

**HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

24 January 2023  
5.30 - 9.40 pm

**Present:** Councillors Thittala Varkey (Chair), Robertson (Vice-Chair), Gawthrop Wood, Holloway, Howard, Lee, Porrer, Pounds and Herbert

**Executive Councillor:** Bird

**Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives:** Diana Minns (Vice Chair), Lulu Agate, Christabella Amiteye (virtually), Diane Best, Mandy Powell-Hardy

Also present (virtually): Councillor Bennett

**Officers present in person:**

Director of Enterprise and Sustainable Development: Fiona Bryant  
Director of Neighbourhoods and Communities: Jane Wilson  
Assistant Head of Finance and Business Manager: Julia Hovells  
Head of Housing Development Agency: Claire Flowers  
Committee Manager: Sarah Steed  
Meeting Producer: Boris Herzog

**Officers present virtually:**

Head of Housing: David Greening  
Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets: Lynn Bradley  
Housing Services Manager: James McWilliams  
Acting Senior Development Manager: Natalie Bailey  
Property Compliance and Risk Manager: Renier Barnard

<b>FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL</b>
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**23/1/HSC Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Sarah Baigent and Councillor Herbert attended as alternate. Colin Stevens Tenant Representative also sent apologies.

Tenant Representative Christabella Amiteye attended the meeting virtually via Microsoft Teams and did not therefore vote on any of the items.

**23/2/HSC Declarations of Interest**

Name	Item	Interest
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Councillor Robertson	23/10/HSC	Trustee of Cambridge Cyrenians.
Councillor Herbert	23/10/HSC	Working on a homelessness project outside of the city which involved some of the organisations who had applied for homelessness grant funding ie: It takes a City.
Councillor Bird	23/10/HSC	Was a tenant of Cambridge Housing Society.
Diana Minns	23/10/HSC	Was a Co-ordinator for Women's Homeless Action Group.

### **23/3/HSC Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **23/4/HSC Public Questions**

There were no public questions.

### **23/5/HSC E&F Compliance Update**

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

#### **Matter for Decision**

The report provides an update on the compliance related activities delivered within the Estates & Facilities Team, including a summary on gas servicing, electrical testing, and fire safety work.

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

- i. Noted the status of the compliance dashboard with reference to Electrical Inspection Condition Reports. The compliance team were currently reviewing and consolidating Electrical Installation Certificate (EIC) and Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR) data. The heating services and maintenance contract was to include the delivery of electrical inspections reporting from November 2022. The request related

to Electrical Inspection Condition Reporting as data was being reviewed and verified and had not been completed at the time of reporting.

### **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 Property Compliance and Risk Manager.

The Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets said the following in response to the Committee's questions:

- i. The cause for concern cards which were used by officers when undertaking inspections of properties had been updated to include damp, mould, condensation and fuel poverty concerns. It was noted that any officer within the council could refer concerns to the Condensation Team.
- ii. The high proportion of concerns raised regarding condensation came from people living in older solid wall properties. It was expected that the number of concerns raised about condensation would increase over the winter months.
- iii. The email address to report concerns about damp, mould and condensation to was [condensation@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:condensation@cambridge.gov.uk).
- iv. EIC stood for Electrical Installation Certificate and EICR stood for Electrical Installation Condition Report. An EIC could be accepted for an upgrade to a whole system within a property and it could reset the timer on the condition report. An EIC could therefore act as a condition report for a new installation provided that it covered the whole system. The difference between an EICR and an EIC was that an EICR included observations which an EIC did not.
- v. It was noted that there were some delayed repairs and complaints arising from a change in the heating services contractor. Datasets could be provided on request. Officers were monitoring the performance of the new contractor to ensure that performance of repairs was back up to 98-100%.

The Committee unanimously resolved 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.

**23/6/HSC Housing Ombudsman determinations**

This item was chaired by Diana Minns (Vice-Chair Tenant Leaseholder Representative).

**Matter for Decision**

The report provides elected members with brief details of the Housing Ombudsman's finding of fault in two cases. The report details why fault was found and outlines the actions the council has taken to remedy the matter for the customer and identifies areas for improvement in the future.

**Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Noted the information contained within the officer's report.
- ii. Approved the remedial actions outlined and measures established to reduce or eliminate the risk of repeat mistakes in future cases.

**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 Head of Housing.

The Head of Housing said the following in response to the Committee's questions:

- i. Asked the Committee to note that it was standard procedure on a stage 2 complaint response to refer people to the Housing Ombudsman if they were not satisfied with the response provided by the Council. It was noted that not all Council's did this as standard practice.
- ii. Advised that the pilot hospital discharge scheme was ended for a number of reasons. This included the fact that the funding from Central Government had ceased, and that the Council already had other processes in place.

- iii. It was accepted that the complaints had arisen from officer errors. Training had been put in place to ensure that the issues did not arise again.

The Committee resolved by 12 votes to 0 with 1 abstention to endorse 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.

### **23/7/HSC HRA Budget-Setting Report (BSR) 2023/24**

Recommendations (part 1) a-k were chaired by Diana Minns (Vice-Chair / Tenant Leaseholder Representative) and recommendations l–y were chaired by Councillor Thittala Varkey.

### **Matter for Decision**

As part of the 2023/24 budget process, the range of assumptions upon which the HRA Business Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy were based, have been reviewed in light of the latest information available, culminating in the preparation of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

The HRA Budget-Setting Report provides an overview of the review of the key assumptions. It sets out the key parameters for the detailed recommendations and final budget proposals and is the basis for the finalisation of the 2023/24 budgets.

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

- i. Approved that council dwellings rents for all social rented and social shared ownership properties be increased by 5%, recognising that inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at September 2022, plus 1% would result in an increase of 11.1%, that the government has introduced a cap on rent increases at 7% from April 2023, but that a local decision is made to implement a lower rent increase to mitigate the impact on tenants. Rent increases will take effect from 3 April 2023. This equates to an average rent increase of £5.36 per week.

- ii. Approved that affordable rents, inclusive of service charge, are also increased by 5% in line with the increase for social rents. This equates to an average rent increase of £7.81 per week.
- iii. Approved that rents for affordable shared ownership properties are increased by 7% or RPI at January 2023 plus 0.5% whichever is the lower, from April 2023, recognising that although the government rent cap does not apply to this tenure, an increase of in excess of 7% may put undue financial pressure on these households.
- iv. Approved that garage and parking space charges for 2023/24, are increased by inflation at 3%, recognising that although inflation is currently at a higher rate, there is a need to balance increases with the ability to let vacant garages, and that charges for parking permits are reviewed, with any resulting charges summarised in Section 3 of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- v. Approved the proposed service charges for Housing Revenue Account services and facilities, as shown in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- vi. Approved the proposed leasehold administration charges for 2023/24, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- vii. Approved that caretaking, building cleaning, window cleaning, estate services, grounds maintenance, temporary housing premises and utilities, sheltered scheme premises and utilities, digital television aerial, gas maintenance, door entry systems, lifts, electrical and mechanical maintenance, flat cleaning, third party services, specialist equipment and catering charges continue to be recovered at full cost, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report, recognising that local authorities should endeavour to limit increases to inflation as measured by CPI at September 2022 (10.1%) plus 1%, wherever possible.
- viii. Approved with any amendments, the Revised Budget identified in Section 4 and Appendix D (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report, which reflects a net reduction in the use of HRA reserves for 2022/23 of £16,521,190.
- ix. Approved with any amendments, any Non-Cash Limit items identified in Section 4 of the HRA Budget Setting Report or shown in Appendix D (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

- x. Approved with any amendments, any Savings, Increased Income, Unavoidable Revenue Bids, Reduced Income Proposals and Bids, as shown in Appendix D (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xi. Approved the resulting Housing Revenue Account revenue budget as summarised in the Housing Revenue Account Summary Forecast 2022/23 to 2027/28 shown in Appendix J of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

The Executive Councillor recommended Council:

- i. Approve the revised need to borrow over the 30-year life of the business plan, with the first instance of this anticipated to be in 2023/24, to sustain the proposed level of investment, which includes ear-marking funding for delivery of the 10 Year New Homes Programme.
- ii. Recognise that the constitution delegates Treasury Management to the Head of Finance (Part 3, para 5.11), with Part 4F, C16 stating; 'All executive decisions on borrowing, investment or financing shall be delegated to the Head of Finance, who is required to act in accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.
- iii. Recognise that the decision to borrow significantly to build new homes impacts the authority's ability to set-aside resource to redeem the HRA Self-Financing debt at the point at which the loan portfolio matures, with the need to re-finance debt in the latter stages of the business plan.
- iv. Approve capital bids, as detailed in Appendix D (3) and Appendix E of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- v. Approve the latest Decent Homes and Other HRA Stock Investment Programme, to include re-phasing of elements of the programme into later years, as detailed in Appendix E of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- vi. Approve the latest budget sums, profiling and associated financing for all new build schemes, as detailed in Appendices E and H, and summarised in Appendix K, of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- vii. Approve allocation of £10,964,000 of funds from the budget ear-marked for the delivery of new homes into a scheme specific budget for East Road, in line with the scheme specific report presented as part of the committee cycle.
- viii. Approve the revised Housing Capital Investment Plan as shown in Appendix K of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

- ix. Approve inclusion of Disabled Facilities Grant expenditure and associated grant income from 2022/23 onwards, based upon 2022/23 net grant awarded, with approval of delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to approve an in year increase or decrease in the budget for disabled facilities grants in any year, in direct relation to any increase or decrease in the capital grant funding for this purpose, as received from the County Council through the Better Care Fund.
- x. Approve delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to determine the most appropriate use of any additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding, for the wider benefit of the Shared Home Improvement Agency.
- xi. Approve delegation to the Strategic Director to review and amend the level of fees charged by the Shared Home Improvement Agency for disabled facilities grants and repair assistance grants, in line with any recommendations made by the Shared Home Improvement Agency Board.
- xii. Approve delegation to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to draw down resource from the ear-marked reserves for potential debt redemption or re-investment, for the purpose of open market land or property acquisition or new build housing development, should the need arise, in order to meet deadlines for the use of retained right to buy receipts or to facilitate future site redevelopment.
- xiii. Approve delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to make any necessary technical amendments to detailed budgets in respect of recharges between the General Fund and the HRA, with any change in impact for the HRA to be reported and incorporated as part of the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2023.
- xiv. Note the result of the Homes England Compliance Audit in respect of rough sleeper property acquisitions at confidential Appendix M, recognising there is no corrective action to be taken.

**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 Assistant Head of Finance and Business Manager.

In response to a member question the Executive Councillor advised that rents were proposed to be increased by 5% as they felt this was the appropriate level of increase in the current economic climate. An increase of 7% would be too much.

The Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets noted that funding had been allocated within the budget to pay for works to bring council homes up to Energy Performance Rating (EPC) rating C. Works could include external wall insulation, ventilation upgrades and new windows. Each property would be surveyed and assessed to see what works would be suitable to bring the property up to an EPC C rating.

Councillor Howard introduced the Green and Independent Group's commentary on the Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting Report.

Councillor Porrer introduced the Liberal Democrat Amendment to the 2023/24 Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting Report.

Lulu Agate read out a comment on behalf of Tenant Representative Colin Stevens regarding the Liberal Democrat budget amendment papers. Colin felt it was possible to keep homes warm and have an airflow (by opening windows) and by educating people this may reduce the need for repairs and empower people to live in a property in a responsible fashion. The Housing Ombudsman had carried out research into how best to communicate with tenants about how tenants can better their own situation.

Mandy Powell-Hardy noted that if tenants did not report repairs to the Council this could create and exacerbate DMC issues.

The Assistant Head of Finance and Business Manager and the Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Advised that there was not an existing backlog in response repairs. There had been a significant underspend during the financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 during the Covid pandemic period for a variety of reasons. There was not a dedicated officer employed to deal with damp,

- mould and condensation (DMC) as per the Liberal Democrat Budget amendment. Officers [a surveyor, tenant liaison officer and multi-skilled officer] were currently seconded to deal with DMC issues. Reporting levels for responsive repairs were back to pre-covid levels, but it was noted that these appear to be lower value repairs. It was expected that reporting levels of DMC would reduce during the summer months even if a level of proactive works continued. DMC concerns were also expected to be picked up through the tenancy audits.
- ii. Advised that a surveyor had been seconded from the Void Inspections Team to respond to responsive repair issues and a surveyor from the Responsive Repair Team was covering DMC inspections. A tenant liaison officer was providing administrative support. There was no backlog of work created by the secondments.
  - iii. There was not an out of hours service for routine repairs but there was an out of hours service for emergency repairs (24 hours per day 365 days a year). Senior Officers were looking into whether appointments for tenant repairs could be offered outside officer's contracted working hours of 8-4pm. A discussion with officer's would be required as potentially changes to officer's contracts of employment (which specifies certain working hours) would be required.
  - iv. The only way to speed up the tenancy audits process would be to put more resource into it to deliver it more quickly. Tenancy audits were undertaken by a number of housing officers but the resource currently equated to one full-time post.

The Liberal Democrat Group amendments were voted on and recorded separately.

*The following votes were chaired by Diana Minns.*

1.3 a) A proposal to employ two full time equivalent additional Multi-Skilled Operatives for a fixed period of 2 years (£100,840 per annum), with a view to these posts working specifically to address any backlog in responsive repairs and to avoid future underspends in this budget by giving staff the additional resources required to catch up. These posts will be employed on contracts (full or part time) that support out of hours working to allow the backlog to be addressed in late afternoons, evenings and on Saturdays, thus reducing some of the persistent 'no access' issues that have been experienced by the service and which may often be caused by tenants being out at work and not able to allow access during standard working hours.

The amendment was lost by 4 votes in favour, 8 against and 1 abstention.

1.3 b) A proposal to pilot the potential for the existing workforce to volunteer to work additional hours as overtime in the late afternoons, evenings or on Saturdays to support catching up the backlog, should staff wish to undertake this work. This would supplement the work done by the two FTE additional posts above, and the opportunity to earn overtime pay would be entirely voluntary. A fund of £11,470 is set aside to allow this pilot to proceed. This is equivalent to 300 hours overtime including all on-costs.

The amendment was lost by 3 votes in favour, 7 against and 3 abstentions.

1.3 c) A proposal to include a revenue bid of £51,840 per annum to employ a dedicated Damp, Mould and Condensation (DMC) Officer. The post would work proactively with data on existing repair requests from tenants and from void inspections to future proof the housing stock across the city against case of damp, mould and condensation. They would deploy mitigation measures to ensure that if one house experiences a problem, the knowledge is rolled out to all similar stock types before future problems arise and ensure that operatives are empowered to treat the root cause and not just the effects of DMC. They would also work with environmental health to educate residents to help reduce risk.

The amendment was lost by 4 votes in favour, 6 against and 3 abstentions.

1.3 d) A proposal to invest £10,000 in additional consultancy input to complete the energy modelling assessment exercise across the entire portfolio of council housing stock. This would build upon an earlier exercise that was completed for a small proportion of the housing stock as part of submitting a current bid for Social Housing Decarbonisation Grant Funding in the autumn of 2022. Importantly, it would ensure that the data is readily available for future government bids.

The amendment was lost by 4 votes in favour to 9 against

1.4 a) Amendment to revenue bid B5038 for increased staffing capacity for Housing IT Development, to make the post a two year fixed term post, as opposed to a permanent post. This would reduce costs by £50,930 per annum from 2025/26 onwards, whilst still allowing IT development, improvement and enhancement to take place over the next two years. This fits within the Corporate Transformation timescales and with the proposed review of ICT

provision across the council and allows future HRA IT development to align with General Fund provision.

The amendment was lost by 2 votes in favour, 8 against and 2 abstentions.

b) Amendment to revenue bid B5083 for increased staffing capacity for Service Improvement, to make the post a two year fixed term post, as opposed to a permanent post. This would reduce costs by £59,550 per annum from 2025/26 onwards, whilst still allowing service improvement to be delivered over the next two years. This then fits within the Corporate Transformation timescales and allows for review once the impact of the additional resources from Bids LDB1 and LDB2 has been assessed alongside this post in two years.

The amendment was lost by 2 votes in favour, 8 against and 2 abstentions.

1.4 c) An increase in garage rents of 5%, as opposed to the 3% currently incorporated into Budget, recognising that this will still impose an increase at a rate far lower than inflation. This will generate additional income of £16,060 per annum and is in line with the current proposals to raise rental income to 5%.

The amendment was lost by 5 votes in favour, 6 against and 1 abstention.

The Committee resolved:

- i. by 9 votes in favour to 0 against and 3 abstentions to endorse the recommendations a-d
- ii. unanimously to endorse recommendations e-g.
- iii. by 9 votes in favour to 0 against and 3 abstentions to endorse the recommendations h-k

*The following vote was chaired by Councillor Thittala Varkey.*

The Committee resolved by 7 votes in favour to 0 against and 1 abstention to endorse recommendations L - y.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Post meeting note

An amended version of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Setting Report (BSR) was presented to Council on the 23 February 2023 following a number of key changes which arose since Housing Scrutiny Committee had met on the 24 January 2023. The changes are set out in the Housing Revenue

Account Budget Setting Report (BSR) 2023/24 to Council. [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 23rd February, 2023, 6.00 pm - Cambridge Council](#). The report amended some of the Executive Councillor for Housing decisions which had previously been taken on 24 January 2023 and the Executive Councillor for Housing recommendations to Council on 23 February 2023. Please refer to the 23 February 2023 Council minutes for the final decisions.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

### **23/8/HSC Void Management Policy (item to be considered under Part 1 of the agenda)**

This item was chaired by Diana Minns (Vice-Chair Tenant Leaseholder Representative).

### **Matter for Decision**

The report detailed a review of current council voids repair processes which had been undertaken, with a programme of communication with tenants and prospective tenants scheduled from January 2023.

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

- i. Approved the Council's Void Management Policy and the revised re-let standard, recognising the factors influencing the Policy that has resulted in the prioritised works to be undertaken in the stock whilst vacant.
- ii. Agreed the revised Cambridge Re-Let Standard and note how the Standard will be communicated to current tenants looking to transfer and those on the Housing Register, via the Council's website and in the Sign-up pack.
- iii. Recognised that this Policy will need to be reviewed again within 2 years, as the Government White Paper for Social Housing Regulation was not yet passed as formal legislation at the time of writing this report and we believe this will have implications on this Policy, once in place.

### **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 Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets.

The Head of Housing Maintenance and Assets said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Factors which contributed to the increased void management workload included properties earmarked for specific initiatives ie: rough sleeper accommodation which needed to be turned around quickly and properties required for decanting tenants from blocks earmarked for redevelopment, unauthorised alterations by tenants which necessitated remedial works by the council.
- ii. Tenancy audits would assist in picking up concerns about property conditions. Sub-contractors had been used to assist in-house officer's workloads.
- iii. Tenancy agreements contained a clause requiring tenants to maintain and leave a property in a certain condition. Costs spent by the Council to undertake any remedial works that are considered rechargeable repairs would be added onto a Tenant's Arrears Account.
- vi. Statutory provisions were available to gain access to properties when tenants refused access, however this was an un-tested area.

In response to concerns raised by the Committee, the Director of Neighbourhoods and Communities advised that an update report would be brought back to Committee in a years' time. It was also noted within recommendation 2.3 that the Void Management Policy may need to be updated in any event when legislation arising from the Government's White Paper for Social Housing Regulation was passed.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse 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.

**23/9/HSC Regular Update on the Development and Delivery of New Council Homes**

This item was chaired by Councillor Thittala Varkey.

**Matter for Decision**

This report provides an update on the housing development programme.

**Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Noted the continued progress on the delivery of the approved housing programme.

**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 Head of the Housing Development Agency.

The Head of the Housing Development Agency said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Reports for housing redevelopment schemes usually contained an external grant funding option and an option funded without grant funding for viability. Currently grant is from Homes England or Right to Buy receipts. Neither of these funding sources would fund replacement dwellings (i.e.: development had to be for new housing).
- ii. ERDF stood for European Regional Development Fund.
- iii. ERDF funding had been sought for the development of housing at St Thomas and Paget Road unfortunately due to criteria the scheme was ineligible for the funding. The cost for delivering the development as a net zero carbon development was however still built into the budget.

The Committee unanimously resolved 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.

**23/10/HSC Homelessness Prevention Grants to Agencies 2023-24**

This item was chaired by Councillor Thittala Varkey.

### **Matter for Decision**

The report detailed the annual bid round for grants made to organisations providing homelessness prevention services.

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

- i. Approved the award of homelessness prevention grants to voluntary and community organisations for 2023-24, as set out in Appendix 1 of the officer's report.
- ii. Approve that funding from this grant programme is set aside so that a procurement exercise can be opened for a three-year contract for winter accommodation for rough sleepers, beginning from the winter of 2023-24.

### **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 Housing Services Manager.

The Housing Services Manager said the following in response to the Committee's questions:

- i. There were two reasons why the grant award to Cambridge Women's Aid was lower compared to other organisations. The first was that the grant funding ideally needed to focus on preventing homelessness and the second was due to the introduction of the County wide domestic abuse service. It was felt there could be an element of double grant funding. This was a difficult decision to make.
- ii. The Council were fortunate as they had been able to use reasonably priced education accommodation for homeless people during the winter period. A longer-term accommodation solution was required, and the council was looking at carrying out a procurement process to have a 3-year contract with an organisation to provide such accommodation.
- iii. The length of time grant funding would cover would be looked at as it was noted that there were benefits to providing grant funding annually, but it also provided more certainty to organisations if funding was guaranteed for a longer period of time (for example over a 3-year period).



iv. A small amount of grant funding was not allocated at this stage so that it could be used for unforeseen events during the year. For example, during the extremely hot weather in July 2022 some severe weather emergency provision was required and was funded from the funding which was not allocated.

The Committee resolved by 7 votes in favour to 0 against and 1 abstention to endorse 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.

### **23/11/HSC Report on Proposed Development Scheme at Corner East Road and St Matthews Street**

This item was chaired by Councillor Thittala Varkey.

#### **Matter for Decision**

The report sought approval to proceed with the redevelopment of the former East Road garage site to provide circa 40 new highly sustainable homes. These new homes would be developed in parallel with the delivery of associated improvements to the adjacent housing estate.

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

- i. Approved that the 100% affordable housing scheme (option A) be brought forward and be included in the Housing Capital Programme, with an indicative capital budget of £10,964,000. Budget will be drawn down from the sum already ear-marked and approved for investment in new homes.
- ii. Authorised the Strategic Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing to approve variations to the scheme including the affordable rent levels, number of units and mix of property types, sizes and tenure as outlined in this report.
- iii. Authorised the Strategic Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing to adopt option B; to deliver 40% affordable housing (16 homes), with rents set at 60% of Market rent or Current Local Housing Allowance, whichever is lowest, should this be necessary to ensure continued financial viability.

- iv. Approved delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to agree the terms in relation to the sale of land, should option B be adopted and market sale units be delivered upon which a capital receipt to the council would be due.
- v. Approved that delegated authority be given to the Executive Councillor for Housing in conjunction with the Strategic Director to enable the site to be developed through Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) subject to a value for money assessment to be carried out on behalf of the 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 Head of the Housing Development Agency.

The Head of the Housing Development Agency and Director of Enterprise and Sustainable Development said the following in response to the Committee's questions:

- i. Concerns raised by resident's regarding the height, density and massing of the site would be looked at as part of the planning application process. Officers would engage with residents as part of this process.
- ii. Noted concerns raised about the style of questions asked during the public consultation. The questions asked were high level questions as it was not a consultation on a detailed scheme at that time.
- iii. It was an ambition for the proposed development to provide 20% biodiversity net gain within the site, further information could be provided outside of the meeting.

Councillor Robertson requested for it to be minuted that although he supported the recommendation, he may need to support local residents if plans remained unchanged and there was strong feeling from local residents against it.

Councillors Porrer, Gawthroe Wood and Howard advised that they were also members of the Planning Committee and wanted to note that by supporting the recommendations they were not fettering their discretion should a scheme be brought to a future Planning Committee.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse 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.

**23/12/HSC To Note Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Housing**

**12a Acquisition of Property**

The decision was noted.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

**CHAIR**