



Housing Scrutiny Committee 20 January 2022.

Decisions

5. Estates and Facilities Compliance Data
 - i. The Executive Councillor noted the Council's current position regarding Compliance, and the progress of ongoing associated works

6. Procurement of Contractors to Deliver Energy Efficiency Improvements and Works to Reduce Carbon Emissions from Council Housing
 - i. The Executive Councillor approved the issue of tenders and authorised the Director of Neighbourhoods and Communities to award a contract(s) to a contractor(s) to deliver energy efficiency works and works to reduce carbon emissions from Council housing in 22/23 and 23/24, with an option to extend for one or more periods up to a maximum of two years.

7. HRA Budget Setting Report 2022/23

There were two agreed amendments to the 2022/23 Housing Revenue Budget:

 - i. A proposal for internal scoping work, including the Independent Living Service and Communities Service, alongside the assessment of external provision, to inform an analysis of the services provided to older residents (not just council tenants) experiencing isolation and to assess community needs. This analysis may include recommending a future revenue bid for a Community Inclusion Officer. They would work across the sheltered housing portfolio and with older tenants in our general needs housing, to support

residents, to improve connectivity between sheltered schemes and other residents and to reduce loneliness and social isolation. The new post would supplement the existing Independent Living Service.

- ii. A proposal to request officers to include in the Transformation Programme some workshops of councillors and stakeholders, such as tenant and leaseholder representatives, to work on a short, focussed overview of the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Setting Reports and the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Setting Reports, which could summarise and communicate information more effectively such as by:
 - Use of key questions
 - Graphical presentation
 - Key performance indicators
 - Benchmarking

This would facilitate more effective scrutiny by all councillors and clearer communication to city residents.

A cost figure is not provided for this recommendation because the HRA's accounting function already produces a very full range of high quality key performance indicator reports and benchmarking. The proposed new overview report would be an introductory guided tour that assists users to engage with the main report and put it in context.

The Executive Councillor:

- i. Approved that council dwellings rents for all social rented properties be increased by inflation of 3.1%, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at September 2021, plus 1%, resulting in rent increases of 4.1%, with effect from 4 April 2022. This equates to an average rent increase of £4.21 per week.
- ii. Approved that affordable rents (inclusive of service charge) are reviewed in line with rent legislation, to ensure that the rents charged are no more than 80% of market rent, with rents for existing tenants increased by no more than inflation of 3.1%, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at September 2021, plus 1%, resulting in rent increases of up to 4.1%. Local policy is to cap affordable rents (inclusive of all

service charges) at the Local Housing Allowance level, which would usually result in rent variations in line with any changes notified to the authority in this level if these result in a lower than 4.1% increase. As the Local Housing Allowance was increased significantly in late March 2020, affordable rent increases will be capped at 4.1% from April 2022, which is still well below the 2022/23 Local Housing Allowances levels.

- iii. Approved that rents for shared ownership properties are reviewed and amended from April 2022, in line with the specific requirements within the lease for each property.
- iv. Approved that garage and parking space charges for 2022/23, are increased by inflation at 2% in line with the level of inflation incorporated into the HRA as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy process, and that charges for parking permits are reviewed, with any resulting charges summarised in Section 3 of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- v. Approved the proposed service charges for Housing Revenue Account services and facilities, as shown in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- vi. Approved the proposed leasehold administration charges for 2022/23, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- vii. Approved that caretaking, building cleaning, window cleaning, estate services, grounds maintenance, temporary housing premises and utilities, sheltered scheme premises and utilities, digital television aerial, gas maintenance, door entry systems, lifts, electrical and mechanical maintenance, flat cleaning, third party services, specialist equipment and catering charges continue to be recovered at full cost, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report, recognising that local authorities should endeavour to limit increases to inflation as measured by CPI at September 2021 (3.1%) plus 1%, wherever possible.
- viii. Approved the updated HRA Rent Setting Policy, included at Appendix M to the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- ix. Approved the Revised Budget identified in Section 4 and Appendix D (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report, which reflects a net reduction in the use of HRA reserves for 2021/22 of £262,870.
- x. Approved any Non-Cash Limit items identified in Section 4 of the HRA Budget Setting Report or shown in Appendix D (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

- xi. Approved any Savings, Increased Income, Unavoidable Revenue Bids, Reduced Income Proposals and Bids, as shown in Appendix D (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xii. Approved the resulting Housing Revenue Account revenue budget as summarised in the Housing Revenue Account Summary Forecast 2021/22 to 2026/27 shown in Appendix J of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

The Executive Councillor recommended that Council

- xiii. Approve the revised need to borrow over the 30-year life of the business plan, with the first instance of this anticipated to be in 2022/23, to sustain the proposed level of investment, which includes ear-marking funding for delivery of a net 1,000 new homes over a 10-year timeframe.
- xiv. Recognise that the constitution delegates Treasury Management to the Head of Finance (Part 3, para 5.11), with Part 4F, C16 stating; 'All executive decisions on borrowing, investment or financing shall be delegated to the Head of Finance, who is required to act in accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.
- xv. Recognise that any decision to borrow further will impact the authority's ability to set-aside resource to redeem 25% of the value of the housing debt by the point at which the loan portfolio matures, with the approach to this to be reviewed before further borrowing commences.
- xvi. Approve capital bids, as detailed in Appendix D (3) and Appendix E of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xvii. Approve the latest Decent Homes and Other HRA Stock Investment Programme, to include reduced expenditure for wall structure and fire safety works and re-phasing of other elements of the programme into later years, as detailed in Appendix E of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xviii. Approve the latest budget sums, profiling and associated financing for all new build schemes, including revised scheme budgets for Colville III, Fen Road, Ditton Fields, Aragon Close, Sackville Close and Borrowdale based upon the latest cost information from the Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) and a reduction in unit numbers at Aylesborough Close, as detailed in Appendices E and H, and summarised in Appendix K, of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

- xix. Approve the allocation of funds from the budget ear-marked for the delivery of 1,000 net new homes to allow buy back of leasehold dwellings and relocation of tenants from Princess and Hanover Court over the next two years, in advance of a final recommendation for the future of the estate which will be presented once the options appraisal and consultation work has been concluded.
- xx. Approve the revised Housing Capital Investment Plan as shown in Appendix K of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xxi. Approve the inclusion of Disabled Facilities Grant expenditure and associated grant income from 2022/23 onwards, based upon 2021/22 net grant received, with delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to approve an in year increase or decrease in the budget for disabled facilities grants in any year, in direct relation to any increase or decrease in the capital grant funding for this purpose, as received from the County Council through the Better Care Fund.
- xxii. Approve delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to determine the most appropriate use of any additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding, for the wider benefit of the Shared Home Improvement Agency.
- xxiii. Approve delegation to the Strategic Director to review and amend the level of fees charged by the Shared Home Improvement Agency for disabled facilities grants and repair assistance grants, in line with any decisions made by the Shared Home Improvement Agency Board.
- xxiv. Approve delegation to the Strategic Director to review, agree and enter into a revised Shared Home Improvement Agency Shared Service Agreement, in line with recommendations made by the Shared Home Improvement Agency Board.
- xxv. Approve delegation to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to draw down resource from the ear-marked reserves for potential debt redemption or re-investment, for the purpose of open market land or property acquisition or new build housing development, should the need arise, in order to meet deadlines for the use of retained right to buy receipts or to facilitate future site redevelopment.
- xxvi. Approve delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to make any necessary technical amendments to detailed budgets in respect of recharges between the General Fund and the HRA, with any change in impact for

the HRA to be incorporated as part of the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2022.

8. Report on Hanover and Princess Courts and Kingsway Flats

The Executive Councillor:

- i. Noted the progress made to date towards identifying the most favourable improvement route for the Hanover and Princess Courts and Kingsway flats and the outcome of the initial consultation exercises.
- ii. Approved commencement of a consultation process for Hanover and Princess Court residents including redevelopment and refurbishment options.
- iii. Approved a decant process with immediate effect in advance of a decision on the future of Hanover and Princess Courts including deviation from the Lettings Policy position that those decanting are given emergency housing status when the required vacant possession date is within 12 months.
- iv. Delegated authority to the Head of Housing to amend the Local Lettings Plans for the Mill Road and Cromwell Road developments to allow for direct lets for residents interested in moving from Hanover and Princess Courts.
- v. Approved with immediate effect the purchase of the leasehold interest of flats in Hanover and Princess Courts and the issue of Home Loss and Disturbance payments to qualifying Council tenants and Basic Loss and Disturbance payments to qualifying leaseholders affected by the potential redevelopment
- vi. Approved the development of a project plan for appraisal work on Hanover and Princess Courts and a management plan for Kingsway including the development of plans for communication and engagement with residents and owners and associated parties.
- vii. Noted the required adjustments to the HRA Business Plan, adjustments to the works budgets and recognition of the phased rent loss that would be anticipated due to vacating flats at Hanover and Princess Courts.
- viii. Approved the amendment to the Lettings Policy detailed at 6.13 and Appendix C of the Officer's report.

9. Update on New Build Council Housing Delivery

The Executive Councillor:

- i. Noted the continued progress on the delivery of the approved housing programme.
 - ii. Noted the updated 2021 Sustainable Housing Design Guide, to include the recommendations approved in January's 2021 Housing Scrutiny Committee meeting and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' National Design Standards.
10. Cambridge City Caravan Site Licensing Policy
- i. The Executive Councillor approved the adoption of the proposed Cambridge City Caravan Site Licensing & Fee Policy as attached in Appendix A to the Officer's report.
11. Approval of 'streets to Home service' budget
- i. The Executive Councillor approved the City Council financial contribution as set out in paragraph 3.6 of the Officer's report.
 - ii. The Executive Councillor delegated to the Head of Housing the authority to endorse the award of the contract to the winning bidder.
12. Homelessness Prevention Grants to Agencies 2022-23 and proposed associated reallocation of funding.
- i. The Executive Councillor approved that from 2022-23 onwards, homelessness prevention grants are funded from the annual homelessness prevention grant award the Council receives from central government.
 - ii. The Executive Councillor approved the award of homelessness prevention grants to voluntary and community organisations for 2022-23, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report.
 - iii. The Executive Councillor approved that from 2022-23 onwards the budget formerly used to fund homelessness prevention grants will instead be used to fund the new Streets-to-Home service and the additional staff roles that were created within the housing advice service in 2018 in response to the additional statutory duties enshrined in the Homelessness Reduction Act.

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