

**HOUSING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MINUTES**19 January 2005
5.30pm – 6.50pm

PRESENT: Councillors James (Chair), Adey, Armstrong, Blencowe, Churchill, Downham, Herbert, J Smith, Stebbings.

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).

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

David Farmer's Retirement

The Chair reminded members that this would be the last meeting which David Farmer, Head of Housing Services, would be attending. Members thanked Mr Farmer for his years of service and wished him well on his retirement.

05/HH/01 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings on 10 November 2004 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to Councillor J Smith's name being substituted for Councillor Stebbings in minute 04/HH/59 and signed by the Chair.

05/HH/02 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Kightley, Dr Gregson and Mr Gault

05/HH/03 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Stebbings declared a personal interests as a Council Tenant in item 05/HH/ (HRA Service Performance Review & Capital Revised Budget).

05/HH/04 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from members of the public.

05/HH/05 **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SERVICE PLANS AND & CAPITAL BUDGETS - REVISED 2004/05, DRAFT BUDGETS 2005/06 AND FORECAST 2006/07** *(See also Record of Decision 050119/h&h/01)*

The Committee considered the report by the officers on the Housing Revenue Account including Part Three of the Service Plan. Parts One and Two of the Service Plans had been considered in the November Committee cycle and set out the performance over the 2003/04 financial year and performance to date for 2004/05. Part Three looked at the service proposals, objectives and budgets for 2005/06 and forecast for 2006/07. This information would enable the Scrutiny Committee to consider whether service priorities and resources needed to be refocused to enable objectives and targets to be met.

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 6 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

05/HH/06 **GENERAL FUND SERVICE PLANS AND REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGETS REVISED 2004/05, DRAFT BUDGETS 2005/06 AND FORECAST 2006/07** *(See also Record of Decision 050119/h&h/02)*

The Committee considered the report by the officers on the General Fund, including Part Three of the General Fund Service Plan and the Environmental Health Service Plans. Parts One and Two of the Plans had been considered in the November Committee cycle and set out the performance over the 2003/04 financial year and performance to date for 2004/05. Part Three looked at the service proposals, objectives and budgets for 2005/06 and forecast for 2006/07. This information would enable the Scrutiny Committee to consider whether service priorities and resources needed to be refocused to enable objectives and targets to be met.

Labour members suggested that the Priority Policy Fund Bid 6 (Part Time Development Officer) be increased to accommodate the cost of a Full Time Equivalent Post. The Executive Councillor said that she would note the suggestion.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed the recommendations on the Environmental Health Service Plan by 6 votes to 0, the remainder of the recommendations were agreed by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

05/HH/07 **INTRODUCTORY TENANCIES** *(See also Record of Decision 050119/h&h/03)*

The officers' report set out proposals to implement Introductory Tenancies as a means by which local authorities could protect existing residents through the reduction of the anti-social behaviour of those few whose conduct brings disruption to the quality of life on estates.

The Committee noted that the officers would be reporting to its meeting in June and not April as suggested in the report following consultation with colleagues, the Tenants Federation and the Housing Management Board.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

05/HH/08 **HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD CONSTITUTION - ELIGIBILITY FOR ELECTION** *(See also Record of Decision 050119/h&h/04)*

The Board's Constitution provided that tenant and leaseholder representatives might be removed from the Board if they committed serious breaches of the Code of Conduct, if they brought the Board into disrepute or if they persistently infringed minor rules. Tenant and leaseholder representatives might also be removed if they failed to attend three or more Board meetings. At present, there was nothing in the Board's constitution to bar representatives who had been removed from standing for election again. This was an omission which needed to be rectified.

The following alternatives were considered:

A permanent prohibition of future candidacy by former representatives removed from the Board. This would not give any scope for consideration of whether any changed circumstances merited the lifting of a prohibition.

A time-limited prohibition. This would not be appropriate if the person remained unsuitable as a candidate at the end of the period.

An indefinite prohibition, which would continue until the Committee made a decision to lift it. This would give flexibility to take account of changed circumstances.

The Committee noted that the Housing Management Board had concurred with the officers' view that the option which best combined flexibility and fairness was an indefinite prohibition which could be lifted at the discretion of the Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee on application. Members agreed that any former member of the Board excluded under this process should be given sufficient notice of the need to make application to the Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee to be included in the election of Tenant Representatives to the Board.

The Committee agreed the officers recommendation by 9 votes to 0 that clause 5.4 of the Housing Management Board constitution be amended to read:

"Those eligible to stand for election shall be:

- Any tenant or joint tenant of the City Council;
- Any leaseholder of a City Council residential property,

However, a former tenant or leasehold representative who ceased to be a member of the Board by virtue of Clause 10.4 or Clause 12.3 shall not be eligible to stand for election unless the Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee gives its consent. Such consent must be requested in writing addressed to the Director of Community Services at least 21 days before the date of the last Housing and Health Scrutiny Committee preceding an election."

The Executive Councillor noted the decision.

05/HH/09 **WRITE OFF OF FORMER TENANT ARREARS** *(See also Record of Decision 050119/h&h/05)*

Members noted that the relevant ward Councillors would be consulted where tenancies arrears accrued prior to the publication of reports.

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 6 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

05/HH/10 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved to exclude the press and public on the basis that if they were present there would be information disclosed which is exempt from publication under paragraph 7 and 9 of the Council's Constitution, page 154.

05/HH/11 DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY B (*See also Record of Decision 050119/h&h/06*)

The officer's report set out the circumstances relating to Property B which had been vacant for some time and the Council was seeking to ensure that it was brought back into residential use. The officers proposed to achieve this by offering to purchase the property with the owners agreement, if this option was not successful then the City Council would use its powers of Compulsory Purchase under Section 17 Housing Act 1985. Once it had acquired the property the Council would sell it in its present condition to a person who intended to use it for residential purposes. The Council intends to impose covenants upon the resultant sale requiring the property to be returned to use within a reasonable time.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

The meeting ended at 6.50pm

CHAIR