

HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD

7 January 2014

5.30 - 6.45 pm

Present: Councillors Blackhurst (Vice-Chair), Bird, Blencowe, Brierley, Johnson, Pippas and Price

Executive Councillor for Housing: Councillor Smart

Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives: Diana Minns (Chair), Diane Best, Kay Harris, John Marais, Caroline Oriokot and Terry Sweeney

Director of Customer & Community Services: Liz Bisset

Head of City Homes: Robert Hollingsworth

Area Housing Manager: Andrew Latchem

Housing Strategy Manager: Helen Reed

Business Manager & Principal Accountant: Julia Hovells

Engineering Services Team Leader: Chris Brown

Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

14/1/HMB Apologies

No apologies were received.

14/2/HMB Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

14/3/HMB Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2013 were approved and signed by the Chair

14/4/HMB Public Questions

There were no public questions.

14/5/HMB Record of Urgent Decisions taken by the Executive Councillor for Housing

14/5/HMBa Increase in Temporary Housing Staff establishment to deliver additional temporary housing

Members noted the Executive Councillor for Housing had approved an increase in the Temporary Housing staffing establishment, allowing the appointment of one full time equivalent additional Assistant Housing Officer. This approval was granted on the basis that this would have a neutral financial impact on the Housing Revenue Account, with the costs met by a combination of existing funding approved as part of the 2013/14 budget process for additional emergency accommodation provision and the increased service charge income that an increase in Temporary Housing units will generate.

This decision was needed to enable the Temporary Housing Service to increase the provision of Temporary and Emergency Accommodation to a target level of 95 units from a position of 63 units at the start of 2013 as quickly as possible.

The Executive Councillor for Housing acknowledged comments that the preferred option would have been for the item to be presented to the Committee for consideration. But there were occasions when this was not possible due to the time frame of the response required.

14/6/HMB Shared Ownership Review

Members were informed that a review had been carried out of the Council's shared ownership service. This was to assess whether shared ownership should continue to be part of the Council's core business within the context of Housing Revenue Account self-financing, and if so whether it should also be offered on the Council's new developments.

It was recommended that the service be continued, with some improvements, and that shared ownership be offered on new affordable housing developments to cross-subsidise the building of rented units and to help create balanced communities.

The recommendations were being submitted for approval to the Executive Councillor and Community Service Scrutiny during this Scrutiny cycle. The report to Housing Management Board was for information only.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

To note the report of the Housing Strategy Manager.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

This item was not for pre-scrutiny.

In response to the report Kay Harris requested that a copy of the survey referenced in the report be circulated to Members.

Councillor Price requested confirmation that the percentage of shared ownership would be taken from the private market proportion and not from the Council's social rented properties on the proposed redevelopment sites as the Council should not lose any more socially rented properties from its portfolio.

Councillor Johnson highlighted page 48, 8.2.4 of the Officer report which read 'Where a rented property is to be used as a shared ownership property, arrangements should be made for an appropriate replacement rental property to be provided from the shared ownership stock as soon as is reasonably practicable, so that the rented stock is not reduced as a direct result of this policy'. He expressed concern that there could be a significant delay in waiting for a replacement shared ownership property to become available which could equate to an imbalance of stock.

In response to Members' questions the Executive Councillor for Housing and Officers confirmed the following:

- i. The rented proportion of social housing would stay firm but the market share could be transferred to intermediate housing. If appropriate for a presently rented house to become shared ownership, it would be the desire of the Council to put shared ownership property quickly back into the rented stock.
- ii. There were currently no proposals for shared ownership as a part of the social housing provision in the current re-development programme.
- iii. Referred the Committee to page 47, 8.2 of the Officer's report, for examples of using existing rented properties as shared ownership. The option would not likely to be used very often but should be available as circumstance required.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

14/7/HMB Tenancy Policy 2014 -2016

As a result of the Localism Act 2011 which gives Local Authorities the power to fixed term tenancies to new social tenants, the Council's preference was for lifetime tenancies, to promote settled communities. However, it was felt that fixed term tenancies could be offered for properties with 4 or more bedrooms, properties with significant adaptations, for move on accommodation and specific one off properties. The Policy would only apply to new tenancies made available from April 2014.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the Tenancy Policy.
- ii. Approved the use of fixed term tenancies from April 2014 for:
 - a) properties with 4 or more bedrooms – 5 years
 - b) ~~significantly adapted disabled properties – 5 years~~
 - c) move on accommodation – 3 years
 - d) one off properties – 5 years.
- iii. Approved the deletion of ii(b) of the Officer recommendation (above). Subject to the condition that a detailed report would be presented at a future meeting on the detail and clarification of how significantly adapted disabled properties on fixed term tenancies would work in practice.

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. Expressed concern at the inclusion of significantly adapted disabled properties for new tenants to be reviewed after five years.
- ii. Questioned why the existing policy for significantly adapted disabled properties could not be continued for new tenants, as it was highly unlikely that the needs of the tenant would change.
- iii. Asked for confirmation that in terms of secure tenancy of four bed properties (of which there is a short supply) would the tenant have a right to buy and would this apply to significantly adapted disabled properties.
- iv. Expressed caution that if a significantly adapted disabled property had been tailored to meet the need of a young person who then went on to independent living not to assume the property would no longer be required. If the family were allocated to a different property this would leave no route back to the family home for visits, holidays, respite care or if that young person could no longer live independently after a period of time.
- v. Requested further information on the term 'one off properties' as the definition was vague and could be interpreted in a number of ways.
- vi. Asked what was the objective for 'one off properties' and the nature of the letting.
- vii. Questioned if money had been spent on specially adapting a four bed property (of which there was a short supply), and that property was no longer required after five years, how would that property be considered either as a four bed or a significantly adapted disabled property.
- viii. Stated that further details were required as to what was deemed as a significantly adapted disabled property.
- ix. Raised the question that if a tenant of a fixed term tenancy was required to find a replacement property during the sixth month review period, what would happen to the tenant when the tenancy expired.
- x. Asked if the tenant under the new fixed term five year policy would have the right to buy.

In response to Members' questions the Executive Councillor for Housing and Officers confirmed the following:

- i. New tenants applying for a significantly adapted disabled property after 1 April 2014 would be made aware that the tenancy would be reviewed after 4.5 years. If the needs of the tenant had not changed or further adaptations were required a further five year fixed tenancy agreement would be offered.
- xi. Confirmed that the policy was on the property and not the tenant.
- xii. Acknowledged the review of significantly adapted disabled properties needed to be a sensitive process and would want to reassure tenants

- that their tenancy would continue if their requirements had not changed. But each case would be considered on an individual basis.
- xiii. Advised that fixed term policies would allow the significantly adapted disabled properties to be reviewed on a periodic basis.
 - xiv. The need of significantly adapted disabled properties was greater than the supply and if there had been a high level of investment to adapt a four bedroom property this would be offered as significantly adapted disabled property.
 - xv. Legal advice was being sought on the status of a tenant if no appropriate accommodation could be found during the six months review period, although this could be extended by a further six months.
 - xvi. One off properties would be designated as such by the Area Housing Manager but would only be used in exceptional circumstances and an example of Cemetery Lodge was given to the Committee.

The Committee:

Councillor Bird proposed and Councillor Johnson seconded the deletion of ii(b) of the Officer recommendation. Subject to the condition that a detailed report would be presented at a future meeting on the detail and clarification of how significantly adapted disabled properties on fixed term tenancies would work in practice (original ~~struck through~~).

ii. Approved the use of fixed term tenancies from April 2014 for:

- a) properties with 4 or more bedrooms – 5 years
- b) ~~significantly adapted disabled properties — 5 years~~
- c) move on accommodation – 3 years
- d) one off properties – 5 years.

Resolved (6 votes to 4 votes) to delete ii(b) of the Officer's recommendation.

Resolved (11 votes to 0) to approve the amended recommendation.

The Executive Councillor 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

14/8/HMB Gas Maintenance Contract Extension**Matter for Decision**

To consider the extension of the Gas Service Contract with Morrison Facilities Services.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Granted permission to extend the Gas Service contract with Morrison Facilities Services for a further period of two years terminating on 30th June 2016 in line with the ESPO contract terms and conditions.

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.

Kay Harris thanked the Officer for information she had received concerning the customer satisfaction survey referenced in the report. It was requested that the information be sent to all Members of the Committee.

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

- i. Highlighted the close working partnership of the City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, tenant representatives and Morrison to monitor compliance, customer satisfaction and best practice on a monthly basis.

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 6.45 pm

CHAIR