

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 January 2015

5.30 - 7.50 pm

Present: Councillors Todd-Jones (Chair), Avery, Baigent, Bird, Blackhurst, Holland and Robertson

Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives: Diane Best, Kay Harris, John Marais, Diana Minns and Terry Sweeney

Officers:

Director of Customer & Community Services: Liz Bisset

Head of City Homes: Robert Hollingsworth

Head of Strategic Housing: Alan Carter

Head of Legal Services: Simon Pugh

Business Manager / Principal Accountant: Julia Hovells

Housing Advice Service Manager: David Greening

Team Manager (Residential): Robin Ray

Committee Manager: Claire Tunncliffe

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**14/32/HSC Apologies**

No apologies were received.

14/33/HSC Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Avery	14/44/HSC	Personal: Alternate Member of the Planning Committee
	14/40/HSC	Personal: As a tenant of a Council owned garage.
Councillor Robertson	14/40/HSC	Personal: Trustee of Cambridge Cyrenians.
Councillor Bird	14/44/HSC	Personal: Alternate Member of the Planning Committee
	14/40/HSC	Personal: Tenant of Cambridge Housing Society
Councillor Holland	14/44/HSC	Personal: Alternate Member of the Planning Committee

14/34/HSC Appointment of Councillor Vice Chair

Councillor Robertson proposed Councillor Baigent as Vice Chair, Councillor Bird seconded the recommendation.

The Committee

Resolved unanimously to appoint Councillor Baigent as Vice Chair.

14/35/HSC Minutes

The minutes of 30 September 2014 were approved and signed as correct record.

The Chair reminded the Committee of the invitation to meet with the Resident Involvement Team referenced on page 11 of the minutes in the agenda pack.

The invitation had been accepted by the Chair and other Councillors who found the visit very informative, particularly the digital inclusion work. Those who had not attended were encouraged to arrange an appointment with the Resident Involvement Officers.

14/36/HSC Public Questions

There were no public questions.

14/37/HSC Standard Item: Write Off of Former & Current Tenant Arrears

This item was chaired by Diana Minns (Vice Chair /Tenant Representative)

Matter for Decision

Write off of one case of current tenant arrears and five former tenant arrears.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

The Executive Councillor for Housing resolved to:

- i. Approved the single case of current tenant arrears totalling £2,850.29 as detailed in the attached appendix be written off.
- ii. Approved the five cases of former tenant arrears totalling £18,569.18 as detailed in the attached appendix be written off.

Scrutiny Considerations

This item was not requested for pre-scrutiny and the Committee made no comments in response to the report.

The Committee:

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

14/38/HSC Housing Revenue Account Rent Setting Policy

This item was chaired by Diana Minns (Vice Chair /Tenant Representative)

Matter for Decision

The report referred to a government consultation on the future rent policy for local authority landlords in late 2013. The government issued revised 'Guidance on Rents for Social Housing' in May 2014.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

The Executive Councillor for Housing resolved to:

- i. Approved the revised 'Rent Policy' at Appendix A of the Officer's to be effective from April 2015.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Principal Accountant / Business Manager who highlighted the changes in rent setting guidance compared with previous government guidance and set out the proposed approach to rent setting at a local level from April 2015, with an update to the local 'Rent Policy' at Appendix A of the Officer's report.

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

- i. Asked for explanation of the statement on page 37 of the agenda report pack:
'The City Council does not currently apply the 5% flexibility in formula rents (10% for sheltered / support housing) but will review this practice on an annual basis, with any change proposed only after consultation'
- ii. Queried who the following statement on page 37 of the agenda pack would apply to; and asked if this would apply to new tenants or existing tenants whose property have under gone redevelopment or have moved back to an area that has been redeveloped.
'Rents for properties which have undergone a material change, full refurbishment or rebuild, (i.e. Sheltered scheme refurbishment, property extension or conversion) will be set immediately at target social rents, reflecting the increased investment and condition of the property'
- iii. Stated that the statement on page 39 of the agenda pack suggests that the Council would implement market rent if able for high income households, which members of the Committee would oppose.
'It is not currently proposed to implement the ability to charge market rents for high income households at a local level, due to the lack of statutory right to demand the required financial information and therefore enforce the higher charge'
- iv. Queried how Housing Associations in Cambridge set their rent.
- v. Asked if the Committee would consider issuing a statement to reiterate that they were not going to charge market rents for high income households.
- vi. Asked what was the length of tenancy for new tenants who moved into new build housing and would rents be reset each time when the tenant leaves.
- vii. Stated that the Committee would have no knowledge of tenants' income as legally they are not asked to disclose the information, therefore it would not be possible to determine those which were high income households.

In response to the Committee's comments Officers, the Director of Community and Customer Services stated the following:

- i. With regards to high income households, any proposal would be for the Housing Scrutiny Committee to consider and the Executive Councillor to make. There was no implication that this would come forward but only if the Government made this statutory.

- ii. The 5% flexibility was introduced as formula in 2002, which allowed Local Authorities to charge above or below the target rent setting if required.
- iii. Confirmed that when a property had been refurbishment, all units were returned at target rent.
- iv. Affordable rent was currently set at around 65% of the market rent (roughly equivalent to the level of Local Housing allowance).
- v. There was an introductory tenancy for twelve months for a new tenant and if there were no issues that tenant would be confirmed as a secure tenant and that tenancy could be for a life time.
- vi. Target rents were set against inflationary calculation referenced in the Officer's report for new build properties.
- vii. Different rules apply to Housing Associations, for example they cannot offer a right to buy and have different interpretation of what they consider to be an affordable rental level. Housing Associations were aware that rents should remain affordable.

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.

14/39/HSC 2015/16 Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting Report

This item was chaired by Diana Minns (Vice Chair /Tenant Representative)

Matter for Decision

The report referred to the 2015/16 budget process, the range of assumptions upon which the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and Mid-Year Financial Review were based, were reviewed in light of the latest information available, culminating in the preparation of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

The Executive Councillor for Housing resolved to:

- a. Approved that council dwellings rents be increased in line with Government guidelines, ceasing any move towards target rents for existing tenants, but instead applying an individual increase of 2.2% across all tenure, made up of inflation (CPI at September 2014 of 1.2%) plus 1%, with effect from 6th April 2015. This equates to an average rent increase at the time of writing this report of £2.18 per week on a 52 week basis.
- b. Approved inflationary increases of 2% in garage and parking space rents for 2015/16, in line with the base rate of inflation for the year assumed in the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- c. Approved the proposed service charges for Housing Revenue Account services and facilities, as shown in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- d. Approved the proposed leasehold administration charges for 2015/16 as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- e. Approved that service charges for gas maintenance, door entry systems, lifts and electrical and mechanical maintenance are increased by a maximum of inflation at 1.2% plus 1%, if required, to continue to recover full estimated costs as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- f. Approved that caretaking, communal cleaning, estate services, grounds maintenance, window cleaning, temporary housing premises and utilities, sheltered scheme premises and utilities, digital television aerial, flat cleaning and catering charges continue to be recovered at full cost, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report

Revised Budget 2014/15

- g. Approved with any amendments, the Revised Budget identified in Section 4 of the HRA Budget Setting Report, which reflects a net reduction in the use of HRA reserves for 2014/15 of £1,084,630.
- h. Approved the release of a net sum of £823,400, previously held within HRA repairs and renewals funds back into general HRA reserves, following a fundamental review of both the inventories and existing funds held.

- i. Approved release of the ear-marked reserves of £389,960 previously held for the purpose of meeting additional pension fund contributions into general HRA reserves, to allow alternative future use.

Budget 2015/16:

- j. Approved with any amendments, the Non-Cash Limit items shown in Appendix D (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- k. Approved with any amendments, the Unavoidable Revenue Bids and Savings, including those associated with organisational transformation, shown in Appendix D (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- l. Approved with any amendments, the Priority Policy Fund (PPF) Bids shown in Appendix D (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- m. Approved the resulting Housing Revenue Account Summary Forecast 2014/15 to 2019/20, as shown in Appendix H of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

The Executive Councillor for Housing resolved to recommend to Council to:

Treasury Management

- n. Retain the existing approach to treasury management, setting-aside a proportion of the surpluses generated over the life of the Business Plan to allow for potential debt redemption, but re-investing up to 75% of the surplus generated in the acquisition or development of new affordable housing, as outlined in Section 6 of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

Housing Capital

- o. Approve capital bids, shown in Appendix D (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report, to include ear-marking resource for the implementation of both a new sub-regional choice based lettings IT system, and the software required to facilitate customer access to elements of the housing management information system, subject to each project demonstrating viability.
- p. Approve of amendment to the Decent Homes Programme investment, recognising the financial implications of a change in the assumed life for UPVC window replacements, from 25 years, to the 40 years required as part of the Decent homes Standard.

- q. Approve re-allocation of £976,000 of resource in 2015/16 and 2017/18, originally included in previous years for works to communal areas, into the budget for garage improvement works, to allow the authority to undertake major works to some of the larger garage blocks should there be a financially viable business case for investment. The decision to proceed with works following the preparation of each business case shall be delegated to the Director of Customer & Community Services, in consultation with the Executive Councillor, Chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee (Part 2) and the Opposition Spokespersons.
- r. Approve the latest budget and funding mix for each of the schemes in the 2011-15 new build programme, as detailed in Section 5 and Appendix F of the HRA Budget Setting Report, recognising the most up to date information available as each scheme progresses through the design, planning, build contract and completion process.
- s. Approve gross funding of £7,008,000 for the development of the affordable housing project on the Homerton site, in line with the scheme specific report being presented to Housing Scrutiny Committee on 14th January 2015, which assumes 75% affordable rented and 25% shared ownership housing.
- t. Approved to earmark the required level of additional funding for new build investment between 2015/16 and 2019/20 to ensure that the anticipated level of future retained right to buy receipts can be appropriately utilised.
- u. Approve re-direction of existing resource, previously identified as Cambridge Standard Investment, to create a new City Homes Estate Improvement Programme, with a view to increasing the future level of investment in this area, as part of the Fundamental Review of the HRA and Housing Service, which will take place during 2015.
- v. Approved of the revised Housing Capital Investment Plan as shown in Appendix I of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- w. Approve a provisional addition to the Housing Capital Allowance of £29,151,000 in respect of anticipated qualifying expenditure in 2015/16.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Principal Accountant / Business Manager on the HRA Budget-Setting Report. It set out the key parameters for the detailed recommendations and final budget proposals, and is the basis for the finalisation of the 2015/16 budgets.

An additional recommendation to the original HRA BSR had been tabled by the Principal Accountant / Business Manager at the meeting.

- m. Approve the resulting Housing Revenue Account Summary Forecast 2014/15 to 2019/20, as shown in Appendix H of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

Due to the Liberal Democratic proposed amendment to the budget the Principal Accountant / Business Manager advised the order of the vote would be reversed with part two of the recommendations (xiv to xxiii) being taken first, in order for the Councillors to vote on the capital before the Committee voted on the first half of the recommendation (i to xiii).

Diane Best proposed and Diana Minns seconded the following amendment to the wording on page 69 of the printed agenda under the Heading 'STAR survey 2014 – Planning ahead' (deleted text ~~struck through~~ and additional wording underlined)

The Housing Regulation Panel (HRP) and Resident Representatives on the Housing Scrutiny Committee ~~has been tasked~~ will be asked to helping officers develop a programme of work that will be taken forward over the next year and beyond. Plans include a comprehensive drill-down into areas of lower satisfaction, using the Tenant and Leaseholder magazine Open Door to further capture opinion, using best practice from other Local Authorities to make the changes to services that most matter to our tenants and leaseholders and undertaking 'hotspot' improvements in specific services across the City where low satisfaction has been captured at ward level.

This amendment was **carried nem con.**

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

- i. Asked for clarification on communal cleaning charges in Appendix B of the Officer's report.
- ii. Requested an explanation in Appendix D of the Officer's report concerning Unavoidable Revenue Pressure: Full costs of building

- cleaning and services and the suggestion that that higher costs could be passed to residents temporarily.
- iii. Asked if the savings in Appendix D of the Officer's report and the proposed reduction in operational costs across City Homes would include 'Open Door'.
 - iv. Asked if the cost of floor coverings would be continued to be met after 2015/16.
 - v. Queried if the disability facility grants was the amount allocated by the City Council or from Government funding and if the allocation always spent.
 - vi. Noted that the affordable housing programme was dependent on the Council's financial reserves and asked if it was possible to identify what reserves could be spent on the Housing programme.
 - vii. Queried the relationship between the general fund and treasury management.
 - viii. Asked if investment from the general fund did not return what was forecasted would the HRA take the hit.
 - ix. Asked if the Executive Councillor for Housing and the Housing Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider on how the general funds were spent for housing.
 - x. Requested a report on where money from the HRA could be invested.

In response to Committees comments Officers, the Director of Community and Customer Services stated the following:

- i. The proposal was not to pass on the additional charge for communal cleaning but this would be absorbed in the budget until the cleaning contract had been agreed.
- ii. If the budget approved the cost of building cleaning and services would not be passed on to residents.
- iii. Confirmed that 'Open Door' came under a separate cost centre.
- iv. A specific allocation for work to communal areas could cover the work to communal floor coverings if required after 2015/16.
- v. Disabled facility grants were a combination of City Council allocation and Government funding. In the last two years this budget had been underspent in the private sector.
- vi. Part of the review of the Housing Revenue Account would be to consider how best to invest in the longer term. Options would be brought back to Committee for new housing investment. Part of the consideration will be if the reserves should be invested for a return.
- vii. Although the HRA was ring fenced this was part of the Council budget which is invested as a whole. The HRA would then be returned a percentage under statutory guidelines.

Councillor Blackhurst proposed the Liberal Democrats Group alternative budget and outlined the following proposals for the Committee's consideration, with the changes identified underlined. In most cases the entire section or appendix has been restated for ease of reference.

- a. Approve that council dwellings rents be increased in line with government guidelines, ceasing any move towards target rents for existing tenants, but instead applying an individual increase of 2.2% across all tenure, made up of inflation (CPI at September 2014 of 1.2%) plus 1%, with effect from 6th April 2015. This equates to an average rent increase at the time of writing this report of £2.18 per week on a 52 week basis.
- b. Approve inflationary increases of 2% in garage and parking space rents for 2015/16, 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 the proposed leasehold administration charges for 2015/16 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 1.2% plus 1%, 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 and utilities, digital television aerial, flat cleaning 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 2014/15:

- g. Approve with any amendments, the Revised Budget identified in Section 4 of the HRA Budget Setting Report, which reflects a net reduction in the use of HRA reserves for 2014/15 of £1,084,630.
- h. Approve the release of a net sum of £823,400, previously held within HRA repairs and renewals funds back into general HRA reserves, following a fundamental review of both the inventories and existing funds held.

- i. Approve release of the ear-marked reserves of £389,960 previously held for the purpose of meeting additional pension fund contributions into general HRA reserves, to allow alternative future use.

Budget 2015/16:

- j. Approve with any amendments, the Non-Cash Limit items shown in Appendix D (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report, as amended in line with Appendix D (1) to this report.
- k. Approve with any amendments, the Unavoidable Revenue Bids and Savings, including those associated with organisational transformation, shown in Appendix D (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- l. Approve with any amendments, the Priority Policy Fund (PPF) Bids shown in Appendix D (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- m. Approve the resulting Housing Revenue Account Summary Forecast 2014/15 to 2019/20, shown originally in Appendix H of the HRA Budget Setting Report, as subsequently amended and re-stated in full at Appendix H to this report.

The Executive Councillor for Housing is asked to recommend to Council (following scrutiny and debate at Housing Scrutiny Committee):

Treasury Management

- n. Retain the existing approach to treasury management, setting-aside a proportion of the surpluses generated over the life of the Business Plan to allow for potential debt redemption, but re-investing up to 75% of the surplus generated in the acquisition or development of new affordable housing, as outlined in Section 6 of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

Housing Capital

- o. Approval of capital bids, shown in Appendix D (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report, and as amended by Appendix D (2) of this report, to include ear-marking resource for the implementation of both a new sub-regional choice based lettings IT system, and the software required to facilitate customer access to elements of the housing management information system, subject to each project demonstrating viability, and identification of additional funding of £100,000 per annum from 2015/16 to improve the energy efficiency in void properties.
- p. Approval of a reduction in the recent additional investment for fencing on housing estates, with a reduction of £50,000 in 2015/16, rising to

- £100,000 per annum from 2016/17 and beyond. It is expected that provision for fencing renewal will feature in the new Estate Fund.
- q. Approval of amendment to the Decent Homes Programme investment, recognising the financial implications of a change in the assumed life for UPVC window replacements, from 25 years, to the 40 years required as part of the Decent Homes Standard.
 - r. Approval of re-allocation of £976,000 of resource in 2015/16 and 2017/18, originally included in previous years for works to communal areas, into the budget for garage improvement works, to allow the authority to undertake major works to some of the larger garage blocks should there be a financially viable business case for investment. The decision to proceed with works following the preparation of each business case shall be delegated to the Director of Customer & Community Services, in consultation with the Executive Councillor, Chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee (Part 2) and the Opposition Spokespersons.
 - s. Approval of the latest budget and funding mix for each of the schemes in the 2011-15 new build programme, as detailed in Section 5 and Appendix F of the HRA Budget Setting Report, recognising the most up to date information available as each scheme progresses through the design, planning, build contract and completion process.
 - t. Approval of gross funding of £7,008,000 for the development of the affordable housing project on the Homerton site, in line with the scheme specific report being presented to Housing Scrutiny Committee on 14th January 2015, which assumes 75% affordable rented and 25% shared ownership housing.
 - u. Approval to earmark the required level of additional funding for new build investment between 2015/16 and 2019/20 to ensure that the anticipated level of future retained right to buy receipts can be appropriately utilised.
 - v. Approval of re-direction of existing resource, previously identified as Cambridge Standard Investment, to create a new City Homes Estate Improvement Programme, with a view to increasing the future level of investment in this area, as part of the Fundamental Review of the HRA and Housing Service, which will take place during 2015.
 - w. Approval of the revised Housing Capital Investment Plan as shown in Appendix I of the HRA Budget Setting Report, as amended by Appendix I to this report.
 - x. Approve a provisional addition to the Housing Capital Allowance of £29,201,000 in respect of anticipated qualifying expenditure in 2015/16.

Scrutiny consideration for the Liberal Democrat Group alternative budget.

Councillor Blackhurst highlighted to the Committee a section of the Liberal Democrats amendment which focused on accelerating the existing practice to make empty properties more energy efficient to the energy rating of City Homes, making the housing stock more sustainable, whilst reducing energy bills for incoming tenants.

Councillor Blackhurst advised that money would be allocated in a separate fund to bring void properties up to the energy rating standard. This would be a direct response to climate change and fuel poverty while long term the return would pay off the investment spent.

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

- i. Expressed concern about the proposed reduction in the fencing budget.
- ii. Stated that the £100,000 allocation to the fencing budget was a key commitment by the current administration as a direct result of talking to residents to ask what they wanted.
- iii. Reiterated that fencing was a big issue with residents.

Councillor Blackhurst responded that investment was an achievable sound investment and would elevate the pressure of utility bills on tenants.

The Committee:

The following votes were chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones

The Liberal Democrats Group alternative budget: **2 votes in favour to 4 against, with 1 abstention.** The amendment fell.

Resolved (**5 vote to 0, with 2 abstentions**) to endorse the recommendations n to x of the budget proposals.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

The following vote was chaired by Diana Minns (Vice Chair /Tenant Representative)

Resolved (**9 votes to 0, with 3 abstentions**) to endorse the recommendations a to m of the budget proposals

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.

14/40/HSC Housing Portfolio Revenue and Capital Budgets 2015/16 (Estimate) and 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 (Forecast)

This item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones.

Matter for Decision

The report detailed the budget proposals which relate to this portfolio that are included in the Budget-Setting Report (BSR) 2015/16 to be considered at the following meetings:

19 January: 2015 Strategy & Resources

Consider proposals / recommendations from all Scrutiny Committees in relation to their portfolios.

22 January 2015: The Executive

Budget amendment may be presented.

13 February 2015: Strategy & Resources

Consider any further amendments including opposition proposals.

26 February 2015: Council

Approves General Fund Budget and sets Council Tax.

The report also included consideration of any recommendations concerning the review of charges and project appraisals for schemes in the capital plan for the portfolio.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Review of Charges:

- i. Approved the proposed charges for this portfolio's services and facilities as shown in Appendix A of the Officer's report.

Revenue:

- ii. Considered the revenue budget proposals as shown in Appendix B of the Officer's report.

Capital:

- iii. Considered the capital budget proposals as shown in Appendix C of the Officer's report.
- iv. Approved the Deletion of some schemes from the Capital Plan as shown in Appendix C of the Officer's report.
- v. Approved, where relevant, project appraisals as shown in Appendix D of the Officer's report.
- vi. Approved the adjustment for capital funding for items 2 (c) to 2 (e) of the Officer's report as appropriate

Scrutiny Considerations

No questions or comments were made.

The Committee:

Resolved by 5 votes to 0, with 2 abstentions to approve the recommendations.

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.

14/41/HSC Council Housing at Homerton College

This item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones.

Matter for Decision

The report requested approval to a capital budget for the scheme based on the scheme submitted for planning approval.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- i. Noted the indicative mix, design and layout of the new scheme submitted for planning approval
- ii. Approved the capital budget of £7,007,505 for the scheme detailed in the Project Appraisal shown as shown in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report.
- iii. Approved delegated authority be given to the Director of Customer and Community Services following consultation with the Director of Resources and the Head of Legal Services enter into a legal agreement with the developers of the scheme.

Scrutiny Considerations

A report from the Head of Strategic Housing outlined the Homerton College scheme as the first to be brought forward in the next phase of the Council's own Housing Programme and is notable too to be the first opportunity to deliver new Affordable Housing on a site not owned by the Council.

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

- i. Asked for clarification on the mix of houses referenced on page 187 & 188 of the agenda reports pack.
- ii. Asked if the four affordable units for wheelchair users were flats or houses.
- iii. Asked what flexibility there would be to adjust the build numbers and would the Committee have to commitment to costs before knowing if reserves were available.

In response to Committees comments Officers, the Director of Community and Customer Services stated the following:

- i. An answer would be given outside of the meeting on clarification on the mix of housing*
- ii. Confirmed that the units for wheelchair users were ground floor flats.
- iii. If the Council did not need to borrow when paying for the scheme and apply for reserves would make the scheme more viable.
- iv. The report is presented to show viability and good assumptions. If the Council do not need to borrow then they won't.
- v. Confirmed there was provision in the budget for the Homerton project. There was sufficient right to buy receipts to cover the cost of the scheme.
- vi. Acknowledged that market forces would have an effect on shared ownership and this would be reviewed twice a year.
- vii. Borrowing would always be the last result for the Council.

*** Committee Manager's note:** *The mix of housing shown in the table on page 187 is the same as the mix in the text on page 188, apart from one discrepancy. The 4 bedroom houses are shown as 5 person on page 187 and 6 person on page 188. They will be 6 person.*

The Committee:

Resolved unanimously to approve the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation and welcomed the scheme.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

14/42/HSC Homelessness Prevention Grants

This item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones.

Matter for Decision

The report sought approval for the grant programme to 2015/ 16 pending a value for money review in 2015.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

The Executive Councillor for Housing resolved to:

- i. Noted, subject to the budget setting process and formal adoption by Council of the 2015-16 budget, the proposed grant funding allocations as outlined in Officer's report, along with approval to spend funds, if awarded, by DCLG as outlined in 3.10 of the Officer's report.
- ii. Agreed the ongoing principle, that DCLG Homelessness Prevention Grant should continue to support initiatives to prevent and alleviate homelessness and, in so doing, support the principles outlined in the Council's proposed Anti-Poverty Strategy

- iii. Agreed to consider a value for money review report, along with recommendations for future homelessness prevention fund allocations in the 2015 October cycle.
- iv. Approved that authority for new grant approvals should continue to be delegated to the Head of Strategic Housing until 31st March 2016. Thereafter, funding approval would be required from the Executive Councillor for Housing following scrutiny by the Housing Committee, except for grants of less than £5000 which will be delegated to the Head of Strategic Housing to authorise.

Scrutiny Considerations

A report from the Housing Advice Service Manager referred to the grant funding programme which the Council's administers to external partners, which aims to support the Council's strategic objectives in tackling and preventing homelessness.

The Council's own funding for these projects is augmented by the homelessness prevention grant provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The DCLG grant, despite its title, is not ring-fenced, but the Council renewed its commitment to tackling homelessness by delegating authority to the Head of Strategic Housing to authorise expenditure of these funds until 31/03/16.

The Government normally commits homelessness prevention funding in two year tranches but the Council's allocation, announced in September 2014, was for the 2015-16 financial year only.

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

- i. Asked if the Officer agreed that there would be a greater need for the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)
- ii. Questioned how does the Council monitor the grant money that had been allocated, how the money had been spent and if a successful outcome had been achieved.
- iii. Asked if there was future provision of funding for Cambridge Central Aid.

In response to Committees comments Officers, the Director of Community and Customer Services stated the following:

- i. There could be an increase in DHP and have transferred over £50,000 in the last two years which has been under spent.

- ii. The organisations awarded grants are monitored very closely and reports are received from those organisations that have been allocated the larger grants.
- iii. Confirmed that future allocation for Cambridge Central Aid was under discussion and would be explored.

The Committee:

Resolved unanimously to approve the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

14/43/HSC Local Government Ombudsman Maladministration Finding: Homelessness

This item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones.

Matter for Decision

The report referred to the Local Government Ombudsman findings of maladministration following a complaint. The complaint related to the Council's homelessness functions.

The Head of Legal Services, as the Council's Monitoring Officer, has an obligation to report the findings to the Executive. The Executive is obliged to set out what action has already been taken in respect of the findings, what action it intends to take and the reasons for taking the action.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

The Executive Councillor for Housing resolved to:

- i. Endorsed the actions taken by officers in response to the finding of the Local Government Ombudsman.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Director for Customer and Community Services advised the Committee of the procedures that had been taken as a consequence of the complaint.

No questions or comments were raised by the Committee.

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.

14/44/HSC Fundamental Review of the Housing Revenue Account

This item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones.

Matter for Decision

The report referred to the scope and process for taking a fundamental review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), taking into account spend profiles, past and future spending pressures, and emergent priorities.

The Council are in the third year of self-financing for the HRA, whereby they manage a ring-fenced account entirely self-financed through income from rents, sales and investments, borrowing and grants. In 2014 the HRA revenue budget for expenditure on services, at the mid-year review was £15.33m and the HRA capital budget was £38.8m for the same year. Underlying these figures is a financial model that informs a 30 year business plan.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

The Executive Councillor for Housing resolved to:

- i. Approved the scope of the review set out in section 5 of the Officer's report.
- ii. Approved the timetable set out in section 10 of the Officer's report.

Scrutiny Considerations

No questions or comments were made by the Committee.

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.

14/45/HSC Delegation of Powers to Make Interim Management Orders

This item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones and the item was called in for debate by Diana Minns and Diane Best.

Matter for Decision

The report sought agreement that where the Council have a duty to make a Management Order that this power to make Interim Management Order (IMOs) and Final Management Order (FOM's) be delegated to the Head of Refuse and Environment. Where discretion exists in relation to the making of a Management Order then the power should remain with the Executive Councillor for Housing.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

The Executive Councillor for Housing resolved to:

- i. Approved an amendment to the Constitution that where the Council have a duty to make a Management Order that this power be delegated to the Head of Refuse and Environment. Where discretion exists in relation to the making of a Management Order then the power should remain with the Executive Councillor for Housing.

Scrutiny Considerations

A report from the Team Manager (Residential) outlined when an IMO and FMO would be made by the Council in respect of a residential property. They are a vital tool in ensuring that whilst steps are taken to improve the skills and approach of the landlord the occupiers are not put at risk.

Comments from the Committee:

- i. Found the description of a prosecution in the Officer's report helpful.
- ii. Asked if the IMO or FMO would be allocated to an individual property or all the properties in the Landlord's portfolios.
- iii. Asked if the Landlord would still retain the freehold.
- iv. Queried if this would apply to licensed properties or none licenced properties.
- v. Asked who is responsible for costing and repairs of the property when taken over by the Council.
- vi. Queried under what circumstances would a tenant have to be moved to temporary accommodation?
- vii. Could a compulsory purchase order still be issued?
- viii. What percentage of private accommodation in the City needs / have had enforcement.

In response to Committees comments Officers, the Director of Community and Customer Services stated the following:

- i. Each property would be individually assessed.
- ii. Licensed properties would come under the delegated power. Unlicensed properties would come under the delegated power of the Executive Councillor for Housing.
- iii. The Council would be responsible for the cost of repairs and would be covered by the rental income.
- iv. The Council would not own the freehold on the property but there would be a charge on the property, similar to when a mortgage company manages the property.
- v. There may be circumstances when a tenant would have to be moved and there could be financial implications to the Council.
- vi. Confirmed that the powers for a compulsory purchase still exist but are not used.
- vii. Could not give details on the question of private accommodation.

The Committee:

Resolved (unanimously) to approve 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.

14/46/HSC Record of Urgent Decision

</AI15>

<AI16>

14/46/HSCa New Build Budgets

The decision was noted.

14/46/HSCb Refurbishment of the Cambridge Access Surgery

The decision was noted.

14/46/HSCc Recommendation to Buy Back a Dwelling

The decision was noted.

14/46/HSCd Recommendation to buy back a dwelling

The decision was noted.

The meeting ended at 7.50 pm

CHAIR