

# Housing Performance Monitoring Panel

## 23 June 2003 5:30 – 7.35pm

### Minutes

Present: Councillors: James(Chair), Smart  
Representatives of the Cambridge Federation of Tenants,  
Leaseholders and Residents: Brian Haywood, Leila Dockerill,  
Rosina McCamley, Simon Windmill (Officer).  
Also present: Executive Councillor for Housing & Health:  
Councillor Nimmo-Smith

#### 1. MINUTES

**Action by**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

#### 2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bell and Pinnington.

Councillor Smart gave members of the Panel an update on Councillor Pinnington who had been seriously ill. Members of the Panel signed a card to send to Councillor Pinnington.

#### 3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public wished to address the Panel.

#### 4. THE CAMBRIDGE FEDERATION PERFORMANCE MONITORING INDICATORS OCTOBER 2002 TO MARCH 2003

Simon Windmill asked for questions and comments on the report written by his predecessor Alison Fox.

The Chair asked for his name to be added to the list of those who attended the training session on 14 November on 'The allocations process and policy explained'. He said it had been a very useful meeting for him as a Councillor and the tenant members of the Panel said they too had found it helpful.

Simon  
Windmill

Simon Windmill affirmed that keeping in touch with Residents Associations was crucial and that the Federation was currently undertaking a review to find out whether the questionnaires sent out were effective.

In relation to the merger of Trumpington, Monkswell and Anstey Way Residents' Associations, the Executive Councillor asked whether there was a maximum area which any one Residents Association could

cover. Simon Windmill said that the Federation had no particular view and the Director of Community Services indicated that the merged Associations still covered a relatively small area. **Action by**

There were currently 21 active Residents' Associations across the city.

The Executive Councillor requested that a map of the areas covered by the Residents Associations be made available. Mr Haywood agreed to provide this once copyright issues had been sorted out as they were on street maps of the city. Brian Haywood

The Executive Councillor asked Simon Windmill to thank Alison Fox for her work especially that on tenant participation. He also wished the Federation well in its review and in the recruitment of new staff. Simon Windmill

The Chair also mentioned the contribution of Simon Pearce who was Secretary at the beginning of the establishment of Residents Associations. Simon Windmill

## **5. QUARTERLY REPORT ON HOUSING MANAGEMENT**

The Performance and Policy Manager presented a report which described the performance of the Housing Service. He highlighted the following aspects:

- The Action points from the last meeting which had been implemented.
- Best Value Fundamental Service Review of Repairs and Major Works. A 5-year action plan would be presented to the Housing & Health Scrutiny Committee in July.
- The Performance Management Plans which included each member of staff setting personal objectives aligned with the Council's Medium Term Objectives.

In response to questions from Panel members the officers made the following points:

- An initial report on Stock Condition would go to Housing & Health Scrutiny Committee on 9 July.
- Staff who cleared the backlog of work to provide tenants with safety certificates for all gas appliances were to be congratulated.
- Improvements had been made to the telephone performance because of better management

Rosina McCamley said that her gas appliances had not been inspected for 18 months and it was agreed that this should be followed up. Robert Hollingsworth

### **Appendix 1 - Estimated cost of carrying out the Repairs and Major Works Best Value Fundamental Service Review**

The Executive Councillor noted that this was a request made by Councillor Howell who had been right to be concerned as staff costs represented time that could have been spent otherwise. The costs of £41,000 in a budget of £10m represented an adequate outcome against investment.

## **Appendix 2 - Cambridge Big Issue**

The Housing Needs Manager reported that there were 2 part time postholders who administered the 16 pitches in Cambridge. The police thought the scheme worked well.

The Chair asked if it would be possible to set up a register of Big Issue sellers. The Housing Needs Manager said that could be considered as part of the wider strategy. Naisha Polaine

The Executive Councillor said it was important to continue the dialogue and to discover whether the scheme did contribute to homeless people moving on into a sustainable lifestyle. Naisha Polaine

The Housing Needs Manager reported that there was a high turnover of vendors, that 2 years was the longest known tenure and that 2 people had used it to build a sustainable lifestyle.

## **Appendix 3 - Family Group Comparison – Percentage of Homeless Applications Decided within 33 days**

The Housing Needs Manager explained that 33 days was the target set by the Government. While Cambridge performed quite well in comparison to other authorities (only 4 out of 14 performed better), more was being done to improve the situation. There was always a balance to be found between speed and quality of decision making and applicants did have a statutory right of appeal which prolonged the time taken to decide.

In response to a question from Brian Haywood, the Housing Needs Manager explained that accommodation was allocated on the basis of one third for homeless persons, one third for transfers and one third for the general needs register. The accommodation used to house homeless applicants was always designated for temporary use. Fifty such dwellings were in the private sector. There was a need to influence citizens' perceptions about the facilities offered to homeless persons.

The Chair reminded the Panel that the Council had a statutory obligation to house homeless persons.

## **Appendix 4 - Analysis of letters not answered within the target timescale**

Councillor Smart and the Executive Councillor commended the exercise, saying that it was worthwhile identifying system failures and finding ways to tackle those. It was agreed that a similar analysis be done in the month of September.

Alastair  
Roberts  
**Action by**

### **Appendix 5 - Anti Social Behaviour and Neighbour Nuisance figures January – March 2003**

The Performance and Policy Manager explained that there was a good deal of preventative work being implemented and that the figures given would be refined in future reports.

The Panel considered whether it were possible to publicise serious cases to indicate the Council's commitment to deal with anti social behaviour. Issues of confidentiality would have to be surmounted.

Alastair  
Roberts

## **6 MEMBERS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Panel was asked to agree the targets set in the report or to set alternative ones.

**The Panel agreed the targets as set out in the report except for the following:**

The Panel considered the merits of percentage figures versus absolute ones especially in relation to BV184. It was agreed to use an absolute figure (2270) for the current year, to ascertain the percentage of stock defined as non decent at the end of 03-04 and to state by how many and by what percentage this had to be reduced in subsequent years to reach zero by the end of 2010.

David Farmer

BV183 – while the target was agreed, the Executive Councillor asked that exceptions be noted as and when they occurred.

11 – Local Performance Indicator: Set at 20 days rather than 18.

Naisha  
Polaine

14 – New Local Performance Indicator: Number of Rough Sleepers permanently re-housed. The Housing Needs Manager commented that this would be treated as a thermometer and would be useful as more was learned about the Cambridge context. She reported that 5 clients had been permanently re-housed, two in Council accommodation and 3 in the voluntary sector.

15 – BVPI 74: Following a request by Leila Dockerill, it was agreed that the number of complaints about repairs received each week would be monitored.

Alastair  
Roberts

## **7 Single Homeless and Rough Sleeping Partnership - Action Plan:**

The Housing Needs Manager reported on key areas:

- At the last street count the previous week there were 13 rough sleepers. This was an increase but not unexpected for the time of year (between Strawberry and Mid Summer Fairs).
- She was hopeful that an information sharing protocol would be agreed with partner agencies in 2 weeks.
- A drug and alcohol Action Plan providing access to detoxification and rehabilitation facilities would provide a pilot for a new model of care for clients.
- There had been an increase in complaints about street drinking.
- Plans for a wet hostel had proved controversial.
- 'Giving' boxes were to be made available to the public to enable them to support the homeless without giving directly to individuals.
- Contracts for 125 Newmarket Road were due to be exchanged on 4 August.
- Accommodation for continuing drinkers, the Jubilee project under Elizabeth Way bridge and the Young People's Research and Action Plan would be presented to the Housing & Health Scrutiny Committee on 9 July.

**Action by**

The Executive Councillor asked for more information about the national project – the New Model of Care. The Housing Needs Manager explained that the new model of care involved trying to keep the individual in drug treatment once they had started. One organisation would be responsible for management of the programme and the others would be part of the overall support.

The Chair thanked the Housing Needs Manager and her team for all their work.

## **8 Dates of Future Meetings**

Before future meeting dates were agreed, the Executive Councillor spoke about the future of the Panel (HPMP). The Panel was set up by Housing & Health Committee to undertake proper scrutiny during the process of Compulsory Competitive Tendering. Now that there was a new constitution which had set up the Housing Management Board (HMB) which had been running for nearly a year, it was time to consider whether the functions connected with the Housing Revenue Account were more appropriately dealt with by HMB than by HPMP. The scrutiny function should be undertaken by those who made the strategy which in the case of the Rough Sleepers should be Housing & Health Scrutiny Committee. The intention was not to reduce tenant participation but rather to find the best way to use their valuable resources. Housing & Health Scrutiny Committee would consider the matter as the Panel was a Sub-Committee of that Committee.

The Chair said that the Panel would await the decision of the Scrutiny Committee.

Tenants expressed their hope that they would still be an important voice which was listened to.

**Action by**

Subject to the decision of the Housing & Health Scrutiny Committee, the Panel agreed to meet on 13 October, 15 December 2003 and 23 February 2004.

Committee  
Manager

The meeting ended at 7.35pm.

**CHAIR**

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