



## Housing Scrutiny Committee 24 January 2023

### 5. Estates and Facilities Compliance Data

The Executive Councillor noted the status of the compliance dashboard with reference to Electrical Inspection Condition Reports. The compliance team were currently reviewing and consolidating Electrical Installation Certificate (EIC) and Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR) data. The heating services and maintenance contract was to include the delivery of electrical inspections reporting from November 2022. The request related to Electrical Inspection Condition Reporting as data was being reviewed and verified and had not been completed at the time of reporting.

### 6. Housing Ombudsman determinations

The Executive Councillor noted the information contained within the officer's report and approved the remedial actions outlined and measures established to reduce or eliminate the risk of repeat mistakes in future cases.

### 7. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Setting Report (BSR)

The Executive Councillor

- i. Approved that council dwellings rents for all social rented and social shared ownership properties be increased by 5%, recognising that inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at September 2022, plus 1% would result in an increase of 11.1%, that the government has introduced a cap on rent increases at 7% from April 2023, but that a local decision is made to implement a lower rent increase to mitigate the impact on

- tenants. Rent increases will take effect from 3 April 2023. This equates to an average rent increase of £5.36 per week.
- ii. Approved that affordable rents, inclusive of service charge, are also increased by 5% in line with the increase for social rents. This equates to an average rent increase of £7.81 per week.
  - iii. Approved that rents for affordable shared ownership properties are increased by 7% or RPI at January 2023 plus 0.5% whichever is the lower, from April 2023, recognising that although the government rent cap does not apply to this tenure, an increase of in excess of 7% may put undue financial pressure on these households.
  - iv. Approved that garage and parking space charges for 2023/24, are increased by inflation at 3%, recognising that although inflation is currently at a higher rate, there is a need to balance increases with the ability to let vacant garages, and that charges for parking permits are reviewed, with any resulting charges summarised in Section 3 of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
  - v. Approved the proposed service charges for Housing Revenue Account services and facilities, as shown in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
  - vi. Approved the proposed leasehold administration charges for 2023/24, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
  - vii. Approved that caretaking, building cleaning, window cleaning, estate services, grounds maintenance, temporary housing premises and utilities, sheltered scheme premises and utilities, digital television aerial, gas maintenance, door entry systems, lifts, electrical and mechanical maintenance, flat cleaning, third party services, specialist equipment and catering charges continue to be recovered at full cost, as detailed in Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report, recognising that local authorities should endeavour to limit increases to inflation as measured by CPI at September 2022 (10.1%) plus 1%, wherever possible.
  - viii. Approved with any amendments, the Revised Budget identified in Section 4 and Appendix D (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report, which reflects a net reduction in the use of HRA reserves for 2022/23 of £16,521,190.

- ix. Approved with any amendments, any Non-Cash Limit items identified in Section 4 of the HRA Budget Setting Report or shown in Appendix D (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- x. Approved with any amendments, any Savings, Increased Income, Unavoidable Revenue Bids, Reduced Income Proposals and Bids, as shown in Appendix D (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- xi. Approved the resulting Housing Revenue Account revenue budget as summarised in the Housing Revenue Account Summary Forecast 2022/23 to 2027/28 shown in Appendix J of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

The Executive Councillor recommended to Council to:

- i. Approve the revised need to borrow over the 30-year life of the business plan, with the first instance of this anticipated to be in 2023/24, to sustain the proposed level of investment, which includes ear-marking funding for delivery of the 10 Year New Homes Programme.
- ii. Recognise that the constitution delegates Treasury Management to the Head of Finance (Part 3, para 5.11), with Part 4F, C16 stating; 'All executive decisions on borrowing, investment or financing shall be delegated to the Head of Finance, who is required to act in accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.
- iii. Recognise that the decision to borrow significantly to build new homes impacts the authority's ability to set-aside resource to redeem the HRA Self-Financing debt at the point at which the loan portfolio matures, with the need to re-finance debt in the latter stages of the business plan.
- iv. Approve capital bids, as detailed in Appendix D (3) and Appendix E of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- v. Approve the latest Decent Homes and Other HRA Stock Investment Programme, to include re-phasing of elements of the programme into later years, as detailed in Appendix E of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- vi. Approve the latest budget sums, profiling and associated financing for all new build schemes, as detailed in Appendices E and H, and summarised in Appendix K, of the HRA Budget Setting Report.

- vii. Approve allocation of £10,964,000 of funds from the budget earmarked for the delivery of new homes into a scheme specific budget for East Road, in line with the scheme specific report presented as part of the committee cycle.
- viii. Approve the revised Housing Capital Investment Plan as shown in Appendix K of the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- ix. Approve inclusion of Disabled Facilities Grant expenditure and associated grant income from 2022/23 onwards, based upon 2022/23 net grant awarded, with approval of delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to approve an in year increase or decrease in the budget for disabled facilities grants in any year, in direct relation to any increase or decrease in the capital grant funding for this purpose, as received from the County Council through the Better Care Fund.
- x. Approve delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to determine the most appropriate use of any additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding, for the wider benefit of the Shared Home Improvement Agency.
- xi. Approve delegation to the Strategic Director to review and amend the level of fees charged by the Shared Home Improvement Agency for disabled facilities grants and repair assistance grants, in line with any recommendations made by the Shared Home Improvement Agency Board.
- xii. Approve delegation to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to draw down resource from the ear-marked reserves for potential debt redemption or re-investment, for the purpose of open market land or property acquisition or new build housing development, should the need arise, in order to meet deadlines for the use of retained right to buy receipts or to facilitate future site redevelopment.
- xiii. Approve delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to make any necessary technical amendments to detailed budgets in respect of recharges between the General Fund and the HRA, with any change in impact for the HRA to be reported and incorporated as part of the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2023.

xiv. Note the result of the Homes England Compliance Audit in respect of rough sleeper property acquisitions at confidential Appendix M, recognising there is no corrective action to be taken.

## 8. Void Management Policy

The Executive Councillor

- i. Approved the Council's Void Management Policy and the revised re-let standard, recognising the factors influencing the Policy that has resulted in the prioritised works to be undertaken in the stock whilst vacant.
- ii. Agreed the revised Cambridge Re-Let Standard and note how the Standard will be communicated to current tenants looking to transfer and those on the Housing Register, via the Council's website and in the Sign-up pack.
- iii. Recognised that this Policy will need to be reviewed again within 2 years, as the Government White Paper for Social Housing Regulation was not yet passed as formal legislation at the time of writing this report and we believe this will have implications on this Policy, once in place.

## 9. Regular Update on the development and delivery of new council homes

The Executive Councillor noted the continued progress on the delivery of the approved housing programme.

## 10. Homelessness Prevention Grants to Agencies 2023-24

The Executive Councillor

- i. Approved the award of homelessness prevention grants to voluntary and community organisations for 2023-24, as set out in Appendix 1 of the officer's report.
- ii. Approve that funding from this grant programme is set aside so that a procurement exercise can be opened for a three-year contract for winter accommodation for rough sleepers, beginning from the winter of 2023-24.

## 11. Report on Proposed Development Scheme at Corner East Road and St Matthews Street

## The Executive Councillor

- i. Approved that the 100% affordable housing scheme (option A) be brought forward and be included in the Housing Capital Programme, with an indicative capital budget of £10,964,000. Budget will be drawn down from the sum already ear-marked and approved for investment in new homes.
- ii. Authorised the Strategic Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing to approve variations to the scheme including the affordable rent levels, number of units and mix of property types, sizes and tenure as outlined in this report.
- iii. Authorised the Strategic Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing to adopt option B; to deliver 40% affordable housing (16 homes), with rents set at 60% of Market rent or Current Local Housing Allowance, whichever is lowest, should this be necessary to ensure continued financial viability.
- iv. Approved delegation to the Head of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, to agree the terms in relation to the sale of land, should option B be adopted and market sale units be delivered upon which a capital receipt to the council would be due.
- v. Approved that delegated authority be given to the Executive Councillor for Housing in conjunction with the Strategic Director to enable the site to be developed through Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) subject to a value for money assessment to be carried out on behalf of the Council.

## 12. Acquisition of Property.

The decision was noted.

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