

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE20 June 2017
5.30 - 7.55 pm

Present: Councillors Todd-Jones (Chair), Baigent, Bird (Vice-Chair), Cantrill, Gawthrope, Holland and Sheil

Executive Councillors: Price (Executive Councillor for Housing)

Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives: Diane Best, Lulu Agate, Kay Harris, Diana Minns, and Mandy Powell-Hardy

Officers:

Strategic Director: Suzanne Hemingway

Strategic Advisor - Housing and Welfare Reform: Liz Bisset

Head of Estates & Facilities: Trevor Burdon

Business Manager & Principal Accountant (Shared Housing Finance Team):
Julia Hovells

Managing Director, Housing Development Agency: Alan Carter

Head of Housing: Anita Goddard

Committee Manager: Toni Birkin

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**17/22/HSC Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Page-Croft and Tenant Representative John Marais.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Cantrill and Councillor Sheil to the Committee.

Grenfell Tower Fire Remembered

The Committee observed a minutes silence for the lives lost in the Grenfell Tower Fire

17/23/HSC Local Fire Safety

In light of the recent tower blaze in London the Committee sought assurance that there were no fire safety concerns locally.

The Officer's confirmed the following:

- i. A statement had been issued to reassure Council Housing Tenants and Leaseholders that there were no properties locally of the type involved in the fire.
- ii. It was recommended that concerned tenants or Leaseholders call the customer access centre for advice and reassurance.

The Committee thanked staff for their reassurance and suggested the following:

- i. Requested a briefing note for Committee Members and Tenant and Leaseholders representatives.
- ii. Suggested that a briefing might be helpful and asked if a representative of the Cambridge Fire and Rescue Service could attend.
- iii. Councillor Baigent stated that he was a former employee of the fire service. He confirmed that the Cambridge Fire Service would call on neighbouring brigades for assistance in the event of a major incident in the City.

The Strategic Director suggested that any further issues or concerns should be emailed to her directly.

17/24/HSC Appointment of Vice-Chair (Tenant/Leaseholder Rep) for 2017/18

Diana Minns was appointed as Vice Chair (Tenant / Leaseholder Representative) for 2016/17.

17/25/HSC Declarations of Interest

| Name | Item | Interest |
|---------------------|-------------|---|
| Councillor Cantrill | All | Personal: Is a Trustee of Wintercomfort |

17/26/HSC Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 7th March 2017 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

17/27/HSC Public Questions

There were no public questions.

17/28/HSC Record of Urgent Decisions taken by the Executive Councillor for Housing**6a 2017/18 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AFFORDABLE RENTS**

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

The Committee noted the decision.

6b DISPOSAL OF COUNCIL PROPERTY IN GWYDIR STREET

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

The Committee discussed the decision without going into a closed session as the matters discussed were not part of the confidential appendix.

Members expressed disappointment that this property could not have been refurbished at a time when single person rental properties were in high demand.

In response to questions, the Business Manager / Principal Accountant (Housing) stated that the property would remain a dwelling and would be subject to leaseholder conditions that mirrored other properties in the same block.

The Committee noted the decision.

6c Appointing a contractor to carry out the heating and hot water refurbishment works at the School Court Sheltered Housing property

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

The Committee noted the decision.

Further Out of Cycle Decision

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

The Business Manager / Principal Account (Housing) informed the Committee that it would be necessary to consult them in the near future about an additional Out of Cycle Decision regarding new shared ownership transactions.

The Committee confirmed that they had a number of questions and concerns regarding this matter and that these would be raised once the report had been circulated.

17/29/HSC 2016/17 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances - Housing Revenue Account

Recommendation 2a (decision i) was chaired by Diana Minns (Vice Chair / Tenant Representative) and recommendations 2b (decision ii) was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones.

Matter for Decision

The report presented a summary of the 2016/17 outturn position (actual income and expenditure) for services within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), compared to the current budget for the year.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the carry forward requests totalling £544,550 in revenue funding from 2016/17 to 2017/18, as detailed in **Appendix C** of the officer's report.
- ii. Approved of carry forward requests of £2,896,000 in HRA and General Fund Housing capital resources from 2016/17 to 2017/18 to fund rephased net capital spending, as detailed in **Appendix D** and the associated notes to the appendix of the Officer's report is recommended to Council.

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 Business Manager / Principal Accountant (Housing) regarding the 2016/17 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances – Housing Revenue Account

The Committee sought clarification regarding the delays in allocating, apparently completed, new build properties and the associated loss of rental income. The Managing Director, Housing Development Agency stated that there had been a number of delays in the hand-over of properties from Keepmoat. The properties had not been finished to the required standard in some cases and also some of the standard health and safety information had not been provided in others. The Council would not accept the properties until

these issues were resolved. The original contract with the developer contained a clause which allowed for the recovery of lost rental income. Recovery of the lost revenue would be vigorously pursued.

The Head of Estates and Facilities said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Variances in the training budget were related to a change in delivery methods. Previously, training had been delivered in an ad hoc method. Over the last year a full programme of training had been rolled out to facilitate staff development.
- ii. Planned maintenance cost had been brought down by securing extra value via the procurement processes.
- iii. Responsive repairs and void spends, by their unpredictable nature, would always be susceptible to greater variances.

Tenant Representatives suggested that there was some tenant dissatisfaction with repairs. Officers asked for more detail and would investigate outside the meeting.

The Committee expressed support and thanks to the staff for the work they had completed over the last year.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

17/30/HSC 2016/17 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances - Housing General Fund

This Item was chaired Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The report presented a summary of the 2016/17 outturn position (actual income and expenditure) for services within the Housing Revenue Account, compared to the current budget for the year.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the carry forward requests totalling £57,060 revenue funding from 2016/17 to 2017/18, as detailed in **Appendix C** of the Officer's report, noting that none are proposed for this portfolio on this occasion.

- ii. Approved Carry forward requests of £3,091,000 in capital resources from 2016/17 to 2017/18 to fund rephased net capital spending, as detailed in **Appendix D** of the Officer's report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Business Manager / Principal Accountant (Housing) said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Explained that the Community Housing Fund Grant was a two year initiative to encourage Community Land Trusts, Self-Build Projects and other affordable housing option. Officers undertook to investigate the possibility of using this funding for imaginative solutions to older people housing needs.
- ii. Explained why there appeared to be an underspend in the Homelessness spend at a time when the perceived needs were high. This was due to increased prevention activities that were proving successful at intervening before families and individuals became homeless.
- iii. Clarified that the Empty Homes Loan Fund was a one off figure that would be recycled as loans were repaid. There had been a slow take up of the loans due to staffing vacancies. However, talks were on-going with the owners of a number of empty properties.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

17/31/HSC Appointment of Cost Consultant

This Item was chaired Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The report sought approval for the service to secure the services of a cost consultant to independently verify that schemes in the Council's New Build Housing Programme represented value for money and to provide ancillary services in respect of compliance with health and safety regulations.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Delegated authority to a Strategic Director to procure the services of a cost consultant to independently verify that schemes in the Council's New Build Housing Programme represent value for money and to provide ancillary services in respect of compliance with health and safety regulations.

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 Managing Director, Housing Development Agency regarding the Appointment of a Cost Consultant.

The Committee welcomed the report and suggested that this appointment would enhance the capacity of the Housing Development Agency.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

17/32/HSC New Build Housing Programme

This Item was chaired Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The report provided an up-date on the sites in the Council's New Build Housing Programme – whether recently completed; under construction or being assessed in terms of feasibility and viability for development. The latter was known as the Rolling Programme.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Noted the up-dated position of schemes including those on the current Rolling Programme (**Appendix 1 and 2** of the Officer's report).
- ii. Approved the new Rolling Programme (**Appendix 3** of the Officer's report).

Reason for the Decision

At the March 2017 Housing Committee, the Executive Councillor for Housing approved a development framework within which new housing by the Council would be delivered. The framework included a commitment to bring a report to the Housing Committee every year to demonstrate progress of schemes on the Rolling Programme.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Managing Director, Housing Development Agency, regarding the New Build Housing Programme.

The Committee sought reassurance that full consultation and engagement would be completed with relevant residents and communities. The Managing Director, Housing Development Agency, reminded the Committee that they had received a report on the engagement strategy in March 2016.

The Managing Director, Housing Development Agency said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The costs associated with re-housing or decanting residents had been taken into account.
- ii. The timeframes for some development on the programme had been extended due to the rent cut decision of 2015. At that point the development programme had been placed on pause.
- iii. New build properties would generally have a three year delivery timescale and therefore restarting the programme would take time before new housing was delivered.
- iv. The programme would be a mix of small scale, in-fill projects and larger developments. A balanced approach would be needed to deliver the targets.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

17/33/HSC Development Options for Land at Hills Avenue

This Item was chaired Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The report provided an update relating to an infill site which was granted scheme specific approval as part of a group of small infill sites at Housing Scrutiny Committee in June 2016. The site was to be brought forward in the Council's social housing programme, to be included in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) garage and small infill sites development.

The report requests approval to an updated capital budget for the HRA in relation to the site at Hills Avenue, Queen Edith.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the site to continue to be investigated to be developed for housing.
- ii. Allocated the capital budget of £249,216 from existing new build budget.
- iii. Approved that delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director to enable the site to be developed through Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP)

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 Managing Director, Housing Development Agency regarding Options for the Land at Hills Avenue.

The Committee regretfully accepted that the site context and location made it more suitable for a three bed house than smaller units. The Managing Director, Housing Development Agency, undertook to provide Committee Members with more details on the planned delivery of smaller properties.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

17/34/HSC Development Options for Land at Queen's Meadow

This Item was chaired Councillor Mike Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The report provided an update relating to an infill site which was granted scheme specific approval as part of a group of small infill sites at Housing Scrutiny Committee in June 2016. The site was to be brought forward in the Council's social housing programme, to be included in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) garage and small infill sites development.

The report requested approval to an updated capital budget for the HRA in relation to the site at Queen's Meadow, Cherry Hinton.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the site to continue to be investigated to be developed for housing.
- ii. Approved the allocation of the capital budget of a maximum of £447,809 for the development from existing newbuild budget.
- iii. Noted the proposed indicative unit type and approve that this be progressed for planning approval.
- iv. Approved that delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director to enable the site to be developed through Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP).

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 Managing Director, Housing Development Agency, regarding Land at Queen's Meadow.

The Committee welcomed the proposals.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm

CHAIR