

HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD4 June 2013
5.30pm - 7.39 pm**Present:** Councillors Blackhurst (Chair), Bird, Blencowe, Brierley, Johnson, Pippas, Price and Rosenstiel**Executive Councillor for Housing:** Councillor Smart**Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives:** Diana Minns (Chair), Diane Best, Allen Champion, John Marais, and Terry Sweeney**Officers:**

Director of Customer & Community Services: Liz Bisset

Head of Strategic Housing: Alan Carter

Head of City Homes: Robert Hollingsworth

Head of Community Development: Trevor Woolams

Area Housing Manager: Sandra Farmer

Area Housing Manager: Andrew Latchem

Business Manager & Principal Accountant: Julia Hovells

Development Officer: Gary Norman

Resident Involvement Facilitator: James Bull

Committee Manager: Glenn Burgess

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**13/16/HMB Apologies**

None.

13/17/HMB Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Diane Best	13/24/HMB	Personal: As a pre-2004 Leaseholder
Terry Sweeney	13/28/HMB	Personal and Prejudicial: Mother a resident of Ditchburn Place. Mr Sweeney left the meeting during discussion on this item and did not vote.
Councillor Rosenstiel	13/23/HMB	Personal: As a tenant of a Council owned garage
Kay Harris	13/23/HMB 13/27/HMB	Personal: Member of Campkin/Hawkins Residents Association

Kay Harris	13/24/HMB	Personal: As a tenant representative on the Gas Maintenance Ops meetings
Diana Minns	13/25/HMB	Personal: As the Chair of the Hanover/Princes Court Residents Association. Ms Minns vacated the Chair for this agenda item, but did take part in the discussion and did not vote.

13/18/HMB Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2013 were approved and signed by the Chair.

13/19/HMB Public Questions

None.

13/20/HMB To Nominate Three Tenants/Leaseholders' Representatives to Community Services Scrutiny Committee for Municipal Year 2012/13

Diane Best, Kay Harris and Diana Minns were nominated as tenant/leaseholder representatives on the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

John Marais was nominated as a reserve representative.

13/21/HMB Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances - HRA

Matter for Decision

The report presented a summary of the 2012/13 outturn position (actual income and expenditure) for services within the Housing Revenue Account, compared to the current budget for the year.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Agreed that the carry forward requests, totalling £3,108,480 as detailed in Appendix C of the officers report, 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 Business Manager/Principal Accountant.

The Committee resolved (by 9 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)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

13/22/HMB Under Occupation Incentive Scheme**Matter for Decision**

As a result of the changes to Welfare Benefits, and in particular, the reduction of Housing Benefit for spare rooms it was felt appropriate to review the scheme.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

The officer's original recommendation was replaced with the following amendment and then agreed by the Executive Councillor:

To maintain the current Under Occupation Incentive Scheme until October 2013, with a further report being brought back to the next meeting of HMB which considers the current and future take up, and looks at practice across other Councils.

Reason for the Decision

To take on board the views of the Scrutiny Committee.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Proposals in the report to reduce the amount of money given in each case (in order for it to spread further) were rejected.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Area Housing Manager.

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

- (i) Raised concern that, with recent changes to Welfare Benefits, it may not be an appropriate time to review the scheme.
- (ii) Highlighted the need for it to remain as an 'incentive' scheme and not an 'assistance' scheme.
- (iii) Highlighted the benefit of the proposed £500 removals grant and additional £500 for those tenants doing mutual exchanges.
- (iv) Noted that more people could be helped by maintaining the current scheme with an additional budget.

In response to Members' questions the Executive Councillor confirmed the following:

- (i) It would not be advisable to revise budgets this early but suggested that they be looked at again in the autumn depending on take up of the revised scheme.
- (ii) Whilst it was proposed that the revised scheme only apply to those moving within HOMELINK properties, relocations outside of the area could be looked at on a case by case basis to see if assistance could be provided.
- (iii) The additional £500 would not be means tested for welfare benefit purposes.

Councillor Price proposed and Councillor Blencowe seconded the following amended recommendation:

To maintain the current Under Occupation Incentive Scheme until October 2013, with a further report being brought back to the next meeting of HMB which considers the current and future take up, and looks at practice across other Councils.

On a show of hands the amended recommendation was endorsed by 9 votes to 3.

The Committee resolved (by 9 votes to 3) to endorse the amended recommendation.

The Executive Councillor deferred her decision for further consideration outside of the meeting.

The Housing Management Board was informed on 17 June 2013 that the Executive Councillor had approved the amended recommendation.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

13/23/HMB City Wide Garage Review

Matter for Decision

The report set out the progress made in the review of garages across the City following the June 2012 HMB committee report.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- (i) To approve the implementation of the variable garage charges effective from September 2013 for all existing and future garage tenancies.
- (ii) To approve the reviewed Conditions of Tenancy and Agreement for garage tenants.
- (iii) To approve the recommendation to undertake a thorough and detailed cost appraisal of the St Matthews Street garage site and bring a report to a future HMB with the findings of the appraisal and recommended options based on this.

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.

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

- (i) Thanked officers and members of the Garages Working Party for their hard work.
- (ii) Emphasised the need for a flexible charging Policy to ensure that garages in more suburban areas remained occupied.

Councillor Rosenstiel raised concern on behalf of his constituents that, as all garage sites were on one side of the City, the 'half mile walking distance' criteria for Priority Table 1 (page 37 of the agenda) may not be sufficient.

The Head of City Homes confirmed that this was merely an administrative indicator to ensure that priority was given to local residents. It was noted that strict measurement would not be implemented.

The Executive Councillor confirmed that the original wording had been 'local' and did not specify a distance. It was upon her request that a more specific distance was included. However it was again emphasised that this would be used merely as an indicator.

Councillor Rosenstiel formally proposed that the distance listed in Priority Table 1 (page 37 of the agenda) be amended to read 'within 1 mile walking distance'.

On a show of hands (3 votes to 8) this proposed amendment was not endorsed.

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

- (i) The revised Conditions of Tenancy and Agreement would apply for both existing and new garage tenants.

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)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

13/24/HMB Gas Safety Certification for Leasehold Dwellings in Flat Blocks

Matter for Decision

The report set out gas safety concerns relating to pre 2004 leasehold properties within flat blocks in the city. A low-cost option was recommended to address concerns and for minimising the risk of a gas related incident occurring.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Approved the following low cost option:

- (i) Estates and Facilities generate and send out a letter (appendix1 of the officers report) to all leaseholders outlining Gas Safety requirements with the option to enter into a private agreement between the Councils approved sub-contractor Compton & Parkinson to have their gas supply and appliances inspected, checked and serviced at a competitive price that has been negotiated between the Council and Contractor.
- (ii) There are at present 400 Leasehold flats that we have no knowledge of gas maintenance history. These will receive letters first as they pose potential significant risk.
- (iii) Every Leasehold dwelling 1079 in total will receive the gas Safety letter on an Annual basis.
- (iv) That a progress report be brought back to the committee in 1 years' time.

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 Engineering Services Team Leader.

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

- (i) Thanked officers for their hard work.
- (ii) Highlighted that, whilst no low cost option could ensure 100% compliance with gas safety certificates, the proposal by officers was a sensible option.
- (iii) Highlighted previous confusion regarding the process for pre and post 2004 leaseholders.

In response to Members' questions the Engineering Services Team Leader confirmed the following:

- (i) Letters would be sent out every year in order to continually remind residents and encourage them to engage with the City Council.
- (ii) Whilst wording was included in lease agreements regarding the requirements for gas certificates, the Legal Department's view was that it was not robust enough to stand up in court.
- (iii) The City Council had to evidence that they were actively trying to engage with residents and address the issue.
- (iv) A 'Gas Safety Week' takes place each year, and officers attend community events to educate residents about gas safety.
- (v) Whilst the quotes provided in the letter by Compton & Parkinson were very competitive, residents were not obligated to use this contractor.

Councillor Johnson proposed and Councillor Bird seconded an additional recommendation to ensure that a progress report be brought back to the committee in 1 years' time.

On a show of hands the committee endorsed this proposed additional recommendation unanimously.

The Committee resolved unanimously to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

13/25/HMB Project Appraisal for Hanover / Princes Court Community Room

Matter for Decision

Re-development of the existing laundry to create a new community room with small adjacent laundry space which could be accessed separately.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- (i) Approved the Project Appraisal for the re-development of the existing laundry to create a new community room with small adjacent laundry at Hanover and Princes Court.

- (ii) Agreed that any shortfall in revenue funding for the community room be met from income generated by telecom masts on the top of Princes and Hanover Courts.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

Councillor Blackhurst took over the Chair for this item.

The Committee received a report from the Head of Community Development.

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

- (i) Highlighted this as an exciting and worthwhile project which had generated lots of enthusiasm from the local community.

In response to Members' questions the Area Housing Manager and the Business Manager and Principal Accountant confirmed the following:

- (ii) The facility would be jointly managed between the City Council and local residents through a Service Level Agreement.
- (iii) The £3,000 allocated for set-up costs would cover laundry equipment and be funded from the repairs and renewals budget.

The Committee resolved (by 12 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)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

13/26/HMB STAR Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2014**Matter for Decision**

Approval of the 2014 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Approved the report's proposals for the 2014 satisfaction surveys with tenants and leaseholders.

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 Resident Involvement Facilitator.

In response to Members' questions the Resident Involvement Facilitator, the Director of Customer and Community Services, the Business Manager and Principal Accountant, and the Head of City Homes confirmed the following:

- (i) A resident representative would be involved in the procurement of the survey company.
- (ii) Results had improved year on year.
- (iii) Where requested the survey could be provided in audio, brail, large print and alternative languages.
- (iv) Results would be compared with other housing providers across the country in order to identify any trends as a result of central government policy.
- (v) *Housemark* benchmarking services would enable comparison of performance nationally.
- (vi) Lots of work had been undertaken by officers to ensure that the survey data could be compared year on year.
- (vii) A budget of £6,000 was set aside each year for this work. As a result of the survey in 2010 not going ahead and then being done jointly in 2012, £35,000 had built up in the budget.
- (viii) Concern over parking and shrubs had been identified as part of the 2012 survey and these had now been improved as a result.

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)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

13/27/HMB Council Affordable Housing Development Programme - Progress Report

Matter for Decision

Report on the progress of the Council's Affordable Housing Development Programme providing an up-date with a particular emphasis on the re-housing of existing residents.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Noted progress with the delivery of the Council's Affordable Housing Development 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.

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

- (i) Water Lane was one of the last schemes approved and was therefore marginally behind the others.
- (ii) Tenants moved from an under-occupied property would be offered the option of a 'like for like' property.
- (iii) The Latimer Close scheme had received planning permission and a final design was being worked on. The scheme may however be delayed slightly by highway related issues.
- (iv) Negotiations were going well regarding the Stanesfield Road Scout Hut.
- (v) Water Lane and Aylesborough Close had been delayed for 3 months and this did hold up some rehousing work but it was not yet at a critical point.

- (vi) Officers would be happy to answer any further questions on specific schemes outside of the meeting.

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)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

13/28/HMB Ditchburn Place Refurbishment

Matter for Decision

The report presented a summary of the feasibility design and financial costing for the refurbishment, alteration, and extension of Ditchburn Place.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Noted progress of the project to date.

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 tabled report from the Development Officer.

In response to Members' questions the Development Officer and the Head of City Homes confirmed the following:

- (i) Acknowledged that members may not have had an opportunity to digest the report, but offered to provide separate briefings or to answer any specific questions outside of the meeting.
- (ii) Options would be looked at for connecting Ditchburn Place to the district heating scheme.
- (iii) As a building of special interest, the frontage would remain the same.

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)**

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

The meeting ended at 7.39 pm

CHAIR

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