

# Housing Management Board

8 July 2003  
5.00pm – 7.00pm

Present: B Haywood (Chair), S Best, C Christofis, Councillor L Downham, J Griffiths, Councillor C Smart, Councillor R Stebbings, Councillor M Todd-Jones, L Routledge, T Sweeney

Also Present: Councillor I Nimmo-Smith (Executive Councillor Housing and Health)

The Chair welcomed the new members of the Board.

## **1 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 10 March 2003 were confirmed as a correct record.

## **2 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Adey and J Pinnington.

Councillor Nimmo-Smith updated the Board about Councillor Pinnington's health. He said she had been seriously ill for a number of weeks and that it would be some time before she was well enough to take up her duties again. The Chair handed round a card for Board members to sign and send to her wishing her a speedy recovery.

## **3 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Stebbings declared a personal interest as a council tenant. Mr Sweeney and Mr Haywood declared personal interests in agenda item number 19 as Chair and member of the Board of the Cambridge Federation of Tenants, Leaseholders and Residents respectively. All stayed in the room and took part in the discussions.

## **4 Public Question Time**

There were no questions from members of the public.

## **5 Issues for the Board's Consideration from the Agenda for the Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee for 12 March**

Members considered those items on the Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee agenda which came within the Board's Terms of Reference.

## **9. STOCK OPTIONS – DRAFT REPORT**

Members heard the background to the options outlined in the report. The Council wanted to set realistic local standards for housing stock in Cambridge which is more than the minimum required by government. This would be done in consultation with

tenants and staff. How to achieve the standards agreed would then inform which option was the best fit.

Board members raised a number of issues on this report:

- It was important not to raise the standard to a level in order to have an ALMO that it was then decided the Council did not want; that there were high level of aspirations in Cambridge and these needed to be managed.
- Given the past history with stock options, it could lead to future problems if tenants were not balloted about their preferred option.

It was agreed:

1. To support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor (Housing & Health) set out in the report.
2. To do everything possible to facilitate the process through the Cambridge Federation and other avenues.

#### *10 STRATEGY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF HOUSING RELATED ASSETS 2003 - 2006*

Members heard the background to the programme of work to deliver improvements to the housing stock with funds allocated in the Business Plan. All windows were to be replaced in a 3-year rolling programme starting in April 2004.

It was agreed:

To support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor (Housing & Health) set out in the report.

#### *11 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK*

The report outlined the strategy for the period of the next 7 years for a budget of £60-70m for maintenance and repairs. To achieve best value for money a preferred partner would be identified as happened with the gas maintenance contract. The current preferred partner was the Direct Works Department at City Services so long as they could demonstrate that they could provide the best value. Negotiations would take place with the preferred supplier to create discrete pieces of work which in turn provided best value for money.

Members of the Board commented as follows:

- A similar scheme was working well during the Rawlyn Court refurbishment. A particularly welcome aspect was the regular updates on progress which the residents received while they were temporarily housed elsewhere. It would be an advantage to include this in the work under consideration.

It was agreed:

To support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor (Housing & Health) set out in the report.

## 12 *HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2003 - 2008*

Members of the Board raised the following issues on this report:

- Several members were aware that there were major concerns among tenants about the allocations policy. The perception was that the homeless received priority over those on the waiting list.
- There was not enough information for both councillors and the public about the results of the homelessness appeals process.

It was agreed:

1. To support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor (Housing & Health) set out in the report.
2. To arrange a briefing for members on the allocations policy.
3. To provide more information for tenants on how the whole system works.

## 13 *TEMPORAY CHANGES TO HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY*

The Board heard about the reason for the need for the temporary changes to the policy. The law now states that any homeless person from anywhere in the country can ask to be housed in the city. The temporary change to the policy is to ensure that local Cambridge people do not lose out.

It was agreed:

To support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor (Housing & Health) set out in the report.

## 16 *STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR HOUSING*

The report was being considered at this point in time as the draft Housing Strategy had to be submitted to government in August. Following feedback from government the final Housing Strategy would be submitted to the meeting of the Housing & Health Scrutiny Committee in November.

The Board appreciated the detail in Appendix 3 which gave the timetable for window replacements over the next 3 years for all the Council's properties.

It was agreed:

To support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor (Housing & Health) set out in the report.

## 17 *REPAIRS AND MAJOR WORKS BEST VALUE FUNDAMENTAL SERVICE REVIEW - FINAL REPORT*

The report described the 5-year action plan stemming from issues raised in the Best Value Fundamental Service Review on Repairs and Major Works and the Audit Commission's Gap Inspection on the service. The Plan will be tested with residents and others in the next few months and the final ratification of the Plan will take place at the Housing & Health Scrutiny Committee in November 2003.

It was agreed:

To support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor (Housing & Health) set out in the report.

#### *18 GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS - ANNUAL REVIEW 2003*

The report reviewed the grants that were awarded in 2002/03 as recommended by the Best Value Fundamental Service Review of Grants to Voluntary Organisations.

It was agreed:

1. To support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor (Housing & Health) set out in the report.
2. To review the grants given to Residents' Associations

#### *19 PLANNED MODERNISATION PROGRAMME FOR RAWLYN COURT SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME*

Members were updated on the project to modernise Rawlyn Court Sheltered Housing Scheme. The opportunity had arisen to buy a plot of land from the neighbouring property at 50 Elfleda Road which would allow two purpose built bungalows to be included in the Scheme along with an additional flat in the main building.

The Board welcomed the possibility especially since it would enhance the facilities at the site.

It was agreed:

To support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor (Housing and Health) set out in the report.

At the end of the meeting the Executive Councillor told the Board it would be his last meeting and that Councillor Smart would be proposed as Executive Councillor at the meeting of Council on 17 July. The Board thanked Councillor Nimmo-Smith for the way he had worked with them.