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Cambridge City Council

HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD

To: Councillors Blackhurst (Vice-Chair), Bird, Blencowe, Brierley, Pippas, Pogonowski, Price, Rosenstiel and 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, 23 February 2012

Date: Tuesday, 6 March 2012

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Committee Room 1 & 2 - Guildhall

Contact: Martin Whelan

Direct Dial: 01223 457012

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 Committee Manager (*Pages 1 - 16*)

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(See information 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.

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

- 5 REPORT ON RESIDENTS' CO-REGULATION, INTRODUCING A PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE HOUSING REGULATION PANEL TO THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD** Principal Tenant Participation Officer (*Pages 17 - 40*)

Information for the Public

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(for use with Smart
Phones)

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

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



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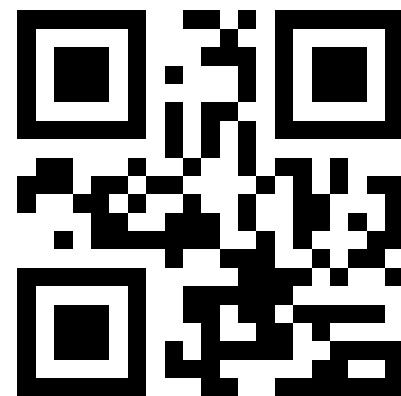
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HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD

3 January 2012

5.30 - 8.02 pm

Present:**Executive Councillor for Housing:** Catherine Smart**Councillors:** Blackhurst (Vice-Chair), Bird, Blencowe, Brierley, Price, Rosenstiel, Stuart and Znajek**Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives:** Diane Best (Chair), Brian Haywood, John Marais and Terry Sweeney**Officers:** Liz Bisset (Director of Customer & Community Services), Bob Hadfield (Head of Repairs & Maintenance), Robert Hollingsworth (Head of City Homes), Andrew Latchem (Area Housing Manager), Julia Hovells (Finance & Business Manager) and Glenn Burgess (Committee Manager)**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL****12/1/HMB Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pippas and Pogonowski and Tenant representative Kay Harris.

12/2/HMB Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Terry Sweeney	12/5/HMB	Personal: Close relative resides at Ditchburn Place
Diane Best	12/8/HMB 12/12/HMB	Personal: As a Leaseholder
Councillor Rosenstiel	12/12/HMB	Personal: As a tenant of a garage in East Road

12/3/HMB Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2011 were approved as a true and accurate record.

12/4/HMB Public Questions

There were no public questions.

12/5/HMB Ditchburn Place Catering Service - Authority to Extend Catering Service contract

Matter for Decision: To consider the extension of the Ditchburn Place Catering Service Contract.

Decision of the Executive Council for Housing:

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- I. Authorise the Director of Customer and Community Services to issue a contract to the successful bidder for three years with the option to extend on an annual basis for a further 3 years.

Reason for the Decision:

As per the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable

Scrutiny Considerations:

N/A

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

12/6/HMB Demolition of two Housing Revenue Account Void Garages in Rackham Close

Matter for Decision: To consider the demolition of two Housing Revenue Account Void Garages in Rackham Close.

Decision of the Executive Council for Housing:

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- i. Dispose, by demolition, of two empty garages in Rackham Close, Cambridge.

Reason for the Decision:

As per the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable

Scrutiny Considerations:

N/A

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

12/7/HMB Draft Housing Portfolio Plan 2012/13

Matter for Decision: To consider the draft Housing Portfolio Plan 2012/13

Decision of the Executive Council for Housing:

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- i. Note the draft Housing Portfolio Plan 2012-13

Reason for the Decision:

As per the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable

Scrutiny Considerations:

The Executive Councillor gave a brief overview of the 2012/13 Housing Portfolio Plan.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee were then invited to comment and discuss the Plan.

In response to member's questions the Executive Councillor and officers confirmed the following:

- i. Agreed that it was important to emphasise a clear distinction between 'affordable housing' and 'affordable rent'.
- ii. As a result of the Localism Act Cambridge City Council would be required to introduce a Tenancy Strategy by December 2012. The Strategy would respond to specific aspects of the new legislation and look at the broad relationship between social and affordable rent levels. The Strategy would act as a guidance document for social housing providers and be brought to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee in June 2012 for discussion and approval. The City Council's own Housing Strategy, which looked at all aspects of housing across the city, would also be brought to this meeting.
- iii. Noted the comment from Mr Sweeney that consideration should be given to allowing Tenant Representatives to vote on the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendation by 12 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.

12/8/HMB Housing Management Board-- Revenue Budgets 2011/12 (Revised), 2012/13 (Budgets) and 2013/14 (Forecast)

Matter for Decision: To consider the Revenue Budgets 2011/12 (Revised), 2012/13 (Budgets) and 2013/14 (Forecast) for the Housing Portfolio.

Decision of the Executive Council for Housing:

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

Review of Charges:

a) Approve the proposed charges for Housing Revenue Account services and facilities, as shown in Appendix B of the committee report.

b1) Approve that council dwellings rents be increased in line with rent restructuring guidelines to seek to achieve convergence with formula rent by 2015/16, with a maximum in individual increases of inflation (RPI at September 2011 of 5.6%) plus half percent (0.5%) plus £2.00 per week with effect from 2 April 2012, in accordance with the latest government guidelines.

b2) Make representations to the DCLG suggesting that adjustments be considered for the self-financing debt settlement in view of excessive rent rises which will otherwise be imposed on council tenants.

c) Approve inflationary increases of 2.55% in garage rents for 2012/13, in line with an average of employee and building cost inflation.

d) Approve that service charges for gas maintenance, door entry systems, lifts and electrical and mechanical maintenance are increased by a maximum of inflation at 5.6% plus 0.5%, if required, to continue to recover full estimated costs as detailed in Appendix B of the committee report.

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

f) Approve revised leasehold administration charges for 2012/13 as detailed in Appendix B of the committee report.

Revenue Budgets:

- g) Approve with any amendments, the current year funding requests and savings, (detailed in Appendix A of the committee report).
- h) Approve the provisional revised revenue budget for 2011/12, as shown in Appendix E of the committee report, which currently results in a reduced use of reserves of £99,370 for 2011/12.
- i) Agree proposals for revenue savings and bids, as set out in Appendix C of the committee report, which have been incorporated into the budgets for this portfolio.
- j) Agree proposals for Priority Policy Fund (PPF) bids, as set out in Appendix D of the committee report.
- k) Note that the Housing Revenue Account revenue budget for 2012/13 and 2013/14 and the Housing Capital Investment Plan for 2011/12 to 2016/17, will be presented to the special joint Housing Management Board and Community Services on 8th February 2012, to include the impact of all proposed bids and savings, re-allocation of existing budgets and additional re-phasing of existing projects and schemes.

Reason for the Decision:

As per the 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. It was noted that a joint meeting of the Housing Management Board and the Community Services Scrutiny Committee would be held on 8 February 2012 to consider the Asset Management Plan and the final debt settlement.

Mr Marais raised concern regarding the proposed council dwellings rent increases (as specified under recommendation b) of the committee report) and the affect that this would have on tenants.

Councillor Price supported this view and highlighted that a two-year increase of 16.4% on some of the most vulnerable people in Cambridge was unacceptable. It was felt that this would result in more people having to claim housing benefit.

Mr Marais proposed the following additional recommendation:

'The Executive Councillor is recommended to make representations to the DCLG suggesting that adjustments be considered for the self-financing debt settlement in view of excessive rent rises which will otherwise be imposed on council tenants.'

The Committee considered and endorsed the additional recommendation by 12 votes to 0 (unanimously):

In response to member's questions the Executive Councillor and officers confirmed the following:

- i. The formula used to structure rent figures had not changed but due to higher inflation the price would increase.
- ii. The date of 2015/16 to achieve convergence with formula rent had been set nationally. In order to dampen the impact of fluctuating interest rates the Government had in the past altered that date, there was however no local discretion to do this.
- iii. After convergence with formula rent had been achieved there would be an expectation that rents would increase by RPI plus half percent (.05%). This was in recognition of expected increases in costs to maintain the current housing stock. Officers would be monitoring the impact of any changes through Sensitivity Impact Assessments.
- iv. For every £1 that rent prices did not increase the Council would have to find an additional £300,000 - £350,000 of savings.

Councillor Blencowe stated that, whilst it was understandable that the Council could not predict inflation rates in coming years, he was concerned about the affect that this uncertainty would have on council tenants.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked officers for making the details of this very difficult decision as clear as possible and agreed that each recommendation would be voted on separately:

Considered and endorsed the following recommendation by 9 votes to 0:

a) Approve the proposed charges for Housing Revenue Account services and facilities, as shown in Appendix B of the committee report.

Considered and endorsed the following recommendation by 5 votes to 0:

b1) Approve that council dwellings rents be increased in line with rent restructuring guidelines to seek to achieve convergence with formula rent by 2015/16, with a maximum in individual increases of inflation (RPI at September 2011 of 5.6%) plus half percent (0.5%) plus £2.00 per week with effect from 2 April 2012, in accordance with the latest government guidelines.

Considered and endorsed the following additional recommendation by 12 votes to 0 (unanimously):

b2) Make representations to the DCLG suggesting that adjustments be considered for the self-financing debt settlement in view of excessive rent rises which will otherwise be imposed on council tenants.

Considered and endorsed the following recommendation by 8 votes to 0:

c) Approve inflationary increases of 2.55% in garage rents for 2012/13, in line with an average of employee and building cost inflation.

Considered and endorsed the following recommendation by 8 votes to 0:

d) Approve that service charges for gas maintenance, door entry systems, lifts and electrical and mechanical maintenance are increased by a maximum of inflation at 5.6% plus 0.5%, if required, to continue to recover full estimated costs as detailed in Appendix B of the committee report.

Considered and endorsed the following recommendation by 9 votes to 0:

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

Considered and endorsed the following recommendation by 9 votes to 0:

f) Approve revised leasehold administration charges for 2012/13 as detailed in Appendix B of the committee report.

Revenue Budgets:

Considered and endorsed the following recommendation by 9 votes to 0:

g) Approve with any amendments, the current year funding requests and savings, (detailed in Appendix A of the committee report).

Considered and endorsed the following recommendation by 9 votes to 0:

h) Approve the provisional revised revenue budget for 2011/12, as shown in Appendix E of the committee report, which currently results in a reduced use of reserves of £99,370 for 2011/12.

Considered and endorsed the following recommendation by 9 votes to 0:

i) Agree proposals for revenue savings and bids, as set out in Appendix C of the committee report, which have been incorporated into the budgets for this portfolio.

Considered and endorsed the following recommendation by 9 votes to 0:

j) Agree proposals for Priority Policy Fund (PPF) bids, as set out in Appendix D of the committee report.

Considered and endorsed the following recommendation by 12 votes to 0 (unanimously):

k) Note that the Housing Revenue Account revenue budget for 2012/13 and 2013/14 and the Housing Capital Investment Plan for 2011/12 to 2016/17, will be presented to the special joint Housing Management Board and Community Services on 8th February 2012, to include the impact of all proposed bids and savings, re-allocation of existing budgets and additional re-phasing of existing projects and schemes.

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.

12/9/HMB Housing Repairs Improvement plan

Matter for Decision: To consider progress with the Housing Repairs Improvement Plan.

Decision of the Executive Council for Housing:

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- i. Note progress made to date.
- ii. Grant an extension of one year until September 2013 for completion of the improvement plan, subsequent to which, Members will determine if sufficient progress has been demonstrated and consider future options for service delivery.

Reason for the Decision:

As per the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable

Scrutiny Considerations:

The committee received a report from the Head of Repairs and Maintenance.

In response to member's questions the Director of Customer and Community Services confirmed the following:

- i. The proposed scrutiny panel would incorporate a wide range of officers and tenant representatives and a full list would be circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Councillor for Housing.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations in the report by 9 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.

12/10/HMB Review of Under Occupancy grant scheme for Council tenants

Matter for Decision: To consider the review of the under occupancy grant scheme for Council tenants.

Decision of the Executive Council for Housing:

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- i. Instruct Officers to take steps to identify Council Tenants who are under occupying, some of whom may lose out on Housing Benefit and approach them with discussions about their Housing Options including the Under Occupation Incentive scheme. While it would be recognised that these tenants have the right to stay in their present homes, they should be clearly informed about the potential financial advantages to them of using the incentive scheme.
- ii. Instruct Officers to consider the benefits of joining the Huntingdonshire District Council "Under Occupation Partnership Agreement" or to establish a local agreement within the City of Cambridge.
- iii. Instruct Officers to report back to HMB after June 2012 following the review of the Lettings Policy.

Reason for the Decision:

As per the 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 and the Director of Customer and Community Services confirmed the following:

- ii. Home visits to further discuss the under occupation grant scheme would only be carried out upon request from interested tenants.
- iii. Whilst the scheme had been previously oversubscribed sufficient funding was available to meet current demand up until April 2012. Funding would then be renewed for 2012/13.
- iv. Broad data was held by the Council on the size of its housing stock, the demand for different band levels, and joint work was being undertaken with Registered Social Landlords. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment document also profiled need across the city and this translated into planning policy. It was however noted that it may be beneficial to conduct further data collection work
- v. Under their Tenancy Agreements tenants were able to let out spare rooms with the prior approval of the Council.

Mr Marais expressed concern that tenants may feel pressured into the down-sizing and highlighted the importance of a sensitive approach. Mr Marais proposed the following amendment to recommendation a) of the officer's report:

Delete and replace with:

"Instruct officers to identify those council tenants living in under-occupied homes who may be at risk of losing some of their Housing Benefit entitlement due to forthcoming changes, or who have significant long-term rent arrears, and approach them for discussions about more advantageous housing options, in particular the Under occupation Scheme. While it would be recognised that these tenants have the right to stay in their present homes, they should be clearly informed about the potential financial advantages to them of using the incentive scheme"

After further discussion regarding the importance of informing all tenants about the potential benefits of the scheme the Scrutiny Committee endorsed the following further amended recommendation by 12 votes to 0 (unanimously):

“Instruct Officers to take steps to identify Council Tenants who are under occupying, some of whom may lose out on Housing Benefit and approach them with discussions about their Housing Options including the Under Occupation Incentive scheme. While it would be recognised that these tenants have the right to stay in their present homes, they should be clearly informed about the potential financial advantages to them of using the incentive scheme”

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed amended recommendation a) and recommendations b) and c) in the officer’s report by 12 votes to 0 (unanimously).

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.

12/11/HMB Update on the future of Area Offices within the context of the Customer Service Strategy

Matter for Decision: To receive an update on the future of Area Offices within the context of the Customer Service Strategy.

Decision of the Executive Council for Housing:

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- i. To keep both area offices open to the public pending the findings of the 2013 HMB report referred to in recommendation below.
- ii. To consider the options outlined in this report, and to request a further report to HMB in January 2013 detailing how the new developments in technology and the forthcoming changes in welfare benefits, both explained in point 3.2 and 3.6 of the officers report, are likely to impact on customer services and the future of area offices.

Reason for the Decision:

As per the Officer’s report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable

Scrutiny Considerations:

The committee received a report from the Head of City Homes. It was noted that recommendation 2.2 of the officer's report should refer to 'point 3.2 and 3.3' and not 3.6.

Councillor Blencowe emphasised the need for the Area Offices to remain open and questioned the principal of the Customer Access Strategy to have a single customer access point for all residents and service users.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations in the report by 12 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.

12/12/HMB Leaseholder Service Charges

Matter for Decision: To consider the issues arising from the Internal Auditor report on Leaseholder Service Charges.

Decision of the Executive Council for Housing:

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- i. Note the progress on achieving the actions arising from the July 2011 Internal Audit report on leaseholder charges.

Reason for the Decision:

As per the 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.

Mrs Best emphasised the need for all Leasehold Service charges to be calculated and presented as openly and transparently as possible. It was also noted that the grounds maintenance charges and the estate cleaning service charges should be kept separate and consultation should be undertaken on any proposed increases.

The Head of City Homes agreed with the need to be as open and transparent as possible and confirmed that all charges would continue to be fully evidenced.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations in the report by 12 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 8.02 pm

CHAIR

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To: Housing Management Board
Report by: Marella Hoffman
Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing Management Board 6-3-2012
Wards affected:

Report on residents' co-regulation, introducing a Progress Report from the Housing Regulation Panel to the Housing Management Board

1. Executive summary

In 2010 the Housing Management Board approved the creation, with the help of the Chartered Institute of Housing, of a residents' co-regulation panel in Cambridge. This report introduces a Progress Report from the Housing Regulation Panel on their first year of activity (Appendix 1), reviews the positive practice achieved and looks ahead to potentials for the future.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

- 2.1 To note the progress achieved by residents' Housing Regulation Panel in their first year of activity.
- 2.2 To continue to support residents' co-regulation and the constructive challenge provided by the Housing Regulation Panel.

3. Background

Co-Regulation under the Localism Act

3.1 The 2011 Localism Act replaced the inspection regime of the Audit Commission with a two-prong system of 'Co-Regulation'. One prong involves social landlords regulating themselves through self-assessments, Annual Reports to Tenants and publishing of performance information. The other involves trained panels of local service-users inspecting the performance of the landlord-related services they receive. In November 2011, a paper entitled 'Directions to the Housing Regulator' emphasised

that government expects local tenant panels to be at the heart of the new regulation arrangements.

3.2 In Cambridge, the residents' Housing Regulation Panel (HRP) had an early starting-point in the rigorous set-up framework created in 2009/'10 with the Chartered Institute of Housing and the South Area Housing Manager, and approved by HMB. Including a formal constitution, code of conduct and framework for the Panel's reporting-powers and relationship to HMB, it is being studied and adapted by other providers as very useful for the set-up stage.

3.3 The Housing Management Board (HMB) itself also continues to be studied around the country as best practice, because residents' co-regulation requires a decision-making Board like HMB to whom the residents' panel could report if they failed to get a satisfactory response from service-managers. And HMB remains a pioneer by having elected tenants and leaseholders with voting rights on a local authority housing committee.

3.4 Meanwhile at national level, in 2010 the housing regulator chose ten 'Co-Regulation Champions' from among sixty-four social landlords who applied for their emerging residents' panels to be recognised as pilots. Since 2011, these Champions have shared their positive practice nationwide, clarifying that co-regulation is not about panels of residents in isolation but about involving them in the whole cycle of performance monitoring. At most landlords, it is taking two or three years to achieve this full cycle so that:

- a) resident representatives are involved in setting service-standards and performance-targets
- b) clear information on performance and benchmarking is published about all landlord-related services, with residents empowered to examine it in an independent way
- c) a trained residents' panel inspects services constructively, with clear reporting lines and powers
- d) service managers understand the authority of the residents' panel, taking action to improve services if the panel shows that they are below agreed standards

3.5 In 2011/'12, in addition to HRP's inspections, the following co-regulatory steps were also achieved in Cambridge for the first time:

- a) fuller performance information published quarterly in Open Door magazine
- b) creation of Residents' Performance Monitoring Sessions, where resident representatives can study performance information and trends

- c) residents more deeply involved in the production of the Annual Report for Tenants and Leaseholders
- d) at residents' request: plans for resident representatives to be consulted in future as part of the process for setting reasonable performance-targets, and fuller performance and benchmarking information to be published in the Annual Report
- e) Cambridge hosted a resident-led Exchange Day on co-regulation, a 70-person event where residents from six social landlords in the region compared and exchanged co-regulation methods
- f) they formed a mutual support network to support their residents' panels
- g) the Resident Involvement offices of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire District Council provided shared services by purchasing tenant satisfaction surveys and some tenant trainings together, making significant savings as well as improving the overall products
- h) South Cambridgeshire District Council asked to co-fund next year's Residents' Exchange Day as a shared service, bringing further savings for Cambridge as well as wider empowerment for residents

3.6 Overall, supporting and developing the system of residents' co-regulation has required about a third of the time resource of the Resident Involvement office in 2011/12, which is comparable with the time being invested by other providers around the country. Feedback from external agencies suggests the outcomes in Cambridge are strong both in quality and quantity.

Looking ahead

3.7 Both the Council and residents are committed to keeping co-regulation in Cambridge at the forefront of positive practice. In February 2012, the national Customer Service Excellence Standard formally assessed HRP's first year of activity and commended the Panel's work as an example of national best practice. Ongoing dialogue with national agencies shows that:

- a) Cambridge has achieved the balance of developing a local system that is homegrown and resident-led, while attaining national positive practice standards
- b) the biggest remaining challenges are the same everywhere, namely recruitment of residents into these challenging roles, and avoiding 'burnout' for those residents.

3.8 It is acknowledged by all the national agencies that this high-end volunteer resource is essentially replacing certain professional functions that formerly soaked up a lot of public sector resources (eg. the Audit Commission, the process of preparing for Audit Commission inspections, use of performance consultancies, etc.). As such, co-regulation's resident panels can be a considerable asset to the business. For instance in their

intensive start-up year of 2011/12, HRP residents gave over 500 volunteer hours to the business (or 66 working days, equivalent to three months of work for a full-time employee). As specialised, systemic contributions to the business, these roles are more 'selfless' and demanding than traditional resident participation, where customers often got involved to see specific problems resolved in their own area.

3.9 The potential for burnout among residents' co-regulation panels is recognised nationwide. At present most of these panels receive no allowances or rewards. (This is different from the elected resident role on HMB, which can receive up to £800 a year in time allowance). The question of rewarding residents' panels remains complex as they exist specifically to inspect the landlord's performance, rather than to assist with management decisions and democratic decision-making as elected residents on boards do. In fact, residents on inspection panels tend themselves to reject the idea of monetary allowances, saying that the reward they want is simply to make a difference through visibly improved services. But sustainability of these panels will require that they at least feel valued and incentivised in other ways.

4. Implications

Financial - Nil

Staffing - This work is part of the routine duties of existing staff.

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

Environmental - Nil

Consultation - Makes a significant contribution to the Council's overall positive practice on consultation.

Community Safety - Nil

5. Appendices

1. Progress Report from the Housing Regulation Panel (HRP) to HMB
2. Sample Inspection Forms designed and used by HRP
3. HRP's Report on their Inspection of Communal Cleaning
4. HRP's article on their Inspection in Open Door magazine, summer 2011
5. Flow of communication through residents' co-regulation groups

6. Inspection of papers

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

Author's Name: Marella Hoffman
Author's Phone Number: 01223-458325
Author's Email: Marella.Hoffman@cambridge.gov.uk

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Progress Report from residents' Housing Regulation Panel (HRP) to Housing Management Board, 2011/'12

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

1. HRP's positive practice achievements

1.1 After Housing Management Board approved the setting up of residents' Housing Regulation Panel (HRP) in 2010, the HRP residents went on to work out for themselves the detail of how they would approach and implement inspections of service-areas. The methodology and documents that they developed (Appendices 2 and 3) are now receiving praise from national agencies. In 2011 residents from HRP and the Housing Management Board gave presentations on these co-regulation methods at agencies like the Chartered Institute of Housing and Housemark.

1.2 With ongoing support from the Resident Involvement service, HRP in 2011 carried out a first and very successful year of co-regulation activity. HMB are encouraged to examine Appendices 2 and 3 in particular as detailed concrete illustrations of HRP's inspection activities in 2011.

2. Methodology of Housing Regulation Panel's Inspections

- HRP's role is to verify that services are being delivered to the service standard already set by the Council for that service area (not to request service-improvements that exceed the resources available).
- To help select which service-areas to prioritise for inspection, HRP use performance information, survey-results, customer satisfaction information and complaints trends.
- The Panel create a forward plan of inspections they intend to do, keeping it flexible to respond to changing priorities.
- In 2011, HRP did a major inspection of a large service, the Communal Cleaning service provided to blocks of flats on the Council's housing estates by Streets and Open Spaces in the Environment Directorate.
- For this inspection HRP did unannounced, on-site inspections on 58% of the 91 blocks of flats involved, graded them on quality of service, and had eight formal meetings with the service-managers.

3. Outcomes and achievements of HRP's Communal Cleaning Inspection

3.1 HRP produced a formal Report of their findings with the following specific recommendations for areas that needed to improve in order to meet the Council's own service standard (Appendix 3 is the full Report):

- “The standard of communal cleaning needs to be consistent across the city.
- The cleaning notices should be displayed in all locations.
- The cleaners should make full use of the equipment they are provided with.
- A deep clean at Hawkins Road must be done.
- When cover is needed for sickness and annual leave, the cleaning should be done to meet the agreed service standard.
- The procedure for cleaners to report issues (obstructions and damage) which prevent them from carrying out their duties in full should be used much more robustly and monitored.”

3.2 This Report became an agreement signed by HRP and service-managers, for the relevant improvements to be delivered within agreed timescales up to October 2011. HRP held high-level meetings with Heads of Service and a Director to ensure the service-improvements would be delivered.

3.3 The broad findings and recommendations of HRP’s inspection, approved by service-managers, were published in their article in Open Door magazine in summer 2011 (Appendix 4).

4. Additional information

4.1 At the January 2012 meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee, a report recommended that the Communal Cleaning service undergo a hard market-testing process in the months ahead. The Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources approved the recommendation.

4.2 Meanwhile, HRP are starting their next inspection on the Caretaking Service provided by City Homes to certain blocks of flats on Council estates. This is expected to be a quicker and easier inspection, as it is a much smaller service-area. Across 2012 HRP will proceed with further monitoring and inspecting of service-areas that have been highlighted by feedback from the wider tenant body.

5. Housing Regulation Panel’s communication lines with other residents and with HMB

- HRP began their year’s work with a Freepost survey in Open Door magazine, to ascertain how tenants and leaseholders prioritise the landlord-related services that they receive.
- HRP also draw ongoing feedback from the specialist residents’ groups that work with the Council on services like repairs, gas, leaseholds, publications, etc. (Appendix 5). (These groups driven by a challenge from

- residents are in addition to the landlord's own customer meetings, such as Southside Partnership, Leaseholder Forum, Community Days, etc.)
- Quarterly updates from HRP go to all tenants and leaseholders in Open Door magazine.
 - The six elected residents of HMB are invited to join the residents' Panel at quarterly Residents' Performance Monitoring Sessions where they monitor performance trends.
 - All these resident representatives have access to the Housemark website where benchmarking information is compared across social landlords, and have resident membership of TPAS (the independent Tenant Participation Advisory Service).
 - As recommended by the 2011 report to HMB on the Independent Review of Resident Involvement, resident representatives are receiving extensive training and support, both from independent conferences and in-house from the Resident Involvement office.
 - HRP will continue to bring annual progress reports to HMB, with interim reports if the need arises.

6. Recruitment ahead in 2012

6.1 National guidance recommends that residents' inspection panels are recruited by nurturing interested residents and selecting them based on aptitude, rather than through elections (which are more appropriate for resident roles on democratic decision-making boards that receive significant financial allowances, like HMB). As was hoped would happen at the outset, a founding resident of HRP went on to stand for HMB's 2012 tenant elections, aiming to 'graduate' on to HMB and help represent the voice of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) residents on the Board.

6.2 Meanwhile several capable, newly-involved tenants, including younger and BME tenants, are working with the Resident Involvement office with a view to being trained as resident inspectors. A recruitment drive, well advertised through Open Door magazine and other channels, will be held in summer 2012. In the current climate of unemployment, these new resident involvement roles can offer training, experience and transferable skills that can be a real asset in a challenging employment market.

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Communal Cleaning Inspections

NORTH

Results

Cleaning notice displayed	Yes 8	No 1	Removed 1	a.m. clean 0	p.m. clean 11
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Area of inspection	A	B	C	D	Notes
Stairs, landings, stairwells	Stairs in good condition. No dirt or litter, swept, mopped and clean.	Stairs condition ok. No dust, dirt and litter.	Dust in edges & corners. Little evidence of recent sweeping or mopping.	Very poor. Dirty. Evidence of alcohol & drug use.	
	3	4	3		
Handrails, ledges & banister rails	Very clean, dust free. Obviously wiped & dusted regularly.	Little dusty. Small bits of dirt present.	Dirty lower section. Old cobwebs & litter.	No evidence of wiping, dusting or cleaning.	
	5	4		2	
Cleanliness of walls in communal areas	Very clean. No scuff marks.	A few scuff marks on walls.	Very dirty, stained walls.	Very dirty throughout.	
	1	8	2		
Bin chambers	No litter, no leaves. Evidence of disinfectant used.	Few leaves, no litter or food on floor.	Rotting food & litter on floor & under bin.	Burst plastic sack on floor, dirty walls, flies.	

	4				No access 4
Area of inspection	A	B	C	D	Notes
Rubbish chutes	Clean chute & floor.	Small bits of dirt on hopper, no rotten food.	Chute almost blocked by rubbish.	Hopper blocked with rubbish, rotting food in hopper.	
	3	2			No chute 3 Locked 1
Graffiti	No graffiti.	A little evidence of graffiti.	Graffiti in many places.	Excessive & offensive graffiti.	
	6	5			
Light fittings and cobwebs	Excellent condition.	Few cobwebs.	Old cobwebs, dirty light surface.	Poor cleanliness, broken light covers.	
	7	1	1		
Fly tipping	Area clear.	Single item on landing or in stairwell.	Furniture etc or other rubbish on landing or in stairwell.	Unsecured fridge etc on landing or in stairwell.	
	7	1	3		
Litter in external areas and bin stores	No litter.	Some litter.	High build up of litter, cans, newspapers etc.	Excessive amount of litter, some hazardous	

				e.g. broken glass, sharp objects.	
	5	3	2		

Communal Cleaning Inspections SOUTH Results

Cleaning notice displayed	Yes 20	No 13	a.m. clean 45	p.m. clean 5
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Area of inspection	A	B	C	D	Notes
Stairs, landings, stairwells	Stairs in good condition. No dirt or litter, swept, mopped and clean.	Stairs condition ok. No dust, dirt and litter.	Dust in edges & corners. Little evidence of recent sweeping or mopping.	Very poor. Dirty. Evidence of alcohol & drug use.	
	18	8	10		
Handrails, ledges & banister rails	Very clean, dust free. Obviously wiped & dusted regularly.	Little dusty. Small bits of dirt present.	Dirty lower section. Old cobwebs & litter.	No evidence of wiping, dusting or cleaning.	
	25	8	2		
Cleanliness of walls in communal areas	Very clean. No scuff marks.	A few scuff marks on walls.	Very dirty, stained walls.	Very dirty throughout .	
	10	11	2		

Bin chambers	No litter, no leaves. Evidence of disinfectant used.	Few leaves, no litter or food on floor.	Rotting food & litter on floor & under bin.	Burst plastic sack on floor, dirty walls, flies.	
	17	1			
Area of inspection	A	B	C	D	Notes
Rubbish chutes	Clean chute & floor.	Small bits of dirt on hopper, no rotten food.	Chute almost blocked by rubbish.	Hopper blocked with rubbish, rotting food in hopper.	
	13				No chutes 12
Graffiti	No graffiti.	A little evidence of graffiti.	Graffiti in many places.	Excessive & offensive graffiti.	
	32	1			
Light fittings and cobwebs	Excellent condition.	Few cobwebs.	Old cobwebs, dirty light surface.	Poor cleanliness, broken light covers.	
	26	5			
Fly tipping	Area clear.	Single item on landing or in stairwell.	Furniture etc or other rubbish on landing or in stairwell.	Unsecured fridge etc on landing or in stairwell.	

	21	2	5	3	
Litter in external areas and bin stores	No litter.	Some litter.	High build up of litter, cans, newspapers etc.	Excessive amount of litter, some hazardous e.g. broken glass, sharp objects.	
	25	3	2	3	

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Communal Cleaning Service Standard Report April 2011

Introduction

The role of the Housing Regulation Panel is to monitor the standards of Housing Services to ensure they are quality services which give value for money. It monitored the Communal Cleaning Standard during the period January 2011 to March 2011 and then evaluated the results and made recommendations for improvement. The communal cleaning standard is described in the CCC leaflet "Cleaning service standards".

Monitoring

Information was collected from the following sources:

- Page 33
- Minutes of meetings June 2010 to February 2011
 - Robert at Home
 - South Side Partnership
 - Joint Robert at Home and South Side Partnership
 - Estate Performance Reports August 2010 to January 2011
 - Open Door survey Autumn 2010
 - Housing Regulation Panel site inspections

These were carried out by HRP members working in 3 teams of 2. The locations were selected randomly from the Cleaning Schedules provided by CCC Streets and Open Spaces and which were shared between the 3 teams. Where possible, inspections were done at each location the morning or afternoon following the scheduled cleaning. The communal cleaning service is delivered at 55 locations; 17 in the North and 38 in the South. HRP members inspected the communal cleaning at 58% of the locations.

Evaluation

- The standard of cleaning is inconsistent across the city. Bracondale is an example of a location where the standard of cleaning is excellent. It is also good in some of the locations in Cherry Hinton and Trumpington inspected by HRP members. The standard of cleaning at Hawkins Road is unacceptable.
- There is an accumulation of dirt and grime in some older blocks of flats. These blocks need a deep clean.
- The cleaning notices give useful information to residents (the name of the cleaner and the cleaning day). The notices are not displayed at all locations.
- There is little or no evidence of graffiti.
- In many of the locations there are obstructions on upper and ground floor walkways and in stairwells (bicycles, buggies, furniture, refrigerators and other discarded items), which prevent the cleaner from fully completing the cleaning to the agreed standard

Recommendations for improvement

- Page 34
- The standard of communal cleaning needs to be consistent across the city.
 - The cleaning notices should be displayed in all locations.
 - The cleaners should make full use of the equipment they are provided with.
 - A deep clean at Hawkins Road must be done.
 - When cover is needed for sickness and annual leave, the cleaning should be done to meet the agreed service standard.
 - The procedure for cleaners to report issues (obstructions and damage) which prevent them from carrying out their duties in full should be used much more robustly and monitored.

Proposals for future consideration

- Provision made for storage of bicycles and buggies in locations where there are no sheds.
- Named resident volunteers willing to be the contact for cleaning issues in their block.
- Co-ordination of the inspections carried out by City Homes and Streets and Open Spaces to avoid unnecessary duplication.
- The cleaners' reporting procedure to be extended to include reporting damage which requires repair e.g. broken stair rail.

Housing Regulation Panel

Stan Best (Chair)

Anna Vine-Lott (Vice Chair)

Trevor Ealey

Faiza El-Neil

Archie Ferguson

Lewis Wilbur

Housing Regulation Panel

Communal Cleaning Service Standard

Recommendations For Improvements	SMART Requirements for Improvements	How this will be evidenced to HRP by Oct 2011
Communal Cleaning Service Standard is consistent across the City	Training for cleaners on the Service Standard	Streets and Open Spaces report to the HRP meeting on 11 October 2011 on the Service Standard training delivered
Cleaning notices displayed in all locations	Cleaning notices displayed where required	Notify the Chair by 5 July 2011 where the notices have been displayed so he can report to the HRP meeting on 12 July 2011
Cleaners make use of all equipment	Training for cleaners on use of equipment	Streets and Open Spaces report to the HRP meeting on 11 October 2011 on the equipment use training delivered
Deep clean needed at Hawkins Road	Deep clean carried out	Notify the Chair as soon as the deep clean has been done (by 5 July 2011 at the latest), so he can report to the HRP meeting on 12 July 2011
The cleaning service standard is maintained and has the same time allocation when there is cover for sickness/annual leave/other absence	Training on the Service Standard for cleaners and agency cleaners providing cover	Streets and Open Spaces report to the HRP meeting on 11 October 2011 on cover training delivered
Procedure for cleaners to report issues which prevent them from carrying out their duties in full to be used robustly and monitored	Cleaners report issues Streets and Open Spaces and City Homes record data to include issues reported and action taken	Joint evidence report form Streets and Open Spaces and City Homes to HRP at the meeting on 11 October 2011

SMART Improvements signed and agreed on 19 April 2011 by:-
Streets and Open Spaces

City Homes

Housing Regulation Panel

Your tenant and leaseholder representatives ensure your voice is heard
Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/yourhomeyoursay

Residents' Panel checks out cleaning

Resident volunteers tested the quality of your communal cleaning service

Residents' Housing Regulation Panel are volunteers who test the quality of your housing services. If they find any below the agreed standard, they have the power to get them improved.

The Council has a published standard, agreed with resident representatives, for the cleaning of communal areas in and around council homes.

Residents' Housing Panel recently put it to the test, monitoring communal cleaning across your estates. They:

- did unannounced, anonymous inspections, examining the cleaning
- reviewed the past year's performance information for trends
- gathered feedback from staff and residents

Residents' Panel agreed the following improvements with the Council

- The standard of communal cleaning needs to be consistent across the city
- A deep clean should be done in some blocks
- Cleaning notices should be displayed in all locations
- If a cleaner is sick or on annual leave, arrangements must still be in place for the cleaning to be done to the agreed standard
- Cleaners must report any issues, like obstructions or damage, that prevent them from cleaning properly

Other improvements recommended by the Residents' Panel

- Storage for bicycles and buggies could be

What the Residents' Panel found:

- On some estates, cleaning was excellent
- On other estates cleaning was good
- There was little trace of graffiti
- Notices about cleaning gave useful information
- But some areas were obstructed by residents' bikes, buggies and wrongly stored items, preventing proper cleaning
- Cleaning was inconsistent across estates, and in some places unacceptable: dirt and grime had accumulated in some older blocks, which needed a deep clean
- Notices weren't displayed at all sites



Residents' Regulation Panel members Anna Vine-Lott, Trevor Ealey and Archie Ferguson visit an estate

provided for blocks without sheds

- Inspections by council officers could be better coordinated to avoid duplication
- Cleaners' regular reports could include any damages needing repair

What's next?

The Council has listened and agreed to improve the service in the ways requested, and by the deadline set by the residents' Panel.

The Panel will verify that these improvements have been made, and will let you know in a forthcoming edition of *Open Door*. Meanwhile they will also continue to monitor other services in the months ahead.

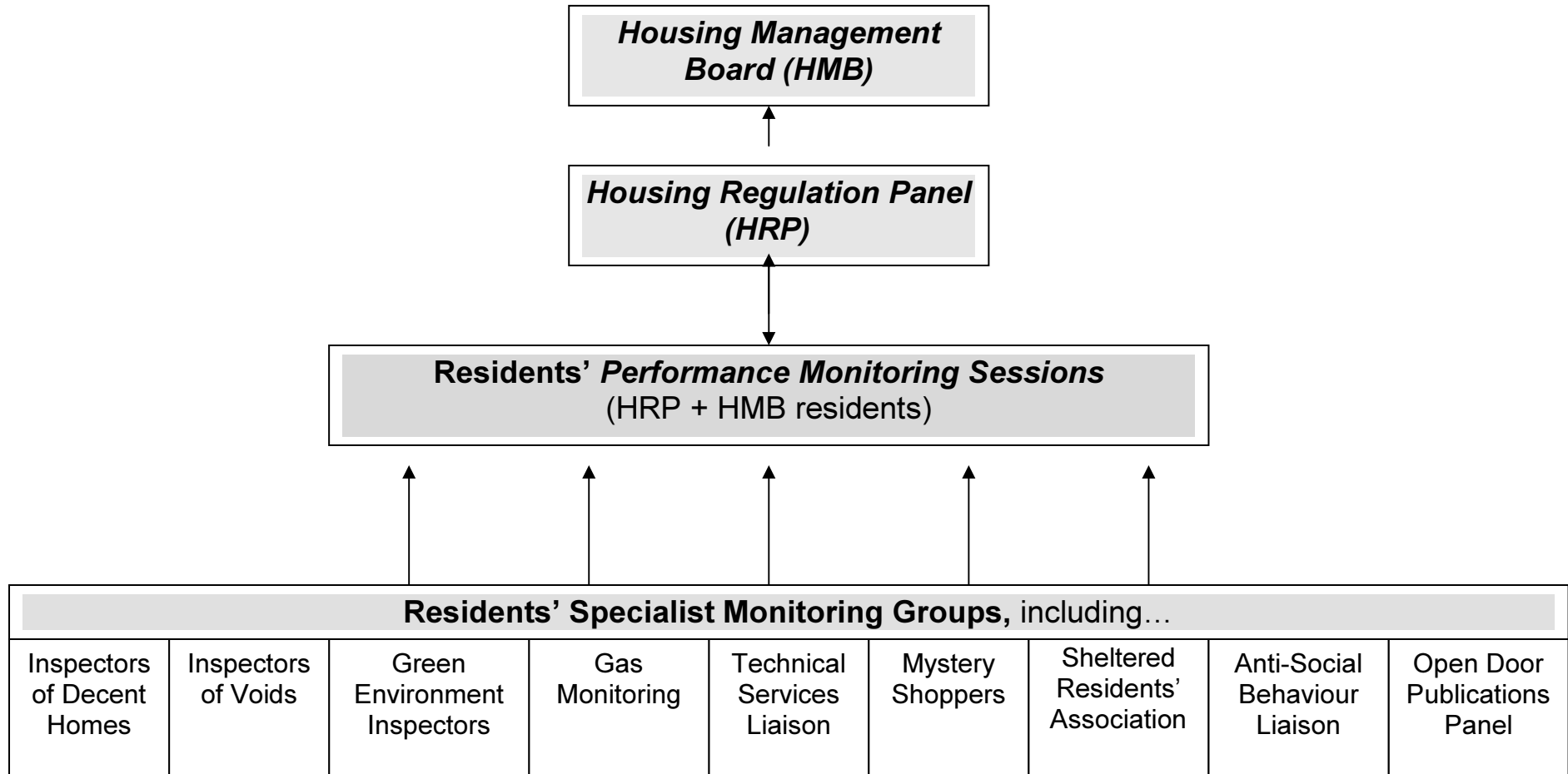
If you'd like to volunteer to help monitor cleaning at your block, or to find out about joining the Residents' Panel, just phone 01223-458323 or email yourhomeyoursay@cambridge.gov.uk

What the Residents' Panel say

Stan Best, chair of resident's Housing Regulation Panel says: "It was great to go round the estates, working as a team, though it took longer than we first thought! The Council does listen and respects residents' views. This whole process proves that co-operation can be better than confrontation."

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Flow of communications between residents' co-regulation groups



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