

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD**

19 June 2012

5.30 - 8.05 pm

**Present****Executive Councillor for Housing:** Councillor Smart**Councillors:** Blackhurst (Chair), Brierley, Pippas, Price and Rosenstiel**Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives:** Diane Best (Vice Chair), Alan Champion, Kay Harris, John Marais, Diana Minns and Terry Sweeney**Officers:** Alan Carter (Head of Strategic Housing), Liz Bisset (Director of Customer & Community Services), James Goddard (Committee Manager), Bob Hadfield (Head of Estates & Facilities), Robert Hollingsworth (Head of City Homes), Julia Hovells (Housing Finance & Business Manager), Andrew Latchem (Area Housing Manager) and Frances Swann (Manager Temp Housing & Housing Support)**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL****12/18/HMB Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bird, Johnson &amp; Pogonowski.

**12/19/HMB Declarations of Interest**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Interest</b>
Councillor Rosenstiel	12/25/HMB recommendations (i & ii)	Personal: Council garage tenant
Councillor Rosenstiel	12/25/HMB recommendation (iii)	Personal and Prejudicial: Council garage tenant in a block where there is a proposal to charge enhanced rents.  Withdrew from discussion and room, and did not vote on recommendation (iii)
Mr Sweeney	12/25/HMB	Personal: Council garage tenant

## 12/20/HMB Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2012 were approved and signed as a correct record.

## 12/21/HMB Public Questions

1. Miss O'Brian raised the following issues:

- (i) Stated that she had not received answers to questions that she had previously raised at the Housing Management Board (HMB) Scrutiny Committee.
- (ii) Referred to 3 January 2012 HMB minutes and raised the following queries:
  - a. Why Labour and Tenant Representatives had abstained from voting on rent increases.
  - b. How rent was calculated and how Central Government guidance was used to develop City Council rent charges.
  - c. Expressed concern regarding:
    - City housing policy.
    - Care/support services for the elderly.
    - Service charges for tenants.
    - Housing cost
    - Provision of housing (ie number of units available).
    - Housing management organisations.
    - Election of Tenant Representatives.
    - City Homes South services.
  - d. Asked what had happened to the Cambridge Federation.
- (iii) Asked if the separation of service charges would affect the amount of housing benefit tenants could claim.
- (iv) Queried if City Council staff had been made redundant and suggested general City Council staff costs were high.

Mr Marais, Mr Sweeney and Councillor Blencowe said that Labour and Tenant Representatives had abstained from voting on rent increases as they did not want to support the increases, but an alternative proposal was not available, so they abstained. The Housing Revenue Account meant that the Council would have to take on national debt in order to get financial flexibility. If the Council had chosen not to take on debt, it would be in a worse position.

Councillor Smart said the Central Government rent charge formula aimed to bring city homes in line with other social housing, not in line with (higher) private sector charges.

Councillor Smart added that the recession had reduced the numbers of houses being built, but this was still occurring. Forty percent of these would be affordable. A consultation period had started on the Local Plan, which sought views on the numbers of new houses required and possible sites.

The Housing Finance & Business Manager said the separation of service charges would not affect the amount of housing benefit tenants could claim. She undertook to confirm this as Miss O'Brian stated that she had been informed it would due to increased costs through separation of charges.

HMB were advised that some staff had been made redundant, as the recession had affected both the private and public sectors.

### **12/22/HMB Appointment of Vice-Chair for 2012/13**

Diane Best was nominated as HMB Vice Chair.

### **12/23/HMB To Nominate Three Tenants/Leaseholders' Representatives to Community Services Scrutiny Committee for Municipal Year 2012/13**

Diane Best, Kay Harris and John Marais were nominated as tenant/leaseholder representatives on the Community Services Committee.

Diana Minns was nominated as a reserve representative.

Councillor Smart undertook to liaise with Officers regarding the nomination of an alternative candidate as well as the expected three representatives.

### **12/24/HMB Council New Build Housing Programme - Impact on Existing Residents**

#### **Matter for Decision:**

The Council has taken the opportunity to establish a new Council house building programme. Eight new homes have been completed to-date and funding has secured from the Homes and Communities Agency to build

another 146 by the end of March 2015. The City Homes Business Plan 2012 to 2042 indicates the financial potential to provide a further 500 new homes over the next ten to fifteen years. In some cases the new build programme involves the demolition of existing housing.

A number of reports have been produced and considered mainly by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee to achieve the necessary approvals to implement the Council house building programme. The reports included approval of a Home Loss Policy that sets out the Council's approach to recompensing residents, both tenants and leaseholders, who will be required to move out of their home to allow the new build programme to happen.

**Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:**

Noted the approach taken to re-house residents' whose current homes are to be demolished under the Council New Build Housing Programme.

**Reason for the Decision:**

As set out in the Officer's report.

**Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

Not applicable.

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Committee received a report from the Head of Strategic Housing regarding the Council New Build Housing Programme.

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

- (i) Acknowledged that tenants could experience disruption and emotional stress when moving.
- (ii) Acknowledged that tenants may feel that they cannot return to the area they came from due to a rise in rent cost once new housing has replaced the old stock.
- (iii) Suggested a protocol was required so that tenants had a transparent process to inform them what to expect if they live in a site identified by the home move programme.

In response to Members' questions the Head of Strategic Housing confirmed the following:

- (i) The Council would support tenants to move. Individuals will be offered as much support as they wish to take advantage of. Different levels of

- support were available. For example, elderly tenants and those with a learning impairment could expect a high level of support.
- (ii) It was a condition of the Homes & Community Agency grant that rents would rise for new housing stock compared to the old.
  - (iii) The intention would be to provide more 2 – 3 bedroom houses to replace 1 bedroom ones, but there remains a high number of 1 bedroom flats in the city.
  - (iv) The few tenants who have moved to date have taken the opportunity to move into bigger 1 bedroom flats (compared to previous ones).
  - (v) An incentive scheme was in place to help people downsize from large to small homes if they wished
  - (vi) Officers were analysing local housing needs using the planning framework and new housing mixes established with reference to the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning document.
  - (vii) The new build programme aimed to address current family and elderly housing needs as demand exceeded supply. Part of the long term development program was to look at general population needs and how these changed over time.
  - (viii) Officers would review existing paperwork to ensure tenants living in a site identified by the home move programme received clear guidance on actions being taken and their entitlements. Currently a 3 year rolling program was reviewed at Community Services Scrutiny committee. Once sites were agreed, tenants were given procedural information in writing.

Councillor Smart said the Council had previously undertaken housing move programs for tenants. These experiences would be used in the current programme.

Councillor Blencowe requested the Head of Strategic Housing brings a report to a future HMB concerning the New Build Housing Programme.

The Committee resolved unanimously to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

Not applicable.

## **12/25/HMB Review of Council Garages across the City**

### **Matter for Decision:**

The Officer's report set out the current position and issues regarding Council garages in the City.

Key priorities were identified as follows:

- (i) Review charging mechanism for garages.
- (ii) Identify garage sites where there is low demand or where investment requirements mean that retention of the garage site is not financially viable.
- (iii) Use proceeds of sales of garage sites to fund improvement programmes to improve the quality of garage sites for which there is a continuing demand.
- (iv) Identify garage sites where alternative use can facilitate the Council's broader parking initiatives and regeneration programmes.
- (v) Carry out appraisals on garage sites to inform the improvement plan.

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

- (i) Agreed the principles underpinning the Improvement Plan.
- (ii) Approved the development of the Improvement Plan in context with the HRA Business Plan.
- (iii) Agreed in principle the implementation of differential charges for popular sites, and to bring a report back to Housing Management Board in future.

### **Reason for the Decision:**

As set out in the Officer's report.

### **Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

Not applicable.

### **Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Committee received a report from the Area Housing Manager regarding the review of Council Garages across the City. He stated P14 paragraph 3.7 of his report contained a typographical error listing Uphill Road in the North of the City when it was in the South.

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

- (i) Observed that garages were used for a variety of purposes such as play areas or general storage, rather than their intended purpose of

storing cars. Members were aware of some garages being sub-let. Officers were requested to undertake enforcement checks to free up inappropriately used garages as demand exceeded supply.

- (ii) Some garages were in a state of disrepair and viewed as unsafe/insecure, therefore there was little demand for them. Some are also too small for modern cars. Conversely, there was high demand for garages in some other areas too. Members requested bigger and more secure garages. Members requested Officers to undertake a review to ensure supply met demand to prevent more on-street park. Any garage sites that were redeveloped (eg turned into housing) should be replaced elsewhere.
- (iii) Leaseholder/Tenant Representatives and City Homes South Officers were making on-going representations that fed into a garage marketing plan.

In response to Members' questions the Director of Customer & Community Services plus Area Housing Manager confirmed the following:

- (i) Officers proposed to manage garage provision more actively in future, as well as other Council assets. This would enable more systematic marketing.
- (ii) The Local Plan Review required a parking facilities review when garages were demolished.
- (iii) The Officer's report was the start of a process covering a program of improvements for Council garages.
- (iv) Rent income from Council garages goes into the Capital Programme, it is not ring fenced. A Housing Revenue Account review plan is underway, details would be brought back to HMB in future.
- (v) There will be a greater provision of Council garages in future compared to current provision. A priority list was in place currently in areas of high demand.
- (vi) Garages can be used for a number of purposes other than storing cars, if permission is sought from the Council in advance. Officers could discuss permitted use with enquirers on request.

The Chair decided that the recommendations highlighted in the Officer's report should be voted on and recorded separately:

The Committee resolved by 10 votes to 0 to endorse recommendations (i) and (ii).

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Councillor Rosenstiel withdrew from the meeting for the remainder of this item and did not participate in the discussion or decision making.

In response to Members' questions the Director of Customer & Community Services plus Area Housing Manager confirmed the following:

- (i) A working group (including select HMB Members) would review charges for City centre garage sites during Autumn 2012.
- (ii) A report would be brought back to HMB in January 2013 concerning charges for City Centre garage sites.

Councillors requested a change to recommendation (iii). Councillor Brown formally proposed to amend the following recommendation from the Officer's report (amendments shown as bold and struck through text):

- (iii) To agree in principle the implementation of differential charges for popular ~~City centre garage sites~~, **and to bring a report back to Housing Management Board in future.**

The Committee approved this amended recommendation by 10 votes to 0.

The Committee resolved 11 votes to 0 to endorse the recommendation as amended.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation as amended.

### **Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

Not applicable.

### **12/26/HMB 2011/12 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances - Housing Portfolio**

#### **Matter for Decision:**

The Officer's report presented a summary of the 2011/12 outturn position (actual income and expenditure) for services within the Housing Revenue Account, compared to the current budget for the year.



The position in relation to the Housing Capital Investment Plan would be reported to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

**Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:**

Agreed that the carry forward requests, totaling £1,853,280 as detailed in Appendix C, are to be recommended to Council for approval.

**Reason for the Decision:**

As set out in the Officer's report.

**Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

Not applicable.

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Committee received a report from the Housing Finance & Business Manager regarding 2011/12 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances - Housing Portfolio.

In response to the Officer's report the Committee expressed concerns regarding contract management that led to an underspend.

In response to Members' questions the Director of Customer & Community Services plus Head of Estates & Facilities confirmed the following:

- (i) Worked had been delayed until July, which resulted in an underspend. The profile was correct for April, but figures were not reprofiled to show the late start as it was not clear at the budget stage what work would be undertaken March – July, and consecutively July to March, as need was not evenly split across these periods. Work not undertaken March – July was carried over into the next period.
- (ii) The budget would be reprofiled in future.

Councillor Smart suggested the new Business Plan could report the figures in a different way.

The Committee resolved by 10 votes to 0 to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

Not applicable.

## **12/27/HMB Tender for Off-Site Housing Cash Collection Services**

### **Matter for Decision:**

In preparation for the end of an existing contract, permission is sought to enter into a competitive process, awarding a contract to secure a supplier for the continued provision of a housing rent and service charge collection service from 25th January 2013.

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

Delegated authority to the Director of Customer & Community Services to determine the most appropriate procurement route, to invite competitive tenders (or undertake a mini competition from an existing framework) in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and thereafter to award a three-year contract (with a one plus one year extension at the Council's option) for the provision of an external cash collection service for payment of rent and service charges.

### **Reason for the Decision:**

As set out in the Officer's report.

### **Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

Not applicable.

### **Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Committee received a report from the Housing Finance & Business Manager regarding the tender for off-site housing cash collection services.

In response to Members' questions the Director of Customer & Community Services plus Housing Finance & Business Manager confirmed the following:

- (i) As part of the tender process, service providers would be asked to provide alternative venues to Post Offices for off-site housing cash collection services. Suppliers may not be able to provide like for like collection services, but would be obliged to provide outlets they undertake to make available as part of the tender process.
- (ii) Service providers would be asked to make credit card and credit union payment facilities available. Debit card, credit card and direct debit payments did not make up the majority of payment methods currently, but there maybe greater take up when the collection service contract changes.

The Committee resolved unanimously to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

Not applicable.

**12/28/HMB Tenancy Policy**

**Scrutiny Committee Minute Text**

**Matter for Decision:**

The Officer's report recommended a Tenancy Policy for the City Council in the context of the new Affordable Rents regime and the new flexibilities around the length of tenancy to be offered.

The Policy covers:

- (i) Introductory tenancies.
- (ii) Security of tenure.
- (iii) Affordable rents.
- (iv) Succession rights.

**Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:**

- (i) Agreed the Tenancy Policy.
- (ii) Agreed to the Tenancy Policy being reviewed during 2012 -13.

**Reason for the Decision:**

As set out in the Officer's report.

**Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

Not applicable.

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Committee received a report from the Area Housing Manager regarding the Tenancy Policy.

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

- (i) The Tenancy Policy draws together various Council policies into one document. Officers would take the opportunity to review the various policies as part of the process.
- (ii) New tenants will be offered an Introductory Tenancy unless where they are transferring from a secure tenancy, or an assured tenancy with a registered social landlord (but not an assured shorthold tenancy). If 3, 6 and 9 monthly reviews were satisfied an Introductory Tenancy would become secure.
- (iii) Demoted Tenancy occurs when someone breaks the terms of their tenancy.
- (iv) A family member (eg son or daughter) could succeed to the tenancy. Provision for this is set out in statute.
- (v) The Tenancy Policy process will include a consultation process prior to implementation. The process should be concluded by April 2013. The final document would include a glossary of terms.

The Chair decided that the recommendations highlighted in the Officer's report should be voted on and recorded separately:

The Committee resolved by 10 votes to 0 to endorse recommendation (i).

The Committee approved recommendation (ii) unanimously.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

Not applicable.

**12/29/HMB Supporting People Tender**

**Matter for Decision:**

The Supporting People contract with the County Council for the provision of support to Older People was extended by one year to March 2013.

It is likely that these contracts will now be tendered in the late Summer/Autumn 2012 and the City Council seeks to update its authority to tender and enter into a new contract commencing April 2013 should the tender be successful.

**Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:**

Extended the decision of HMB on 14th June 2011 to authorise the Director of Customer and Community Services to:

- (i) Select the most appropriate option for the future provision of support services in sheltered housing.
- (ii) Submit tenders in response to the appropriate tender advertisements by the County Council, for the continued provision of support services.
- (iii) Enter into a contract with the County Council for the provision of support to older people, in accordance with the tender specification, should any tender be successful.

**Reason for the Decision:**

As set out in the Officer's report.

**Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

Not applicable.

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Committee received a report from the Manager Temp Housing & Housing Support regarding the Supporting People Tender.

In response to Members' questions the Manager Temp Housing & Housing Support clarified that category 1 referred to sheltered housing, and category 2 referred to communal open space.

The Committee resolved unanimously to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

Not applicable.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

**CHAIR**

