

**HOUSING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MINUTES**9 July 2003
5.30pm – 9.00pm

PRESENT: Councillor Adey (Chair), Councillors Bagnall, Coleman, Downham, James, Stebbings, Todd-Jones

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

Tenant representatives: Mr B Haywood, Mrs K Harris, Miss J Tipple

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

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**03/HH/39 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2003 were confirmed as a correct record.

03/HH/40 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bell and J Smith.

03/HH/41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stebbings declared personal interests as he was a Council tenant. He remained in the room and took part in the discussion.

03/HH/42 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public

03/HH/43 MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY 2004/05 TO 2009/09 *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/25)*

The report by the Director of Finance responded to Part 4C (Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules) of the Council's Constitution which included the requirement for the issuing of a Medium Term Strategy (MTS) document. This document set out the financial context in which the budget for the following year would be made, issues which were or would be facing the Council, policy priorities and an indication of the approach which Executive Councillors were minded to take in respect of preparing budget proposals. The document also outlined proposals for consulting the public regarding budget matters.

A copy of the draft Executive Summary of the MTS was being submitted to all Scrutiny Committees for the purpose of consultation, the aim being to ensure that all appropriate items have been taken into consideration in developing the strategy. The final version was then to be submitted to Council on 17 July 2003 for adoption.

Councillor Bagnall said that the introduction of Area Committees provided an opportunity of discussing housing finance at a local level.

The Committee did not put forward any views on the MTS for consideration by the Leader.

03/HH/44 **GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL FINAL OUTTURN FOR 2002/03, AND BUDGET CARRY FORWARD REQUESTS** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/26)*

The officers' report set out the final outturn position for the financial year 2002/03, in respect of those services reporting to this Committee. The report highlighted any significant variances from budget and updated the requests for approval to carry forward certain budget under-spends to 2003/04 (subject to the Council's final overall outturn position).

Councillor Bagnall said she supported the measures being taken to reduce the cost of providing bed and breakfast accommodation and ensure benefit is claimed in the circumstances.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

03/HH/45 **PROVISIONAL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT OUTTURN FOR 2002/03 AND BUDGET CARRY FORWARD REQUESTS INTO 2003/04** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/27)*

The officers' report set out the provisional revenue income and spend position (revenue outturn) for the 2002/03 financial year and provided the latest position on requests to carry forward underspends into 2003/04. The revenue outturn was compared to the revised budget for 2002/03 and the amount of carried forward requests. The reasons for the main variances were also set out in detail in Appendix B of the report. Appendix C detailed the latest estimates for the carry forwards including any new requests requiring consideration by this committee.

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/46 **HOUSING CAPITAL OUTTURN 2002/03 AND HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2003/04 to 2007/08** *(See also Record of Decision SU/h&h/28)*

This officers' report looked at the final position in the financial year 2002/03, highlighted any significant variations and updated the request to carry forward funding in respect of slippage and underspends in the capital programme to 2003/04. It also recommended changes to the Housing Capital programme for 2003/04, in the light of the latest funding information and forecast outturn for the current year, 2002/03

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/47 **STOCK OPTIONS – DRAFT REPORT** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/29)*

The officers' report said that in 2001 the Council had considered a report on stock options but had concluded that until such time as the future position concerning a number of the options was clearer the Council would continue to manage the stock in house. The report of the Housing Inspectors had been critical that the Council had not made any firm decision on the future options for the stock. As a result a new stock options appraisal had been commissioned from the Housing Quality Network, the organisation that undertook the previous options appraisal.

Since the original stock options report had been produced in 2001 the Communities Plan had been announced on 5 February 2003 and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) had indicated that within the Plan, a stock options appraisal, which had been 'signed off' by the Government Office, needed to be undertaken by July 2005. The detailed criteria for the 'sign off' of appraisals had been announced on 19 June 2003.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/48 **STRATEGY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF HOUSING RELATED ASSETS 2003 - 2006** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/30)*

The report by the officers' said that the CPA inspection report had identified the Asset Management plan as requiring further development. In order to take into account wider strategic considerations it should be underpinned by clear and unambiguous targets for improvement and maintenance of the stock.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/49 **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/31)*

The officers' report said that the last tendering process for Maintenance and Repair had been carried out under Compulsory Competitive Tendering regulations some 8 years ago. The work had been won by City Services and no competing tender had been received. Testing the market for these services had been delayed pending a Best Value Fundamental Service Review and this review had not been completed as the Housing Inspectors carried out a Gap Inspection as part of the Pathfinder CPA inspections carried out by the Audit Commission.

The Council had been criticised in the Housing Inspectors report for failing to test the market or to prove that Best Value had been achieved. A 6-Month Action Plan addressing urgent issues raised by the inspectors had been agreed by the Executive Councillor at the Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee on 12 March 2003. One of the actions was that a Procurement Strategy would be presented to this meeting and

that it would be implemented during the financial year 2004/5. A draft Strategy had been prepared by the Housing Quality Network and this had been tailored to meet the specific characteristics of Cambridge. There had been no detailed consultations with tenants and service providers on the draft Strategy or how work might be packaged. For that reason, one of the early tasks for implementation would be detailed consultation with tenants and service providers. It was also important to ensure that the Procurement Strategy served the objectives of the Asset Management Plan and contribute in a meaningful way to the demonstrable attainment of best value for the authority.

Following publication of the report, officers had revised the recommendations contained in it to seek approval to the priorities for action and provide further details of the tendering strategy.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/50 **HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2003 - 2008** (*See also Record of Decision 03/hh/32*)

The report by the officers said that the Homelessness Act 2002 required all districts to publish a Homelessness Strategy for their area by 31 July 2003. This requirement came from the belief that local housing authorities needed to take a long term and strategic approach to tackling and managing homelessness, including rough sleeping, in their areas.

The Council's proposed Strategy was set out in the Appendix to the report and an Executive Summary had been included in the report reviewing the situation in the city and identifying actions and objectives for service development.

Following publication of the report, officers had revised the recommendations contained in it to authorise the Director of Community Services to make any minor factual amendment necessary before publication of the Strategy.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/51 **TEMPORARY CHANGES TO HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY**
(*See also Record of Decision 03/hh/33*)

The officers' report said that changes in legislation, including the Homelessness Act 2002 had meant that the existing Council Policy on allocation had had to be overridden.

Pending a full review of the Allocations Policy, a temporary decision needed to be made to deal with new applicants and those existing applicants whose applications would go 'live' before the Review was completed and implemented.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

03/HH/52 PROGRESSING THE SINGLE HOMELESS AND ROUGH SLEEPERS STRATEGY – JUBILEE PROJECT *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/34)*

The officers report said that the Dawe Charitable Trust had approached the City Council to provide a housing scheme in Cambridge for 10 people who had successfully rehabilitated from drug use. People who were accepted into the scheme must be in employment or be able and willing to take up full time employment with the Dawe Charitable Trust. The housing model was based on an existing project already successfully operated by the Trust in East Dereham, Norfolk.

This type of project complied with the aims and objectives of the City Council's Single Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Strategy 2002 – 2004. It was proposed to site the project in the void under the south side of Elizabeth Way Bridge, facing Walnut Tree Avenue and Midsummer Common. Full Planning Permission had been granted to develop this area in June 1999 to build a single storey hostel comprising 20 single and 2 double rooms.

The proposed scheme would implement this permission in part providing a 10 single room scheme to clients who were free from alcohol and drugs. All Planning Conditions attached to the scheme would be fully met by the Dawe Charitable Trust.

There was no funding in terms of capital or revenue required from the City Council. The Council and the Dawe Charitable Trust had agreed to conclude a service agreement prior to occupation the terms of which were set out in the report.

Cllr Bagnall expressed concern over public confidence in the consultation process that had been carried out and the difference in the areas covered in the planning application consultation and the current consultation process over the hostel. She also commented on the need to secure proper delivery of service by the Dawe Charitable Trust.

It was proposed that the Director of Community Services be authorised to conclude a Service Agreement with the Dawe Charitable Trust, and that it be subject to prior consultation with the Executive Councillor (Housing and Health), Chair and Spokesperson.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

03/HH/53 HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/35)*

The report said that the Council, with South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire District Councils, had recently commissioned a survey of housing needs in the City, carried out by independent consultants. This survey informed both the Local Plan consultation and the development of a City and sub regional housing strategy. It highlighted the gap between median incomes and the price of owner occupation in the City and supported the case for increasing the supply of social

rented, affordable and key worker housing. So officers could make use of the findings of the report to support bids for development of such housing. Councillors were asked to endorse the findings of the housing needs survey, and in particular, recognition of the increasing need for social rented, low cost and affordable housing for the City, and to consider the implications of these findings for future planning and housing strategies.

Environment Scrutiny Committee had considered the report at its meeting in this cycle and the Executive Councillor (Environment) had agreed an amended recommendation which this Committee agreed (by 6 votes to 0) for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

03/HH/54 **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR HOUSING** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/36)*

The report proposed clear priorities for the next Housing Strategy and an outline framework for capital expenditure on housing be established. Options were outlined in the report and members' attention was drawn to officers' recommendations were required to identify priorities from this.

In previous years, housing authorities had been required to submit Housing Strategies to government for assessment, as part of the annual HIP (Housing Improvement Programme) round in July. Assessment of these strategies had had a direct connection to funding allocations, and had assumed significance for housing authorities. In more recent years, a Business Plan for the HRA (Housing revenue Account) had also been required.

In 2002, the ODPM had published new criteria for assessment of housing strategies. Whilst strategies were still assessed and banded as in previous years, the ODPM also would use the new criteria to assess whether the strategy was "Fit for Purpose". For 2003, the ODPM would be assessing all strategies against the FFP criteria, and the government offices had offered to work with authorities prior to submission, to identify areas that need to be improved, if FFP was to be attained.

The ODPM had also announced that the requirement to submit strategies in July had been removed, and individual authorities could agree their own dates for submission of Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan. Some statistical information was still required in July. It had been provisionally agreed to forward a draft strategy to Go-east in September, alongside public consultation, prior to approval in November. The priorities outlined in this report would form the backbone of that strategy.

Councillor Bagnall's proposal that the Council re-establish a grant scheme to fund fire precaution work in HMOs was lost by 6 votes to 3.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations

03/HH/55 **REPAIRS AND MAJOR WORKS BEST VALUE FUNDAMENTAL SERVICE REVIEW - FINAL REPORT** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/37)*

The officers' report was the final report of the Repairs and Major Works Best Value Fundamental Service Review and followed on from the Briefing Note submitted to Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Councillor on 12 March.

As highlighted in that report, the Audit Commission Gap Inspection had taken place before the BVFSR could be completed, and the decision had been made to terminate the Review and to come up with a 6-month action plan and a longer term 5-Year Improvement Plan, based on the outcome of the inspection and the work to date of the BVFSR.

Because of the timing and content of the Audit Commission Inspection, this report did not follow the normal corporate BVFSR Final Report template, but concentrated on the outcomes to be achieved.

The actions to be taken had been incorporated into two plans – a short-term action plan (STAP), running for approximately six months from March 2003, and a five year improvement plan (FYIP) covering the period April 2003 to March 2008. The Improvement Plan needed to be read in conjunction with three other reports being presented to H&H Scrutiny in July 2003: the Housing Procurement Strategy, Asset Management Strategy and Stock Options reports

An updated 6 month Action Plan (STAP - Appendix 1) had been circulated by the officers prior to the meeting.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations

03/HH/56 **KEY DECISION GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS – ANNUAL REVIEW 2003** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/38)*

The Council's Best Value Review of Grants to Voluntary Organisations recommended that each grant-giving Committee establish a funding strategy for the grants in their remit. The funding strategies would assist with planning, reviewing and prioritising grant aid and contribute to a corporate grants policy.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/57 **RAWLYN COURT REFURBISHMENT PROJECT** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/39)*

At the meeting of the Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee on the 30 October 2002, members had approved the refurbishment of Rawlyn Court sheltered housing scheme at a cost of £1,286,000 for construction works, making a total scheme cost of £1,557,967 including fees.

At the meeting of the Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee on 12 March 2003, A partnering route should be followed for the refurbishment of Rawlyn Court.

The rear garden of 50 Elfeda Road adjoined the side of Rawlyn Court and had outline planning permission for building. The plot of land for sale had had a preliminary appraisal and would offer the opportunity to extend Rawlyn Court and provide two extra flats/ bungalows.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved to exclude members of the public from the meeting during discussion of the information included on Appendix C to the report 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.

The estimated additional costs of acquiring the plot of land was shown in the Appendix C to the report.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation

03/HH/58 **WRITE OFF OF FORMER TENANT ARREARS** (*See also Record of Decision 03/hh/40*)

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

03/HH/59 **APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES**
(*See also Record of Decision 03/hh/41*)

To appoint the following representatives on the Outside Bodies indicated:

Organisation	Representatives
<i>Ditchburn Place Management Cmmttee</i>	Cllrs Bradnack, J Rosenstiel and Smart
<i>Health, Housing and Social Care Forum</i>	Cllr Smart
<i>Continuing care Review Panel</i>	Cllrs Dryden and Smart

03/HH/58 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved to exclude members of the public from the meeting during discussion of the next item 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/59 **PROGRESSING THE SINGLE HOMELESS AND ROUGH SLEEPERS STRATEGY – HEAVY DRINKERS PROJECT** *(See also Record of Decision 03/hh/42)*

The provision of accommodation for Heavy Drinkers in the city had already been approved as a bid by English Churches Housing Group to the Housing Corporation for joint funding under the Safer Communities Grant funding pot and LA SHG. This bid had been to convert, re-model and lease a property already owned by the City Council. Difficulties had been encountered in implementing the project as the property initially identified and a subsequently identified property had both not been feasible because of local community issues and the project had been delayed as a result.

The property currently under consideration had been identified in 2002 and already had planning permission for hostel use. It was felt the new project would not have an unacceptably adverse impact on the community. Because of the market value of the property, additional funding was required and on 20 November 2002 the Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee had approved an increase in the LA SHG capital allocation from £96,233 to £428,750.

Details of delays in the negotiations to complete the purchase were set out in the report. The proposed supplier of special support services had secured Supporting People (SP) funding which was essential to the success of this project. The scheme had to be up and running by 31 March 2004 to qualify for funding, therefore the purchase of the property, and renovation works needed to begin as soon as possible.

Because of changes in Government funding on April 1 2003, the Council was no longer able to provide Social Housing Grant (capital funding recoverable from government) and has become a Debt Free Local Authority. Any Cambridge City Council (CCC) capital funding of new projects would be from credit approvals or capital receipts. With no other sources of capital funding available, Officers from Housing, Finance and Property Services had examined a number of different options requiring capital funding by the Local Authority, which were set out in the report.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm

CHAIR