

HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD14 June 2011
5.30 - 7.50 pm**Present:****Executive for Housing:** Catherine Smart**Councillors:** Blackhurst (Vice-Chair), Bird, Blencowe, Brierley, Pippas, Pogonowski, Price, Rosenstiel and Znajek**Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives:** Diane Best (Chair), Kay Harris, Brain Haywood, John Marais and Terry Sweeney**Officers:** Liz Bisset (Director of Customer & Community Services), Glenn Burgess (Committee Manager), Bob Hadfield (Head of Repairs & Maintenance), Robert Hollingsworth (Head of City Homes), Julia Hovells (Finance & Business Manager), Andrew Latchem (Area Housing Manager) and David Horspool (Director of Resources).**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL****11/26/HMB Apologies**

Apologies were received from Tenant Representative Bev Dennis.

11/27/HMB Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Terry Sweeney	11/38/HMB	Personal and Prejudicial: Close relative likely to take residence at Ditchburn Place
John Marais	11/36/HMB	Personal: As a tenant of a council house
Councillor Rosenstiel	11/36/HMB	Personal: As a tenant of a council garage
Councillor Rosenstiel	11/36/HMB	Personal: Close relative is a tenant of a council house

11/28/HMB Minutes

The minutes of the 8 March 2011 meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.

11/29/HMB Public Questions

None

11/30/HMB To Nominate Three Tenants/Leaseholders' Representatives to Community Services Scrutiny Committee for Municipal Year 2011/12

Diane Best, Brian Haywood and Kay Harris were nominated.

11/31/HMB Write-Off of Former Tenant Arrears

Matter for Decision: Write-Off of former tenant arrears.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Agreed to write off two cases of former tenant arrears totaling £4,488.02.

Reason for the Decision:

As per Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

There was no debate on this item

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

11/32/HMB Procurement of 24 Hour Emergency Alarm Telephone Response Service for the Independent Living Service

Matter for Decision: Procurement of a new provider for a 24 hour response service for sheltered housing schemes and approximately 750 community alarm and warden agency customers.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Authorised the Director of Customer and Community Services to select the most appropriate procurement route and, if appropriate, invite competitive tenders in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and thereafter to award a three-year contract (with a two plus two-year extension at the Council's option) for the provision of a 24 hour telephone response service for the Independent Living Service.

Reason for the Decision:

The current contract for a 24 hour emergency alarm telephone response service was due to come to an end on 31st March 2012.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

There was no debate on this item.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

11/33/HMB Review of the Under Occupancy Grant Scheme for City Council Tenants

Matter for Decision:

Approval for the continuation, with additional funding, of the Under Occupancy Grant Scheme for City Council Tenants.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Acknowledged the success of this scheme and approved the continuation of the scheme.
- Instructed officers to review the scheme before April 2012 to take into account proposed changes to the benefit system and how these might affect under occupation, and the wider issue of under occupancy in the social rented sector.

- Approved additional scheme funding of £20,000 per annum from 2011/12, subject to formal approval by Council, as part of the 2011 Medium Term Strategy.

Reason for the Decision:

As per 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 confirmed the following:

- i. Funding for the scheme was currently cash limited to £30,000 per annum and the full sum had been allocated. It was therefore not possible to retrospectively pay those tenants that had moved whilst waiting on the list.
- ii. It was acknowledged that the current funding tended to be fully allocated within the first 3 months of the financial year. However it was expected that addition funding of £20,000 would ensure that the scheme could be maintained throughout the year.

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

- i. It would be beneficial to publicise the scheme through the Councils 'Open Door' publication.
- ii. Ward Councillors had a role to play in publicising the scheme and encouraging tenants to consider downsizing.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations by 14 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.

11/34/HMB Action Plan to promote Financial Inclusion and to tackle Worklessness amongst Cambridge City Council tenants

Matter for Decision:

As financial inclusion was a key factor within the social exclusion agenda, the committee report gave an overview of what financial inclusion was, what support the Council currently offered to Cambridge City Council tenants to prevent financial exclusion and recommendations for how the council could ensure tenants were aware of what financial inclusion services were currently available to them.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Acknowledged the support currently given to tenants.
- Agreed the action plan outlined in the officers report.

Reason for the Decision:

As per 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 confirmed the following:

- i. The City Council worked closely with housing associations to promote training and to advise residents of the services available.
- ii. Rent Advisors would work with individuals where appropriate to discourage the use of pre-payment utility meters.
- iii. Loan sharks were operating in some of the concentrated council housing estates and staff were being trained to help address the issue. Posters had been circulated and individual tenants had been written to regarding this issue.
- iv. Extensive long term support and advice would be given to tenants in arrears in order to avoid eviction. Eviction would be a last resort and a magistrate would make the final decision. Officers were happy to talk through in detail with members the full package of support that would be provided to tenants prior to eviction.

- v. As younger age groups tended to find it hard to manage their finances some targeted work had been undertaken by officers.
- vi. As part of the 'sign up' process, Rent Advisors would identify those tenants that had been receiving support from voluntary organisations and their ongoing support would be planned accordingly.

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

- i. With regard to Universal Credit, a recent statement by the government had indicated that they would consider direct deductions to be made in certain circumstances.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations by 14 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.

11/35/HMB Future provision of Support Services in sheltered, supported and temporary housing

Matter for Decision:

The report sought to gain authority to delegate to the Director of Customer and Community Services, the decision as to the most appropriate option for the City Council to ensure the continued provision of these services.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Authorised the Director of Customer and Community Services, in consultation with the Executive Councillor, Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokes, to select the most appropriate option for the future provision of support services in sheltered, supported and temporary housing:
 - To submit tenders in response to the appropriate tender advertisements by the County Council, for the continued provision of support services.
 - To explore working in partnership with South Cambridgeshire District Council to deliver shared support services, with the possibility that this

may exempt the County Council from being required to formally tender the services.

- Approved that the funding for the recently vacated Customer Care and Project Manager post for 2011/12 be utilised specifically to secure resource to work on the tender submission or shared service project and to fulfil service delivery needs for the Independent Living Service.

Reason for the Decision:

All contracts with the County Council, for the provision of support services, were due to come to an end in March 2012

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

It was agreed that consultation would take place with the Executive Councillor, Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokes prior to action by the Director of Customer and Community Services. The recommendation was amended to reflect this.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the amended recommendations by 11 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.

11/36/HMB HRA 2010/11 Revenue Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances

Matter for Decision:

The report presented a summary of the 2010/11 outturn position (actual income and expenditure) for services within the Housing Revenue Account, compared to the current budget for the year. The position for revenue was reported and variances from budgets are highlighted, together with explanations. Requests to carry forward funding arising from certain budget underspends into 2011/12 were identified.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Agreed that the carry forward requests, totaling £1,156,000 as detailed in Appendix C of the officers report, be recommended to Council for approval.
- Endorsed investigation of day-to-day Repairs expenditure by internal audit.

Reason for the Decision:

As per 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.

In response to member's questions the Housing Finance and Business Manager, the Head of Repairs and Maintenance and the Director of Resources confirmed the following:

- i. As part of their lease agreement, leaseholders would be recharged for their proportion of works undertaken to communal areas such as lifts, roofing and stairwells.
- ii. All communal areas had been assessed for risk and a priority list of works had been drawn up.
- iii. Historically the Councils spend on 'day-to-day repairs' per dwelling had been one of the lowest in the area. The base line figures had therefore been adjusted to address the current overspend.
- iv. The number of jobs received and the average cost per job had significantly increased. RPI inflation and/or the inefficiency of the Councils work may account for this increase and work was being undertaken to address this.
- v. Repairs and Improvements would be looking at more effective accounting methods in the coming year.
- vi. Discussions were ongoing with Apollo regarding the Planned Maintenance Contract and the TUPE arrangements. Staff and unions had requested more time to digest the information and it was estimated that a 12-month agreement would be signed with Apollo on 27 June 2011. As a result of these ongoing discussions, activity had being maintained at a low level and no new large-scale projects had been

commissioned. Weekly updates were being provided to Group Leaders and Spokes and this would continue.

- vii. New procurement arrangements allowed for a second contractor (Kiers) to be put in place. Slippage from last year could therefore be picked up by this contractor.

Councillor Brierley proposed and Councillor Blencowe seconded the following additional recommendation:

- To endorse investigation of day-to-day Repairs expenditure by internal audit.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the additional recommendation by 14 votes to 0 (unanimously).

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendation included in the officer's report by 10 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.

11/37/HMB Update on the Position Regarding Self Financing for the HRA

Matter for Decision: The report provided detail of the latest government proposals, gave an initial indication of the potential financial impact for Cambridge City Council and identified the work-streams that would be necessary to achieve self-financing by April 2012.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Noted progress to date in preparing for self-financing for the HRA and approved the proposed approach to undertaking the remaining work-streams prior to April 2012.

Reason for the Decision:

As per 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.

In response to member's questions the Housing Finance and Business Manager confirmed the following:

- i. Discussions were ongoing as to whether the authority would need to employ any additional treasury management resource to manage the new debt portfolio.
- ii. The 'mix' of debt would be dependant on repayment periods and interest rates in national and international markets. The chosen 'mix' would help influence whether additional treasury management resource was needed.
- iii. As this will be a redistribution of existing housing debt and not new debt nationally, a question raised about any potential impact of increased borrowing and impact on interest rates is not expected to have a direct impact.
- iv. There would be scope for additional borrowing of approximately £10m, and this could be utilised to build more stock or improve existing stock.
- v. From the consultation paper and resulting policy document it was clear that the government would retain some control over rent setting.
- vi. The projected 230m debt was based on guideline rents over a 30-year period. Whilst the authority would not be forced to follow the guideline rents, any decision to reduce rents would have an impact on the ability to service the debt and the resulting resource available to spend on the housing stock.
- vii. Current projections assumed that the authority would move towards target rent by 2015/16, with an annual increase of inflation plus 0.5% per year thereafter.
- viii. Whilst the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) were advising 80% of market rents for any new build projects, this does not currently apply to existing local authority housing. It was acknowledged that there was much confusion around the general requirements of market rents.
- ix. The current level of negative subsidy paid to the government was 13m per year. The complexity of the existing system was one of the

reasons the government had decided that it was no longer fit for purpose.

- x. Some minor changes may be required to the Councils Constitution regarding timings of Council authority in respect of borrowing and debt management and the inter-relationship between the Community Services Scrutiny Committee and the Housing Management Board.
- xi. Officers were concerned about the ability for ministers to re-open debt settlements, as this could take away the incentive for improving HRA stock.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations by 10 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.

11/38/HMB Ditchburn Place Catering Service - changes to Tenancy Conditions and authority to externalise Catering Service provision

Matter for Decision: Following the recent re-tender and award, by the County Council, of the care and support contract at Ditchburn Place, it was now necessary to review the future provision of catering services in the extra care housing scheme.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- (1) Authority given, subject to the appropriate tenant consultation, for change in the tenancy agreement for extra care housing, to include the catering service as a condition of tenancy.
- (2) Authorised the Director of Customer and Community Services to select the most appropriate procurement route and, if appropriate, invite competitive tenders in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and thereafter to award a three-year contract for the provision of a fresh cooked meal service at Ditchburn Place.

Reason for the Decision:

As per Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations:

The Committee received a report from the Head of City Homes.

In response to member's questions the Head of City Homes confirmed the following:

- i. Officers had visited a similar scheme in St Neots and held brief discussions with their external catering provider.
- ii. It was felt that an external catering service could be provided at Ditchburn Place at a price and quality equivalent to the current standard.
- iii. The current kitchen would be utilised to provide a fresh cooked meal service 365 days a year. The authority would not be considering a 'cooked-chilled' option.
- iv. As staff regularly used the catering service at Ditchburn Place, the quality and hygiene standards would be checked on a daily basis.
- v. Members could be supplied with suggested menus and information regarding ingredient sourcing.
- vi. Members were encouraged to visit Ditchburn Place to sample the catering services and talk to staff and residents.

Councillor Blencowe proposed and Councillor Rosenstiel seconded a minor amendment to the second recommendation to specify that the contract would be for a 'fresh cooked meal service at Ditchburn Place'.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed recommendation (1) by 12 votes to 0.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the amended recommendation (2) by 8 votes to 0.

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.

11/39/HMB Minor Amendments to the Constitution of the Housing Management Board

Matter for Decision: Approval of minor amendments to the Constitution of the Housing Management Board.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Approved the following amendments to the Terms of Reference.
 - Following the Council's restructure, the department that contained the housing service was now called Customer and Community Services. The Board's Terms of Reference to be updated to reflect this.
 - The Cambridge Federation of Tenants, Leaseholders and Residents decided to end their partnership with the Council from 1-4-2011. Obsolete references to the partnership to be deleted from the Board's Terms of Reference.

Reason for the Decision:

As per 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.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations by 14 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 7.50 pm

CHAIR