCRACY**

Officer Decisions taken in Consultation with the Mayor

The purpose of this report is to inform Members that the following Officer Decisions were taken under urgency provisions in consultation with the Mayor:-

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

Authorisation was needed for a site erroneously omitted from the SHLAA document approved for public consultation by Cabinet to be included in the public consultation.

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) was published in October 2008. The document is currently in the process of being updated to produce the SHLAA 2009 Report. As part of the updating process a schedule has been produced showing the internal assessment of SHLAA sites. This was approved for public consultation by the Cabinet meeting of 16 April and Full Council of 6 May. The consultation period was Friday, 8th May to Friday 12 June and included a “drop-in” event on Monday 1 June which will provide an opportunity for interested parties – developers, consultants, landowners, the general public and Councillors to comment on the site assessments.

Owing to an error, one site (Land at Green Lane Station, Yarm) was not included in the assessment. Given that it was just one site it was agreed that it should be possible to obtain the necessary site assessment data and solicit the relevant officer opinions to be able to complete an internal assessment of this site speedily.

If it had not been included in the consultation then effectively it would have been excluded from the SHLAA. A site should only not be carried forward as part of the assessment if it falls under a site designation (such as local wildlife site) that the SHLAA steering group have agreed to ascribe zero housing potential to. A small proportion of the site does in fact fall within a local wildlife site, but the greater part does not. Therefore, it was important to include the site in the assessment.

The SHLAA is an important document for the evidence base to support the Core Strategy DPD and the Regeneration DPD. Procedurally it is important that an Inspector knows that all sites submitted within the timescale for site submission have been appraised. It is also important in terms of avoiding the possibility of a legal challenge.

Therefore, it was agreed that the assessment for this site, when completed would be retrofitted into the document which is the subject of public consultation.

Amended 2009/10 Rent Increase

On the 8th January 2009, Cabinet approved an average 6.5% rent increase for 2009/10 for Council homes, this decision was agreed by Council on 21st January 2009.

As a result of extensive lobbying by Councillors, tenants and interested housing organisations, the government on the 3rd March 2009 announced that they would, after consultation, amend the guideline rent to a 3.1% increase on the previous years actual rent.

This had resulted in an average £2.10p per week (48 weeks) reduction to the rent set on the 8th January, which will be back dated to the 1st April 2009.

In order to reduce the period before the new rent can be set and refunds calculated the matter needed to be approved under 'Urgency' procedures.

Following this approval a statutory 28 days notice needs to be given to the tenants.

It is intended to introduce this new rent from week commencing 6th July 2009 and to calculate rent refunds and new housing benefit entitlements from that date. Tenants will then be notified on their quarterly rent statement of any monies credited back to their account.

The table below sets out the approved rent increase, the proposed rent increase and the proposed rent reduction:-

	2009/10 APPROVED RENT INCREASE	2009/10 PROPOSED RENT INCREASE	RENT REDUCTION
BEDSITS	£2.96	£1.49	£1.47
1 BEDROOM	£3.52	£1.69	£1.83
2 BEDROOM	£3.93	£1.92	£2.01
3 BEDROOM	£4.40	£2.08	£2.32
4 BEDROOM	£4.79	£2.19	£2.60
5 BEDROOM	£5.27	£2.29	£2.98
AVERAGE	£4.02	£1.92	£2.10

RECOMMENDED that the Officer Decisions that have been taken in consultation with the Mayor be noted.