

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Notes of the Housing Portfolio Holder Meeting
held on Tuesday, 6 February 2007 at 10.00
a.m.

PRESENT:

Councillors:	RE Barrett	Scrutiny & Overview Monitor
	Mrs A Elsby	Opposition Spokesman
	Mrs EM Heazell	Opposition Spokesman and Scrutiny & Overview Monitor
	Mrs DSK Spink MBE	Portfolio Holder

Officers:	Susan Carter	Housing Advice and Options Manager
	Pauline Gardner	Housing Services Manager
	Steve Hampson	Executive Director
	Denise Lewis	Head of Housing Strategic Services
	Brent O'Halloran	Property Services Manager
	Gwynn Thomas	Principal Accountant (Housing)
	Kevin Reynolds	Strategic Lead - Community Living

Action

1. NOTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

Actions from previous minutes:

Item 3: Management and Sheltered

To be covered as an agenda item.

Item 4: Housing Capital Programme

BOH confirmed that there would be no detrimental effect as a result of the virement of funds.

Item 7: DLO Services Working Plan

BOH reported that the implementation of the PDAs had been successful and that their usage was being closely monitored to determine any potential benefits.

Item 10: Shepreth, 74 & 76 Frog End

DL reported the first action completed.

BOH reported that the request for hard standing areas had been noted and would be incorporated into the refurbishment programme.

2. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT (MILESTONES AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS) QUARTERLY REPORT 2006/07 - 6 MONTH REPORT

At the suggestion of SH the paper was reviewed from the Corporate Policy 3 – Affordable housing section onwards. The other P.Is. would be reviewed at agenda item 5.

M22 – Council held land/property appraisal. It was anticipated that the project would be commenced by April and the milestone achieved within 3 months.

In reply to the question of establishing community land trusts, it was explained that this was a model to keep down land prices and that SCDC currently uses other mechanisms to achieve this but could explore this option in the future if appropriate.

M17 – Monitoring of affordable housing permissions. It was noted that the County Council were providing good quality information and that the planning team were working to establish baselines for target setting.

BV212 – Average days to re-let council houses. BO'H gave an overview of the DLO recovery plan and how it would impact on the measure. He said that he was looking at stores management, possibly with a view to externalisation. BO'H said that he would come back to the PFH to advise on a course of action after reviewing the best practice guides available.

BOH

3. HOUSING FINANCE REPORTS - 3RD QUARTER

Gwynn Thomas informed the meeting that subject to acceptance of the estimates , budgets are likely to be achieved.

In reply to a question about the new communal facility at Meldreth it was confirmed that the increase in budget, from £5,000 to £31,000, was caused by slippage from the previous year. The slippage was believed to have been caused by an issue with the utility suppliers.

4. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - QUARTER 3

SH gave an undertaking to provide a monthly update to the PFH about voids.

SJH

Homelessness

BV183ii "length of stay in hostel accommodation" - interim changes to the lettings policy had been agreed by Cabinet in December 2006 to help address the issue.

Repairs

SH301 "non-urgent repairs" - will move to 93-93% when the measure is recalculated in line with Government recommendations.

SH302 "Tenant satisfaction" - will be extended to cover emergency repairs.

SH328 "Tenants satisfied with refurbishments" - a caveat was given concerning the low number of returns. It was hoped that the number of returns increases this year.

Management and Sheltered

BV66a "Proportion of rent collected" - PG informed the PFH that an assessment visit was due, the outcome of which would be a series of improvement opportunities.

BV212 – "Average re-let time" - This measure has been subject to review and a number of steps have been taken to improve performance. SC informed the PFH that an additional member of staff was being recruited for the allocations team.

It was asked if any progress had been made with the proposal to transfer the management of the Rents Team from Finance to Housing. It was reported that the Rents Team were now aligned to the Housing Services team and, in terms of their location within the building, feedback suggested that this had positive benefits. At this time transfer of management responsibility would not be pursued because organisational issues outweighed additional perceived benefits. This position would be reviewed when a suitable opportunity arose to do so.

5. SERVICE PLANS 2007/08 - STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT FOR EACH SERVICE - VERBAL REPORT

Steve Hampson confirmed that the service planning process was about to start and said that the same template would be used as last year with the intention of drawing all housing service plans into one document that could be incorporated into individual objectives for team members.

The document would need to be formally signed off by the Portfolio Holder and the Executive Director by the end of March 2007.

SJH

6. ARBURY PARK: SUSTAINABLE LETTINGS POLICY

DL presented the report and said that the local authority and RSL partners were looking to achieve a balance in terms of households, especially in relation to affordable housing. She said that it was important to learn from past experience and that improved monitoring arrangements had been put in place based on outcomes achieved at Cambourne.

It was asked if the lettings policy would allow families to be offered more space than they were generally allowed under normal lettings policy. It was explained that the authority would set targets based on child density, but that the policy needed to be coordinated with both Cambridge City Council and registered social landlords. The targets would be flexible to accommodate a range of households although underletting would be by 'bedspace' rather than 'bedroom'.

The report is scheduled to go to Cabinet in March for approval.

7. PROVISION OF CALL CENTRE MONITORING SERVICE

After consideration of a report presented by KR the Portfolio Holder AGREED to award a three-year contract to Invicta Telecare for the supply of call monitoring services, incorporating the Council's standard Terms

and Conditions, based upon existing costs, subject to annual inflationary increase.

8. CAMBRIDGE CHALLENGE: AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY - DRAFT SELECTION CRITERIA

The Portfolio Holder AGREED to endorse the proposed selection criteria and weightings for the selection of a lead strategic affordable housing delivery partner for the 3 major sites that are included within the Cambridge Challenge, a Housing Corporation led initiative.

9. PROTOCOL FOR LOCAL CONSULTATION ON HOUSING ISSUES - PRE-CONSULTATION DRAFT

Following discussion about the need for a consultation process the Portfolio Holder AGREED to adopt a protocol for informal consultation on housing issues subject to consultation with all Local Members and Parish Councils.

10. FORWARD PLAN

SH explained that the format of the forward plan remained "work in progress".

11. DATES OF FURTHER MEETINGS

The next meeting will be held at 10:00 on Tuesday 3 April in the Swansley Room.

The meeting ended at 11.35 a.m.
