



Public Document Pack

Cambridge City Council

HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD

To: Councillors Blackhurst (Vice-Chair), Bird, Blencowe, Brierley, Pippas, Pogonowski, Price, Rosenstiel, Znajek

Alternate: Councillors Stuart, Todd-Jones, Wright

Tenant Reps: Diane Best (Chair), Beverley Dennis, Kay Harris, Brian Haywood, John Marais and Terry Sweeney

Executive Councillor for Housing: Catherine Smart

Despatched: Thursday 15 September 2011

Date: Tuesday, 27 September 2011

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Committee Room 1 & 2 - Guildhall

Contact: Glenn Burgess

Direct Dial: 01223 457169

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3 MINUTES *(Pages 1 - 14)*

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2011 as a correct record.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(See information below).

Items for Decision by the Executive Councillor, Without Debate

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

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

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

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

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

Executive Councillor for Housing

Items for Decision by the Executive Councillor, Without Debate

5 WRITE-OFF OF FORMER TENANT ARREARS *(Pages 15 - 18)*

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

6 WATER HYGIENE CONTRACT *(Pages 19 - 24)*

7 UPDATE ON THE POSITION REGARDING SELF FINANCING FOR THE HRA *(Pages 25 - 36)*

8 OPTIONS FOR AN INDEPENDENT TENANTS VOICE *(Pages 37 - 78)*

9 EXTENSION OF CURRENT INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICE CONTRACT FOR PROVISION OF 24 HOUR EMERGENCY ALARM TELEPHONE RESPONSE SERVICE *(Pages 79 - 82)*

Information for the Public

QR Codes
(for use with Smart
Phones)

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

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

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

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



Public Participation Some meetings may have parts, which will be closed to the public, but the reasons for excluding the press and public will be given.

Most meetings have an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions or make statements.

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

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

Speaking on Planning Applications or Licensing Hearings are subject to other rules and guidance on speaking on these issues can be obtained from Democratic Services on 01223 457013 or democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk.

Filming, recording and photography

Filming, recording and photography at council meetings is allowed subject to certain restrictions and prior agreement from the chair of the meeting.

Requests to film, record or photograph, whether from a media organisation or a member of the public, must be made to the democratic services manager at least three working days before the meeting.

The Democratic Services Manager can be contacted on 01223 457013 or democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk.

Fire Alarm

In the event of the fire alarm sounding please follow the instructions of Cambridge City Council staff.

Facilities for disabled people

Access for people with mobility difficulties is via the Peas Hill entrance.

A loop system is available in Committee Room 1, Committee Room 2 and the Council Chamber.

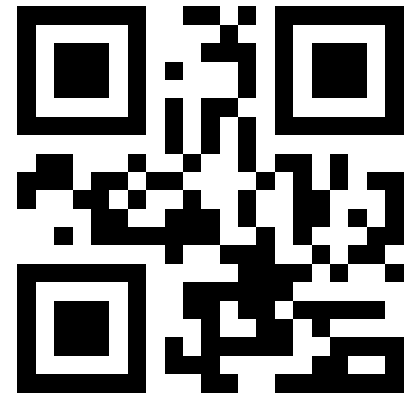
Adapted toilets are available on the ground and first floor.

Meeting papers are available in large print and other formats on request.

For further assistance please contact Democratic Services on 01223 457013 or democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk.

Queries on reports

If you have a question or query regarding a committee report please contact the officer listed at the end of relevant report or Democratic Services on 01223 457013 or democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk.



General Information

Information regarding committees, councilors and the democratic process is available at www.cambridge.gov.uk/democracy.



This page is intentionally left blank

HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD14 June 2011
5.30 - 7.50 pm**Present:****Executive for Housing:** Catherine Smart**Councillors:** Blackhurst (Vice-Chair), Bird, Blencowe, Brierley, Pippas, Pogonowski, Price, Rosenstiel and Znajek**Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives:** Diane Best (Chair), Kay Harris, Brain Haywood, John Marais and Terry Sweeney**Officers:** Liz Bisset (Director of Customer & Community Services), Glenn Burgess (Committee Manager), Bob Hadfield (Head of Repairs & Maintenance), Robert Hollingsworth (Head of City Homes), Julia Hovells (Finance & Business Manager), Andrew Latchem (Area Housing Manager) and David Horspool (Director of Resources).**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL****11/26/HMB Apologies**

Apologies were received from Tenant Representative Bev Dennis.

11/27/HMB Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Terry Sweeney	11/38/HMB	Personal and Prejudicial: Close relative likely to take residence at Ditchburn Place
John Marais	11/36/HMB	Personal: As a tenant of a council house
Councillor Rosenstiel	11/36/HMB	Personal: As a tenant of a council garage
Councillor Rosenstiel	11/36/HMB	Personal: Close relative is a tenant of a council house

11/28/HMB Minutes

The minutes of the 8 March 2011 meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.

11/29/HMB Public Questions

None

11/30/HMB To Nominate Three Tenants/Leaseholders' Representatives to Community Services Scrutiny Committee for Municipal Year 2011/12

Diane Best, Brian Haywood and Kay Harris were nominated.

11/31/HMB Write-Off of Former Tenant Arrears

Matter for Decision: Write-Off of former tenant arrears.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Agreed to write off two cases of former tenant arrears totaling £4,488.02.

Reason for the Decision:

As per Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

There was no debate on this item

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

11/32/HMB Procurement of 24 Hour Emergency Alarm Telephone Response Service for the Independent Living Service

Matter for Decision: Procurement of a new provider for a 24 hour response service for sheltered housing schemes and approximately 750 community alarm and warden agency customers.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Authorised the Director of Customer and Community Services to select the most appropriate procurement route and, if appropriate, invite competitive tenders in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and thereafter to award a three-year contract (with a two plus two-year extension at the Council's option) for the provision of a 24 hour telephone response service for the Independent Living Service.

Reason for the Decision:

The current contract for a 24 hour emergency alarm telephone response service was due to come to an end on 31st March 2012.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

There was no debate on this item.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

11/33/HMB Review of the Under Occupancy Grant Scheme for City Council Tenants

Matter for Decision:

Approval for the continuation, with additional funding, of the Under Occupancy Grant Scheme for City Council Tenants.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Acknowledged the success of this scheme and approved the continuation of the scheme.
- Instructed officers to review the scheme before April 2012 to take into account proposed changes to the benefit system and how these might affect under occupation, and the wider issue of under occupancy in the social rented sector.

- Approved additional scheme funding of £20,000 per annum from 2011/12, subject to formal approval by Council, as part of the 2011 Medium Term Strategy.

Reason for the Decision:

As per Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

The Committee received a report from the Area Housing Manager.

In response to member's questions the Area Housing Manager confirmed the following:

- i. Funding for the scheme was currently cash limited to £30,000 per annum and the full sum had been allocated. It was therefore not possible to retrospectively pay those tenants that had moved whilst waiting on the list.
- ii. It was acknowledged that the current funding tended to be fully allocated within the first 3 months of the financial year. However it was expected that addition funding of £20,000 would ensure that the scheme could be maintained throughout the year.

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

- i. It would be beneficial to publicise the scheme through the Councils 'Open Door' publication.
- ii. Ward Councillors had a role to play in publicising the scheme and encouraging tenants to consider downsizing.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations by 14 votes to 0 (unanimously).

The Executive Councillor for Housing 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.

11/34/HMB Action Plan to promote Financial Inclusion and to tackle Worklessness amongst Cambridge City Council tenants

Matter for Decision:

As financial inclusion was a key factor within the social exclusion agenda, the committee report gave an overview of what financial inclusion was, what support the Council currently offered to Cambridge City Council tenants to prevent financial exclusion and recommendations for how the council could ensure tenants were aware of what financial inclusion services were currently available to them.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Acknowledged the support currently given to tenants.
- Agreed the action plan outlined in the officers report.

Reason for the Decision:

As per Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

The Committee received a report from the Area Housing Manager.

In response to member's questions the Area Housing Manager confirmed the following:

- i. The City Council worked closely with housing associations to promote training and to advise residents of the services available.
- ii. Rent Advisors would work with individuals where appropriate to discourage the use of pre-payment utility meters.
- iii. Loan sharks were operating in some of the concentrated council housing estates and staff were being trained to help address the issue. Posters had been circulated and individual tenants had been written to regarding this issue.
- iv. Extensive long term support and advice would be given to tenants in arrears in order to avoid eviction. Eviction would be a last resort and a magistrate would make the final decision. Officers were happy to talk through in detail with members the full package of support that would be provided to tenants prior to eviction.

- v. As younger age groups tended to find it hard to manage their finances some targeted work had been undertaken by officers.
- vi. As part of the 'sign up' process, Rent Advisors would identify those tenants that had been receiving support from voluntary organisations and their ongoing support would be planned accordingly.

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

- i. With regard to Universal Credit, a recent statement by the government had indicated that they would consider direct deductions to be made in certain circumstances.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations by 14 votes to 0 (unanimously).

The Executive Councillor for Housing 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.

11/35/HMB Future provision of Support Services in sheltered, supported and temporary housing

Matter for Decision:

The report sought to gain authority to delegate to the Director of Customer and Community Services, the decision as to the most appropriate option for the City Council to ensure the continued provision of these services.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Authorised the Director of Customer and Community Services, in consultation with the Executive Councillor, Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokes, to select the most appropriate option for the future provision of support services in sheltered, supported and temporary housing:
 - To submit tenders in response to the appropriate tender advertisements by the County Council, for the continued provision of support services.
 - To explore working in partnership with South Cambridgeshire District Council to deliver shared support services, with the possibility that this

may exempt the County Council from being required to formally tender the services.

- Approved that the funding for the recently vacated Customer Care and Project Manager post for 2011/12 be utilised specifically to secure resource to work on the tender submission or shared service project and to fulfil service delivery needs for the Independent Living Service.

Reason for the Decision:

All contracts with the County Council, for the provision of support services, were due to come to an end in March 2012

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

It was agreed that consultation would take place with the Executive Councillor, Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokes prior to action by the Director of Customer and Community Services. The recommendation was amended to reflect this.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the amended recommendations by 11 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Housing 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.

11/36/HMB HRA 2010/11 Revenue Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances

Matter for Decision:

The report presented a summary of the 2010/11 outturn position (actual income and expenditure) for services within the Housing Revenue Account, compared to the current budget for the year. The position for revenue was reported and variances from budgets are highlighted, together with explanations. Requests to carry forward funding arising from certain budget underspends into 2011/12 were identified.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Agreed that the carry forward requests, totaling £1,156,000 as detailed in Appendix C of the officers report, be recommended to Council for approval.
- Endorsed investigation of day-to-day Repairs expenditure by internal audit.

Reason for the Decision:

As per Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

The Committee received a report from the Housing Finance and Business Manager.

In response to member's questions the Housing Finance and Business Manager, the Head of Repairs and Maintenance and the Director of Resources confirmed the following:

- i. As part of their lease agreement, leaseholders would be recharged for their proportion of works undertaken to communal areas such as lifts, roofing and stairwells.
- ii. All communal areas had been assessed for risk and a priority list of works had been drawn up.
- iii. Historically the Councils spend on 'day-to-day repairs' per dwelling had been one of the lowest in the area. The base line figures had therefore been adjusted to address the current overspend.
- iv. The number of jobs received and the average cost per job had significantly increased. RPI inflation and/or the inefficiency of the Councils work may account for this increase and work was being undertaken to address this.
- v. Repairs and Improvements would be looking at more effective accounting methods in the coming year.
- vi. Discussions were ongoing with Apollo regarding the Planned Maintenance Contract and the TUPE arrangements. Staff and unions had requested more time to digest the information and it was estimated that a 12-month agreement would be signed with Apollo on 27 June 2011. As a result of these ongoing discussions, activity had being maintained at a low level and no new large-scale projects had been

commissioned. Weekly updates were being provided to Group Leaders and Spokes and this would continue.

- vii. New procurement arrangements allowed for a second contractor (Kiers) to be put in place. Slippage from last year could therefore be picked up by this contractor.

Councillor Brierley proposed and Councillor Blencowe seconded the following additional recommendation:

- To endorse investigation of day-to-day Repairs expenditure by internal audit.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the additional recommendation by 14 votes to 0 (unanimously).

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendation included in the officer's report by 10 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Housing 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.

11/37/HMB Update on the Position Regarding Self Financing for the HRA

Matter for Decision: The report provided detail of the latest government proposals, gave an initial indication of the potential financial impact for Cambridge City Council and identified the work-streams that would be necessary to achieve self-financing by April 2012.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Noted progress to date in preparing for self-financing for the HRA and approved the proposed approach to undertaking the remaining work-streams prior to April 2012.

Reason for the Decision:

As per Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

The Committee received a report from the Housing Finance and Business Manager.

In response to member's questions the Housing Finance and Business Manager confirmed the following:

- i. Discussions were ongoing as to whether the authority would need to employ any additional treasury management resource to manage the new debt portfolio.
- ii. The 'mix' of debt would be dependant on repayment periods and interest rates in national and international markets. The chosen 'mix' would help influence whether additional treasury management resource was needed.
- iii. As this will be a redistribution of existing housing debt and not new debt nationally, a question raised about any potential impact of increased borrowing and impact on interest rates is not expected to have a direct impact.
- iv. There would be scope for additional borrowing of approximately £10m, and this could be utilised to build more stock or improve existing stock.
- v. From the consultation paper and resulting policy document it was clear that the government would retain some control over rent setting.
- vi. The projected 230m debt was based on guideline rents over a 30-year period. Whilst the authority would not be forced to follow the guideline rents, any decision to reduce rents would have an impact on the ability to service the debt and the resulting resource available to spend on the housing stock.
- vii. Current projections assumed that the authority would move towards target rent by 2015/16, with an annual increase of inflation plus 0.5% per year thereafter.
- viii. Whilst the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) were advising 80% of market rents for any new build projects, this does not currently apply to existing local authority housing. It was acknowledged that there was much confusion around the general requirements of market rents.
- ix. The current level of negative subsidy paid to the government was 13m per year. The complexity of the existing system was one of the

reasons the government had decided that it was no longer fit for purpose.

- x. Some minor changes may be required to the Councils Constitution regarding timings of Council authority in respect of borrowing and debt management and the inter-relationship between the Community Services Scrutiny Committee and the Housing Management Board.
- xi. Officers were concerned about the ability for ministers to re-open debt settlements, as this could take away the incentive for improving HRA stock.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations by 10 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Housing 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.

11/38/HMB Ditchburn Place Catering Service - changes to Tenancy Conditions and authority to externalise Catering Service provision

Matter for Decision: Following the recent re-tender and award, by the County Council, of the care and support contract at Ditchburn Place, it was now necessary to review the future provision of catering services in the extra care housing scheme.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- (1) Authority given, subject to the appropriate tenant consultation, for change in the tenancy agreement for extra care housing, to include the catering service as a condition of tenancy.
- (2) Authorised the Director of Customer and Community Services to select the most appropriate procurement route and, if appropriate, invite competitive tenders in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and thereafter to award a three-year contract for the provision of a fresh cooked meal service at Ditchburn Place.

Reason for the Decision:

As per Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

The Committee received a report from the Head of City Homes.

In response to member's questions the Head of City Homes confirmed the following:

- i. Officers had visited a similar scheme in St Neots and held brief discussions with their external catering provider.
- ii. It was felt that an external catering service could be provided at Ditchburn Place at a price and quality equivalent to the current standard.
- iii. The current kitchen would be utilised to provide a fresh cooked meal service 365 days a year. The authority would not be considering a 'cooked-chilled' option.
- iv. As staff regularly used the catering service at Ditchburn Place, the quality and hygiene standards would be checked on a daily basis.
- v. Members could be supplied with suggested menus and information regarding ingredient sourcing.
- vi. Members were encouraged to visit Ditchburn Place to sample the catering services and talk to staff and residents.

Councillor Blencowe proposed and Councillor Rosenstiel seconded a minor amendment to the second recommendation to specify that the contract would be for a 'fresh cooked meal service at Ditchburn Place'.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed recommendation (1) by 12 votes to 0.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the amended recommendation (2) by 8 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Housing approved the amended recommendations

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

11/39/HMB Minor Amendments to the Constitution of the Housing Management Board

Matter for Decision: Approval of minor amendments to the Constitution of the Housing Management Board.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Approved the following amendments to the Terms of Reference.
 - Following the Council's restructure, the department that contained the housing service was now called Customer and Community Services. The Board's Terms of Reference to be updated to reflect this.
 - The Cambridge Federation of Tenants, Leaseholders and Residents decided to end their partnership with the Council from 1-4-2011. Obsolete references to the partnership to be deleted from the Board's Terms of Reference.

Reason for the Decision:

As per Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

The Committee received a report from the Director of Customer and Community Services.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations by 14 votes to 0 (unanimously).

The Executive Councillor for Housing 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 meeting ended at 7.50 pm

CHAIR



To: Executive Councillor for Housing and Health:
Cllr Catherine Smart

Report by: Director of Community Services

Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing Management Board

September 2011

WRITE-OFF OF FORMER TENANT ARREARS Not a Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

This report sets out details of three cases of former tenant arrears together with a summary of the action taken to try to recover these debts.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

That the three cases of former tenant arrears totalling £7,454.29 detailed in the attached Appendix be written off.

3. Background

The former tenant arrears cases have been subject to the standard rent arrears recovery process.

4. Implications

Financial Implications

Provision for writing off of bad debts has been made in the Housing Revenue Account.

Staffing Implications

None

Equal Opportunities Implications

None

Environmental Implications

None

Community Safety Implications

None

5. Background Papers

The background paper was used in the preparation of this report:

Individual case file and recommendations.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1: Individual arrears case and action taken.

7. Inspection of papers

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

Author's Name:	Lizzie Thoday
Author's Phone Number:	01223 457823
Author's Email:	lizzie.thoday@cambridge.gov.uk

Individual arrears cases and action taken.

Area Team	Ward	Amount	Action Taken To Recover Debt	Reason for Write-off
North	Arbury	£2,141.15	Property repossessed March 2007	The tenancy was for the period from February 2006 to March 2007 where the debt comprises of outstanding rent arrears, garage arrears and associated court costs. The tenant initially made arrangements to make payments on the account by direct debit, however these were returned as unpaid on all occasions. Very few cash payments were received during this time, which did not cover the arrears accruing on the account. Payments then ceased and due to the level of the arrears, court action subsequently resulted in repossession of the property. The debt was passed to a tracing agent to attempt to recover but with no success and was returned to us as 'activity exhausted'.
North	Arbury	£2,182.66	Property repossessed July 2004	The tenancy was for the period from December 2001 to July 2004, where the debt comprises of outstanding rent arrears and associated court costs. Numerous payment arrangements were made, however the tenant failed to keep to the agreements and the arrears continued to accrue on the account. Due to the level of the arrears, court action subsequently resulted in repossession of the property. In July 2010 the former tenant applied for a Debt Relief Order to include this outstanding debt of £2,182.66. A Debt Relief Order remains in place for twelve months and at the end of the moratorium period, the debtor is discharged from all the outstanding debts specified in the order. We therefore can no longer legally pursue the former tenant for the debt and as a result are requesting approval to write off this amount in our accounts.
South	Abbey	£3,130.48	Unable to Recover - Debt Relief Order in place.	The tenancy is from February 2003 to present, where the debt comprises of outstanding rent arrears and associated court costs. In July 2010 the tenant applied for a Debt Relief Order against all the outstanding debts that they held, which included their outstanding rent arrears accrued of £3,130.48. It stated in the Debt Relief Order, that at the end of the twelve month moratorium period, the debtor is discharged from all the outstanding debts specified in the order. We can no longer legally pursue the current tenant for the outstanding amount due to the Debt Relief Order and as a result are requesting approval to write off this amount in our accounts.

Total :

£7,454.29

This page is intentionally left blank

Project Appraisal and Scrutiny Committee Recommendation

Project Name	Water Hygiene Contract 2013-16
Committee	Housing Management Board
Portfolio	Housing
Committee Date	27 th September 2011
Executive Councillor	Cllr Catherine Smart
Lead Officer	Jenny Gibson

Recommendation/s

Recommendations:

- The Executive Councillor is asked to authorise the carrying out of a two-stage procurement process and to delegate authority to the Director of Resources to award a Corporate contract for Water Hygiene services for a period of three years with the option to extend by two years.

1 Summary

1.1 The project

The Council's current water hygiene services contract comes to an end on 31st March 2013 and the Council therefore needs to appoint a new contractor to deliver:

- Water hygiene assessments and re-assessments
- A water hygiene control programme.

The project will be to carry out a two-stage procurement to award a new corporate contract. It is proposed that the council will procure a framework contract with 3 suppliers that will be made available to other public bodies or housing providers in the County/Region.

The City Council's contract for services will be awarded to the company scoring the highest marks in the procurement process. Any future call offs by the Council and those by other authorities will be the subject of a mini-tendering procedure among all suppliers on the framework.

1.2 Estimated Cost of the Service

Revenue Cost

Year 1	£49,000
Years 2 -5	£ 49,000
Estimated maximum total value of contract over 5 years	£245,000

1.3 The Procurement

It is proposed that the City Council will run a joint procurement process with the County Council, with the City Council leading. Other interested parties (at the moment South Cambs, Papworth Trust but potentially others) will be asked if they wish to join the procurement process.

It is envisaged that there will be a two-stage tender process leading to the establishment of four year framework contract.

The opportunity will be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Community (OJEU) as required by the Regulations and on the Council's website and Source Cambridgeshire.

The Procurement will comply with the council's constitution and the corporate procurement Officer will be a member of the project team.

1.4 What are the aims & objectives of the project?

The aim of the project is to appoint a contractor to ensure that the City Council manages water systems in housing and other

Council buildings to a high standard and in accordance with the relevant best practice and legislation .A clear audit trail of quarterly water sampling reports and assessments will provide evidence of the Council's compliance with legislation. By good management of the water systems the risks of contracting legionnaire disease and associated illnesses will be reduced.

1.5 Summarise the major issues for stakeholders & other departments?

The contract will be a corporate contract, allowing all departments within the council to use the same contract. The majority of departments have been working in this manner for the last 3 and half years and this has been very successful.

Having a framework in place will allow other partner authorities named in the OJEU notice to select via mini-competition the most appropriate contractor for their needs and also would leave pre-qualified contractors in reserve in case that any contractor procured failed

1.6 Summarise key risks associated with the project

The main risk associated with this project is a failure by the Council to appoint a competent contractor. This can be managed and mitigated by ensuring that a clear and accurate specification describing the services required is written backed up by suitable terms and conditions and that the evaluation process is thorough. Evidence of bidders holding appropriate registration and qualifications and having appropriate experience will be examined during the pre-qualification phase. Only appropriately qualified and experienced bidders will be invited to submit tenders for the second phase of the tender process.

1.7 Financial implications

a. Appraisal prepared on the following price base: 2010/11

Whilst the monthly monitoring costs can be predicted with accuracy, as there is also a reactive element to the works. The

reactive element of the works is extremely difficult to predict with any accuracy. The reactive element of the works have reduced over a number of years however with the wrong weather conditions (fluctuating very high temperatures) these could increase.

b. Other comments

1.8 Revenue costs

(see also Appendix B for spread across financial years)

(b) Revenue	£	Comments
Housing	18,000	
Community Development	6,000	
Property Services	10,000	
Arts & Recreation	12,000	
Risk Assessment/re-assessment	3,000	
Total estimated annual revenue Cost	49,000	

1.9 VAT implications

There are no adverse VAT implications associated with this Procurement exercise.

1.10 Other implications

None

1.11 Estimate of staffing resource required to deliver the project

The resources required to deliver this contract will remain unchanged from the 2008-2013 Contract.

Duty Holders are based within each service area and are responsible for their own service area, corporately the repairs and maintenance team within the City Council leads and co-ordinates the contract.

1.12 Identify any dependencies upon other work or projects

None

1.13 Background Papers

*Health & Safety At Work Act
L8 ACOP for Legionella Control*

1.14 Inspection of papers

Author's Name	Jenny Gibson
Author's phone No.	01223 457839
Author's e-mail:	Jenny.Gibson@cambridge.gov.uk
Date prepared:	10 th August 2011

This page is intentionally left blank



To: Executive Councillor for Housing (and Deputy Leader): Councillor Catherine Smart
Report by: Julia Hovells, Finance & Business Manager
Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing Management Board 27/9/2011
Wards affected: All Wards

**UPDATE ON SELF-FINANCING FOR THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)
Not a Key Decision**

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update in relation to a number of work streams that are in progress as part of the Council's preparations for the implementation of self-financing for the Housing Revenue Account with effect from 1st April 2012.
- 1.2 Housing Management Board received an update report in June 2011, but since this time Communities and Local Government (CLG) have issued a further publication, 'Self-Financing: Planning the Transition' and more recently a consultation document 'Streamlining council housing asset management: Disposals and use of receipts'.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

- a) To note progress to date in the work streams in preparing for the implementation of self-financing for the HRA.
- b) To approve that officers prepare and send a response to the CLG Consultation 'Streamlining council housing asset management: Disposals and use of receipts', in consultation with the Executive Councillor, Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokespersons.

3. Background

CLG Policy Document 'Self-Financing: Planning the Transition'

- 3.1 The latest policy document, issued in late July, confirms progress of the Localism Bill, the process under which self-financing for the Housing Revenue Account will be introduced, through Parliament.
- 3.2 Key dates and deadlines for local authorities in the lead up to go live for self-financing are also confirmed. There are a number of returns which we are required to submit to CLG, many of which require certification by our external auditors, between August 2011 and March 2012.
- 3.3 There is no evidence of fundamental change in the financial assumptions being made in relation to self-financing, compared to those made in formulating the February 2011 policy document. Further guidance in respect of the exclusion of properties identified for disposal or demolition from the self-financing settlement has been received.
- 3.4 The actual level of debt that Cambridge City will be required to take on will not be finally confirmed until January 2012, following consultation on a draft self-financing determination in November 2011. These timescales are similar to those previously adopted for the subsidy system.
- 3.5 The policy document confirms that despite self-financing not going live until 1st April 2012, local authorities will be required to pay monies due to CLG under the new regime on 28th March 2012, recognising that 31st March and 1st April fall over a weekend. It is however, made clear in the policy document that CLG intend to financially compensate local authorities in year, for the cost of servicing the borrowing for 4 additional days via an adjustment to the 2011/12 subsidy settlement.
- 3.6 Local authorities have been asked to provide an indication to CLG by 16 September 2011 of how / from where they plan to raise the funds to meet the requirements of self-financing, thus giving CLG an early indication of the potential call upon the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB). Although this information has been requested it is acknowledged that local authorities are not formally committing themselves to a specific borrowing route at this stage. There are a number of economic factors that mean that an intended borrowing route at this stage might not be considered the most financially viable option at the point at which we require the funds.

- 3.7 For local authorities wishing to borrow from the Public Works Loans Board, new arrangements have been put in place to allow temporary borrowing of variable rate loans, which could be repaid within the first 12 months of the advance, providing a longer time frame for authorities to raise long term finance. This proposal could have some benefits in terms of giving us time to explore and potentially progress a wider range of financing options, but carries additional risks in terms of any rise in interest rates over this period.

Borrowing

- 3.8 In order to be in a position to respond to varying levels of investment need in our housing stock over the longer term, it is key that we secure a portfolio of debt that best meets these anticipated requirements, while retaining as much flexibility as possible enabling us to respond to change.
- 3.9 The Medium Term Strategy, which will be presented to Council in October 2011, includes amendment to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, allowing borrowing of up to £250 million in 2011/12.
- 3.10 Working jointly with South Cambridgeshire District Council, officers have soft market tested a number of alternative vehicles for raising finance at the anticipated level of £230 million (if we opt to borrow up to our borrowing limit).
- 3.11 It is important that good treasury management practices are applied, considering the following:
- A balanced portfolio of debt
 - Diversification to spread risk
 - Retention of flexibility
 - Consideration of set up costs versus anticipated longer term benefits
 - The maturity profile that best meets our anticipated investment needs
- 3.12 The options that have been investigated and considered to date include:
- Internal borrowing from the General Fund
 - Borrowing from the County Council pension fund
 - Borrowing from other local authorities
 - Borrowing from the PWLB

- Raising funds through bond issuance (either individually or as part of a club)
 - Raising funds through private market placement
- 3.13 Clearly, the General Fund only has the financial capacity to advance a small proportion of the finance, but internal borrowing could be advantageous to both the General Fund and the HRA in terms of interest rates that could be beneficial to both parties and reduced risk.
- 3.14 Discussions with the County Council are at an early stage, but again there are potential benefits to keeping the borrowing within the public sector, in terms of both risk and interest rates.
- 3.15 Borrowing from other local authorities would still retain the interest in the public sector, but at this stage, with no formal vehicle in place to broker the arrangements between authorities, this route may prove difficult to pursue.
- 3.16 Until recently, borrowing from the PWLB was likely to have been the chosen route for many local authorities, with preferential interest rates being offered for a variety of fixed and variable products. A move to a rate of Gilts plus 1% from October 2010, seeing an increase of approximately 1% in the rates being offered, means that forms of market borrowing become a more attractive option.
- 3.17 Bond issuance is demonstrating itself as a credible solution, with many investors in the market place keen to invest in local authority business. Bonds can be issued publicly (either on an individual or group basis) or privately with a specific investor. The process to issue a bond would be expected to take up to 16 weeks.
- 3.18 Currently, it is anticipated that a public bond could achieve rates in the region of Gilts plus 0.8%, with a small difference in rate making a substantial difference in the interest payable on the sums we are considering.
- 3.19 Although £230 million is a huge level of debt for a debt free local authority to contemplate taking on, in terms of bond issuance the sum is small. The minimum realistic value to place in the bond market is in the region of £150 million, meaning that as an individual authority, placing a bond would significantly limit the flexibility of our portfolio.
- 3.20 Forming a bond club with other local authorities would enable the placement of a number of bonds with varying terms, thus providing the degree of flexibility that will be required to respond to the investment needs of our housing stock. Again, a special purpose vehicle (SPV)

would be required to facilitate such an arrangement, but in this instance, a number of financial institutions consider they are well progressed.

- 3.21 The set up costs to issue a £150 million bond would be expected to be in the region of £450,000, but the potential ongoing savings in interest payments compared to those payable with the rates currently being offered by PWLB would be expected to quickly pay back the initial costs involved.
- 3.22 To be in a position to place bonds in the market place, the Council and any other parties in a bond club, would be required to obtain a formal credit rating from a limited number of rating agencies, such as Moody's, Fitch or Standard & Pools.
- 3.23 To give an indication of the potential benefits of bond issuance, the table below compares the interest payable each year, on a £200 million debt.

Discount Compared to PWLB	Effective Rate	Cost £'000	Variance to PWLB £'000
0.40%	4.50%	9,000	800
0.35%	4.55%	9,100	700
0.30%	4.60%	9,200	600
0.25%	4.65%	9,300	500
0.20%	4.70%	9,400	400
0.15%	4.75%	9,500	300
0.10%	4.80%	9,600	200

Property Disposals / Demolitions

- 3.24 Updated guidance in respect of reflecting proposed property disposals or demolitions has extended the period for which CLG will consider removing the property from the debt settlement to up to 5 years after the implementation of self-financing.
- 3.25 However, clarity provided in respect of the evidential requirements to secure exclusion of the property from the settlement confirms that the property either needs to be:
- Unoccupied, where the authority has resolved, before 1st April 2011, to demolish the dwelling

- Unoccupied, where the authority has resolved, between 1st April 2011 and 10th October 2011, to demolish the dwelling
- Occupied, but where the authority has resolved prior to 10th October 2011, to demolish and the appropriate consultation has taken place.

3.26 In light of the guidance, and having taken advice from the consultants employed to assist us in preparing for self-financing, fewer properties have been included on our final submission to CLG than identified in principle in March 2011.

3.27 The properties on our 3-year affordable housing programme have been approved as sites that warrant future investigation, feasibility study and option appraisal, rather than the authority having made a scheme specific formal resolution to dispose or demolish any specific dwellings.

3.28 The properties identified for exclusion from the settlement are:

- 51 vacant units in Seymour Court / Street
- 14 vacant units in one wing of Roman Court identified for disposal on long lease to Papworth Housing Trust
- 5 vacant units in the other wing of Roman Court, where 15 existing units will be re-modelled into 10 units of accommodation
- 7 units in Brandon Court, where 37 existing units are being re-modelled into 30 units of accommodation

Asset Management

3.29 The introduction of self-financing drives a major change in the way we manage our HRA assets. Our ability to effectively service our housing debt from 2012, will be wholly dependent upon securing a viable net revenue stream from our housing asset base.

3.30 Work is underway in analysing our stock data, to inform a new asset management strategy, which will form part of our 30 year business plan. It will, in future, be necessary to consider both individual and groups of assets in terms of their financial contribution to the business plan, driving investment decisions in our stock, with demolition, re-development or strategic disposal of some assets being considered as potential options.

3.31 With many of the financial deterrents to local authority new build that are inherent as part of the HRA subsidy system removed under self-

financing, the delivery of new affordable housing, to be managed locally, also becomes a viable option for the first time in many years.

3.32 Work has begun, supported by Savills, to consider the financial contribution that particular categories of our dwelling stock make to the business plan. This work will then need to be expanded to include other housing assets, such as garages, land, shops and commercial property. Individual properties, or groups of properties, that make a negative contribution to our business model, will need to receive consideration as to the best option for the future, whether that be significant investment, disposal, demolition or alternative use.

3.33 The categories within which Savills are preparing an assessment to inform our asset management strategy are:

- 1 3 Year Affordable Housing Programme Properties
- 2 Lichfield / Neville Road
- 3 Shared Ownership
- 4 Miscellaneous Leases
- 5 Easiform
- 6 BISF
- 7 Unity
- 8 Caldor
- 9 Timber Framed
- 10 Listed Buildings / Houses of Special Interest
- 11 Temporary Housing - Hostels
- 12 Temporary Housing - Dispersed Tenancies
- 13 Sheltered Housing - Cat I
- 14 Sheltered Housing - Cat II
- 15 Sheltered Housing - Cat II.5
- 16 New Build (Under 10 Years Old) Post 2000
- 17 Flats above Shops
- 18 Flats in Blocks of 4
- 19 Low Rise Flats (2 storeys)
- 20 Medium Rise Flats (3 to 5 storeys)
- 21 High Rise Flats (6 storeys and over)
- 22 Bungalows
- 23 Houses - Detached Pre 1945
- 24 Houses - Semi Pre 1945
- 25 Houses - Terraced Pre 1945
- 26 Houses - Detached 1945 -2000
- 27 Houses - Semi 1945 - 2000
- 28 Houses - Terraced 1945 - 2000

3.34 In the future, we will need to carefully balance investment decisions in housing assets, with both their financial impact on our business plan and social impact on our tenants and leaseholders.

CLG Consultation 'Streamlining council housing asset management: Disposals and use of receipts'

3.35 A recent consultation, issued by Communities and Local Government, seeks to further reduce the administrative burden on local authorities in respect of strategic disposal of housing assets. The consultation proposes amendments to the existing requirement, under Section 32 of the Housing Act 1985, to obtain approval from the Secretary of State prior to disposal of a housing asset unless it meets limited criteria which excludes it from needing consent. Government consider that current legislation unnecessarily burdens local authorities in effectively managing their asset base, investing in social housing, aiding regeneration, assisting in sustainable home ownership and creating mixed communities.

3.36 The consultation also addresses the financial disincentive that the continuation of the pooling regime for capital receipts has, in respect of a local authority's ability to maintain housing schemes such as shared ownership. It is clear, however, that there is no intention to revisit the proposal to continue with pooling in respect of receipts from right to buy sales.

Financial Modelling

3.37 Once the result of the asset management analysis is available, officers will be in a position to undertake extensive financial scenario modelling, providing a view on the impact on the HRA business plan of investment in the stock at a number of levels.

3.38 ConsultCIH have been preparing an advanced financial model, which when populated with both our asset management investment need and options for our debt portfolio, will assist us to demonstrate the financial impact of multiple scenarios.

3.39 The financial modelling will form part of our 30 year business plan, which will be presented for decision later in the year.

Governance

3.40 Due to the timing of both the consultative and final self-financing determinations, it may be necessary to convene special meetings of Housing Management Board, Community Services and Council.

- 3.41 It is anticipated that delegated authority will be sought for the Director of Resources, in consultation with appropriate Executive Councillors, Chairpersons and Opposition Spokespersons, to finally determine the most appropriate route for securing the funding required on 28th March 2012, dependent upon the position in the market place in the lead up to this date.
- 3.42 Formal approval will be sought as part of the Medium Term Strategy, to be considered by Council on 20 October 2011, to changes required to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy to enable borrowing to be undertaken during 2011/12 to meet the self-financing debt settlement payment on 28 March 2012.
- 3.43 Reports presented to special meetings later in the calendar year are also anticipated to consider some constitutional amendments to delegations in respect of HRA borrowing and debt repayment.

Communication

- 3.43 An article introducing the concept of self-financing was recently incorporated in the summer edition of Open Door, which will have been received by all tenants and leaseholders. We will continue to include updates in future editions of Open Door as we move towards 1st April 2012.
- 3.44 Although we are clear, having obtained a legal opinion, that formal consultation with tenants and leaseholders is not required to meet the terms of the Housing Act, it is still intended to produce a communication for tenants and leaseholders on an individual basis, which we hope to send out with rent statements in early December.
- 3.44 Included, as an annex to the latest CLG policy document, is a summary of self-financing for tenants, which is included at Appendix A to this report.
- 3.45 CLG are clear in this communication that self-financing provides the opportunity for investment to be driven by local priorities, that it assumes there will be more resource available for council housing at a local level and that tenants can expect clear and transparent information about how the rent they pay relates to the services they receive. The policy document encourages local authorities to strive to provide a similar level of information around rents and service charges to secure tenants, that leaseholders are entitled to receive under the terms of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

3.45 The annual report produced by Cambridge City Council provides tenants with this information at a summary level, but consideration needs to be given to how we might move to communicating similar information on an individual basis.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

The cost of the consultancy being deployed in the current financial year is being met from the policy space in the HRA for 2011/12, earmarked specifically for this purpose.

The business plan, to be presented later in the year, will contain the known longer-term financial implications for self-financing.

(b) Staffing Implications

As identified in the report to HMB in June 2011, during the implementation phase of self-financing for the HRA, additional staffing resource is being secured using a number of external consultants. Consideration will need to be given to any ongoing need for additional staffing resource, and any identified need will be presented for consideration as part of the 2012/13 budget process.

(c) Equal Opportunities Implications

An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The change in funding regime in itself is not expected to have a disproportionate impact on any particular equalities group, although the change in regime is anticipated to lead to future amendments to policy, all of which will require independent Equality Impact Assessments.

(d) Environmental Implications

There are no specific environmental issues for consideration as a direct result of this report, although there will need to be consideration given to the level of desired investment in environmental initiatives in the preparation of the new / updated Asset Management Strategy.

(e) Consultation

Following confirmation that formal consultation under the Housing Act is not required, the communication plan that has been adopted ensures that a series of briefings and reports to Housing Management

Board will inform members and tenant / leaseholder representatives of the progress in implementing self-financing. As described in more detail in the body of the report, communication with tenants and leaseholders will take the form of Open Door articles and individual letters.

(f) **Community Safety**

There are no specific community safety issues for consideration as a direct result of this report, but again there will need to be consideration given to the level of desired investment in community safety initiatives in the preparation of the new / updated Asset Management Strategy.

5. Background Papers

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- CLG Policy Document ‘Self-Financing: Planning the Transition’
- CLG Consultation ‘Streamlining council housing asset management: Disposals and use of receipts’

6. Appendices

The appendices included as part of this report are:

Appendix A – CLG Summary of Self-Financing for Tenants

7. Inspection of Papers

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

Author’s Name: Julia Hovells
Author’s Phone Number: 01223 – 457822
Author’s Email: julia.hovells@cambridge.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank



To: Executive Councillor for Housing
Report by: Director of Customer and Community Services
Relevant scrutiny committee: HMB 27.9.11
Wards affected: All

OPTIONS FOR INDEPENDENT TENANTS VOICE Not a Key Decision

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 A report was commissioned to provide independent advice to Housing Management Board and the Executive Councillor for Housing on the following:
- i. Are current arrangements for resident involvement robust and fit for purpose in a changing world?
 - ii. Should tenants and leaseholders have an “independent voice”, free from Council influence and interference?
- 1.2 The independent report has provided a thorough review of past and existing arrangements, and made a number of recommendations, based on consultation, evidence, and analysis. The report is complimentary about the Council’s existing arrangements for tenant involvement and engagement, but recognises that there are areas where this could be strengthened or improved.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

To agree the recommendations set out in section 12 of the attached report from Wiles consulting as follows:

- 2.1. Recommendations 1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11,and 13 adopted as they stand in the report, or amended.
- 2.2. Recommendations 5, if supported in principle, to have the resource implications clarified before decision at a later date.

Or

Recommendation not supported.

- 2.3. Recommendation 12, to be taken forward on the advice of resident representatives of HMB.

3. Background

- 3.1. A report was brought to the 8th March 2011 Housing Management Board (HMB) recommending that independent advice was commissioned to review existing resident involvement, and make recommendations for an independent voice for residents. This was supported by HMB and agreed by the Executive Councillor.
- 3.2. A steering group comprised of councillors and tenant representatives on HMB was set up to advise the Director of Customer and Community Services on the appointment of an external consultant, and to consider the consultants report and recommendations prior presentation at HMB. Colin Wiles of Wiles Consulting was appointed following a tender and evaluation process, and has now delivered his report and recommendations.
- 3.3. He was given a brief summarised into two questions:
 - i. Are current arrangements for resident involvement robust and fit for purpose in a changing world?
 - ii. Should tenants and leaseholders have an “independent voice”, free from Council influence and interference?
- 3.4. The brief made it clear that there was not a preconceived view of the best options for the future; and that the object of the exercise was to get independent expert advice. The study took account of the local and national context; the views of tenants, leaseholders, councillors, and council officers; and considered current thinking on good practice and emerging issues.
- 3.5. The final report from Wiles Consulting is attached in full to this report. It makes a number of recommendations, and gives the reasoning for arriving at these conclusions. The recommendations of the report are as follows:

3.6. Summary list of Recommendations :

This is a list of recommendations arising from the points raised in the report. The adoption and implementation of these recommendations should be carried out in partnership with residents.

- i. To re-channel the budget of £80,000, previously used to support the Cambridge Federation, into other Resident Involvement activities.
- ii. To recruit a new member of staff to the Council Resident Involvement team, reporting to the Resident Involvement Manager. The suggested key duties of this post are as set out in section 11 of the main report.
- iii. To ensure that the work plan of the Resident Involvement Team has a high degree of guidance and involvement from residents.
- iv. To review the terms of reference of the Housing Management Board, and other formally established groups, to ensure that there is clarity over the lines of governance and accountability for the housing service.
- v. To consider holding resident elections to the Housing Management Board every two years.
- vi. To review the system of support and expenses for active residents, so that their efforts are properly rewarded and recompensed. This should include a review of IT support and the possible provision of IT facilities for current and new resident activists.
- vii. To review the arrangements for recruiting resident activists and for succession planning for resident involvement. The aim should be identify and recruit a new cohort of active residents who can be step into the shoes of current activists in the future, and to create a civic core of active residents who can be involved in resident involvement and wider community development issues.
- viii. To review the level of training and support for residents so that current and new resident activists can take on a range of roles within the tenant involvement framework, and be fully equipped to handle strategic housing issues as well as day-to-day service delivery issues.
- ix. To review the communications strategy for resident involvement so that all residents, and particularly activists, are kept informed of actions and activities on a need to know basis. This should

include a review of social media, more and better training on the use of IT and the provision of IT equipment where necessary, and the ability for all residents' groups to have access to effective printing facilities. It should also include a review of estate notice boards and the use of Radio Cambridgeshire and other local radio stations to publicise events.

- x. To re-launch the residents' forum and to make this the independent co-ordinating body for resident involvement in Cambridge. The details of its terms of reference would need to be developed but this could include the following: meetings to be open to all tenants and leaseholders and to be held four or five times a year; meetings to have a clear agenda with the ability to call officers to answer questions and an opportunity for elected HMB members to provide feedback; the ability to seek advice from independent advisers with an appropriate budget; a formal voting system using green and red voting cards for all registered residents; a clear commitment to the independence of the forum from all parts of the Council.
- xi. To consider some of the ideas for further development of resident involvement as highlighted in section 11. of the report.
- xii. To undertake a "healing" exercise with residents where the events surrounding the demise of the Cambridge Federation can be used as a positive learning exercise in order to move forward.
- xiii. To increase the level of grant funding to support residents' associations and other grass roots bodies. The grants previously awarded by the Cambridge Federation for environmental improvements should also be brought back under City Council control and integrated with other grant funding for resident support.

3.7. All of these recommendations have considerable merit. I would recommend supporting them without alteration, with the exception of the following:

3.8. Recommendation 5, to hold bi-annual elections needs further consideration in terms of the additional resources needed for this change. Further analysis would be needed if this were to be taken forward as a possible option, before any final decision.

3.9. Recommendation 12 needs to be seen to be worthwhile by potential participants. The views of HMB are sought as to whether this approach would be welcomed.

4. Implications

(a) Financial

The options recommended in this report will be delivered within the current budgetary provision of £78k for tenant involvement, previously provided as a grant to the Cambridge Federation.

(b) Staffing

The report recommends the creation of a new post, to be funded from the £78k budget allocation, referred to above.

(c) Equal Opportunities

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out identifying the importance of tenant involvement work for engaging all sections of the community.

(d) Environmental

Nil: the proposal has no direct climate change impact.

(e) Consultation

Consultation with various stakeholders is summarised in the background section, and detailed in the main report.

(f) Community Safety

The main report considers the importance of tenant involvement to build community cohesion within areas of the city where there are concentrations of social housing.

5. Background papers

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Equality Impact Assessment

6. Appendices

Cambridge City Council: A Review of Resident Involvement and options for an independent voice for Residents. Wiles Consulting. 2011.

7. Inspection of papers

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

Author's Name:	Liz Bisset
Author's Phone Number:	01223 457 801
Author's Email:	liz.bisset@cambridge.gov.uk

Cambridge City Council

A Review of Resident Involvement and options for an independent voice for Residents

Colin Wiles

30th August 2011



Registered in England and Wales No: 7135416

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction and background	4
2. Methodology	5
3. External change	5
4. Present arrangements for resident involvement	6
5. Governance and accountability	8
6. Staffing and the financial costs of resident involvement	10
7. Are there gaps in provision?	11
8. The Cambridge Federation and an independent voice for residents	14
9. Options for an independent voice for residents	16
10. Wider community development issues	18
11. The Way Ahead	19
12. Conclusions and recommendations	21
13. Appendices	25

Executive Summary

1. Cambridge City Council's framework for resident involvement is robust, effective, and represents excellent value for money.
2. Residents have a strong voice in setting strategy, in formulating policy and in monitoring and improving service delivery.
3. Effective mechanisms are in place that allow residents to scrutinise the housing service and to hold their landlord to account.
4. Existing structures for involvement allow residents to exercise a high degree of independence.
5. Although the menu of resident involvement is comprehensive, there needs to be greater co-ordination and communication so that active residents are kept informed of the full range of actions and activities being carried out.
6. There are some gaps in service provision and the Council has not yet reached the "ceiling" of involvement that has been identified by the Tenant Services Authority. This is partly because the level of investment in resident involvement has been low compared to some other providers. Some ideas are put forward for marginal improvements in the service.
7. Following the demise of the Cambridge Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations there is a widespread view that an external "independent voice" should still be available for residents.
8. There is general agreement that a new Cambridge Federation should not be created. Residents are already able to exercise a high level of independence; therefore the budget previously used to fund the Cambridge Federation should be re-allocated. Some of the budget should be used to fund an additional member of staff within the Council who would support grass-roots groups and a revived independent residents' forum. Training and support to residents should also be increased. A summary of recommendations for future action is presented at section 12.1.

1. Introduction and background

I was appointed by Cambridge City Council in July 2011 to carry out a review of the Council's resident involvement framework. The brief asked me to consider two questions:

- 1) Are current arrangements for resident involvement robust and fit for purpose in a changing world?
- 2) Should tenants and leaseholders have an "independent voice", free from Council influence and interference?

Cambridge City Council manages 8,451 homes – 7,290 tenants, 89 shared owners and 1,072 leaseholders – and this amounts to around 18% of the total of 46,611 homes in the City (April 2008 figures).¹

The Council's housing service has been awarded 2 stars with excellent prospects for improvement by Audit Commission inspectors. The Council has also been praised in the past by regulators and inspectors for having an effective approach to resident involvement. But in a period of dramatic change in the housing world the City Council wishes to maintain its position as one of the best performing local authorities.

The Council's landlord function is regulated by the Tenant Services Authority, and the TSA expects robust self-regulation by councillors "incorporating effective tenant involvement". The TSA standards place a strong emphasis on providers carrying out "co-regulation" with their tenants, and involving their tenants to shape local delivery.

The scaling down of the TSA and its merger with the Homes and Communities Agency from April 2012 means that future regulatory interventions will be minimal and the drive for improvement and effective governance has to come from within the authority itself. The notion of co-regulation and "Resident Led Self Regulation" implies that

¹ City Council housing strategy 2009/12. Available at www.cambridge.gov.uk

residents will be responsible for driving this forward in the future, and this will require them to be effectively trained, supported and empowered to play their part.

2. Methodology

I conducted three discussion groups: one with members of the Housing Management Board; one with members of the Housing Regulation Panel and other active residents, and one with non-active residents.

I carried out face-to-face and telephone interviews with a number of active residents, council officers and councillors, including Catherine Smart the Executive Councillor for Housing. A list of these respondents is at Appendix 1 and I would like to thank them for their time and their enthusiasm.

All members of the Housing Management Board and the Housing Regulation Panel were given the opportunity to respond to some written questions and to conduct a personal interview if they chose to do so. I also reviewed internal Council reports and wider policy issues in framing this report.

3. External change

The housing world is changing. From April 2012, as a result of Housing Revenue Account reform, the City Council's housing service will become self-financing . All rental income will be retained locally instead of a significant proportion being returned to the Treasury. Under the new arrangements the Council will be allocated a fixed amount of debt to pay off, allowing it greater freedom and certainty to run its own affairs. This effectively ends any need to look at stock transfer and will allow the Council to make longer-term plans and to build new homes. Many local authorities are bringing their ALMOS (Arms Length Management Organisations) back in house as a result of this change.

The Tenant Services Authority, which regulates the Council's landlord service, will be absorbed into the Homes and Communities Agency in 2012 and the scale of inspection has already been significantly reduced. In effect, no landlord will be inspected unless there is some form of serious detriment (yet to be defined) to tenants. This provides the Council with a degree of breathing space and more freedom to innovate,

but it does mean that the impetus for improvement will need to come from within the authority. Residents will need to access suitable training and resources in order that they are empowered to take on the step change that will come with this enhanced role. It will also mean linking tenant activists into wider networks, such as ARCH, TPAS and tenant groups that are being developed through Facebook and Twitter where ideas and information can be rapidly disseminated.

The Localism Bill also contains a number of measures, (such as the Right to Challenge, Neighbourhood Plans, the Right to Build and the Right to Acquire), that could also have an impact upon wider community development issues. Changes in housing and welfare benefits could also have an impact upon tenants and communities. Some of these issues are discussed in greater detail below.

4. Present arrangements for resident involvement

The key requirements for resident involvement and empowerment are as set out in the Tenant Services Authority's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard – see Appendix 2.

Resident involvement should take place at three levels.

- The ability to influence strategic priorities
- To be Involved in the formulation of policies
- To have a say in the delivery of housing services

4.1 Strategic

At the strategic level, a Housing Management Board (HMB) effectively acts as the main governing and discussion forum for the housing service. It comprises 9 councillors (6 from the ruling group and 3 from other parties) and 6 residents. The 6 residents (five tenants and a leaseholder) are elected by all residents every four years to serve a four-year term. The elections are run by the Electoral Reform Society and are well contested. The response rate at the last election in 2008 was 22.5%.

The composition of the HMB is such that if opposition councillors and residents unite they could out-vote the ruling party. This represents a

really powerful and independent role for residents and is possibly unique within the country.

The City Council has a system of executive councillors, who are responsible for each service. The HMB acts as a scrutiny forum for the decisions taken by the Executive Councillor for Housing. It monitors the housing service and makes recommendations to the Executive Councillor. To date, there has not been an occasion when the Executive Councillor for Housing has overturned a decision or recommendation of the HMB.

In addition, three residents are selected to sit on the Community Services Scrutiny Committee, which has a wider remit to consider strategic housing issues.

I deal with the composition and constitution of the HMB in greater depth at section 5. below.

4.2 Policy formulation and service delivery

The City Council offers a menu of involvement methods. This includes street forums, area meetings in the north and south of the City, ad-hoc meetings, estate walkabouts, support to residents' associations, a citywide forum for leaseholders, a youth forum in Abbey, a Tenants' Initiative Scheme that offers up to £7,000 for environmental projects and an annual garden competition. The Tenants' Initiative Scheme and the garden competition were previously run by the Cambridge Federation. Local offers have been developed in partnership with residents.

The Council also offers a range of ways to communicate with residents. *Open Door* magazine is co-edited with residents and is distributed to all residents quarterly. This magazine includes a freepost feedback survey so that improvement can be built in. The Annual Report to residents is also co-edited with residents and includes a feedback survey. The Council website includes a *Your Home, Your Say* feature and there are residents' videos on YouTube and on the Council website. The *Count Me In* campaign has sought to involve Black and Minority Ethnic residents and has been successful. In addition, an annual residents' day and an annual tour take place- both organised with residents.

In terms of tenant scrutiny, the Housing Regulation Panel (HRP), monitors service delivery and scrutinises the performance of the housing service. It is properly constituted, its members have been properly trained and it has formal powers to seek evidence and hold officers and councillors to account. The HRP has carried out a number of independent surveys of council services and the Council has adopted its recommendations. A Residents' Asset Management Group (RTLG), inspects work done on homes, Green Inspectors check work carried out on estates and the Council also uses Mystery Shoppers.

Details of the full range of involvement and communication methods are shown at Appendix 3.

Traditionally, many housing providers supported residents' associations and saw this as the principal means of consulting with and involving their tenants. Progressive landlords recognise that this model is out of date and that residents associations are not always representative of their communities. Involvement needs to take place at many levels to reflect the differing aspirations, enthusiasm and lifestyles of residents. Some residents want to be heavily involved. Many more want to have the comfort that their views will be taken into account if issues arise. The Council's menu of methods therefore offers something for everyone, from the resident who does not wish to be involved, through armchair activists to those who are completely committed to being involved.

All of the respondents I spoke to felt that the Council's internal methods of resident involvement were comprehensive and valuable. However, there was a widespread feeling that, although much activity was taking place, there was sometimes a lack of co-ordination and communication. Tenants who were active in one area did not know what others were doing elsewhere. Some respondents wanted more feedback on discussions and decisions from the Housing Management Board. There seemed to be a genuine appetite to understand the bigger picture. This was felt to be a particular problem following the demise of the Cambridge Federation. Current gaps in provision are identified in section 7. below.

5. Governance and Accountability

Within any landlord organisation a clear distinction needs to be made between governance and accountability. The governing body is responsible for leading and controlling the organisation, ensuring that all legal and regulatory requirements are complied with and that risks are effectively managed. In the event of a serious incident, regulators, customers and other partners need to know where the “buck stops”.

Accountability means that customers and other stakeholders are able to scrutinise the work of the governing body and to hold them account, making them change direction or even changing their composition if necessary. During my discussions with respondents I used the example of RBS, where Fred Goodwin had been able to lead the bank to bankruptcy due to ineffective governance and poor accountability. The governing Board of RBS was weak and unable to control him, and he was not held to account either by shareholders, regulators or staff, either because they were ignorant of his activities or were scared to challenge him.

For a housing association, the relationship between governance and accountability is fairly straightforward. The Board is the governing body, responsible for leading and controlling the organisation, and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel should, in theory, be able to hold the Board to account.

Within the City Council the situation is more complex. When I asked the question “who or what is the governing body of the housing service?” the answers were unclear. Some people stated that the buck stopped with the Executive Councillor for Housing. Others felt that the HMB acted as the governing body. Perhaps the fact that the question was not properly understood reflects the complexity of Council structures.

The HMB terms of reference lists three main objectives:

- To be the main discussion forum between the Council, its tenants and its leaseholders for all matters relating to the landlord function of Cambridge City Council.
- To make recommendations to the Council’s Executive or to full Council as appropriate.
- Pre-scrutiny of non-strategic housing management functions.

The HMB is also a scrutiny body holding the Executive Councillor for Housing to account. The HMB and the Executive Councillor for Housing are also held to account by the Housing Regulation Panel, which acts as a tenant scrutiny panel. Councillor members of the HMB, along with all councillors, are also held to account by their electorate, and resident members of the HMB are held to account by all residents, who vote for resident places every four years. All members of the HMB sign the Council's code of conduct for councillors.

In the light of this, I feel that the terms of reference of the HMB should be revised to clarify, beyond any reasonable doubt, the lines of responsibility between the Executive Councillor for Housing and the Housing Management Board.

In terms of resident elections to the HMB, in theory all six residents could be replaced at the four yearly elections. In order to ensure effective continuity and succession planning, and to get residents into the "habit" of electing their resident representatives, it may be sensible to hold elections every two years, with three resident places available at each election. This means that two tenant representatives and a leaseholder could be elected in year 1 and three tenant representatives could be elected in year 3, each to serve a four-year term.

The current resident members of the HMB are experienced housing practitioners. They all feel able to think and act independently and to campaign on behalf of residents. They also display a high level of competence and a close familiarity with strategic housing issues and the Council should be proud to have the benefit of their contribution. However, by their own admission, they are not as young as they were. The Council will need to think carefully about succession planning and where their replacements might come from. Within the context of co-regulation it will be important to "talent spot" and nurture up and coming resident activists who can take on a wider and more strategic role in the future.

As detailed above, the Housing Regulation Panel also plays a key role in holding the landlord service to account. It has a comprehensive constitution and robust powers to investigate services, to question councillors and officers and to make recommendations for service improvements. The HRP can also commission advice from independent consultants.

All of these factors show that the HRP is able to exercise an independent role within the Council, and that resident members of the HMB also feel able to act independently.

6. Staffing and the Financial costs of resident involvement

The Council employs a Resident Involvement Officer. A Publications Officer also assists with resident involvement work. Both of these posts are full time. These staff work with residents and other officers to ensure that resident involvement work is effective within the Council.

The Council's annual Budget for Resident Involvement is £158,000, of which £78,000 funded the Cambridge Federation with the remaining £80,000 funding the Council's in-house service and grants. It is fair to say that this rough 50:50 split was not reflected in outputs of equal value. Most respondents felt that the Cambridge Federation had not been providing value for money in recent years in comparison to the Council's in-house staff.

£158,000 amounts to just over £21.09 for every Council property per annum. According to Housemark the national upper quartile for spend is an average of £33.91, and the lower quartile is an average of £21.90, so the City Council is achieving remarkable results in resident involvement given that it is spending below the lowest quartile.

In my view, given the regulatory emphasis upon co-regulation and the changing housing landscape, it will be important to retain and redirect the £80,000 budget that previously supported the Federation into alternative resident involvement mechanisms, and options for this are set out in this report.

7. Are there gaps in provision?

The menu of involvement offered by the City Council more than complies with regulatory advice. Of course there is always room for improvement, and complacency should never be an option. Some ideas that the City could consider are listed below.

National research shows that there is always a ceiling to involvement. However hard you try there will only be a minority of residents who wish to be actively involved. Research by the TSA showed that 50 per cent of tenants were not interested in any form of involvement. Of the tenants who were interested, the most popular involvement methods were:

- Responding to surveys (20 %)
- Site surgeries (14%)
- Tenant and residents associations (13%)

Only 9 per cent of tenants were interested in becoming a tenant board member.²

Data provided by Housemark³ shows how Cambridge compares to other landlords (national figures).

	Cambridge	National data		
		Upper Quartile	Median	Lower Quartile
% Responding to consultations and surveys	33.4%	43.2%	33.1%	23.1%
% Who feel their views are taken into account	65%	69.1%	64.9%	59.9%
% Satisfied about being kept informed by their landlords on issues affecting them	75%	84.5%	81%	76%

This indicates that the City is still below the upper quartile averages for each of these questions, and this suggests that the “ceiling” of involvement has not yet been reached in Cambridge. This is not a criticism, because the Council has achieved remarkable results with a

² Understanding tenant Involvement Tenant Services Authority, 2009

³ Housemark – Resident Involvement benchmarking. 2009/10

relatively modest resident involvement budget. But it does indicate that an additional investment in resources could yield further benefits.

7.1 Critiques of current provision

Most respondents felt that the Council was doing excellent work in resident involvement and that Cambridge was well ahead of the vast majority of housing providers. However, many resident respondents felt that there was a lack of co-ordination and a lack of publicity between and about the various activities. Everyone was busy in their own “silo” but they did not always know what others were doing. They wanted to see the bigger picture and they felt that current resource levels and communication methods were not always adequate. This was felt to be a particular issue since the decline of the Cambridge Federation.

There was an assumption on the part of the Council that all residents had access to electronic communication, but many active residents do not have computers and prefer to use the telephone or to write and receive letters.

The Council has highlighted the fact that residents contribute over 3,000 hours of voluntary effort each year but some respondents felt that this contribution was not always recognised or rewarded. It was felt that small gestures such as an invitation to an occasional civic function would be highly appreciated. One resident member of the HMB stated that their greatest achievement had been to receive a key to the drinks’ machine on the civic floor! These gestures may seem minor, but they are very symbolic and meaningful to residents and provide proof that residents are being treated as genuine and equal partners.

In addition, some respondents felt that they were not give adequate support to carry out their work. Some commented that they had found it hard to get leaflets printed. Others commented that it could be difficult to obtain expenses forms to reclaim money for travel and other spending. The procedures for claiming expenses were felt to be poorly publicised and that residents had to push hard to get their proper entitlement.

It was felt that there should be an effective system in place to allow residents to produce newsletters and other publications.

Many respondents felt that the Council could do more in terms of grass-roots work, reaching out to people and communities who have been untouched or unmoved by previous methods of involvement. One councillor expressed concern that areas of his ward lacked any viable groups that could access council funds and that the ward was therefore “losing out.”

With the new provisions in the Localism Bill, and the initiatives that come under the general heading of the Big Society, it will also be important for neighbourhoods and communities to have a “civic core” of active citizens who are able to take advantage of funding and other opportunities. This is dealt with in section 10. below.

Some of the non-involved tenants that I spoke to were unaware of formal structures such as the HMB and the HRP. They could not recall being asked to vote in elections to the HMB. Their focus was very much on their immediate neighbourhood. They stated that they would appreciate the occasional knock on the door or a letter to ask them how they were. When pushed, they did admit to reading Open Door, but did not appear to recall much of its content. They also commented that good and regularly updated notice boards in their immediate vicinity would be helpful and that the Council should make more use of Radio Cambridgeshire as many residents listened to it. This again proves the point that grass roots’ door-knocking and street-level communications could have a positive impact.

8. The Cambridge Federation of Tenants, Leaseholders and Residents and an independent voice for residents

Until recently, the Cambridge Federation of Tenants, Leaseholders and Residents nominally provided an independent voice for residents. However, in early 2011 they decided not to apply for further grant support from the City and the organisation has effectively ceased to exist. A formal winding up meeting is to take place in September 2011.

The reasons behind this decision are complex, but in summary the history of the Federation over the past few years appears to be a classic case of a third sector organisation losing its way due to a lack of effective leadership and internal infighting. Voluntary trustees are not always able to steer an organisation in the right direction, particularly if they do not have the requisite legal, financial and human resources skills that are

needed to run an independent organisation. This will be compounded if trustees have to tackle what they may perceive to be unreasonable demands from the funding organisation, and if they are also attempting to manage staff who are steering a different course to the one that is required.

It was made clear to me that the Federation had been carrying out very little campaigning and advocacy work over the past few years and that, although they had been successful in earlier years, their recent performance had been poor in terms of outputs and outcomes and that the relationship with the Council had been difficult. A great deal of work had been carried out by councillors and Council officers to resolve these issues but to no avail.

A minority of respondents expressed a dissenting view. They felt that the Federation had been too successful and too independent and that this was the reason for the difficult relationship with the Council. However, I did not find any substantial evidence that the Federation had been producing a high level of positive outputs and outcomes for residents.

At a meeting with tenant activists it became clear that the demise of the Federation had caused a great deal of bitterness, with personal insults being traded between some respondents. It will therefore be important for the Council and residents working together to carry out some form of “healing” exercise so that the wounds of this saga can be mended and resident activists can “move on” without the demise of the Federation becoming a running sore. It may be useful to bring in an external facilitator to conduct this exercise.

Residents need to be re-assured that their work is valued and that what has happened in the past should be seen as a learning experience for future ways of working. Every cloud has a silver lining.

However, many residents told me that the monthly forum previously organised by the Federation had been a very successful event, since it allowed residents to hold officers to account and was run entirely by residents without Council interference. It had acted as a kind of select committee, with an agenda set by and for residents and had the ability to call Council officers to attend in order to answer questions on service delivery issues. Several respondents stated that the forum, or an updated version, should be revived.

The demise of the Federation does leave a gap in terms of an independent voice for residents. However, it also represents a significant opportunity to develop new and better ways of working. The Council's internal structure for involvement already provides residents with a large degree of independence. As stated above, HMB resident members can out-vote the ruling group if they combine with opposition councillors and the Housing Regulation Panel is able to hold officers and councillors to account and has formal powers to commission advice and consultancy.

However, many respondents felt that, when and if it comes to the crunch, residents as a whole should have the ability to seek independent advice and to hold the Council to account outside of existing mechanisms. The options for how this could be put in place are set out below.

9. Options for an independent resident voice

The options are set out below.

1. Do nothing.

For: The Council's framework for resident involvement is comprehensive and successful and residents have the ability to act independently - for example their ability to out-vote the ruling group on the HMB and the ability of the HRP to commission research.

Doing nothing saves money and funds could be re-directed to other essential areas.

Against: Complacency should never be seen as an option. If the Council stops improving it will fall behind other providers and it will take more effort and resources to catch up.

An independent voice could help to keep the Council focused on improvement.

Most respondents felt that an independent voice over and above existing structures should be provided.

2. Set up a Cambridge Federation Mark 2 using the current budget.

For: A new Federation could revitalise residents' associations and act as an effective independent voice for residents.

The Federation would be truly independent of Council control.

Against: Unless it could gain access to alternative funding, the organisation would still be dependent upon Council funding and could go the way of the previous Federation.

Residents' associations on their own are seen as only part of a wider spectrum of resident involvement spectrum. This could alienate a significant proportion of tenants who do not wish to become involved in formal groups.

As an independent company, the Federation would require an effective Board of Management and separate premises. Not only is this costly, but many third sector organizations struggle to find experienced trustees who are able to deal with complex legal, financial and human resource issues.

3. Appoint an independent external advisor/consultant who could provide advice to the HMB/HRP or other resident forums as and when required.

For: The cost would be significantly less than the cost of the Federation and would allow residents to draw upon external expertise.

The support provided could be genuinely independent.

Against: It may be difficult to find someone who could carry out this role effectively.

If they move on, or have other work, a new advisor would need to be recruited and this would hamper continuity.

4. Provide all active residents and associations with membership of TPAS, or a similar organisation, allowing access to an independent advice service.

For: The costs would be significantly cheaper than previous funding of the Federation. If the landlord is a full member of TPAS membership for groups is free. If not, it is £73 per annum.

Against: The approach is fragmentary and lacks co-ordination. It would require a clear process by which advice would be sought.

5. Re-launch the regular resident forum, properly resourced, with a defined constitution and the ability to hold councillors and officers to account.

For: The forum has the scope to act as a genuine independent voice, with the power to invite officers to attend, commission advice and to campaign outside of Council structures.

This option was favoured by many respondents.

Against: It is likely to attract only the more active residents.

On balance I recommend option 5. This option appeared to be favoured by respondents, followed by option 3. I found few respondents who favoured Options 1 or 2.

Given the constraints upon budgets and the need to get value for money for residents, it would seem sensible to re-direct the Cambridge Federation's previous budget into areas that have proved to be the most cost effective in the past. Assuming that the re-launched forum is properly constituted and is given effective support by the Resident Involvement Team, it has the ability to act as a genuinely independent voice for residents, a place where all resident involvement issues can be "washed up" and co-ordinated as requested by residents.

10. Wider community development issues

Resident involvement is one element in a wider perspective of community development. Social landlords engage with their residents because they are required to do so and because they want to. The business case for involving residents within a co-regulation framework is sound – it increases efficiency and provides greater value for money and residents who are able to participate display higher levels of satisfaction.

But there is a bigger picture. Many Councils have now disposed of their stock, but they still have a wider responsibility to create and maintain healthy and sustainable communities. In Cambridge, the Council still owns and manages the majority of social housing. However, there are 29 housing associations with stock in the City amounting to around 3,300 homes.

The Localism Bill may present additional opportunities for communities to take greater control of their futures. Many social landlords will be looking at their wider role and considering whether social enterprises and other forms of community capacity building can be developed in the future.

Following the August 2011 riots there may also be greater pressure upon local authorities and other agencies to provide opportunities for young people, in particular. This report proposes that an additional member of staff should be recruited to the Resident Involvement team and one element of their job description would be to ensure that resident involvement work links to the Council's wider community development role. This will facilitate a comprehensive approach and ensure that tenants and leaseholders feel connected to the wider community.

These issues are dealt with in greater depth at Appendix 4.

11. The way ahead

In the light of the issues raised in this report, and on the assumption that the Council will not be re-forming a Cambridge Federation Mark 2, I believe the Council should consider re-allocating the £80,000 previously used to fund the Cambridge Federation as follows:

1. To recruit an additional member of staff to the in-house RI team. Their duties could include some or all of the following.
 - Linking Resident Involvement work with the Council's wider community development role and ensuring effective links with community development outreach staff, CHYPPS team and others.
 - Supporting grass-roots groups and reaching out to harder to reach residents (this work previously came under the remit of the Cambridge Federation).
 - Working with BME and youth-panel groups.
 - Identifying and supporting small-scale grants for local groups.
 - Identifying and nurturing up and coming talent with an eye on succession planning.
 - Working with other housing staff to ensure that resident involvement is properly resourced and prioritised within the Council.
 - Providing support to the Sheltered Housing Scheme Residents' Association
 - Supporting the proposed residents' forum and ensuring its independence

So long as the work of the RI team is accountable to residents I do not believe the new post will compromise the independence of the work that is undertaken.

2. I would also suggest that the Resident Involvement Team should have a greater pot of grant funding to support and "pump prime" new groups and activities, in addition to the environmental grants that are offered currently.

3. Additional funds should also be committed to supporting active residents, ensuring that residents are also properly rewarded and recompensed for their time. This should include an analysis of how residents prefer to communicate with the Council and with each other so that communication is more effective. Some may prefer the telephone; others may prefer to use electronic media or traditional pen and paper. In either case, residents should be helped to communicate effectively and should not be left out of pocket for the time they spend on RI work.

4. The Council should consider investing more funds in training and capacity building so that residents can ask informed and high-level, challenging questions about the running of their organisation, including major procurement decisions. (Involving tenants at the early stages of procurement has been shown to save millions of pounds elsewhere in the country).

The new post, and the wider work of the Resident Involvement team, could be overseen by the Residents on the HMB or by the monthly residents' forum. This already happens in practice, since the team works on a partnership basis with residents, but it may be sensible to formalise the arrangement so that residents know exactly the services they can expect to receive. In the spirit of co-regulation, the principle should be that a significant proportion of the team's work should be resident-led. This reflects the fact that involvement has shifted to a position where residents are the driving force for improvement.

11.2 Some ideas for further development of resident involvement

As part of this review I have consulted with colleagues and reviewed some of the innovative schemes that have been implemented elsewhere in the country. Some of these are presented below and the Council should consider whether any of these could be relevant to Cambridge.

- The additional use of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter and the use of new technology, such as texting or on-line voting, to communicate with residents and elicit views. These methods may be particularly useful for younger people.
- Setting up a junior board, as at South Liverpool Homes. This would have formal powers and could contribute to the shaping of the housing service. It would help to embrace youth issues within the housing service and to encourage new talent who could succeed to more senior posts in the future.
- Setting up a cross-district scrutiny panel covering all social landlords, as at Welwyn Hatfield, where every social landlord, regardless of size, nominates two representatives to a cross-

district scrutiny panel. This reflects the fact that people live in neighbourhoods where many landlords may be active and builds upon the notions of wider community development issues discussed in section 10. above.

- Review of provisions within the Localism Bill such as the community Right to Challenge and Acquire, and the impact that these may have upon resident involvement and community empowerment within Cambridge. As set out in section 10. above, it will be important that less-prosperous neighbourhoods are able to take advantage of these initiatives in order that they do not lose out.
- Review of initiatives coming out of the forthcoming Big Society White Paper about community empowerment.
- Discussion and training, with residents, for the world of post-HRA reform after April 2012, looking at longer-term business planning.

12. Conclusions and Recommendations

The systems for resident involvement in Cambridge are robust and comply with regulatory expectations. In terms of the quality of the service, its value for money and the range of involvement options on offer Cambridge sits within the top quartile of landlords and has been rightly praised by regulators and bodies such as the Audit Commission and the CIH.

However, the national landscape is changing fast. The top down regulatory framework for social landlords is retreating, and there is an expectation that co-regulation will fill the gap, with much more emphasis on highly trained and active tenants who can deal not only with day to day service issues but who are able to take a view on strategic housing issues and have the skills and experience to provide an independent challenge and hold their landlord to account. In addition, progressive local authorities will be considering wider issues of community development and responding to the provisions in the Localism Bill to identify and support a “civic core” or citizens, particularly in more deprived areas, which can help to build community investment and community resilience.

The figures provided by Housemark (see section 7. above) indicate that the Council has not yet reached the “ceiling” of participation. In my view, the Council is unlikely to reach this ceiling unless it commits resources to further resident involvement work. The demise of the Cambridge Federation provides an opportunity to extend the scope of current work and to reap additional rewards in terms of resident engagement and satisfaction levels.

12.1 Summary list of Recommendations

This is a list of recommendations arising from the points raised in this report. The adoption and implementation of these recommendations should be carried out in partnership with residents.

1. To re-channel the budget of £80,000, previously used to support the Cambridge Federation, into other Resident Involvement activities.
2. To recruit a new member of staff to the Council Resident Involvement team, reporting to the Resident Involvement Manager. The suggested key duties of this post are as set out at 11. above.
3. To ensure that the work plan of the Resident Involvement Team has a high degree of guidance and involvement from residents.
4. To review the terms of reference of the Housing Management Board, and other formally established groups, to ensure that there is clarity over the lines of governance and accountability for the housing service.
5. To consider holding resident elections to the Housing Management Board every two years.

6. To review the system of support and expenses for active residents, so that their efforts are properly rewarded and recompensed. This should include a review of IT support and the possible provision of IT facilities for current and new resident activists.
7. To review the arrangements for recruiting resident activists and for succession planning for resident involvement. The aim should be identify and recruit a new cohort of active residents who can be step into the shoes of current activists in the future, and to create a civic core of active residents who can be involved in resident involvement and wider community development issues.
8. To review the level of training and support for residents so that current and new resident activists can take on a range of roles within the tenant involvement framework, and be fully equipped to handle strategic housing issues as well as day-to-day service delivery issues.
9. To review the communications strategy for resident involvement so that all residents, and particularly activists, are kept informed of actions and activities on a need to know basis. This should include a review of social media, more and better training on the use of IT and the provision of IT equipment where necessary, and the ability for all residents' groups to have access to effective printing facilities. It should also include a review of estate notice boards and the use of Radio Cambridgeshire and other local radio stations to publicise events.
10. To re-launch the residents' forum and to make this the independent co-ordinating body for resident involvement in Cambridge. The details of its terms of reference would need to developed but this could include the following: meetings to be open to all tenants and leaseholders and held four or five times a year; meetings to be fully supported by the City Council; meetings to have a clear agenda with the ability to call officers to answer

questions and an opportunity for elected HMB members to provide feed back; the ability to seek advice from independent advisers with an appropriate budget; a formal voting using green and red voting cards for all registered residents; a clear commitment to the independence of the forum from all parts of the Council.

11.To consider some of the ideas for further development of resident involvement as highlighted at 11. above.

12.To undertake a “healing” exercise with residents where the events surrounding the demise of the Cambridge Federation can be used as a positive learning exercise in order to move forward.

13.To increase the level of grant funding to support residents’ associations and other grass roots bodies. The grants previously awarded by the Cambridge Federation for environmental improvements should also be brought back under City Council control and integrated with other grant funding for resident support.

Colin Wiles August 2011

Appendix 1

List of interviewees/respondents

Councillor Catherine Smart, Executive Councillor Housing

Councillors Adam Pogonowski Mike Todd-Jones, Andy Blackhurst, Kevin Blencowe, Colin Rosenstiel, George Pippas, Kevin Price, Roman Znajak.

Residents: (tenants and leaseholders)

Diane Best (HMB), John Marais (HMB), Terry Sweeney (HMB), Kay Harris (HMB), Stan Best (HRP), Margaret Betson, Anna Vine-Lott (HRP), Trevor Ealey (HRP), Ann Chapman, Jane Tanburn, Leila Dockerill, Eugene Toyloy, Colin Dickins (RTLG), Archie Ferguson (HRP), Jill Crossley (Cambs Federation/RTLG), Harold Jenkins, Gwen Wesley, Leroy Simpson, Julia Reid, Dennis Rowlands, Cathy Stothart.

Officers:

Liz Bisset, Alan Carter, Robert Hollingsworth, Sandra Farmer, Marella Hoffman.

Thanks also to Kathy Brown

Appendix 2 TSA Tenant involvement standard

Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

Required outcomes

1 Customer service, choice and complaints

Registered providers shall:

- provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
- have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly

2 Involvement and empowerment

Registered providers shall support co-regulation with their tenants by:

- offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing-related policies and the delivery of housing-related services
- consulting with their tenants and acting reasonably in providing them with opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery
- providing tenants with a range of opportunities to influence how providers meet all the TSA's standards, and to

scrutinise their performance against all standards and in the development of the annual report

- providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved

3 Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

Registered providers shall:

- treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the seven equality strands and tenants with additional support needs

Registered providers shall set out in an annual report for tenants how they are meeting these obligations and how they intend to meet them in the future. The provider shall then meet the commitments it has made to its tenants. Registered providers shall take the obligations of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard into account in setting out how they are meeting and intend to meet all the other TSA standards.

Specific expectations

1 Customer service, choice and complaints

1.1 Registered providers shall provide tenants with accessible, relevant and timely information about:

- how tenants can access services
- the standards of housing services their tenants can expect
- how they are performing against those standards
- the service choices available to tenants, including any additional costs that are relevant to specific choices
- progress of any repairs work

- how tenants can communicate with them and provide feedback
- the responsibilities of the tenant and provider
- arrangements for tenant involvement and scrutiny

1.2 Providers shall offer a range of ways for tenants to express a complaint and set out clear service standards for responding to complaints, including complaints about performance against the standards, and details of what to do if they are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint. Providers shall inform tenants how they use complaints to improve their services. Registered providers shall publish information about complaints each year, including their number and nature, and the outcome of the complaints. Providers shall accept complaints made by advocates authorised to act on a tenant's/tenants' behalf.

2 Involvement and empowerment

2.1 Registered providers shall consult with tenants on the desirability and scope of local offers in relation to services to meet the following TSA standards: Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, Home and Neighbourhood and Community. In providing opportunities for tenants to agree local offers by no later than 1 April 2011 they shall offer commitments on:

- local standards for performance
- how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants
- what happens if local offers are not met (including procedures of redress)
- arrangements for reviewing the local offers on a periodic basis

2.2 Registered providers shall enable tenants' opportunities to scrutinise the effectiveness of their policies in relation to tenant involvement.

2.3 Registered providers shall inform tenants about the results of their consultations on issues related to the standards.

2.4 Registered providers shall consult with their tenants, setting out clearly the costs and benefits of relevant options, if they are proposing to change their landlord or when proposing a significant change in their management arrangements.

2.5 Registered providers shall consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service. They shall ensure that any changes to tenant involvement in governance and scrutiny leads to an enhancement of the overall effectiveness of their approach.

3 Understanding and responding to diverse needs

3.1 Registered providers shall demonstrate how they respond to tenants' needs in the way they provide services and communicate with tenants.

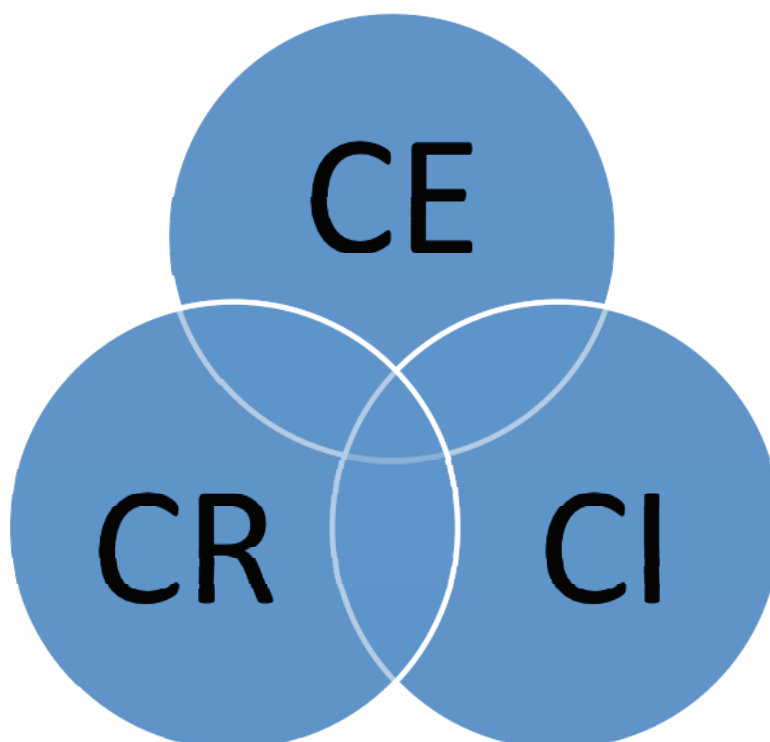
Appendix 3 – Range of Resident Involvement and communication methods

<p>Running resident involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing and supporting over 3,100 volunteer hours from resident reps each year Demonstrating and recording the positive impacts on services Publicising these involvement opportunities and recruiting residents to new ones 	<p>Organising resident events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents' Festival Day, bringing residents together with other providers & promoting RI Residents' Housing Tour organising event & facilitating hosting by HRP for 2011 <i>New, 2011</i> Resident reps meeting Lead Cllr 	<p>HMB resident Elections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertising; call for candidates; meeting, training, screening all new candidates; screening of manifestos; commissioning Electoral Reform Services; advertising results; training & induction of new HMB resident reps <i>New, 2011</i>
<p>Publications & communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Report for Tenants (summary & long versions) <i>New since 2010</i> Quarterly Open Door magazine Making Residents' Videos, posted on YouTube <i>New, 2011</i> Your Home, Your Say webpages Year-in-advance calendar of article-planning with c.15 housing-related managers Contributing to corporate Diversity events as part of Count Me In brand <i>New since 2010</i> 	<p>Performance info for residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with partners & HRP to select a range of tenant-friendly PI's about Housing <i>New, 2011</i> Publishing performance on these quarterly <i>New, 2011</i> Involving resident reps in Housing's Value for Money Group in 2011 <i>New, 2011</i> 	<p>Consultations with residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisting with commissioning & design of STATUS survey-replacement <i>New, 2011</i> Open Door postal surveys & feedback-loops 'RI Impacts': A-Z Database outcomes-based evidence of Housing's 35+ consultations each year Open Door & online communications-loop for & about HRP <i>New since 2010</i> Maintaining Community Services' online consultation database Housing Sounding Board local survey-panels for housing officers <i>New, 2011</i>
<p>Meeting national requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating & returning all required reports & evidences for Housing Regulator Completing Regulator's processes & submissions on Council's behalf each year for <i>National Standards & Annual Reports</i> <i>New since 2010</i> Implementing annual Local Offer cycle; submission on Council's behalf in Regulator's formats <i>New, 2011</i> Keeping Council ahead of national RI policy requirements Keeping resident reps & tenant public well informed on the above 	<p>Supporting & communicating work of Housing Regulation Panel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular support-meetings & admin for HRP Chair <i>New, 2011</i> Supporting HRP in planning Housing Tour & promoting HRP at the Tour <i>New, 2011</i> Quarterly article for HRP in Open Door <i>New since 2010</i> Creating & maintaining webpage about HRP <i>New, 2011</i> South Office window display featuring Housing Regulation Panel <i>New, 2011</i> 	<p>Outreach through new media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributing to corporate Facebook project at request of Antoinette Jackson <i>New, 2011</i> Exploring Resident Involvement pilot through Facebook, as part of Arbury Area Committee pilot project with Committee Services <i>New, 2011</i>
<p>Supporting residents' groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular support-meetings & admin for Open Door Residents' Panel and Green Inspectors, and for Housing Management Board reps and Count Me In BME reps as requested, etc. Quarterly public communications loops via Open Door for HMB reps, HRP, Green Inspectors and Count Me In reps; then fielding public's calls & emails for the groups <i>New since 2010</i> Residents' Association grants & all resident reps' expenses 	<p>Positive practice for residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organising residents' positive practice visits or exchanges with other providers Building learning-exchange into annual Residents' Day Giving positive practice trainings at national agencies as appropriate when requested (at TSA, CIH, Housemark, etc.) <i>New since 2010</i> Fielding requests from other providers about our positive practice <i>New since 2010</i> 	<p>Diversity & Equalities</p> <p>Collating and reporting on: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Homes' regular reports for HMT on EqIAs calendar City Homes' regular reports for HMT on Housing's BME Action Plan City Homes' regular reports for HMT on overall Equalities & Diversity actions

Appendix 4 – Resident Involvement in a wider community development context

One model for a wider community development approach is highlighted below. The key elements are:

- Community engagement – how involved are communities in available democratic processes and decisions affecting them? How well do they respond to consultations and surveys? How active is the community in fostering community relationships?
- Community resilience – how well does the community meet its own needs and respond to external threats? How well does the community recover from adverse incidents? To what degree do members of the community support each other in a crisis?
- Community investment – what internal resources does the community have? What external resources are available and how effective is the community in obtaining resources?



The area where all three elements overlap indicates a high level and comprehensive approach to community capacity building.

As can be seen below, various work streams sit within each element and a narrow definition of Resident Involvement represents only one element in a truly comprehensive approach. Of course, resident involvement can be a stepping-stone to wider community development. For example, where residents get together to deal with an external threat this can lead to networks and friendships developing that lead on to other activities.

Community Resilience	Community Engagement	Community Investment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community safety • Support to disadvantaged neighbourhoods • Robust responses to Anti-Social Behaviour • Sustainability and environmental work • Community cohesion/ tackling discrimination • Neighbourhood Watch • Community campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community profiles/targeting services • Resident involvement • Support to front line staff • Community development work • Local referenda and petitions • Neighbourhood Plans • Specialist projects (such as youth) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising - support to local projects • Grants and fundraising • Social enterprise • Community building – support to new developments/ regeneration projects • Community right to build and Community right to challenge

Notions of social capital also useful in understanding how successful communities work. Social capital has been defined as the sum of our “social connectedness” and reflects our shared norms and values. The concept was first described in detail by Robert Putnam in his seminal

book *"Bowling Alone – the Collapse and Revival of American Community"* (Simon and Schuster 2000) in which he established a link between high levels of social capital (neighbourliness, civic engagement, reciprocity, membership of clubs and societies, and trust) on the one hand and the health, wealth and happiness of communities on the other. Neighbourhoods with high levels of social capital, he found, will have higher levels of educational attainment, be more economically successful, suffer less from crime, and its people will be healthier and happier. This is not just a case of saying that rich areas will be better than poor ones. A major research study in the USA showed that quality of life and happiness was highest in socially connected communities. The survey also found that levels of civic engagement - how much residents trusted each other, socialised with others, and joined with others, among other measures - predicted the quality of community life and residents' happiness far better than levels of community education or income.

Putnam concluded that the stock of social capital in the developed world had declined since 1950 and the causes that he identified included increased travel time to and from work, work pressures, more women working, television, job mobility, fear of crime, and gated housing estates. He did not find any negative link with the Internet, telephones, divorce, big government or regulation.

Social capital, in Putnam's view, could therefore be compared to other forms of capital (money, human capital, land, buildings) in that it can add real economic value to communities.

Critically, Putnam identified three types of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking.

- "Bonding" social capital (e.g. between family members, close friends or ethnic groups). Bonding is essential for "getting by"
- "Bridging" social capital (e.g. across ethnic groups or with work associates and employers). Bridging is essential for "getting ahead"
- "Linking" social capital (e.g. between different social classes or to the wider world).

These three elements need to be in balance for communities to succeed. If bonding is too dominant, for example, it can lead to neighbourhoods

becoming inward looking and intolerant of outsiders and change. Its residents cannot "get ahead". For example, the Traveller Community or Loyalist and Nationalist communities in Northern Ireland have impressive levels of bonding social capital but they are not so good at bridging or linking beyond their close-knit communities and this is what tends to hold them back. This can lead to racism and sectarianism, because these communities are seen as inward looking and separate.

Similarly, young people involved in gangs display impressive levels of bonding social capital, but because of their fear of violence from neighbouring gangs their geographical and social horizons are often severely constrained, and they cannot "get ahead".

Trust is a quick measure of social capital. Neighbourhoods where people trust each other and the institutions that serve them are more likely to be successful. From trust flows reciprocity – the notion that if you look out for others they will look out for you.

What does all this mean for housing providers? Well, the theory of social capital isn't necessarily telling us anything we didn't already know, but it can be a useful diagnostic tool for housing providers in creating "balanced and sustainable" communities. Assessing the level of social capital in any neighbourhood can be quickly assessed using some simple questions about trust and reciprocity and this can help to inform prescriptions for community action. Questions such as "Do you trust other people in your street?" or "How often do you speak to your neighbours?" can give a quick measure of social capital in a defined neighbourhood.

A key component of social capital is a sense of "belonging". Personal attachment to an area – something that is becoming increasingly important in a world that is more and more fragmented and global in its workings - is more likely to persuade people to invest time and effort in their community. Housing providers need to recognise this and building on local traditions and history and retaining or building local landmarks is a key element of this.

The University of Southampton has been "mapping" the Big Society and their researchers conclude that there is only a small number of people, the 'civic core', who make the greatest contribution to voluntary

organisations⁴. They state that 31 per cent of the population provides around 90 per cent of hours of unpaid help, four-fifths of money donated to charities, and 70 per cent of civic participation. This civic core is more likely to be middle-aged, have higher education qualifications, own their house, practice a religion, and lived in the same neighbourhood for over 10 years. Crucially, those groups who are more active tend to be living in the most prosperous parts of communities rather than the most deprived. Their research also indicates that there are fewer third sector organisations per head in more deprived areas than in prosperous areas. Those organisations operating in more deprived areas are also more likely to be reliant on public funding. The research also shows the areas with fewest registered third sector organisations are also likely to be in areas most at risk from funding reductions.

What does all this mean in terms of resident involvement? Firstly, RI is only one element in a wider perspective of community development. One critique of traditional resident involvement is that it is a “silo” that separates and isolates social housing residents from the wider community. In order for social housing residents to “bridge” across tenure and social barriers it makes sense for involvement, in some circumstances, to involve the whole community.

The proposed new member of staff in the RI team could help this to happen, bringing other grass roots groups into the frame and working with the Council’s community development team to make sure that work is co-ordinated and “tenure blind”.

It also means that local authorities will need to commit resources to the “civic core” in less prosperous areas, so that activists can be nurtured and developed in order that they can compete on a level playing field with more prosperous areas.

⁴ See www.soton.ac.uk/mediacentre/news/2011/aug/11_77.shtml



To: Executive Councillor for Housing (and Deputy Leader): Councillor Catherine Smart
Report by: Robert Hollingsworth, Head of City Homes
Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing Management Board 27/9/2011
Wards affected: All Wards

EXTENSION OF CURRENT INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICE CONTRACT FOR PROVISION OF 24 HOUR EMERGENCY ALARM TELEPHONE RESPONSE SERVICE
Not a Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 14th June 2011, Housing Management Board considered a report recommending the Executive Councillor for Housing approve the re-procurement of a 24 hour emergency alarm service, delegating to the Director of Customer & Community Services the ability to tender and award a 3 year contract, with the option to extend for 2 further years.
- 1.2 The report presented in June 2011 indicated that the contract had already run for a total of 5 years, ending on 31st March 2012 and therefore needed to be re-tendered.
- 1.3 There is, however, scope within the existing contract to take up an extension for up to a further 2 years and this report requests that we amend the decision of Housing Management Board in June 2011 to re-tender for a new contract, and instead seek approval to extend the existing contract for one year (plus the option of a further year if required, making a total of 7 years).

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

- 2.1 To authorise the Director of Customer and Community Services to defer the decision to tender and award a new contract for the provision of a 24 hour telephone answering service until it is known whether the Council is appointed by the County Council to provide support services beyond April 2012 and instead to extend the existing

contract with Eldercare (New Church Housing Services Limited) for a period of up to two years.

3. Background

- 3.1 In June 2011, the Executive Councillor for Housing approved a recommendation for the Director of Customer & Community Services to select the most appropriate procurement route and, if appropriate, invite competitive tenders and thereafter to award a contract for the provision of a 24 hour emergency telephone answering service for the Independent Living Service.
- 3.2 Subsequent investigation has identified that the terms of the existing contract allow for a contract extension of up to 2 years from April 2012.
- 3.3 Since June 2011, further uncertainty in the future provision of support services currently commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Council, has arisen. Although all contracts for the provision of support in our sheltered, supported and temporary housing are due to expire in March 2012, it is not clear that the County Council will be in a position to complete the re-tender for all of these services within this timescale. It is possible that the County Council will seek to extend existing contractual arrangements for a period of time to allow the process to be completed appropriately.
- 3.4 The provision of the 24 hour telephone response service is directly related to the provision of support, and the City Council would not have the same requirement for this service if they were unsuccessful in securing contracts from the County Council for the continued provision of support services.
- 3.5 As a result of this, it is recommended that the contract extension for the emergency telephone response service, for up to 2 years (on an annual basis), is pursued, to allow maximum flexibility in responding to any request from the County Council for a temporary extension of the support contract.
- 3.6 The current contract specification still meets the needs of the service and when asking for an extension to our current contract term we need to ensure the contract enables our service users to have continued access to assistive technology.
- 3.7 Based upon prior year experience, bearing in mind that client numbers can fluctuate, the anticipated annual sum to extend the existing

contract for this service is approximately £19,000, which is comparable to the current contract price.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

There is ongoing revenue funding included within the Housing Revenue Account for the continued provision of this service, whether by virtue of an extension of the existing contract or re-tender of the service. There is also a budgetary assumption that the costs of providing the service are fully recovered through service charges to tenants and recharges to community alarm and warden agency customers.

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

There are no direct staffing implications for Cambridge City Council.

(c) Equal Opportunities Implications

An EQIA, incorporating the proposal to extend the existing contract, has been undertaken and details are available upon request.

(d) Environmental Implications

There are no direct environmental implications for this project.

(e) Consultation

Stakeholders were involved in the tender and selection process when the current service provider was appointed.

(f) Community Safety

There are no direct Community Safety implications arising from this decision.

5. Background Papers

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- HMB Committee Report June 2011
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Existing Contract Documents

6. Appendices

There are no appendices to be considered with this report.

7. Inspection of Papers

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

Author's Name:	Sally-Jane Williams
Author's Phone Number:	01223 - 458001
Author's Email:	sally-jane.williams@cambridge.gov.uk