



# Public Document Pack

## Cambridge City Council

### HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD

**To:** **Scrutiny Committee Members:** Councillors Blackhurst (Vice-Chair), Bird, Blencowe, Brierley, Johnson, Pippas, Price, Rosenstiel and Minns (Chair)

**Alternates:** Councillors Pitt and Todd-Jones

**Tenants and Leaseholders:** Diane Best (Leaseholder Representative), Kay Harris (Tenant Representative), John Marais (Tenant Representative), Diana Minns (Chair - Tenant Representative), Caroline Oriokot (Tenant Representative) and Terry Sweeney (Tenant Representative).

**Executive Councillor for Housing:** Councillor Smart

*Despatched: Thursday, 20 February 2014*

**Date:** Tuesday, 4 March 2014

**Time:** 5.30 pm

**Venue:** Committee Room 1 & 2 - Guildhall

**Contact:** Claire Tunncliffe **Direct Dial:** 01223 457013

### AGENDA

#### 1 APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare at this stage any interests that they may have in an item shown on this agenda. If any member of the Committee is unsure whether or not they should declare an interest on a particular matter, they should seek advice from the Head of Legal Services **before** the meeting.

#### 3 MINUTES (*Pages 7 - 26*)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 7 January and 16 January 2014.

## **4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

(See information below).

### **Items for Decision by the Executive Councillor, Without Debate**

These Items will already have received approval in principle from the Executive Councillor. The Executive Councillor will be asked to approve the recommendations as set out in the officer's report.

There will be no debate on these items, but members of the Scrutiny Committee and members of the public may ask questions or comment on the items if they comply with the Council's rules on Public Speaking set out below.

### **Items for Debate by the Committee and then Decision by the Executive Councillor**

These items will require the Executive Councillor to make a decision after hearing the views of the Scrutiny Committee.

There will be a full debate on these items, and members of the public may ask questions or comment on the items if they comply with the Council's rules on Public Speaking set out below.

## **Executive Councillor for Housing**

### **Items for Debate by the Committee and then Decision by the Executive Councillor**

**5 HOUSING PORTFOLIO PLAN 2014/15** *(Pages 27 - 40)*

**6 PROGRESS REPORT FROM RESIDENTS' HOUSING REGULATION PANEL** *(Pages 41 - 62)*

## Information for the Public

**Location** The meeting is in the Guildhall on the Market Square (CB2 3QJ).

Between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. the building is accessible via Peas Hill, Guildhall Street and the Market Square entrances.

After 5 p.m. access is via the Peas Hill entrance.

All the meeting rooms (Committee Room 1, Committee 2 and the Council Chamber) are on the first floor, and are accessible via lifts or stairs.

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To ask a question or make a statement please notify the Committee Manager (details listed on the front of the agenda) prior to the deadline.

- For questions and/or statements regarding items on the published agenda, the deadline is the start of the meeting.
- For questions and/or statements regarding items NOT on the published agenda, the deadline is 10 a.m. the day before the meeting.

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<http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD1057&ID=1057&RPID=33371389&sch=doc&cat=13203&path=13020%2c13203>.

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people**

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[democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk).

**Queries on reports** If you have a question or query regarding a committee report please contact the officer listed at the end of relevant report or Democratic Services on 01223 457013 or [democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk).

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**HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD**

7 January 2014

5.30 - 6.45 pm

**Present:** Councillors Blackhurst (Vice-Chair), Bird, Blencowe, Brierley, Johnson, Pippas and Price

**Executive Councillor for Housing:** Councillor Smart

**Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives:** Diana Minns (Chair), Diane Best, Kay Harris, John Marais, Caroline Oriokot and Terry Sweeney

Director of Customer & Community Services: Liz Bisset

Head of City Homes: Robert Hollingsworth

Area Housing Manager: Andrew Latchem

Housing Strategy Manager: Helen Reed

Business Manager & Principal Accountant: Julia Hovells

Engineering Services Team Leader: Chris Brown

Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**

**14/1/HMB Apologies**

No apologies were received.

**14/2/HMB Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were made.

**14/3/HMB Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2013 were approved and signed by the Chair

**14/4/HMB Public Questions**

There were no public questions.

**14/5/HMB Record of Urgent Decisions taken by the Executive Councillor for Housing**

## 14/5/HMBa Increase in Temporary Housing Staff establishment to deliver additional temporary housing

Members noted the Executive Councillor for Housing had approved an increase in the Temporary Housing staffing establishment, allowing the appointment of one full time equivalent additional Assistant Housing Officer. This approval was granted on the basis that this would have a neutral financial impact on the Housing Revenue Account, with the costs met by a combination of existing funding approved as part of the 2013/14 budget process for additional emergency accommodation provision and the increased service charge income that an increase in Temporary Housing units will generate.

This decision was needed to enable the Temporary Housing Service to increase the provision of Temporary and Emergency Accommodation to a target level of 95 units from a position of 63 units at the start of 2013 as quickly as possible.

The Executive Councillor for Housing acknowledged comments that the preferred option would have been for the item to be presented to the Committee for consideration. But there were occasions when this was not possible due to the time frame of the response required.

## **14/6/HMB Shared Ownership Review**

Members were informed that a review had been carried out of the Council's shared ownership service. This was to assess whether shared ownership should continue to be part of the Council's core business within the context of Housing Revenue Account self-financing, and if so whether it should also be offered on the Council's new developments.

It was recommended that the service be continued, with some improvements, and that shared ownership be offered on new affordable housing developments to cross-subsidise the building of rented units and to help create balanced communities.

The recommendations were being submitted for approval to the Executive Councillor and Community Service Scrutiny during this Scrutiny cycle. The report to Housing Management Board was for information only.

## **Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

To note the report of the Housing Strategy Manager.



**Reason for the Decision**

As set out in the Officer's report.

**Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

Not applicable.

**Scrutiny Considerations**

This item was not for pre-scrutiny.

In response to the report Kay Harris requested that a copy of the survey referenced in the report be circulated to Members.

Councillor Price requested confirmation that the percentage of shared ownership would be taken from the private market proportion and not from the Council's social rented properties on the proposed redevelopment sites as the Council should not lose any more socially rented properties from its portfolio.

Councillor Johnson highlighted page 48, 8.2.4 of the Officer report which read 'Where a rented property is to be used as a shared ownership property, arrangements should be made for an appropriate replacement rental property to be provided from the shared ownership stock as soon as is reasonably practicable, so that the rented stock is not reduced as a direct result of this policy'. He expressed concern that there could be a significant delay in waiting for a replacement shared ownership property to become available which could equate to an imbalance of stock.

In response to Members' questions the Executive Councillor for Housing and Officers confirmed the following:

- i. The rented proportion of social housing would stay firm but the market share could be transferred to intermediate housing. If appropriate for a presently rented house to become shared ownership, it would be the desire of the Council to put shared ownership property quickly back into the rented stock.
- ii. There were currently no proposals for shared ownership as a part of the social housing provision in the current re-development programme.
- iii. Referred the Committee to page 47, 8.2 of the Officer's report, for examples of using existing rented properties as shared ownership. The option would not likely to be used very often but should be available as circumstance required.

**Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)**

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

**14/7/HMB Tenancy Policy 2014 -2016**

As a result of the Localism Act 2011 which gives Local Authorities the power to fixed term tenancies to new social tenants, the Council's preference was for lifetime tenancies, to promote settled communities. However, it was felt that fixed term tenancies could be offered for properties with 4 or more bedrooms, properties with significant adaptations, for move on accommodation and specific one off properties. The Policy would only apply to new tenancies made available from April 2014.

**Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Approved the Tenancy Policy.
- ii. Approved the use of fixed term tenancies from April 2014 for:
  - a) properties with 4 or more bedrooms – 5 years
  - b) ~~significantly adapted disabled properties – 5 years~~
  - c) move on accommodation – 3 years
  - d) one off properties – 5 years.
- iii. Approved the deletion of ii(b) of the Officer recommendation (above). Subject to the condition that a detailed report would be presented at a future meeting on the detail and clarification of how significantly adapted disabled properties on fixed term tenancies would work in practice.

**Reason for the Decision**

As set out in the Officer's report.

**Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

Not applicable.

**Scrutiny Considerations**

The Committee received a report from the Area Housing Manager.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Expressed concern at the inclusion of significantly adapted disabled properties for new tenants to be reviewed after five years.
- ii. Questioned why the existing policy for significantly adapted disabled properties could not be continued for new tenants, as it was highly unlikely that the needs of the tenant would change.
- iii. Asked for confirmation that in terms of secure tenancy of four bed properties (of which there is a short supply) would the tenant have a right to buy and would this apply to significantly adapted disabled properties.
- iv. Expressed caution that if a significantly adapted disabled property had been tailored to meet the need of a young person who then went on to independent living not to assume the property would no longer be required. If the family were allocated to a different property this would leave no route back to the family home for visits, holidays, respite care or if that young person could no longer live independently after a period of time.
- v. Requested further information on the term 'one off properties' as the definition was vague and could be interpreted in a number of ways.
- vi. Asked what was the objective for 'one off properties' and the nature of the letting.
- vii. Questioned if money had been spent on specially adapting a four bed property (of which there was a short supply), and that property was no longer required after five years, how would that property be considered either as a four bed or a significantly adapted disabled property.
- viii. Stated that further details were required as to what was deemed as a significantly adapted disabled property.
- ix. Raised the question that if a tenant of a fixed term tenancy was required to find a replacement property during the sixth month review period, what would happen to the tenant when the tenancy expired.
- x. Asked if the tenant under the new fixed term five year policy would have the right to buy.

In response to Members' questions the Executive Councillor for Housing and Officers confirmed the following:

- i. New tenants applying for a significantly adapted disabled property after 1 April 2014 would be made aware that the tenancy would be reviewed after 4.5 years. If the needs of the tenant had not changed or further adaptations were required a further five year fixed tenancy agreement would be offered.
- xi. Confirmed that the policy was on the property and not the tenant.
- xii. Acknowledged the review of significantly adapted disabled properties needed to be a sensitive process and would want to reassure tenants

- that their tenancy would continue if their requirements had not changed. But each case would be considered on an individual basis.
- xiii. Advised that fixed term policies would allow the significantly adapted disabled properties to be reviewed on a periodic basis.
  - xiv. The need of significantly adapted disabled properties was greater than the supply and if there had been a high level of investment to adapt a four bedroom property this would be offered as significantly adapted disabled property.
  - xv. Legal advice was being sought on the status of a tenant if no appropriate accommodation could be found during the six months review period, although this could be extended by a further six months.
  - xvi. One off properties would be designated as such by the Area Housing Manager but would only be used in exceptional circumstances and an example of Cemetery Lodge was given to the Committee.

#### The Committee:

Councillor Bird proposed and Councillor Johnson seconded the deletion of ii(b) of the Officer recommendation. Subject to the condition that a detailed report would be presented at a future meeting on the detail and clarification of how significantly adapted disabled properties on fixed term tenancies would work in practice (original ~~struck through~~).

ii. Approved the use of fixed term tenancies from April 2014 for:

- a) properties with 4 or more bedrooms – 5 years
- b) ~~significantly adapted disabled properties – 5 years~~
- c) move on accommodation – 3 years
- d) one off properties – 5 years.

**Resolved (6 votes to 4 votes)** to delete ii(b) of the Officer's recommendation.

**Resolved (11 votes to 0)** to approve the amended recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the amended recommendation.

#### **Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)**

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor

**14/8/HMB Gas Maintenance Contract Extension****Matter for Decision**

To consider the extension of the Gas Service Contract with Morrison Facilities Services.

**Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

Granted permission to extend the Gas Service contract with Morrison Facilities Services for a further period of two years terminating on 30th June 2016 in line with the ESPO contract terms and conditions.

**Reason for the Decision**

As set out in the Officer's report.

**Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

Not applicable.

**Scrutiny Considerations**

The Committee received a report from the Engineering Services Team Leader.

Kay Harris thanked the Officer for information she had received concerning the customer satisfaction survey referenced in the report. It was requested that the information be sent to all Members of the Committee.

The Committee made the following comment in response to the report:

- i. Highlighted the close working partnership of the City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, tenant representatives and Morrison to monitor compliance, customer satisfaction and best practice on a monthly basis.

**The Committee:**

**Resolved** (unanimously) to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)**

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor

The meeting ended at 6.45 pm

**CHAIR**

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD**

16 January 2014

5.30 - 8.15 pm

**Present:** Councillors Blackhurst (Vice-Chair), Bird, Blencowe, Brierley, Johnson, Pippas, Price, Rosenstiel, Minns (Chair), Best, Harris, Marais, Oriokot and Sweeney

**Executive Councillor for Housing:** Councillor Smart

**Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives:** Diana Minns (Chair), Diane Best, Kay Harris, John Marais, Caroline Oriokot and Terry Sweeney

**Officers:**

Director of Customer & Community Services: Liz Bisset

Director of Resource: David Horspool

Committee Services Manager: Gary Clift

Business Manager & Principal Accountant: Julia Hovells

Committee Manager: Toni Birkin

Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**

**14/1/HMB Apologies**

No apologies were received.

**14/2/HMB Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Rosenstiel	14/4/HMB	Personal: As a tenant of a garage in East Road
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**14/3/HMB Public Questions**

There were no public questions.

**14/4/HMB Housing Revenue Account budget for 2014/15**

**Matter for Decision:**

To consider the Revenue Account Budget 2014/15 for the Housing Portfolio.

**Decision of the Executive Council for Housing:**

As the Executive Councillor for Housing took a view on this key decision which materially differed to that of the Housing Management Board. Under 2.5 of Part 4D Executive Procedure Rules of the Council's Constitution, the matter was referred to the Leader of the Council for Decision.

**Reason for the Decision:**

Not applicable.

**Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

Not applicable

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Committee received a report from the Business Manager/Principal Accountant regarding the Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting Report. The Report referred to proposals for both the review of rents and service charges and revenue bids and savings, which form part of the HRA budget, both revised for 2013/14 and for 2014/15 and beyond.

The Director of Customer and Community Services, reminded the Committee of the procedural process for considering the Labour Group Amendment.

Mr Marais expressed opposition and concern about the proposed council dwellings rent increase above the rate of inflation for a following year (as specified under recommendation A of the committee report) and outlined the effect that this would have on tenants.

In response to the Committee's questions Officers stated the following:

- i. There would be very few tenants who would not be affected by the additional £2.00 for conversion to target rent.
- ii. Inflation plus half a percent plus £2.00 is the current limit that could be applied under the rent re-structuring policy, and is the expectation of Government.
- iii. As the outcome of the recent Government consultation on rent policy had not yet been published and would not come into force until April 2015, rent levels for consideration had been calculated under existing



Government guidelines. It was the assumption that 2014/15 would be the last opportunity for Local Authorities to close the gap between actual and target rents and that they were expected to do this.

- iv. Due to the high differential between actual and target rents in Cambridge at the outset of the regime, the gap remains too great to be closed fully in April 2014.
- v. The HRA has a fully committed business plan, with the level of debt based on the assumption that Government guidelines would be followed and adhered to. Any decision not to follow the Government guidelines to increase the rent would equate to savings needing to be made elsewhere in the HRA.
- vi. There was nothing to stop the Committee considering the HRA business plan over a longer time frame, but this would not change the financial impact of fixed rate loans and the timing of their maturity. Any decision to re-finance loans at any point in the business plan is likely to result in higher interest payments, as the lending rates would not be as favourable as they were at the outset of self-financing.
- vii. For every £1 that rent prices did not increase the Council would have to find a year on year saving of approximately £330,000.

Councillor Price proposed the Labour Group amendment and outlined the following proposals for the Committee's consideration, with the changes identified in *italics*. In most cases the entire section or appendix has been re-stated for ease of reference.

The Committee were advised that the rent reduction recommended for consideration (as specified under recommendation (i) of the Labour Amendment) would be offset by using 20% of the existing £1,090,000 set aside. The on-going impact of the business plan would be managed by greater efficiency savings in 2015 (a suggested saving of 4%). A reduction of HRA target reserves from £3,000,000 to £ 2,750,000 would also contribute to offsetting the reduction in rental income in the first year.

Councillor Price stated it was important to acknowledge that tenants were facing economic hardship whilst rents had consistently increased since 2010/11 with the cost of living also growing.

### **Review of Rents and Charges**

- i. *Approve that council dwellings rents be increased, departing from Government guidelines, assuming that 2014/15 is the last year that a move towards convergence with formula rent is possible, but introducing*

*a local maximum in individual increases of inflation (RPI at September 2013 of 3.2%) plus half percent (0.5%) plus £1.00 per week with effect from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2014.*

- ii. Approve inflationary increases of up to a maximum of 2.5% in garage and parking space rents for 2014/15, in line with the base rate of inflation for the year assumed in the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- iii. Approve the proposed service charges for Housing Revenue Account services and facilities, as shown in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- iv. Approve revised leasehold administration charges for 2014/15 as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- v. Approve that service charges for gas maintenance, door entry systems, lifts and electrical and mechanical maintenance are increased by a maximum of inflation at 3.2% plus 0.5%, if required, to continue to recover full estimated costs as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- vi. Approve that caretaking, communal cleaning, estate services, grounds maintenance, window cleaning, temporary housing premises and utilities, sheltered scheme premises, utilities, digital television aerial and catering charges continue to be recovered at full cost, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

## **Revenue – HRA**

### **Revised Budget 2013/14:**

- vii. Approve with any amendments, the Revised Budget items shown in
- viii. Appendix D of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

### **Budget 2014/15:**

- ix. *Approve the Non-Cash Limit items originally shown in Appendix E of the HRA Budget Setting Report, as amended in line with Appendix E to this report.*
- x. Approve with any amendments, the Unavoidable Revenue Bids and Savings shown in Appendix F of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xi. *Approve the Priority Policy Fund (PPF) Bids originally shown in Appendix G of the HRA Budget Setting Report, as amended at Appendix G to this report.*
- xii. *Approve the resulting Housing Revenue Account Summary Forecast 2013/14 to 2017/18, shown originally in Appendix L of the HRA Budget Setting Report, as subsequently amended and re-stated in full at Appendix L to this report.*

The following comments were made in relation to the proposed Labour amendment:

- i. It would undermine the service tenants receive going forward and the Council's ability to build, which would impact on those on the waiting list.
- ii. The purpose of target rent was to close the gap between all types of social housing rent.
- iii. Not aware of the Council ever attempting a 4% saving target and there is no evidence to show how this would be met.
- iv. The proposed amendment was based on a lower level of reserves and doubled the rate of efficiency gains with no indication of how this would be delivered.
- v. It offers no suggestion of what areas of the service would be reduced to make the savings.
- vi. Queried if the reserves of the HRA should be touched as this was the wrong direction of travel at this particular time.
- vii. Raised the possible risk of future borrowing at a higher interest rate.
- viii. If the amendment was to be approved the savings would be have to be achieved.

Councillor Blencowe reminded the Committee that efficiency gains had already been over-achieved for 2013/14 therefore it would be entirely possible to achieve the proposed savings target of 4% in 2014/15.

Councillor Johnson concluded that the proposed amendment would still ensure the flexibility in the HRA to build the much need social housing required in the City as demand dictated.

The Executive Councillor stated that if the rent increased in line with the rent restructuring guidelines the Council's tenants would be paying a maximum of 45% of market rent. Those in the private sector regardless of income level could pay double, a factor of the Cambridge housing market and an indicator of the urgent need to build more houses in the social rented sector.

She, reiterated to the Committee that the purpose of target rent was to close the gap between all types of social housing rent.

Finally the Executive Councillor spoke of the HRA reserves which may be required to cover the Council's self-insure policy which could affect the building programme.

The Committee accepted the Labour amendment by **(7 votes to 4 votes)**.

The Committee:

**Resolved (7 votes to 5 votes)** to agree the following recommendations:

**Review of Rents and Charges**

- xiii. *Approve that council dwellings rents be increased, departing from Government guidelines, assuming that 2014/15 is the last year that a move towards convergence with formula rent is possible, but introducing a local maximum in individual increases of inflation (RPI at September 2013 of 3.2%) plus half percent (0.5%) plus £1.00 per week with effect from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2014.*
- xiv. Approve inflationary increases of up to a maximum of 2.5% in garage and parking space rents for 2014/15, in line with the base rate of inflation for the year assumed in the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xv. Approve the proposed service charges for Housing Revenue Account services and facilities, as shown in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xvi. Approve revised leasehold administration charges for 2014/15 as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xvii. Approve that service charges for gas maintenance, door entry systems, lifts and electrical and mechanical maintenance are increased by a maximum of inflation at 3.2% plus 0.5%, if required, to continue to recover full estimated costs as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xviii. Approve that caretaking, communal cleaning, estate services, grounds maintenance, window cleaning, temporary housing premises and utilities, sheltered scheme premises, utilities, digital television aerial and catering charges continue to be recovered at full cost, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

**Revenue – HRA**

**Revised Budget 2013/14:**

- xix. Approve with any amendments, the Revised Budget items shown in
- xx. Appendix D of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

**Budget 2014/15:**

- xxi. *Approve the Non-Cash Limit items originally shown in Appendix E of the HRA Budget Setting Report, as amended in line with Appendix E to this report.*
- xxii. Approve with any amendments, the Unavoidable Revenue Bids and Savings shown in Appendix F of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xxiii. *Approve the Priority Policy Fund (PPF) Bids originally shown in Appendix G of the HRA Budget Setting Report, as amended at Appendix G to this report.*
- xxiv. *Approve the resulting Housing Revenue Account Summary Forecast 2013/14 to 2017/18, shown originally in Appendix L of the HRA Budget Setting Report, as subsequently amended and re-stated in full at Appendix L to this report.*

The Executive Councillor for Housing refused the recommendations and under 2.5 of Part 4D Executive Procedure Rules of the City Council's Constitution, the matter would be referred to the Leader of the Council for decision.

**Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted):** No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

*The Leader of the Council's decision can be viewed at the following link:*

<http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2686>

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

**CHAIR**

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# CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

## Record of Executive Decision

### HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET SETTING REPORT (BSR) 2013/14 to 2017/18 – REVENUE IMPLICATIONS

**Decision of:** The Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor portfolio for Strategy) Councillor Tim Bick

**Reference:** RoED/HMB/01

**Date of decision:** 31 January 2014      **Recorded on:** 31 January 2014

**Decision Type:** Key Decision

**Matter for Decision:** The Leader is asked to take decisions in respect of both housing rents and service charges and the Housing Revenue Account revenue budget.

**Why the decision had to be made (and any alternative options):** Following deliberation at the Housing Management Board (16.01.14), the Executive Councillor for Housing took a view on a key decision which materially differed to that of the Housing Management Board. Under 2.5 of Part 4D Executive Procedure Rules of the Council's Constitution, the matter was referred to the Leader of the Council for Decision.

The minutes from Housing Management Board (16.01.14) record that the Housing Management Board supported the Labour amendment by 7 votes to 4 votes. The Housing Management Board then supported the Labour recommendations (i-xii) set out on page 6-7 of the minutes.

The Executive Councillor for Housing supported the recommendations (A-K) on pages 2-3 of the HRA BSR report (January 2014).

The Leader of the Council is requested to make a decision, either as set out in the HRA BSR covering report (January 2014) Final or as set out in the Labour HRA BSR covering report.

**Leader of the Council decision(s):**

The Leader of the Council decided to approve the recommendations as set out in the HRA BSR covering report (January 2014) Final:

**Review of Rents and Charges**

a) Approve that council dwellings rents be increased in line with rent restructuring guidelines, assuming that 2014/15 is the last year that a move towards convergence with formula rent is possible, but with a maximum in individual increases of inflation (RPI at September 2013 of 3.2%) plus half percent (0.5%) plus £2.00 per week with effect from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2014, in accordance with the recent consultation for government rent policy guidelines.

b) Approve inflationary increases of up to a maximum of 2.5% in garage and parking space rents for 2014/15, in line with the base rate of inflation for the year assumed in the HRA Budget Setting Report.

c) Approve the proposed service charges for Housing Revenue Account services and facilities, as shown in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

d) Approve revised leasehold administration charges for 2014/15 as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

e) Approve that service charges for gas maintenance, door entry systems, lifts and electrical and mechanical maintenance are increased by a maximum of inflation at 3.2% plus 0.5%, if required, to continue to recover full estimated costs as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

f) Approve that caretaking, communal cleaning, estate services, grounds maintenance, window cleaning, temporary housing premises and utilities, sheltered scheme premises, utilities, digital television aerial and catering charges continue to be recovered at full cost, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.



**Revenue – HRA**

**Revised Budget 2013/14:**

g) Approve with any amendments, the Revised Budget items shown in Appendix D of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

**Budget 2014/15:**

h) Approve with any amendments, the Non-Cash Limit items shown in Appendix E of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

i) Approve with any amendments, the Unavoidable Revenue Bids and Savings shown in Appendix F of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

j) Approve with any amendments, the Priority Policy Fund (PPF) Bids shown in Appendix G of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

**Reasons for the decision:**

The reasons for the decision are as set out in the HRA BSR report to Housing Management Board (16.1.14).

**Scrutiny consideration:**

As described above the matter was scrutinised at HMB on 16.1.14.

**Report:**

The report and amendment is attached.

**Conflicts of interest:**

None

**Comments:**

This decision was published on 31.1.14 and the Housing Management Board, Executive Councillor for Housing and spokes were advised.

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To: Executive Councillor for Housing (and Deputy Leader): Councillor Catherine Smart  
Report by: Liz Bisset, Director of Customer & Community Services  
Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing Management Board 4/3/2014  
Wards affected: All Wards

## **DRAFT HOUSING PORTFOLIO PLAN 2014-15 Key Decision**

### **1. Executive summary**

1.1 This report covers the draft Housing Portfolio Plan 2013-14, which sets out the strategic objectives for the portfolio for the year ahead, describes the context in which the portfolio is being delivered and details the activities required to deliver the outcomes and the vision. Performance measures and risks are also shown for each strategic objective.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended:

To note the draft Housing Portfolio Plan 2014-15

### **3. Background**

3.1 This is the fourth year in which Cambridge City Council has produced Portfolio Plans. The aim of the Portfolio Plans is to set out how each of the seven Portfolios will contribute to the delivery of the vision outlined in the Council's vision statement.

3.2 The draft Housing Portfolio Plan for 2014-15 has been developed by officers and the Executive Councillor, in parallel with the budget planning process. The draft Housing Portfolio Plan for 2014/15 sets out a limited number of high-level, strategic objectives for the Portfolio, along with the broad activities required to achieve these objectives.

3.3 The services that will deliver the strategic objectives set out in the Plan are each developing more detailed Operational Plans. These will function as management tools to ensure the tasks that deliver the strategic objectives are planned and managed effectively.

## **4. Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

The financial implications of this plan are set out in the budget for the portfolio.

### **(b) Staffing Implications (if not covered in Consultations Section)**

Staff will be allocated personal objectives to ensure the tasks and activities to deliver the objectives are managed. Staff will be supported in the learning and development activities they need to deliver their contribution to the plan.

### **(c) Equal Opportunities Implications**

The activities set out in this plan aim to support the Council's equality and diversity objectives. Equality impact assessments will be carried out on decisions and projects related to this plan as appropriate.

### **(d) Environmental Implications**

The actions in the plan that aim to ensure that new affordable housing meets Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes should have a medium positive environmental impact.

### **(e) Procurement**

Some of the actions involved in the Plan will involve procurement by the Council. Separate reports on the procurement elements of actions included in the Plan will be provided at an appropriate time.

### **(f) Consultation and communication**

This is a strategic document covering a number of different objectives. There has therefore been no consultation on this plan per se, although there will be consultation on those elements of it that have a significant impact on residents at the appropriate time, in accordance with the Council's code of practice on consultation and community engagement, and our statutory duties for consulting tenants.

## **(g) Community Safety**

There are no significant community safety issues associated with the strategic actions set out in the Portfolio Plan.

### **5. Background papers**

N/a

### **6. Appendices**

Appendix A - Draft Housing Portfolio Plan 2014-15

### **7. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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**Cambridge City Council**

**Housing Portfolio Plan 2014-15**

**Portfolio Holder: Catherine Smart**

**Accountable Officer: Liz Bisset**  
**Email address: [liz.bisset@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:liz.bisset@cambridge.gov.uk)**  
**Phone number: 01223 457801**

## Introduction

The local economy centred on Cambridge remains one of the most buoyant in the country and the number of new homes planned and needed remains high. We will make sure that the expansion of Cambridge creates new homes and communities that people want to live in. Market house prices and rents remain high in Cambridge and we will continue to make the case for investment in a range of sizes, types and tenures of housing for local residents, including Affordable Housing. We will also continue to invest in, and make best use of, the existing homes within the City, taking account of the need to tackle climate change and ensuring the existing communities can benefit from the planned growth.

In 2013 we revised our Lettings Policy in response to new national guidelines and we also started innovative work to set up a sub-regional lettings agency (Town Hall Lettings) with the aim of providing immediate accommodation for single homeless people. Recognising the pressure on the private rented sector we increased staff capacity to tackle private landlords who have the tendency to flout rules on property standards and the service they offer to their tenants. 2013 also saw the first significant batch of new housing on the Southern Fringe growth site contributing to the completion of over 300 Affordable Housing for the first time for a number of years. This new housing is timely to mitigate the worst impact on households of the implementation of welfare reforms. For example, the numbers of households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation reduced significantly by the end of 2013 as a direct result of the supply of new Affordable Housing. Nearly 400 more Affordable Housing dwellings are predicted to be completed by March 2015.

In 2014.15 we will continue to work with partner local authorities, housing associations and others across the sub-region around Cambridge to demonstrate the need for investment in local housing and how this is critical to the success of other local policy requirements such as social care; health; and local economic growth. The opportunities that may arise from the City Deal will be central to the influence the City Council can have on the local housing market and meeting housing need. Working to address local City Council priorities to support vulnerable people to sustain independent housing within the framework set by the county-wide Health and



Wellbeing Board will be critical if housing choice is to equally and fairly sustained for all households including meeting the need of an ageing population.

## **Vision Statements applicable to this portfolio**

The vision statements most pertinent to this portfolio are:

- A city which recognises and meets needs for housing of all kinds - close to jobs and neighbourhood facilities
- A city in the forefront of low carbon living and minimising its impact on the environment from waste and pollution.

## Strategic Objectives 2014- 2015

<p><b>Vision Statement:</b></p>	<p><b>A city which recognises and meets needs for housing of all kinds - close to jobs and neighbourhood facilities</b></p> <p><b>A city in the forefront of low carbon living and minimising its impact on the environment from waste and pollution.</b></p>
<p><b>Strategic Objective HSO1:</b></p>	<p><b>Maximise the delivery of new sustainable housing in a range of sizes, types and tenures – driving up standards and increasing the energy efficiency of new homes for residents and developing plans for the Council to deliver up to 2000 new Affordable Homes.</b></p>
<p><b>By March 2015 we will have:</b></p>	<p>HS01.1 Worked with developers, Registered Providers (housing associations) and planners to ensure that the city’s social and market housing (including private rented housing) stock continues to grow, including 40% Affordable Housing in most new developments and the delivery of the Council’s own new build programme.</p> <p>HS01.2 Developed proposals to work together with partners to deliver affordable housing in the Greater Cambridge area, potentially under the auspices of a Greater Cambridge City Deal.</p> <p>HS01.3 Worked with Registered Providers to ensure the current standard of new build housing is maintained in terms of size, construction, layout and to at least Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes – reviewing sizes of new build to ensure the supply of new build reflects the context of welfare reforms.</p>

	<p>HS01.4 Established the extent that new approaches to revenue funding available to health and social care partners support vulnerable people to sustain independent lifestyles and housing in community settings including meeting the needs of an ageing population.</p>
<p><b>Lead Officer:</b></p>	<p>Alan Carter, Head of Strategic Housing</p>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New Affordable Housing on the strategic growth sites. Completions – 168</li> <li>2. New Affordable Housing on other sites. Completions - 252</li> <li>3. 75% of new Affordable Homes built to at least Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes in 2014.15 (it is estimated that 60% will be completed to Level 4 of the Code in 2013.14).</li> </ol>
<p><b>Delivery Risks:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. National policy drivers could impact on the ability to deliver policy aspirations for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the introduction of Affordable Rents changes the tenure mix of housing on new housing sites restricted choice of housing options for some lower income groups.</li> <li>• changes to the benefit system could adversely impact on the ability of the Council to plan under-letting of some new homes in the Growth areas to foster mixed and sustainable communities</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Depending on the outcome of current negotiations with Government, together with</li> </ol>

	<p>South Cambridgeshire District Council, the City Deal may not result in the level of new funding for Affordable Housing sought by the Council and partners.</p> <p>3. The availability of development finance and mortgage finance slows up the delivery of new housing.</p>
<p><b>Strategic Objective</b> <b>HSO2:</b></p>	<p><b>Make the best use of existing homes, promoting and leading the provision of well maintained, safe and secure homes to maximise housing choice.</b></p>
<p><b>By March 2015 we will have:</b></p>	<p>HSO2.1 Increased staff capacity to support vulnerable people and those most adversely affected by welfare reforms to remain in their homes, including those with mental health issues and those who are moving into an independent home of their own for the first time or following a period of homelessness.</p> <p>HSO2.2 Completed our annual planned maintenance programme of works that ensure City Homes continue to be maintained to a good standard.</p> <p>HSO2.3 Continued to have maintained and promoted services to take action effectively against private sector landlords that do not comply with housing health and safety matters as well as landlord and tenant issues</p> <p>HSO2.4 Continued to prioritise bringing back into occupation long standing empty homes in the private sector.</p> <p>HSO2.5 Completed the House Condition survey to help assess the current condition of the private housing stock including its energy efficiency.</p>

<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Robert Hollingsworth, Head of City Homes (HS02.1), Bob Hadfield (HS02.2) Jas Lally (HS02.3;HS02.4 and HS02.5)
<b>Performance Measures:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Report and monitoring of all investigations undertaken according to complaints received – estimate 200 new cases 14.15</li> <li>2. Number of long term empty homes brought back into use – target 20</li> <li>3. Survey completed by March 2015 on current housing stock with an emphasis on energy efficiency</li> </ol>
<b>Delivery Risks:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health and care funding will not be sufficient to support vulnerable people to sustain independent housing.</li> <li>2. More detailed analysis shows that there are complex reasons why a number of homes stay empty and the investment required to bring them back into use does not represent good value for money.</li> </ol>

<b>Strategic Objective HSO3:</b>	<b>Deliver good quality housing related advice and direct measures to help prevent homelessness.</b>
<b>By March 2015 we will have:</b>	HS03.1 Focused our housing advice to reduce homelessness and help prevent homelessness by offering early advice on alternative housing options and by embedding the Town Hall Lettings scheme.

	<p>HS03.2 Increased the range of temporary housing available to minimise the impact on households who become homeless or who are threatened with homelessness and reinforced our work with partner organisations to support people with a history of homelessness to find a settled home.</p>
<p><b>Lead Officer:</b></p>	<p>Alan Carter, Head of Strategic Housing</p>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of Rough Sleeping estimates average no more than 15 (the average number of individual recorded as sleeping rough over the calendar year 2013 was 25.</li> <li>2. Numbers of households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation less than 5 at any one time (from a high of over 30 households in B&amp;B in one month over the last 12 numbers have reduced to less than 5 since November 2013)</li> <li>3. Combined number of households in and waiting for temporary accommodation no more than 95 (measured through quarterly snapshot)</li> <li>4. Homelessness preventions to continue to be above average for region ie over 380 per annum</li> </ol>
<p><b>Delivery Risks:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Local Housing Allowance levels restrict access for some households to housing that meets their needs within the city.</li> <li>2. New national policy initiatives such as the new 'Affordable Rents will restrict access to new housing provided by housing associations (Registered Providers).</li> <li>3. There will be insufficient suitable properties for single people that become available</li> </ol>

	to be let under the Town Hall Lettings scheme.
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**Background Information:**

- Housing Strategy 2012-15
- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
- Developing Affordable Housing Policy Guide
- Charter for New Affordable Housing
- Private Housing Stock Condition Survey
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment

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To: Executive Councillor for Housing (and Deputy Leader): Councillor Catherine Smart  
Report by: Liz Bisset, Director Of Customer & Community Services  
Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing Management Board 4/3/2014  
Wards affected: Wards containing Council housing

**PROGRESS REPORT ON RESIDENTS' HOUSING REGULATION PANEL  
Not a Key Decision**

**1. Executive summary**

In 2010, the Housing Management Board approved the creation of a residents' Housing Regulation Panel (HRP) in Cambridge. This report introduces (as Appendix 1), a progress report from the Housing Regulation Panel, plus a copy of the Panel's latest inspection report (plus supporting information) on the window cleaning service (Appendix 2-5).

**2. Recommendations**

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

**2.1** To note the positive outcomes achieved by residents' Housing Regulation Panel in their third year of activity

**2.2** To continue to support residents' co-regulation and the constructive challenge provided by residents' Housing Regulation Panel

**3. Background**

**3.1** A key element of the Localism Act was to involve the public in the scrutiny and regulation of the public services they receive.

**3.2** This emphasis on local, co-regulation became a priority for Social Housing Landlords following the closure of the Tenant Services Authority and the Audit Commission.

**3.3** Cambridge City Council (with the help of the Chartered Institute of Housing) had already begun developing a tenant/leaseholder co-regulation

panel before these national regulatory changes. This meant that Cambridge's Housing Regulation Panel was among the first co-regulation groups in the country.

**3.4** Having developed robust systems for inspection and clear terms of reference, the Housing Regulation Panel began their inspection regime in 2011/12 with Communal Cleaning. They inspected caretaking in 2012/13 and have just completed their 3<sup>rd</sup> inspection – window cleaning (Appendix 2-5).

**3.5** HRP report to the Housing Management Board on an annual basis, which usually includes their latest service inspection report. This link between the two groups is a key part of the co-regulation process in Cambridge. HRP may also make a formal request to the Housing Management Board, outlining a concern with the performance of a specific service.

**3.6** HRP's work is supported by other tenant/leaseholder volunteers in Resident Inspector, Green Inspector and Mystery Shopping roles. Some of the current HRP members started out in these roles and it is planned that in the future they will continue to be a stepping stone for tenant/leaseholder volunteers looking to develop their skills further as part of the Housing Regulation Panel.

## **4. Implications**

(a) **Financial Implications** - Nil

(b) **Staffing Implications** - This work is part of the routine duties of existing staff.

(c) **Equal Opportunities Implications** - Advances Equal Opportunities by actively empowering a diverse range of residents, including Black and Minority Ethnic representatives.

(d) **Environmental Implications** - Nil

(e) **Procurement** - Nil

(f) **Consultation and communication** - Makes a significant contribution the Council's overall positive practice on consultation and community engagement. The material in this report is published on the Council's website, communicated to customers through Open Door magazine and shared at a broad range of meetings and consultations with residents.

(g) **Community Safety** - Nil

## **5. Background papers**

None

## **6. Appendices**

**Appendix 1** HRP Progress Report 2013/2014

**Appendix 2** Inspection form

**Appendix 3** Inspection Results

**Appendix 4** Window Cleaning Report

**Appendix 5** Recommendations for Improvement SMART Action Plan

## **7. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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## **Housing Regulation Panel (HRP) Progress Report 2013/2014 to Housing Management Board**

**Presented by: Chair of Housing Regulation Panel, Mr. Stan Best**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Housing Management Board on 5 March 2013 the Executive Councillor
  - (i) Noted the outcomes achieved by residents' Housing Regulation Panel in their second year of activity.
  - (ii) Approved continuing to support residents' co-regulation and the constructive challenge provided by residents' Housing Regulation Panel
- 1.2 This report is to inform Housing Management Board of the Housing Regulation Panel's activities during the year 2013/2014.

### **2. The Role of the Housing Regulation Panel**

- 2.1 The Panel is a group of trained tenants and leaseholders who independently inspects the standards of Cambridge City Council's landlord services. It has the authority to challenge any services that are falling below the agreed service standards.
- 2.2. The Panel provides a residents' view about service, performance and business direction.

### **3. Housing Regulation Panel's programme of activities 2013/2014**

- 3.1 The Panel continuously reviews its own practices and procedures to make them appropriate for specific activities within its programme.
- 3.2 In addition to inspecting a specific Landlord Service, it has widened its role to obtain an over-view of the services provided by the landlord. This helps to inform its forward plan.
- 3.3 The Panel continues to review the services it has previously inspected and reports locations to City Homes where a particular service is falling below the agreed service standards.

- 3.4 Representatives of the Housing Regulation Panel have been involved in:
- a) Voids Best Practice Group
  - b) Repairs and Maintenance Improvement Plan Scrutiny Group
  - c) Estate Services Liaison meetings
  - d) Citywide Garages Review Working Group
  - e) Judging the annual Residents' Garden Competition
  - f) Disabled Adaptions meetings
  - g) Performance Monitoring sessions
- 3.5 During the year Housing Regulation Panel representatives participated in:
- a) Recruitment and appointment of the Resident Involvement Officer
  - b) Viewing of the new build properties at Jane's Court
  - c) Visit to Uttlesford District Council to gather information about management of void properties
  - d) Study visits with representatives from other housing providers to share good practice
  - e) Chartered Institute of Housing Eastern Regional Conference
  - f) Customer Journey Mapping Seminar
- 3.6 The Housing Regulation Panel independently appraises the Tenant Initiative Scheme (TIS) bids from residents and makes recommendations for approval or not to City Homes Management Team. The projects recommended for approval were:
- a) Water butts for a communal garden at Russell Court
  - b) Retractable sunshade for the communal garden at School Court
  - c) Retractable sunshade for the communal patio and small shed at Rawlyn Court
  - d) Communal shed at Fernwood

#### **4. Housing Regulation Panel Inspection of the Communal Window Cleaning Service**

- 4.1 The purpose of the investigation was to determine:
- If the service being provided is in accordance with the specification in the contract
  - If the service is being provided consistently across the city
  - If the service provides value for money

The inspection of this service was the most challenging of all the services HRP have inspected. The service is delivered to each location three times a year and the contractor can vary the scheduled dates up to fourteen days either way which made the logistics of co-ordinating the HRP inspections problematical. As the service is delivered by an

outside contractor, HRP had to observe all the sensitivities associated with this. Communication had to be with City Homes, not directly with the Contractor.

- 4.2 The Housing Regulation Panel commenced its inspection with an information briefing from City Homes and the Contractor's Operations Manager.
- 4.3 It proceeded to collect information about the service from a variety of documented sources.
- 4.4 It developed a Window Cleaning Service Inspection form (Appendix 2) for site visits using the Window Cleaning Specification and the Housemark Estate Services Club Peer Review Photo Book
- 4.5 When requested by the Housing Regulation Panel, a City Homes Housing Officer made site visits with HRP during the inspections to provide clarification of issues arising.
- 4.6 The Housing Regulation Panel collated the results from all the site inspections (Appendix 3)
- 4.7 On completion of the inspection the Housing Regulation Panel presented the report of its findings and recommendations for improvement (Appendix 4) to City Homes.
- 4.8 Together, City Homes and the Housing Regulation Panel agreed the improvements for the service which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed (SMART).
- 4.9 In January 2014 City Homes reported back to the Housing Regulation Panel on the actions taken to improve the service as agreed.

(Appendix 5 lists HRP's recommendations for improvements together with the actions taken by City Homes).

## **5. Keeping tenants and leaseholders informed**

The Housing Regulation Panel gives regular updates to all tenants and leaseholders in the quarterly Open Door magazine. The Summer 2014 edition will feature the findings and results of the inspection of the window cleaning service.

## **6. Housing Regulation Panel support and recruitment**

- 6.1 The Housing Regulation Panel Chair has regular meetings with the Resident Involvement team to support the independent work of the panel.
- 6.2 The work programme of the Resident Involvement team includes strategies for the recruitment of more residents to become involved.





**Communal Window Cleaning Service      Inspection Form**

Location.....      Block number.....      Date.....

Names of HRP members inspecting site.....

**(To score each area of inspection, tick inside the relevant box)**

<b>Area of inspection</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Cleanliness of communal windows on doors/landings and staircases, internal and external faces	The windows have no dirt, no dust, no cobwebs and generally the level of cleanliness is excellent	The windows are generally in an acceptable condition	The condition of the windows is poor (e.g. water streaks on the inside of the windows)	The condition of the windows is very poor (e.g. frame and glass covered in excessive cobwebs, dust and dirt)	
Cleanliness of ledges and window cills	Ledges and window cills in excellent condition and totally litter free	The ledges and window cills are in good condition, typically no more litter than would be expected	The ledges and window cills are in poor condition, with a high build up of litter (e.g. old cobwebs, insects dirt, and litter)	The condition of the ledges and window cills is totally unacceptable, with excessive amount of litter and hazardous conditions (e.g. broken glasses or mirror or sharp objects)	

**Additional comments**

<b>Health and Safety issues</b>	<b>Location of any broken glazing</b>	<b>Location of any obstructions preventing window cleaning being carried out</b>

**Inspection Results**

 Inspection  
Scores

Location	A	B	C	D	Comments
<b>South General Locations May 2013 cleaning cycle</b>					
Ainsdale			3		Marks left on the outside of some window panes. Outside cills not cleaned.
Anstey Way			1		Outside cills not cleaned.
Arran Close			1		Outside cills not cleaned.
Ashbury Close		1	3		Outside cills not cleaned.
Colville Road			3	2	Outside cills not cleaned
Davy Road		3			Adhesive left on window from old notices.
Fanshawe Road		2			Outside cills dusty.
Highdene			1	1	
Monkswell			1		
Rush Grove			1	2	
St. Bede's Crescent			3	1	No evidence of window cleaning in block starting at number 38 St, Bede's Crescent
<b>Sheltered Schemes July 2013 cleaning cycle</b>					
Ditton Court			2		Window adjacent to stair lift cleaned. Front window of lounge partially cleaned. Upper windows and cills not cleaned. Cobwebs on windows not removed. Water streaks left on windows. One of the residents spoke to the inspectors about the poor state of the window cleaning. The windows on the street side do not appear to have been cleaned.
Ditchburn Place		2	2	1	Small windows on the top floor not cleaned. Cleaning on the front is very good. The standard of cleaning at the back of the building is not good.
Mansel Court			1		Outside windows are left with water streaks. Residents told the inspectors they are not happy with the standard of window cleaning. One resident quoted the example of bird droppings still left on a window after 2 years.
Rawlyn Court			2	1	No evidence of window cleaning at the back of the property.
Whitefriars		1	1		Cleaning of the main entrance windows is good. Cleaning of the upstairs back windows is poor.

<b>North General Locations August 2013 cleaning cycle</b>					
Arbury Court			1		
Brackley Close			2		Broken windows in the stairwell of block 38 to 48
Cockerel Road			3		Writing in blue on entrance door window. A resident commented that this has been there for months.
Edgecombe			2	1	Side windows on the stairs not cleaned. Covered in cobwebs.
Hawkins Road		2			Windows and cills clean.
Hazelwood Close			1	2	Windows very badly marked.
Maitland Avenue				2	Cobwebs and streaks on windows. No evidence of recent cleaning of some windows
Molewood Close				2	
Mortlock Avenue			1	2	
Rutland Close			2		Broken windows.
St. Kilda Avenue			2		



**City Homes**  
**Communal Window Cleaning Service**

**Report**

**8 October 2013**

## **Introduction**

The role of the Housing regulation Panel is to monitor the standards of Housing Services to ensure they are quality services which give value for money. It monitored the Communal Window Cleaning Service Standard during the period December 2012 to September 2013.

City Homes provides the Communal Window Cleaning Service which is delivered by an external contractor. The current contract commenced in 2011. In Autumn 2010, HRP was invited to send two representatives to two information meetings at an early stage in the contract procurement process.

The Service Standard is described in the Window Cleaning Contract Specification which City Homes made available to HRP.

## **Monitoring**

Prior to commencing its monitoring of the service, HRP had two briefing meetings in December 2012 and January 2013 both attended by a City Homes Housing Officer and the Contractor's Head of Operations.

Information was collected from the following sources:

- City Homes, including site visits and follow-up meetings with Officers when requested by HRP.
- The Contractor's Head of Operations (until he left the Company in February 2013).
- Estate Champion.
- ILS Maintenance Manager.
- Business Manager and Principal Accountant.
- Finance Manager and Accountant.
- Business Development Officer.
- Housing Regulation Panel site inspections.

Co-ordinating the programme of site inspections presented HRP with a logistical challenge. The service is delivered by an external contractor, so all HRP communication about the cleaning schedules was through City Homes. HRP recognises that this increased the work load of the City Homes Housing Officer who was HRP's main contact. The cleaning is scheduled every four months in specific weeks but the contract allows for work to be completed within a maximum of 14 days either side of the published date which presented a further challenge to co-ordinating the programme of HRP

site inspections. The Housing Officer liaised with the Contractor who agreed for the Cleaning Supervisor to send text messages to the HRP Chair confirming the locations where cleaning was complete. In fairness to the Contractor, HRP carried out its site inspections during the cleaning cycle scheduled from May to August 2013, on the day after the cleaning was done at each location. HRP carried out the site inspections working in pairs. It inspected the standard of window cleaning (in flat blocks randomly selected) at 11 South General Locations, 11 North General Locations. In all, the cleaning standard was inspected at 54 flat blocks. HRP also inspected the cleaning standard at 5 Sheltered Schemes.

## Evaluation

- There is little information available to tenants and leaseholders about the Communal Window Cleaning Service Standard. There is a very brief reference on the council's website in the section "who-is-responsible-for-what".
- The standard of service delivery generally does not comply with the specification and does not give value for money. At many of the sites visited, the glass was not left free from marks, smears and streaks, window frames and cills remained dirty and cobwebs were not removed. HRP concluded from the evidence gathered during its site inspections that the service standard is generally poor city wide. The only areas where the cleaning fully complied with the specification were the windows at the entrances and in the reception areas of Sheltered Schemes.
- If the standard of service delivery complied with the specification, it would give value for money.
- Invoices are not being sent consistently to the named officers for signing to authorise payment.
- In some locations, obstructions left by residents, adjacent to glazing prevents proper cleaning of windows.
- One of the main weaknesses is the level of communication between the Contractor and City Homes which makes it difficult for City Homes to carry out effective monitoring.
- The Window Cleaning Contract Specification states that the council may carry out checks to ensure that the specification is being met at any time. This may involve site checks as well as interviews with the contract manager or contractor staff as appropriate. City Homes confirmed that they mainly rely on residents to monitor the cleaning

of windows as they do not have the capacity to inspect all the areas after each window clean. Where caretakers are in place they will obviously do this. In addition there is feedback from resident inspectors. The Sheltered Schemes are slightly easier to monitor as they have staff in and out of the buildings all the time. Negative feedback is always acted upon.

- No specific performance information (benchmarking, complaints information etc.) is kept centrally for the service. There is minimal local performance data kept by City Homes.

## **Recommendations for improvement**

- Details of the Communal Window Cleaning Service Standard and the Cleaning Schedules made available to tenants and leaseholders. This could be achieved by adding more information to the section already on the Council's web site, including details in the new tenants pack if the property receives the service and publicising the information in "Open Door".
- Liaise with the contractor to agree a mechanism for more effective communication so that service delivery issues can be addressed.
- Although City Homes has stated that it does not have the capacity to monitor the service delivery standard after each window clean, there is a need for effective monitoring to ensure the cleaning is delivered to the standard described in the specification. This could be achieved setting up a simple system for Caretakers, Independent Living Service staff and Housing Officers to report window cleaning issues when they are on site. To do this effectively they need to know the service standard and the cleaning schedules.
- Monitoring the service provides an opportunity for resident involvement and could be the main way the service is monitored. The grass roots resident involvement strategy should include facilitating residents, resident inspectors and resident representatives to monitor the service.
- Ensure invoices are sent to the named officers for signing to authorise payment.
- A system for recording the service performance information needs to be developed. Some examples of feedback about the service standard and actions taken made available to HRP.
- The issue of residents leaving obstructions adjacent to glazing so it cannot be cleaned properly needs to be addressed.



- For the future, consider revising the frequency of the cleaning of communal windows to twice a year. One cycle between February and April and the second cycle between August and October. When HRP did its inspections it became apparent that window cleaning between November and January was severely disrupted by winter weather and sickness of the contractor's window cleaning operatives.

The Housing Regulation Panel would like to thank the following Officers for their support with this investigation:

Sandra Farmer, Area Housing Manager  
Andrew Latchem, Area Housing Manager  
Nacer Dali, Housing Officer  
Will Beavitt, Estate Champion  
Frances Swann, Manager, Temporary Housing and Housing Support  
Chas Page, Maintenance Manager, Independent Living Service  
Julia Hovells, Business Manager and Principal Accountant  
Cherie Carless, Finance Manager and Accountant  
Catherine Buckle, Business Development Officer

Housing Regulation Panel

Stan Best (Chair)  
Anna Vine-Lott (Vice Chair)  
Julia Casey  
Faiza El-Neil  
Archie Ferguson  
Lewis Wilbur

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## Housing Regulation Panel

## Communal Window Cleaning Service

Recommendations For Improvements	SMART Requirements for Improvements	Action Plan evidenced to HRP by 7 January 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make details of the service standard and cleaning schedule available to tenants and leaseholders, resident inspectors, resident representatives and relevant officers and staff</li> <li>• More effective communication with the contractor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add more information to the section on the Council's web site</li> <li>• Include details in the new tenants pack if the property receives this service</li> <li>• Publish the service standard and cleaning schedules in "Open Door"</li> <li>• Meet with the contractor to agree a mechanism for more effective communication and to address service delivery issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will Beavitt has arranged for the Estate Maintenance Calendar and Window Cleaning Schedule to be included in web site information on the Estate Services page (<a href="https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/estate-services">https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/estate-services</a>).</li> <li>• Information will be included as part of James Bull's new tenants pack review.</li> <li>• Service Standard and Window Cleaning Schedule will appear in the Easter edition of Open Door. Will Beavitt lead Officer.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressed at City Homes meeting with the Contractor on 11 December 2013. Quarterly performance meetings have been set up which Officers, Window Cleaning contractor and HRP representatives(s) will also attend. First was held on Thursday 9 January 2014. In addition all future</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor the standard of service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up a simple system for Caretakers, Independent Living Service staff and Housing Officers to report window cleaning issues when they are on site</li> <li>• Facilitate residents, resident inspectors and resident representatives to monitor the service</li> </ul>	<p>communications will be dealt with the appropriate housing officer. For the North this would be Nacer Dali, and the South would be Will Beavitt and Sheltered Housing Chas Page.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will Beavitt has added window cleaning to the monthly Grounds Maintenance/Estate inspections form. This was shared with HRP at the meeting on 7 January 2014. A Service Standard feedback form for Officers is saved at: M:\HOUGENERAL\HousingStandards.</li> <li>• Will Beavitt has included this as part of the Green Inspectors inspections.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the procedure for signing invoices is followed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure invoices are always sent to the named officers designated to sign them to authorise payment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate action. Names of Officers to receive invoices given to Contractor at meeting on 11 December 2013.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record service performance information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record local performance data from all sources on the Estate Inspection Performance Reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per bullet point 'Monitor the standard of service delivery' above.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address the matter of obstructions left by residents which prevent proper delivery of the service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a concerted effort to address this issue as this has also been evidenced from HRP's previous investigations of the Communal Cleaning Service and Caretaking Service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressed at City Homes meeting with Contractor on 11 December 2013. Agreed problems such as this will be reported immediately to the designated Housing Officer, for North, South and Sheltered Housing and were appropriate a picture would be sent to highlight the problem.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide examples of feedback about the service standard and actions taken</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an appropriate record and make it available to HRP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will Beavitt to set up a spreadsheet for recording purposes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise the frequency of the service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider revising the frequency of window cleaning to twice a year, one cycle between February and April and the second cycle from August to October</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When appropriate</li> </ul>

**SMART Improvements agreed on 12 November 2013**

**City Homes**  
Sandra Farmer and Andrew Latchem  
(Area Housing Managers)

**Action Plan agreed on 7 January 2014**

**Housing Regulation Panel**  
Stan Best  
(HRP Chair)

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