

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEMBER SIGNING
FRIDAY, 12 APRIL 2013**

Present: Councillor Claire Kober, Leader of the Council

In Attendance: Xanthe Barker, Principal Committee Officer, Phil Harris, Deputy Director Strategic and Community Housing Services

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION	ACTION BY
HSP03.	<p>URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>There were no items of Urgent Business.</p>	
HSP04.	<p>DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS POLICY 2013/14</p> <p>The Leader considered a report that sought approval of a new Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) Policy for 2013/14.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. That a £442,000 increase in Haringey’s DHP budget for 2013/14 (which will be reported to Cabinet in June 2013), using part of the extra funding that the Council has received from the Department of Work and Pensions, to prepare for and implement the application of the Benefit Cap, be approved. ii. That Haringey’s Discretionary Housing Payments Policy 2013/14 (as set out in Appendix A of the report), be approved, as the means by which the Council will determine how the DHP funds will be allocated during the 2013/14 financial year. iii. That it be agreed that, until the DHP budget is reviewed later in the year, Council officers would implement the DHP Policy on the basis that the £2,864,506 represents the full DHP budget for 2013/14. <p><u>Alternative Options Considered</u></p> <p>Consideration had been given to the option of continuing with Haringey’s existing Discretionary Housing Payments Policy. However, this option was rejected on the grounds that a new policy was needed to deal fairly and effectively with the substantial increase in demand for DHPs, the severe impact that the Benefit Cap and the Social Rented Sector Size Criteria were likely to have on some households and the need for the Council to make best use of the limited resources available.</p>	<p>Director of Adult and Housing Services</p> <p>Director of Adult and Housing Services</p> <p>Director of Adult and Housing Services</p>

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEMBER SIGNING
FRIDAY, 12 APRIL 2013**

In the course of developing Haringey's DHP Policy 2013/14, officers have considered a wide range of options – including which claimants should be awarded priority and under what circumstances, whether or not claimants should receive DHPs for a period exceeding twelve months and whether or not conditions should be attached to the award of a DHP – but have always been mindful of the fact that the Council must not fetter its discretion and needs to consider all applications (including those that are not listed as a priority) on their merits.

Consideration has been given to the option of the Council 'topping up' the DHP budget using its own financial resources. However, taking into account the considerable demands on the Council's finances – and the fact that the full effects of the welfare reforms are not yet known – it was concluded that the Council should increase the DHP budget by £442,000 in 2013/14 (using some of the extra funding it has received from the DWP to prepare for, and implement, the Benefit Cap) and then review the situation later in the financial year.

Reasons for Decision

Each year, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) makes grants available to Local Authorities for DHP purposes. DHPs can play an important role in sustaining tenancies, preventing homelessness and, where needed, enabling tenants to move to more affordable accommodation.

In 2013/14 Haringey will receive a DHP grant of £2422,506. Although this represents an increase of £1,569,338 (compared to 2012/13), it is estimated that the introduction of the Benefit Cap and Social Rented Sector Size Criteria in April 2013, will reduce, by more than £8m a year, the amount of Housing Benefit paid to households living in Haringey or in temporary accommodation.

Although the DWP provides guidance to Local Authorities on how DHPs can be used, Local Authorities have a large degree of discretion over the scheme and there are few regulatory restrictions. They must also decide whether to increase the size of their DHP budget by 'topping up' the DWP grant with their own resources.

A new Discretionary Housing Payments Policy is needed to ensure that, during 2013/14, Haringey's limited DHP resources are used in a way that deals fairly and effectively with the substantial increase in demand for DHPs, the severe impact that the Benefit Cap and the Social Rented Sector Sized Criteria is likely to have on some households, and helps sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.

It is also needed to enable tenants to make a successful transition into employment and/or to move to more affordable accommodation.

HSP05. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of Urgent Business.

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEMBER SIGNING
FRIDAY, 12 APRIL 2013**

| |

| |

The meeting closed at 9.40am.