

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Housing Options Portfolio  
Holder's Meeting held on Monday, 12 May  
2008 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor SM Edwards, Portfolio Holder

Councillors in attendance: AN Berent Scrutiny and Overview Committee Monitor  
and Opposition Spokesman  
Mrs EM Heazell Opposition Spokesman

Advisers Dr S Sharples PS Consultants  
Ms K Laud Savills

Officers: Steve Hampson Executive Director  
Denise Lewis Corporate Project Manager - Housing Futures  
Steve Rayment Head of ICT  
Stephen Hills Corporate Manager, Affordable Homes

### **Action**

#### **52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **53. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held 15 April 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

##### **Matters arising.**

##### **Housing Futures.**

There were no matters arising.

##### **ICT**

The Head of ICT confirmed that he had met with the Principal Solicitor and the Corporate Manager for Finance Support Services to discuss the Northgate contract. A meeting has been arranged with Northgate for 2 June and a letter outlining the Council's concerns would be sent to both Northgate and Pat Harding at the County Council in advance of the meeting.

The Fenland review has been completed and passed back to the Project Board. The Head of ICT said that technically the project could move ahead and that the next stage would be to revisit the Business Case for presentation at the next Project Board meeting on 13 June.

The Head of ICT confirmed that he had a meeting with Tyco on 14 May to discuss proposals for a maintenance contract. He confirmed that he was also talking to NTE to obtain a quote for the service.

The portfolio holder asked for a status report of the old microphone system.

**SR**

#### **54. SHADOW BOARD FOR POTENTIAL NEW HOUSING ASSOCIATION LANDLORD**

Denise Lewis presented the report "Shadow Board for potential new Housing Association Landlord" and explained that it was important to establish the Shadow Board early. Competency based selection would be used so that the recruitment process could be seen as open and transparent, as per the recommendations of the Elton Review.

Concerns were expressed that the report appeared to refer only to the consideration of a stand-alone housing association, but the Portfolio Holder was reassured that all three housing association options were being considered irrespective of any previous feedback received from tenants.

DL also confirmed that tenants would receive a questionnaire with the next newsletter to identify further areas to address.

Specific comments on the report:

Paragraphs 22-24

It was confirmed that Members be nominated by their political groups taking proportionality into account. The Portfolio Holder said that the Conservative group would not nominate members of the executive.

Democratic Services would circulate a copy of the recruitment pack to group leaders as soon as possible.

Paragraph 25 (3)

- The process for dealing with vacancies following any election had still to be formulated.
- It was confirmed that the person specification listed the skills needed for the Board as a whole and it was not the expectation that the skills listed would be found in every applicant.
- Stephen Hills confirmed that an expectation of membership turnover would be built into the Board terms of reference to include a process for dealing with vacancies or changes in circumstances, such as a general needs tenant becoming a sheltered tenant.
- It was confirmed that advertising for the tenant reps would be through the ITA and that an open recruitment session was taking place this week.

Paragraph 27

It was suggested that the Employment Committee could play a role in the recruitment of Shadow Board members, however it was explained that the proposed panel would receive training from the HR professional from Savills and that there could be a potential conflict of interests, or a view that the Council was trying to control membership of the board if the Employment Committee played a role.

Dr Sharples explained that other authorities had established a Tenant Member Board Panel onto which any tenant could apply to be a member. The panel had responsibility to ensure that members were trained and acted as a filter before election to the Shadow Board. However this process worked better for authorities that had already transferred their housing stock. In the meantime it was felt that the recommended process was the best compromise available

#### Paragraph 37

Remove the word "staff", so the final sentence reads, "The involvement of tenants and council nominees as members of the Shadow Board will help provide a face to the new organisation and demonstrate how it can be locally accountable and what it could offer in the event that tenants support a housing transfer in a ballot."

#### Paragraph 40

The Portfolio Holder expressed a wish to see the short-listing process.

The Housing Options Portfolio Holder **AGREED** that a Shadow Board be established for a new local housing association that would be the recipient landlord in the event that tenants support the option of a housing transfer through a ballot.

That the Shadow Board should be 15 members and that the proposed split would be:

Tenants	[5]
Council nominees	[5]
Independents	[5]

That the council nominees be sought at Full Council on 22nd May 2008 in accordance with political proportionality.

That tenant members be identified through an open recruitment process by a panel of independent and tenant representatives comprising:

- the Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) PS Consultants
- a relevant specialist from within Savills
- a suitably trained and experienced tenant board member from another housing association set up as a result of a housing transfer, for example Watford Community Housing

the chair or vice chair of the Tenant Participation Group (TPG) or, in the event that the chair and vice chair of TPG apply for membership of the shadow board an alternative representative agreed by the TPG

In the event that there are more than 5 suitable candidates then tenants be asked to elect the tenant members for the Shadow Board. The arrangements for any election to be considered and agreed in consultation with Savills as lead adviser and the Independent Tenant Adviser following the outcome of the short listing process

## 55. ICT SECURITY POLICY

The Head of ICT presented two security policy leaflets to the Portfolio

Holder and explained that they had been prepared in response to a request from Senior Management Team to make the policy more accessible to Members and staff, by covering general, rather than specific, topics.

It was explained that the main differences between the leaflets recognised that Member's equipment would not be held on site and that Members were not employees of the Council.

The Head of ICT said that with the Portfolio Holder's and Management Team approval the leaflets would be circulated to all Members and staff.

The Head of ICT also advised the Portfolio Holder that the full policy was being revisited as an audit had recommended a strengthening of the sections covering Wireless Access and Network Access Controls.

#### **56. ICT STEERING GROUP**

The Head of ICT informed the Portfolio Holder that the Steering Group terms of reference reflected the views of Senior Management Team. He added that it was intended for the group to meet before the end of May, when there would be a need for the group's quorum to be agreed.

#### **57. ICT PROJECT REVIEW**

It was confirmed that an upgrade to M3 was ongoing, and that a date had been set for the transfer of Land Charges data.

#### **58. ICT PROJECT STATUS**

ICT Strategy:

The Head of ICT confirmed that the document as reviewed by SOCTIM would be published once reviewed by Senior Management Team. The Portfolio Holder asked for a copy of the final document.

CB Direct:

It was reported that the Performance Improvement Project had achieved its objectives. The challenge now would be to maintain the momentum and proactively manage the relationship. The Head of ICT informed the Portfolio Holder that he had a meeting scheduled with the Contact Centre for 21 May.

SMS Text Messaging

The Portfolio Holder expressed dissatisfaction at the lack of progress with the SMS text messaging trial as he saw it as a quick win for improving communication with customers. He suggested looking at an alternative service area to implement a pilot study at the earliest opportunity, and looked forward to an update at the next meeting.

CorVu:

The Head of ICT confirmed that this project was in partnership with the

City Council and would be fully effective by the end of June 2008.

Guest Access WiFi:

It was confirmed that guest access wifi would be available by the end of June. The Portfolio Holder offered his thanks to Craig Giles for his work on the project.

VPN Trail:

It was reported that Cllr Mason had opted out of the trial and that there were no other volunteers. It was suggested that County Members be approached as the County used a similar process.

The Portfolio Holder expressed his desire to see the following functionality:

- The removal of multiple links from Democratic Service emails
- Access to planweb
- Modern.gov updates, and
- Extended access to other sites from In-site

## **59. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 8 July, at 2pm in the Jeavons Room.

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**The meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.**

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