

**HOUSING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MINUTES**15 January 2003
5.30pm – 8.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Griffiths (Chair), Councillors, Bagnall, Benstead, Currie, James, Liddle (Vice-Chair), Pinnington, Stebbings, Todd-Jones

ALSO PRESENT : Executive Councillor Housing And Health: Councillor Nimmo-Smith

Tenant representatives: Mr B Haywood, Mrs K Harris

Co-opted Members: Mr H Gault (Cambridgeshire Social Services), Dr D Gregson (Cambridge Primary Care Trust)

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**03/HH/01 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2002 were confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendment in minute 02/HH/28, the second paragraph:

Delete all and replace with 'Councillor Bagnall informed the Committee that the Regional Assembly had set up a Housing Panel and in her view, it was vital that the city had representation on it'.

03/HH/02 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bell and Mr T Sweeney (Tenant Representative). Mr Sweeney had resigned from the Committee and a replacement member would be elected by the Federation.

03/HH/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stebbings declared a personal interest in minute number 03/HH/11 as he knew the owners of two of the properties; he remained in the room and took part in the discussions.

Councillors Pinnington and Stebbings declared personal interests in minute number 03/HH/07 as they were Council tenants. They remained in the room and took part in the discussion.

Councillor Bagnall declared a personal interest in minute number 03/HH/06 as a member of the Cambridge Women and Homelessness Group and Cambridge Women's Aid. She remained in the room and took part in the discussion.

03/HH/04 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A member of the public addressed the meeting on the subject of Compulsory Purchase Orders (see minute 03/HH/11).

03/HH/05 IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF THE PEOPLE OF CAMBRIDGE (see also Record of Decision 03/h&h/01)

The Chief Executive introduced the report and welcomed Dr Gregson as a co-opted member representing the Primary Care Trust, a key partner in the plan. Dr Gregson commended the council for looking at the wider determinants affecting health and for putting prevention high on the agenda.

Councillor Bagnall suggested that it would be desirable to have a mutual exchange of information on priorities between the new County Council Scrutiny Panel for health services in the Cambridge area and Housing & Health Scrutiny Committee. The City Council had appointed three representatives on the Panel.

The Committee agreed with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor as stated in the report.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

03/HH/06 **KEY DECISION GENERAL FUND SERVICE PLANS, DRAFT BUDGETS 2003/04 AND FORECAST 2004/05** *(see also Record of Decision 03/h&h/02)*

The Committee considered each service plan in turn and asked key questions of clarification. Councillor Bagnall suggested that, in future, the critical Performance Indicators be highlighted and receive consideration.

The Executive Councillor introduced the draft budgets highlighting the key bids. He said that he was minded to explore funding the Anti-Social Behaviour Project Co-ordinator for a further 2 years only. The temporary housing managed by King Street Housing Society on behalf of the Council was important because it contributed to the Council's housing strategy.

The Committee agreed with the recommendations (6 votes to 0) for the Executive Councillor as stated in the report, and amended in relation to the funding of the Anti-Social Behaviour Project Co-ordinator post.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations as amended.

03/HH/07 **KEY DECISION – HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SERVICE PLANS, DRAFT BUDGET 2003/04** *(see also Record of Decision 03/h&h/03)*

The Executive Councillor highlighted key aspects of improving services – exploring how the Housing Management Board could empower tenants locally and reviewing the caretaking service. He said he was waiting for the framework from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister about rent restructuring and the Supporting People initiative. There was built-in protection for those tenants facing the largest increase in rents in order for the Council to meet the target rents set by the Government. There were to be discussions with tenants about areas of discretion as regards what service charges to introduce as recommended by the Government.

The Head of Housing Services mentioned an issue raised by tenants at the Housing Management Board to do with the cost borne by the Housing Revenue Account for the Rangers Service. He explained that this referred to an annual survey of footpaths to help if there were insurance claims and, in time, to reduce the funds spent by the Housing Revenue Account on insurance.

Councillor Bagnall said that a consequence of the new Government initiatives meant that tenants in neighbouring properties could be asked to pay different rents for the same services because the Supporting People benefit would not be granted to everyone. Councillors and officers needed to be prepared as service charges caused most concern to tenants. She hoped that the new area committees might be able to accommodate discussion of concerns about the Council's landlord responsibilities.

The Committee agreed with the recommendations (6 votes to 0) for the Executive Councillor as stated in the report.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

03/HH/08 **MEMBERSHIP OF HOUSING PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL**

The Committee noted that Councillor Griffiths would replace the Executive Councillor on the Housing Performance Monitoring Panel.

Councillor Bagnall asked for a review of the roles of the various sub-committees over the spring and summer. The Executive Councillor said that this was in hand but that an undertaking had been given to tenants to maintain the structure in the medium term. In the long term, the Housing Management Board was the setting for monitoring performance. Mr Haywood spoke on behalf of tenants affirming that the Housing Performance Monitoring Panel was an excellent forum for tenants to give their views and that as the Housing Management Board had only just started, its members were not yet in a position to carry out a full monitoring role.

03/HH/09 **HEAVY DRINKERS PROJECT**

The Committee noted that the decision had to be made because the original plan for converting an existing building to provide accommodation for heavy drinkers in the city had not been possible. The only option was to buy a property. The joint bid agreed with the Housing Corporation could not be carried forward into the next financial year, 2003/04.

03/HH/10 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved

To exclude members of the public from the meeting on the grounds that, if they were present, there would be disclosure to them of information defined as exempt from publication by paragraphs 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and set out in the Appendix 1 of Part 4B of the Council's Constitution.

03/HH/11 **COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDERS** (*see also Records of Decision 03/h&h/04 and 03/h&h/05*)

Property A: The Committee remained very concerned that the property remained vacant and unfit for occupation, and expected the owner to put forward proposals to improve the property and bring it back into use. The Committee said it was happy for the Executive Councillor to make a decision on whether to pursue compulsory purchase in the light of any proposals made by the owner without further reference to the Scrutiny Committee.

Properties B and C: The Committee agreed unanimously to recommend the making of compulsory purchase orders to bring the properties identified in the reports back into habitable use.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations as set out above.

03/HH/12 **FORMER TENANT ARREARS – WRITING OFF BAD DEBT** (*see also Record of Decision 03/h&h/06*)

The Committee agreed unanimously with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor as stated in the report.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

CHAIR