

HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD

4 March 2014
5.30 - 6.55 pm

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

Executive Councillor for Housing: Councillor Smart

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

Chair of the Housing Regulation Panel: Stan Best

Officers:

Head of City Homes: Robert Hollingsworth

Area Housing Manager: Sandra Farmer

Resident Involvement Facilitator: James Bull

Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

14/13/HMB Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Bird, Mr John Marais and the Director of Community and Customer Services.

14/14/HMB Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

14/15/HMB Minutes

Minutes of the 7 January 2014 meeting were approved and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendments (replacement underlined and original text ~~struck through~~):

- 14/6/HMB Shared Ownership Review
In response to the report ~~Kay Harris~~ Diane Best requested that a copy of the survey referenced in the report be circulated to Members.

Councillor Rosenstiel who attended the HMB meeting on 7 January 2014 requested that his name was added to the list of Councillors who were present at the meeting.

Minutes of the 16 January 2014 meeting were approved and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendment.

It was noted that the minutes of 16 January 2014 had not referenced the funding in the Labour Group Amendment Housing Revenue Budget 2014/15 to allow the phased recruitment of four repairs apprentices starting in 2015/16. The Executive Councillor for Housing had agreed to the principle of this commitment providing that Officers could guarantee proper and sufficient training for the additional apprentices

Councillor Price requested that the Committee's disappointment with the Executive Councillor for Housing not agreeing with the decision of the Housing Management Board to approve the Labour Amendment on Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2014/15 be minuted.

14/16/HMB Public Questions

There were no public questions.

14/17/HMB Housing Portfolio Plan 2014/15

Matter for Decision

To note the draft Housing Portfolio Plan 2014/15, which had set out the strategic objectives for the portfolio for the year ahead, describing the context in which the portfolio would be delivered and detailed the activities required to deliver the outcomes and the vision. Performance measures and risks were also shown for each strategic objective.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

Noted the draft Housing Portfolio Plan 2014-15.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

In response to the report the Committee made the following comments:

- i. The developing plans for the Council to deliver up to 2000 new affordable homes in Strategic Objective HS01 should state that this would be in the Greater Cambridge area and would be delivered with partnership agencies. The statement indicates this would be provided solely by the Council. This was a misleading statement.
- ii. The reference to 2000 new affordable homes in Strategic Objective HS01 lay under the heading 2014/15, which gave the indication that 2000 homes would be built in this period.
- iii. The Strategic Objective for HSO1 should state that the target of 2000 new affordable homes was based on the thirty year self-financing business plan and a completion date included. Based on the business plan the goal would be to build 66 homes per year to meet the 2000 new affordable homes. This information should have been included in the report.
- iv. The performance measures for the Strategic Objective HS02 did not provide a specific objective on how the Council would guarantee support for vulnerable people.
- v. There was nothing in the performance measures for the Strategic Objective HS03 which indicated the following:
 - How the Council would tackle youth homelessness.
 - How the Council would integrate the homeless back into permanent housing.
 - How the Council would encourage landlords to bring the homeless back into the private sector.
- vi. Impressed with No 3 of the Performance Measures in the Strategic Objective HS01, which indicated that the majority of new Affordable Homes would be built to Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes in 2014/15, a higher level of privately built houses which were usually built to Level 3.
- vii. Queried if the figure shown in No 2 of the Performance Measures in the Strategic Objective HS01 (completion of Affordable Housing on the other sites, total of 252), could be split into three categories:
 - Those outside the city boundaries.
 - Those on the growth sites.
 - Those elsewhere.

- viii. Asked if there was an update on the City Deal and how this would affect funding.
- ix. Requested if information could be circulated to the Committee on the work of the Town Hall Lettings Scheme.

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

- i. The 2000 new affordable houses was part of the City Homes Scheme and she did not believe that the statement misleading.
- ii. Advised that a Key Performance Indicator would be developed to measure how the Council was helping vulnerable people and this would be brought back to Committee for information.
- iii. Although the report did not specifically indicate how the Council would combat youth homelessness, the Service for Single Homelessness stated in the report would cover young people. There were also charities and hostels that were in partnership with the Council such as the Cambridge Youth Foyer which assisted young people.
- iv. Reminded the Committee that the report provided a general overview of the work that was carried out.
- v. Confirmed that the Council were below the national average eviction rate. Fewer people were likely to be evicted than in previous years. Other measures were more complicated to calculate due to tenants who move on from a property and then re-present themselves later. A report would come back to Committee at a later date on these measures.
- vi. Advised the Town Hall Lettings Scheme referenced in Strategic Objective HS03.1 would be working with landlords in the private sector. Confirmed that figure No 2 of the Performance Measures in the Strategic Objective HS01 other sites could be divided into further categories for better clarity.
- vii. Advised that the City Deal could have an impact to the build rate of the 2000 new affordable homes, therefore it had been best not to include an end date.
- viii. Noted the Committee's comments that the report did not make reference to the business plan or an end date in Strategic Objective HS01 in relation to the completion of 2000 new affordable homes.
- ix. Would like the Council to continue with the installation and energy efficiency to ensure that tenants could keep warm at a low cost.
- x. There was no reason why an item on the Town Hall Lettings Scheme could not be included on a future agenda.

The Committee:

Resolved unanimously to note the Draft Housing Portfolio Plan 2014/15

The Executive Councillor for Housing noted the Draft Housing Portfolio Plan

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

14/18/HMB Progress Report From Residents' Housing Regulation Panel

To note the Housing Regulation Panel (HRP) progress report 2013/14 and the HRP inspection report on the City Homes Communal Window Cleaning Service.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Noted and welcomed the positive outcomes achieved by residents' Housing Regulation Panel in their third year of activity.
- ii. Resolved to continue to support residents' co-regulation and the constructive challenge provided by residents' Housing Regulation Panel.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee were presented with a report by the Chair of the Housing Regulation Panel, Mr Best, on the 2013/14 HRP progress report and inspection report on the City Homes Communal Window Cleaning Service.

Diana Minns expressed the Committee's thanks to the HRP for their hard work and to Mr Best for collating such comprehensive and detailed reports.

The Executive Councillor for Housing also passed on her thanks to Mr Best and the Housing Regulation Panel for the work that they had undertaken.

In response to the report the Committee made the following comments:

- i. Welcomed the reports and reiterated thanks to Mr Best, members of HRP and Officers for their work.
- ii. Acknowledged that there had been no capacity in the past to monitor the window cleaning service to such a standard.
- iii. Agreed it was important to hold the Council to account if standards were not being met and to discuss how any issues could be resolved.
- iv. As tenants paid a service charge the work of the HRP was vital to ensure that the money had been well spent.
- v. The report had clearly highlighted that the Window Cleaning Service had not been value for money.
- vi. Disappointed to note the sub-standard of service that had been identified in the inspection report; not one window had met with the inspection standards.
- vii. Clean windows contributed to a sense of pride to the building and the area in which the tenant's lived.
- viii. Questioned the role of the Contractor's Supervisor and how the standards had failed.
- ix. Pleased to note the SMART requirements for improvements and the action plan.
- x. Acknowledged that the service had not been continuously monitored but with the action plan in place hoped that there would be continuing improvements.
- xi. By publishing the Service Standard and Window Cleaning Schedule this should encourage tenant participation to report to Officers if standards had not been met.

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

- i. The inspection report had been taken extremely seriously.
- ii. Dismayed to note that windows at the back of Sheltered Housing had not been cleaned.
- iii. Acknowledged that there were lessons that needed to be learnt.
- iv. This particular service would be looked at in the overall bigger procurement contract.
- v. Tenants would be encouraged to become more involved.
- vi. The service standard would be looked at on a regular basis.

Mr Best informed the Committee that due to meetings that he had attended with Officers and the Contractor, the SMART requirements and action plan in place, he now had confidence in the service. He acknowledged the improvements would not take place overnight but they would happen.

The Committee:

Resolved unanimously to endorse the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor 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.

Diana Minns, as Chair of the Housing Management Board, thanked the Committee and Officers for their attendance during the year, their debate and interest. She also thanked the Committee Manager, Claire Tunnicliffe.

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm

CHAIR

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