

## **Executive Councillor Records of Decision and Housing Management Board Minutes**

**17:30- 19:20pm**

### **PRESENT**

#### **Executive Councillors:**

Executive Councillor for Housing: Catherine Smart

#### **Scrutiny Committee:**

Scrutiny Committee Members: Councillors Blackhurst (Vice Chair), Blencowe, Howell, Levy, McGovern, Todd-Jones (Labour Spokesperson for Housing), Ward.

Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives: Tony Barnes, Diane Best (Chair), Brian Haywood and John Marais.

### **09/HMB/34 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2009 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **09/HMB/35 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Armstrong and Kerr, plus Tenant Representatives Beverley Dennis and Terry Sweeney

### **09/HMB/36 Declarations of Interest**

Diane Best declared a personal interest in agenda item 6, as she had Chaired the Tranche 6 Resident Working Group.

As a leaseholder, Diane Best also declared a personal interest in agenda item 8. During this item Councillor Blackhurst would be asked to Chair the meeting.

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09/HMB/37      **Public Questions**

None

09/HMB/38      **Procurement of contract to carry our planning maintenance works after March 2010** (*Key Decision – Agenda Item 5*)

**Matter for Decision:** Approval to enter into an agreement with ESPO to appoint a contract for a new framework contract for planning maintenance works for the period April 2011 to March 2016.

**Decision of Executive Councillor:**

- Approved the appointment of Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation to carry out a procurement exercise with officers of the City Council to establish a new framework contact for planned maintenance works from which the Council will select a main contractor to carry out planned maintenance works for the City Council with effect from April 2011 to March 2016, with an option to extend the contract for any period up to two years.
- Authorised the Director of Community Services to issue tenders for and, following consultation with the Director of Finance, Chair and Spokes of the Board and the Executive Councillor, to award a contract for the appointment of a main contractor to carry out planned maintenance works in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution.
- Approved the extension for a period of nine months, of the existing planned works agreement with City Services when it expires on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010.

**Reason for the Decision:** As set out in the Officers report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

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### **Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Partnering Manager introduced the report and highlighted the recommendations to Members. It was stated that the Council had worked previously with ESPO a good working relationship had been established. The value of the works for the contract would be £4 million per year and would cover a wide range of services. Consultation had taken place with Corporate Procurement, Legal and Audit, and residents would be fully involved in the selection process. It was confirmed that, as the budget would be decreasing over the next two years, the Council would be unable to sustain two main contractors.

In response to a question regarding value for money and the possibility of using more than 1 smaller contractor, the Partnering Manager confirmed that the Council followed best practice guidelines and undertook a 2-stage tender process, which evaluated both price and quality. Whilst the Council would be looking for one main contractor, this contractor would then be able to sub-contract out the work to smaller, local businesses.

The Director of Community Services confirmed that, if necessary, the Council would alter its procurement practices, as a result of findings from the recent Office of Fair Trading report into illegal bid-rigging."

A Member questioned how resident representatives involved in the selection process would be selected, and was informed by the Partnering Manager that this was yet to be confirmed. The ROAM Group had been used previously but the Council was open to other suggestions. The leaseholder consultation would however follow the same format as before.

The Technical Manager highlighted a small error in 2.3 of the report. The extension period for the contract would be 9 months (not 8 as reported).

The Committee approved recommendations by 10 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

### **Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

N/A

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09/HMB/39      **Customer Access Strategy (CAS)**  
*(Key Decision – Agenda Item 6)*

**Matter for Decision:** Consideration of the process and implications of transferring services through the “tranche 6 customer access strategy implementation plan” to the Customer Services Centre (CSC).

**Decision of Executive Councillor:**

- Instructed Officers to take into account
  - The residents views on the elements of the Area Officers service which residents would like to see maintained when the Customer Services Centre undertakes Housing and Tenancy Management Services queries; and
  - The anticipated risk residents have identified – including responses to address these concerns – as set out in the committee report.
- Agreed that the Residents Working Group meets again to consider the outcomes of the Business Analysis work (previously referred to as the Business Process Re-engineering) and the Tranche 6 Customer Access Strategy Implementation plan for the proposed service requests/transactions, which will be delivered within the Customer Service Centre, alongside the Area Officers.
- Agreed that wide consultation with residents be kept under review, and that decisions to consult appropriately are made in conjunction with the implementation plan.
- Agreed that a further report be brought back to the Housing Management Board in January 2010 highlighting staffing issues, cost implications and key process changes. The report to also specifically address implications for the Area Offices.

**Reason for the Decision:** As set out in the Officers report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

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### **Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Interim Director of Customer and Democratic Services introduced the report. The Tranche 6 Resident Working Group had met on three occasions and it was recommended that a further meeting take place to consider the outcomes of the Business Analysis work and the Tranche 6 Customer Access Strategy Implementation plan. It was proposed that a report be brought back to Committee in January 2010.

Members that had sat on the Working Group expressed their thanks to the Executive Councillor for setting up the group and felt that the risks noted in appendix B were an accurate record of their views.

Concern was raised by Members regarding the accessibility of Mandela House for elderly and infirm residents, the ability to still deliver services in the community such as rent collection and the lack of cycle parking in the area around the CSC. The Director of Community Services commented that improved access for all customers was a concern with regard to disabled parking.

Councillor Howell questioned whether the key driver of these changes was the increased pressure on budgets. It was also suggested that, to ensure good communication and interaction with residents, the Council had to keep a presence in the community and not centralise all services. This was especially relevant to the Area Housing Offices. The cost of having both the Area Offices and the CSC open, and effectively providing the same service, was also questioned.

Councillor Blencowe agreed with the value of satellite management of Council services and felt it important that a pro-active presence is maintained in the community.

The Interim Director of Customer and Democratic Services stated that the Area Housing Offices would remain open, but be monitored closely to see how the public engaged with the services. Only then would a decision be made on the future of the offices. She agreed that it was important to have a local presence but appointments could still be made for housing officers to visit residents in their homes if necessary.

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In response to suggestions from Members, the Executive Councillor agreed that it would be beneficial to conduct a residents survey on the repairs service, as this had already moved into the CSC. She suggested that it would be better to conduct a more comprehensive survey on the Area Offices once the services had been in the CSC for one year.

Councillor Howell formally proposed the additional recommendation:

- A further report to be brought back to the Housing Management Board in January 2010 highlighting staffing issues, cost implications and key process changes. The report to also specifically address implications for the Area Offices.

The Committee approved this additional recommendation by 7 votes to 0.

The Committee approved the full list of recommendations unanimously.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

N/A

09/HMB/40      **Decent Homes – A position statement on Tenant Waivers**  
*(Non-Key Decision - Agenda Item 7)*

**Matter for Decision:** To note the current arrangements in relation to the position of tenant waivers with respect to the Decent Homes scheme.

**Decision of Executive Councillor:**

Noted the contents of the report.

**Reason for the Decision:** As set out in the Officers report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

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### **Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Technical Manager introduced the report and gave some background on this issue, which had been raised through a Tenant Representative.

The Tenant Representative stated that on this occasion a potential compromise had been agreed with the tenant, but he did question the flexibility of the Decent Homes Programme. It was also suggested that some aspects of this work could have been completed through other funding streams.

The Technical Manager confirmed that this was a very rare incident but the Council did aim to provide a consistent approach. New advice from the Building Research Establishment would help guide Council's decision making in the future.

The Director of Community Services confirmed that budgets were tight across the whole of the Council but the aim was to be flexible and sensitive to the individual needs of all tenants.

The Tenant Representative expressed his thanks for all the work done by officers to reach a compromise with the tenant.

The Committee approved recommendations by 8 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

### **Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

N/A

09/HMB/41      **Leasehold Management Recharges**  
*(Non-Key Decision - Agenda Item 8)*

**Matter for Decision:** Approval of the Leasehold Management Recharge for 2008/2009 and the arrangements for 2009/10.

### **Decision of Executive Councillor:**

- Approved an annual Management Charge of £95.59 for leaseholders for 2008/09 and acknowledged that the Full Cost of the Management service to leaseholders for 2008/09 would have been £142.40.
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- Approved the decision to cover the full cost of the service in the actuals for 2009/10.

**Reason for the Decision:** As set out in the Officers report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

As agreed, Councillor Blackhurst took the Chair during this item.

The Area Housing Manager introduced the report and highlighted to Members that with this change, the Leasehold Service would then meet the Audit Commissions criteria for Best Practice. It was also noted that the Management Charge comprised both the cost and associated overheads of managing the service.

The Leaseholder Representative stated that whilst it was appropriate that the charge accurately reflect the full cost of the service, it could be beneficial to produce a leaflet for all leaseholders to fully explain the reasoning behind the decision. It was felt that this could save valuable officer time fielding a high volume of enquiries and concerns.

The Area Housing Manager agreed with this suggestion and it was agreed that the Leaseholder representative would proof read the leaflet prior to publication.

The Committee approved recommendations by 11 votes to 0 (unanimous).

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

N/A

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09/HMB/42      **Review of Cambridge City Council's under occupation incentive scheme**  
*(Non-Key Decision - Agenda Item 9)*

**Matter for Decision:** Approval to continue funding of the scheme until May 2012 and to include two bedroom flats within the scheme.

**Decision of Executive Councillor:**

- Approved the continuation of funding for the scheme until May 2012 and to include two bedroom flats within the scheme.

**Reason for the Decision:** As set out in the Officers report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Senior Housing Officer introduced the report and highlighted to Members the table in 3.2 of the report, which indicated the number of people who had applied and moved since the scheme started. It was noted that the number of applicants now stood at 52.

The Committee approved recommendations by 10 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

N/A

09/HMB/43      **Review of Council Housing Finance – Consultation**  
*(Non-Key Decision - Agenda Item 10)*

**Matter for Decision:** Consideration of the consultation issued by Department of Communities and Local Government regarding Council Housing Finance, and the mechanism for agreeing the response.

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**Decision of Executive Councillor:**

- Noted the details of the CLG consultation in relation to the review of Council Housing Finance and approved that a response be made by officers, following consultation with the Executive Councillor, Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokesperson.

**Reason for the Decision:** As set out in the Officers report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Housing Accountant introduced the report and gave some background to the current Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System.

A Tenant Representative highlighted the recently released Council Housing Group MP's Report as an interesting document.

Members felt that this system should be covered from general taxation and not rental income. It was noted that much depended on any changes by the Government to the current rent rates.

The Housing Accountant confirmed that no indication had yet been given to local authorities regarding possible increase to rent rates.

The Director of Community Services reminded Members of three upcoming national meetings being held to discuss this issue. Representatives from Cambridge City Council would be attending all of the meetings to increase their knowledge and to learn how other local authorities would be responding to the consultation.

Members were asked to forward any further comments to the Executive Councillor in order to inform her consultation response.

The Committee approved recommendations by 10 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

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**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)**

N/A

The Chair reminded Members that they were welcome to attend the Annual Resident's Day taking place on Saturday 2 October at the Cambridge Professional Development Centre.

**Chair**

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