

**HOUSING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MINUTES**21 April 2004
5.30pm - 9.15pm

PRESENT: Councillors James (Vice-Chair), Bell, Blencowe, Coleman, Downham, Pinnington, J Smith, Stebbings and Todd-Jones.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Smart (Executive Councillor for Housing and Health); Non-voting, co-opted members Mr B Haywood, Mrs K Harris, Mrs Vine-Lott (Cambridge Tenant Federation representatives), and Mr H Gault (Cambridgeshire Social Services), Dr Gregson (Cambridge NHS Primary Care Trust).

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR RUTH BAGNALL – The Chair advised the Committee of the death of Councillor Bagnall who had been the Labour spokesperson on housing and health matters. The Committee stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

MRS VINE-LOTT - The Chair welcomed Mrs Vine-Lott (who replaced Ms Tipple) to the meeting as a Cambridge Tenant Federation representative. Ms Tipple was thanked for her contribution during the previous year.

MR DAVID POOLE – The Executive Councillor and members of the Committee paid tribute to Mr Poole who after 30 years service firstly as Chief Housing Officer, then as Director of Community Services, was retiring at the end of May.

04/HH/20 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 14 January were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

04/HH/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology was received from Councillor Adey.

04/HH/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Stebbings and Pinnington declared personal interests in item 04/HH/28.

04/HH/23 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

04/HH/24 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003

In response to concerns from some Committee members on support for tenant victims and witnesses, the officers stated that it was a pressing issue for the Anti-Social Behaviour

Strategic Task Group and that detailed work with Victim Support over the summer would be undertaken with a report back to the Executive Councillor with proposals.

Councillor Blencowe suggested that the Strategic Task Group should include Councillor representation and the Group should look at ways to better inform councillors of the anti-social behaviour work being undertaken. Councillor Smith had found it difficult to know initially where to look for information on the anti-social behaviour strategy and requested that the Work in Progress report be made widely available to Councillors and interested parties. Members agreed that the ASB Strategy should be included in new Councillor's Induction Packs. Councillor Todd-Jones stated that the information on anti-social behaviour the Council gave to tenants was crucial and that this had been highlighted at the Housing Management Board.

Action by: Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

04/HH/25 **DO-IT YOURSELF SHARED OWNERSHIP SCHEME**

In introducing the report the officer advised the Committee that the external organisation referred to in recommendation 2.2 was Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association. Councillor Blencowe queried the administrative cost of going externally compared to keeping the scheme in-house. The Director of Community Services stated that the scheme would be monitored and reviewed if it was costing too much.

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

04/HH/26 **AGREEMENT ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION - WITH SOUTH CAMBS DC**

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 9 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

04/HH/27 **UPGRADING COMMUNAL TV AERIAL FACILITIES**

The Committee noted that the tenants on the ROAM group favoured the fourth option (the most comprehensive) as the long-term goal for the Council, although it was noted that the costs were substantial. In response to queries from the Committee, the Director of Community Services stated that the Council was unable to apply a service charge to freehold right-to-buy properties already wired in to the network, but at the request of the Executive Councillor would look to see if a service charge could be applied to future right-to-buys.

Action by: Property Services Officer

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 8 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

04/HH/28 SETTING THE CAMBRIDGE STANDARD

The Committee noted the tabled errata sheet with amendments to paragraphs 2, 6 and 8. The Executive Councillor advised members that a special meeting of the Committee would be required in early September to make recommendations on the way forward to Council on 9 September.

The Committee agreed the recommendations, as amended, for the Executive Councillor by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

04/HH/29 PARTNERING WITH CITY SERVICES FOR THE PROVISION OF RESPONSIVE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE 2004 – 2010

Councillor Todd-Jones stated that it was important that this service improved and was monitored by members. His casework on repairs/maintenance was one of the main issues he dealt with as a Councillor and the 1 star rating of the service from the Audit Commission backed this up.

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 8 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

04/HH/30 BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SHELTERED HOUSING

In introducing the report the Director of Community Services congratulated the officers for producing the Review within a reasonably tight timescale. The Committee noted that this Review took into account the County-wide Best Value Review which would be reported to the Scrutiny Committee in July, with a Business Plan for the service to be agreed once the County Review had been completed.

During discussion on the input of the various agencies, Dr Gregson suggested a future agenda item from the PCT on its work regarding Supporting People.

Action by: Dr Gregson, PCT

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

04/HH/31 STATUTORY FOOD SERVICE PLAN

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 9 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

04/HH/32 STATUTORY HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE PLAN

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 9 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

04/HH/33 GENERAL FUND: REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS, CARRY FORWARDS AND SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES FOR 2003/04

The Committee agreed that the carry forward in 2b should be used toward another homeless hostel project.

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

04/HH/34 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT: REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS, CARRY FORWARDS AND SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES FOR 2003/04

The Director of Finance advised the Committee that because of the decision taken on communal TV aerials earlier, the figures will need to be amended to reflect this commitment. In response to a question from Councillor Pinnington (4f), the Director of Community Services undertook to provide details of the recruitment of carecall officers.

Action by: Supported Housing Officer

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

04/HH/35 REVIEWING THE HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

In introducing the report the officer clarified that the decision recommended was option 2 listed in paragraph 3.17.

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 9 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

04/HH/36 HOMELESSNESS REVIEWS/APPEALS COMMITTEE

The officer advised the Committee that representations from the Cambridge Independent Advice Centre had been received (paragraph 5). The comments from the agency were that a future provider needed to be independent, there was the possibility of more appeals determined/reviewed at County Court and more preparation may be required.

Councillor Todd-Jones stated that the current system had not been properly tested because not all members of the Committee were available to sit on Appeals, coupled with many cases in the last year ending up adjourned. He also stated that officers had not prepared members as well as they could for the amount of work required on the Appeals Committee. Councillor Smith stated that the current system could be made more flexible as members had been very accommodating in the past year sometimes at short notice.

Members expressed concern that the appellants may not get a fair hearing without being given the opportunity to directly appeal to a panel of members.

The Director of Community Services advised the committee that if the decision to outsource was agreed, an independent lawyer would determine appeals having been provided with all the relevant paperwork. Appellants would have the opportunity to appeal to the County Court. The Committee noted that officers would monitor the contract and review it after two years and report to Committee.

Councillor Todd-Jones proposed that option 1 be supported. This was lost by 4 votes to 5.

The Committee agreed to the recommendation for the Executive Councillor (option 4) by 5 votes to 4.

The Executive Councillor agreed that, subject to consideration by the Civic Affairs Committee in view of the amendment required to the Constitution, to recommend Council to out source the homelessness decision review/appeals procedure to an external agency, on a three-year contract (option 4).

04/HH/37 **WRITE OFF OF FORMER TENANT ARREARS**

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 9 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

04/HH/38 **DELEGATIONS OF AUTHORITY**

The Committee noted revised wording to the proposed delegation which had been tabled.

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 9 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

04/HH/39 **RECORD OF DECISION**

The Committee noted the decision taken on 25 March by the Executive Councillor on Wulfstan Court.

04/HH/40 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved -

To exclude the press and public by virtue of the fact that if they were present there would be information disclosed which is exempt from publication under paragraph 7 of the Council's Constitution page 154.

04/HH/41 **COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER: PROPERTY N**

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 8 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

The meeting ended at 9.15pm

CHAIR