

**HOUSING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MINUTES**12 March 2003
5.30pm – 10.45pm

PRESENT: Councillor Griffiths (Chair), Councillors, Bagnall, Currie, James, Liddle 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/13 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2003 were confirmed as a correct record.

03/HH/14 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Benstead and Miss J Tipple (Tenant Representative).

03/HH/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Pinnington and Stebbings declared personal interests 03/HH/19, 24 and 25 as they were Council tenants. They remained in the room and took part in the discussion.

Councillor Stebbings declared a personal interests in minute number 03/HH/23 and 30 as his mother was a tenant in a sheltered housing scheme. He remained in the room and took part in the discussion.

03/HH/16 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public

03/HH/17 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SCRUTINY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE (*See also Record of Decision 03/hh/07*)

The report by the Chief Executive referred to the legislation effective from 1 January 2003 allowing social services authorities to scrutinise health services and summarised the regulations. It also covered the local response to the legislation and membership of the Area Panels. A set of Working Principles to guide the scrutiny process had been prepared; these needed formal agreement prior to the first meeting of the County Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee on 18^t March 2003.

Members endorsed the view that the scrutiny process should be reciprocal, and that consideration of health issues should be broadly based.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

03/HH/18 **GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET, CARRY FORWARDS AND SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/08)*

The officers' report looked at the latest budget position in the current financial year, 2002/03, for housing general fund services, highlighted anticipated significant variances and listed requests for approval to carry forward certain budget under-spends to 2003/04, subject to final outturn.

Members expressed concern at the increasing cost of providing bed and breakfast accommodation resulting in overspending on that budget and inhibiting provision of permanent accommodation for people at risk.

The Committee agreed (by 6 votes to 0) the recommendation for the Executive Councillor as stated in the report with the priority given to spending from carry forwards on the rough sleepers and single homeless strategy.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

03/HH/19 **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT, CAPITAL, CARRY FORWARDS AND SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/09)*

The officers' report looked at the latest budget position in the current financial year, 2002/03, for the Housing Revenue Account. It highlighted any significant variances or requirements to carry forward budgets.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/20 **FREEHOLD PURCHASE OF PROPERTY FOR USE FOR CLINIC FOR THE HOMELESS - DECISION BY THE LEADER** *(See also Record of Decision Strategy/030205)*

In accordance with the Constitution, the Committee noted a Decision by the Leader relating to the proposed purchase of a property to provide a GP service for the Homeless.

03/HH/21 **GAS MAINTENANCE SERVICE PARTNERING - DECISION BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR (HOUSING AND HEALTH)** *(See also Record of Decision SU/h&h/01)*

In accordance with the Constitution, the Committee noted a Decision by the Executive Councillor (Housing and Health) relating to the gas appliance maintenance service. The current contract runs out on 31st March 2003 and a new contract is required to ensure continued provision of service.

03/HH/22 **REMEDIAL WORKS TO ROOFS AT BERMUDA TERRACE ESTATE
- DECISION BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR (HOUSING AND
HEALTH)** *(See also Record of Decision SU/h&h/02)*

In accordance with the Constitution, the Committee noted a Decision by the Executive Councillor (Housing and Health) relating to a tender for remedial works to the roofs at Cooper House, Daniels House, Burgess House, St David's House, and Spencer House at Bermuda Terrace. Following the severe damage to the roof at Gibbons House caused by the recent gales, officers undertook a survey of the remaining properties at Bermuda Terrace where the roof is of a similar design.

03/HH/23 **REPLACEMENT OF HOME LIFTS IN SHELTERED SCHEMES** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/10)*

The officers' report covered the proposed replacement of lifts which were reaching the end of their useful life and for which it was not possible to obtain spare parts for ongoing servicing and maintenance at a number of sheltered schemes.

The Scrutiny Committee expressed concern that tenants affected by the replacement scheme, should only be charged rent for one property at a time, and that the replacement would be carried out with a minimum of disruption.

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Executive Councillor as stated in the report, subject to the clarification to tenants of the position on rents.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/24 **KEY DECISION HOUSING CAPITAL OVERVIEW REPORT
2002/03 AND 2003/04** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/11)*

The officers' report referred to the capital plan and reminded members of the briefing papers issued in January 2003, explaining the current situation on funding and current spending of the 2002/03 capital programme and proposed funding of the 2003/04 capital programme. In November 2002 a report had been approved showing the proposed schemes for 2003/04 Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) funding. Further changes had been anticipated to both of the programmes. Subsequently a number of Government announcements over recent months were impacting on this area and were brought to Members attention in the body of the report. The officers' report also highlighted projected funding streams for the Housing Programme of Works and Housing Partners Reports, which were elsewhere on the agenda for the meeting.

The officers outlined the various elements of housing funding that were likely to change in the near future and have an impact on the capital programme including the progress towards debt free status, the availability of right-to-buy funding, and the abolition of Local Authority Social Housing Grant funding. Many of the issues had yet to be resolved, and the capital programme would have to be amended to take account of developments as they were determined.

Members drew attention to the need to work closely with the Regional Housing Board to improve the use of centrally available resources.

The Committee agreed the recommendation (by 6 votes to 0) for the Executive Councillor as stated in the report, subject to further clarification of the emerging position on the availability and use of resources on capital financing.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/25 KEY DECISION **FIVE YEAR HOUSING PROGRAMME OF WORK
2004/05 – 2008/09** (*See also Record of Decision 03/hh/12*)

At the November meeting of this committee officers had been asked to report on the proposed five-year plan that would form the basis of the statistical information provided to the Government Office as part of the Business Plan submission in July 2003. The programme submitted covered work to bring homes up to the Decent Homes Standard, to prevent homes failing the Decent Homes Standard and other works (e.g. disabled adaptations, door entry systems, environmental works etc.). The detailed programme to be drawn up was to be based upon the need identified within the Codeman stock condition database, which identified the age and condition of key parts in the properties that are the tests set for meeting the decent homes standard.

The officers drew members attention to the updating of stock condition information on an ongoing basis as a result of void inspections, estate inspections, and the forthcoming inspections for repairs associated with the painting programme for 2003/04. The situation that was reported would continue to be updated as more information is fed into the database. Officers were able to provide an overview of the investment needs, although detailed programmes with addresses would continue to develop.

The details included in the report at Appendix A of the report, reflected the proposed programme based upon known need at the current time. The actual detailed programmes to be submitted as part of the Business Plan would need to be amended in the light of any new condition, information, or as the result of amendments to the database arising from the verification process.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/26 KEY DECISION **CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL ASBESTOS
POLICY** (*See also Record of Decision 03/hh/13*)

The officers' report referred to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and regulations relating to the requirement of employers to provide a safe workplace. Since Cambridge City Council staff were occasionally employed in the maintenance and refurbishment of housing stock, constituting a workplace, the Council was required to comply with the existing and proposed Control of Asbestos at Work regulations.

Members suggested that the adoption of the policy be published in as sensitive manner as possible to tenants.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/27 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved to exclude members of the public from the meeting during discussion of 03/HH/28 and 29 on the grounds that, if the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of information defined as exempt from publication by paragraph 8 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and set out in Appendix 1 of Part 4B of the Council's Constitution.

**03/HH/28 KEY DECISION PRIORITY LIST OF BIDS RECEIVED FOR
2003/04 SOCIAL HOUSING GRANT INVESTMENT PROGRAMME**
(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/14)

The officers' report set out the priority list of projects for funding either through the Housing Corporation Approved Development Programme or the transitional funding provided instead of the recently abolished Local Authority Social Housing Grant. Officers noted that because of recent changes in funding regulations the first project, Cambourne RSL Consortium, on the priority list shown in Appendix A was no longer eligible.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

**03/HH/29 KEY DECISION THE COUNCIL'S APPROVED LIST OF
HOUSING PARTNERS** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/15)*

The officers' noted that a significant requirement of the Council's 'Affordable Housing Strategy' was that all new grant funded development was to be commissioned through an approved list of Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners.

The current list consisted of 8 RSLs had been in place for approximately 7 years. It had been decided to review the approved list to ensure best value from its partner relationships. Once the new list was in place, interim reviews would be held to evaluate the service provided.

The need for the current review arose to take account of significant strategic changes to the way the Housing Corporation allocated housing investment resources through its Approved Development Programme and to maximise operational efficiency.

In the absence of background information to the RSLs selected the Committee agreed to the deferral of its recommendation to the Executive Councillor, in accordance with provisions in the Constitution, pending its provision.

**03/HH/30 KEY DECISION PLANNED MODERNISATION PROGRAMME
FOR RAWLYN COURT SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME** *(See also
Record of Decision 03/hh/16)*

The Executive Councillor (Housing and Health) approved a modernisation programme of the Rawlyn Court Sheltered Scheme.

Two routes were available to conclude the modernisation of the scheme, a traditional contracting route and the more preferred route of Partnership. This met current Government recommendations for carrying out major works of this type and would also allow more scope for tenant involvement in the modernisation process, as the construction partner would be more involved in the discussions with the current tenants.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/31 **KEY DECISION COUNTY WIDE BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SHELTERED HOUSING** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/17)*

The officer's report referred to the decision to carry out a combined Supporting People review of sheltered housing accommodation, with a Best Value Review by the five main housing providers in Cambridgeshire, i.e. the District Councils and voluntary transfer Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Following discussions between the district councils and RSLs it had been agreed that a county wide review of sheltered housing take place.

The City Council was to take a lead role in undertaking the Best Value Review on a county level and the proposed format of the Review was set out in the report. Funding was required to support the employment of an external facilitator, to enable the review to be carried out on a county wide basis.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/32 **FOOD SERVICE PLAN** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/18)*

The Environmental Health and Waste Strategy Service (EHWSS) was responsible for enforcing specific food safety legislation. Since 1 April 2000, food authorities had been subject to scrutiny by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). In September 2000, the FSA had published the Agreement which laid down its expectations of local authorities in respect of their food safety functions. One of the requirements in the Agreement was that authorities should produce a Food Service Plan in accordance with its guidance on content and format.

The Environmental Health Service had for many years produced its own general service plan covering many of the food safety issues required by the FSA in the Agreement. It was proposed that the general service plan would continue to provide an overview of the whole service and be made available for Members, and that a separate Food Service Plan was produced to meet the FSA requirements. The FSA had also stated that the Plan should receive Member approval.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/33 **HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE PLAN** (*See also Record of Decision 03/hh/19*)

The Environmental Health and Waste Strategy Service (EHWSS) was responsible for enforcing health and safety legislation for specific types of business activity e.g. offices, shops and restaurants. The Environmental Health Service had for many years produced its own general service plan that included reference to health and safety enforcement work. This plan had been circulated to Members for their information.

In September 2001, the Health and Safety Commission (HSC), in its guidance to local authorities under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HASWA), had introduced a requirement that they produce a dedicated Health and Safety Service Plan to be reported for approval to the appropriate member forum. The Food Safety Service Plan was approved by the Housing and Health Committee in January 2002.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/34 **KEY DECISION PRIVATE SECTOR STOCK CONDITION SURVEY 2002** (*See also Record of Decision 03/hh/20*)

In accordance with guidance from the DTLR the City Council had budgeted to carry out a house condition stock survey every 5 years. The recent survey had been carried out by Fordham Research, between May and July 2002. The survey had included 1000 dwellings and considered house condition, especially fitness for habitation. The analysis had been supplemented by energy efficiency and housing, health and safety analysis.

This consultant's report focused on key issues, namely the profile of the housing stock, its state of repair, fitness and energy efficiency; matters concerning houses in multiple occupation; and grant and other resource implications. It took into account proposed changes in housing legislation, namely, Housing Health and Safety Rating System and the Regulatory Repair (Housing Assistance) Order.

The report findings would influence the priorities of the Housing Standards Team in 2003/04 onwards, the Housing Strategy of the Council and the policies adopted. It was essential that the Environmental Health and Waste Strategy Service continued to work closely with the Housing Service and other partners in order to improve housing condition across the private sector.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/35 **KEY DECISION REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE BEST VALUE FUNDAMENTAL SERVICE REVIEW - ACTION PLAN** (*See also Record of Decision 03/hh/21*)

The officers' report was an interim report prepared prior to the official publication of the Housing Inspectorate's Inspection Report on maintenance and repair. The full inspection report would be presented to the Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee at their next meeting on 9/7/2003 together with a five-year continuous programme which would address issues raised in the report and identified in the Best Value Fundamental Service Review process.

The purpose of this report was to set out the present position with the Review and Inspection and to consider immediate action, which needed to be agreed. The report also sought to provide greater clarity in two policy areas, tenancy termination and response times to requests for repairs and maintenance.

Members noted the imminent publication of the inspector's report and the difficulty which this presented in giving it proper consideration at this time. It was suggested that a workshop be held for members on the report before the next scheduled meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Executive Councillor as stated in the report with the addition of a workshop to be arranged for members on the Housing Inspector's report.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations

03/HH/36 KEY DECISION **REGULATORY REFORM ORDER – ADOPTION OF NEW POLICY** (See also *Record of Decision 03/hh/22*)

On 18 July 2003 the regulations governing the allocation of grant funding under the Housing Act 1985 and the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 were to be repealed and replaced by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002. Failure to comply with the requirement to adopt a policy in accordance with the regulations would result in the Authority not being able to provide assistance to the more vulnerable members of the community to repair and maintain their homes. The proposed policy would enable the Authority to address some of the unfit properties in the city that were owned and occupied by people on low income with little or no savings.

As there was currently a lack of suitable financial packages available for people who were elderly, disabled or on low income, this policy would enable the Council to continue to investigate other options of funding for home improvements, such as equity release schemes and introduce new products and packages as and when they are developed by the financial institutions.

The authority would continue to develop new ways of funding these works including partnership working with independent financial institutions. As and when appropriate products were available from these institutions clients would be informed and the authority would give due consideration to the availability of grant assistance based on the products available to the client as well as other criteria within the policy.

whether or not to adopt the policy, subject to consultation, outlined in appendix 1 in order to continue providing assistance for people on low income; who are frail & elderly and those with disabilities in the city of Cambridge to repair and maintain their homes to a reasonable standard.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

03/HH/37 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved to exclude members of the public from the meeting during discussion of 03/HH/38 on the grounds that, if the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of information defined as exempt from publication by paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and set out in Appendix 1 of Part 4B of the Council's Constitution.

03/HH/38 **WRITE OFF OF FORMER TENANT ARREARS** (*See also Record of Decision 03/hh/23*)

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

The meeting closed at 10.45pm

CHAIR