

CABINET

29 JUNE 2015

19 **APPROVAL FOR COUNCIL NOMINATED OFFICER TO VOTE AT AGM ON PROPOSAL FOR BBCHA TO MERGE WITH LIVERPOOL HOUSING TRUST**

Councillor George Davies introduced a report by the Strategic Director – Regeneration and Environment that informed that the Council, as a member of Beechwood and Ballantyne Housing Association (BBCHA), of proposed changes to undertake a Transfer of Engagements (ToE) of BBCHA to the Liverpool Housing Trust (LHT). The report also set out the ongoing dialogue which had been undertaken with tenants and the lead petitioners following a petition being presented to the Cabinet Member at a meeting with lead petitioners on 18 June 2015. Appended to the Strategic Director’s report was

- Appendix 1 – BBCHA Board Consultation Final Paper; and
- Appendix 2 – Key Issues Raised at the Meetings held concerning the proposed BBCHA Transfer of Engagement to LHT.

The Cabinet noted that BBCHA had been undertaking a review of its current arrangements since May 2014. In particular BBCHA had been considering how best to mitigate the key risks it was exposed to, and ensure the long term protection of services and investment in the Beechwood and Ballantyne neighbourhoods in an increasingly hostile environment.

The BBCHA Board had considered a range of possible options for its future and agreed in October 2014 that the best option was to enter into formal negotiations with LHT for a possible transfer. The BBCHA Board presented a detailed ‘ask’ to LHT, focussed on improving services and homes in Beechwood and Ballantyne, and during negotiations a detailed business case was developed.

Formal consultation was undertaken with BBCHA tenants from 26 March 2015 for a period of six weeks. The resulting feedback showed that the majority of tenants were supportive of the ToE on the understanding that services they receive were not compromised.

Consultation with other key stakeholders including the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and funders had been completed with no barriers to progressing the transfer being raised. The BBCHA Board had undertaken a due diligence exercised and no areas of concern in terms of LHT had been reported. The BBCHA Board had also received independent legal advice and support from Trowers and Hamblins and they had confirmed that due process had been followed.

After on-going discussions with Officers, BBCHA and LHT, a report had been provided for the Cabinet meeting held on 4 June 2015 setting out the rationale of why BBCHA had proposed to undertake a ToE to LHT, a business case which had set out the potential benefits of BBCHA transferring to LHT compared to staying as it was now, along with a report on the consultation undertaken, responses received by local tenants affected and the response to these issues raised.

Immediately prior to the Cabinet Meeting, the Cabinet Member had been presented with a petition of 271 signatories from tenants and residents from Beechwood and Ballantyne. The petition had been dated 23 February 2015.

In the light of this petition the Cabinet had agreed to defer the decision on the report until the Council had been given the opportunity to review the petition further and undertake discussions with tenants and BBCHA and report those discussions back to this meeting of the Cabinet to inform any decisions to be made.

At a subsequent meeting with the lead petitioners, another petition had been presented which was different to the first and had 428 signatories.

A meeting had also arranged by BBCHA in the Community to discuss concerns in response to both the petitions.

The report dealt with both petitions presented and set out the questions raised at the Community meeting.

Councillor Ann McLachlan reminded the Cabinet that she represented the area in question as she was a ward Councillor for Bidston and St James and that she had sat on the BBCHA Board previously for a period of nine years. She had been on the Board in 2005 when the Estate had voted no re Wirral Partnership Homes. Councillor Ann McLachlan reported that the Beechwood Estate had in recent years seen significant redevelopment and was now totally transformed.

Councillor Ann McLachlan reported that she had attended a meeting on the Estate on 2 June 2015 where concerns had been raised about the public buildings, no guarantees had been received and the residents considered that they had not been engaged or consulted on the proposals.

Since that meeting the Leader had received written guarantees and it was noted that the public buildings would be transferred with peppercorn rents.

RESOLVED: That:

- (1) the Transfer of Engagements of the Beechwood and Ballantyne Housing Association to the Liverpool Housing Trust be supported;**
- (2) the relevant Council officers be authorised to vote on the proposal (and associated matters) proposed and detailed in the report at the forthcoming Beechwood and Ballantyne Housing Association Special General Meeting; and**
- (3) the report be referred to the meeting of the Council scheduled for 6 July 2015.**