



**HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 9TH MARCH 2004 AT 6.00PM
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 3, SOUTHFIELDS, LOUGHBOROUGH**

To: Councillors Akroyd, Allen (Vice-chair), Hampson, Hubbard (Chair),
Jenkins, R. Kershaw, Muldoon, Slater, Taylor and Yardley

Co-opted Member: Mrs J. Green (Association of Charnwood Tenants)

Reserves: Councillors Blanchard, Cowles, Edwards, Noon and Snartt

Reserve Co-opted Member: Mr F. McKeown (Association of Charnwood Tenants)
(for attention)

All other members of the Council
(for information)

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES
2. MINUTES
3. DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL INTERESTS
4. DECLARATIONS – THE PARTY WHIP

PART 2 (DELEGATED)

5. [RECOVERY OF HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS](#)

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, a report of the Head of Financial Services to update the Committee on the current situation relating to the recovery of Housing and Council Tax Benefit Overpayments is attached at page 5.

With the agreement of the Chair and Vice-chair, Mr P. Davey of The Bridge Housing and Advice Assistance Service and Ms D. Orton of Leicestershire Money Advice Service (part of Charnwood Citizens' Advice Bureau) have been invited to attend the meeting and take part in consideration of the matter.

6. [REVENUE MONITORING 2003/04](#)

A report of the Head of Financial Services on the expenditure and income of services within the Committee's remit as at the end of January 2004 is attached at page 17.

7. VOID PROPERTIES – PROPOSED REVISED PROCEDURES

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, the Head of Housing Services will report verbally on a new procedure for dealing with all void properties arising in Charnwood. The matter was considered by the Cabinet on 26th February 2004 and a copy of the report considered is attached at page 21. The Cabinet agreed recommendations 1. and 2. in the report.

8. WARDEN SERVICES RESTRUCTURE

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, the Head of Housing Services will report verbally on the restructuring of Warden Services. The matter was considered by the Cabinet on 26th February 2004 and a copy of the report is attached at page 25. The Cabinet agreed recommendations 1. to 4. in the report.

9. HOMELESS FAMILIES – PROVISION OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

At its meeting on 27th January 2004, the Committee requested that the issue of the use of the East Midlands Hotel, Loughborough as temporary accommodation for homeless people should be considered. The position regarding action being taken to meet the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) target in relation to homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation was considered by the Cabinet on 26th February 2004 and a copy of the report is attached at page 27.

The Cabinet decided to support the action of officers to meet homelessness targets in the short term, and specifically by 1st April 2004, largely through actions contained in Option 2. of the report. The Cabinet resolved to review Option 1. as a longer term solution to the homelessness targets, alongside preventative measures and other best practice initiatives in an integrated homelessness strategy at its meeting on 29th April 2004.

10. HOMELESSNESS WORKING PARTY

This item is included on the agenda to receive feedback from the Working Party, including issues related to the use of the East Midlands Hotel, Loughborough as temporary accommodation for homeless people. A copy of the minutes of the last meeting is to follow.

11. REPLACEMENT – MULTI-TRADE CONTRACT

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, the Head of Property Services will report verbally on proposals for the re-letting of the Multi-Trade Contract. The matter by the Cabinet on 29th January 2004 and a copy of the report is attached at page 30. The Cabinet agreed recommendations 1. to 6. in the report.

12. [PRC HOMES – REFURBISHMENT AND MODERNISATION 2004/05](#)

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, a report of the Head of Housing Services to update the Committee on the Council's PRC homes refurbishment and modernisation programme is attached at page 42.

13. [CHARNWOOD TENANT COUNCIL PARTNERSHIP](#)

This item is included on the agenda to enable the Association of Charnwood Tenants' representative to report on any issues discussed at meeting(s) of the Partnership held since the last meeting of the Committee which she considers require the input of the Committee.

14. [CABINET – CURRENT/RECENT ISSUES CONSIDERED AND RESPONSES TO REPORTS/COMMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE](#)

Details of the items within the Committee's remit which the Cabinet has considered since the Committee's meeting on 27th January 2004 are listed below to enable the Committee to identify whether any of the issues should be included in its work programme. The list includes details of any responses of the Cabinet to reports/comments put forward by the Committee in respect of the items.

[29th January 2004](#)

- Assistance for Private House Owners – New Scheme (minute 223)
- Re-letting of the Multi-Trade Repairs and Maintenance Contract for the Council's Housing Stock and Public Buildings (minute 230)

The Cabinet invited the Housing Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the proposed partnership specification document when a draft document is available

- Budget and Outline Service Plans Feedback (minute 231)
- * Budget Provision – Energy Officer Post – H151 (minute 232A)

[12th February 2004](#)

- Proposed Capital/MRA programme (minute 237)
- Budget 2004/05 (minute 238)
- Council Tax Levy (minute 240)
- Gas Servicing and Repairs Term Contract 2004-2007 – Re-letting (withdrawn from agenda)

[26th February 2004](#)

- Void properties – Proposed Revised Procedure (item 8)
- Homeless Families – Provision of Temporary Accommodation (item 9)
- Lifeline Charges – Proposed Increase and Standardisation (item 10)
- Issues Referred from Scrutiny Committee – Housing (item 18)

***The public were excluded from the meeting when the Cabinet considered the above item on the ground that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The Committee will also need to resolve to exclude the public if it wishes to discuss the item.**

15. SCRUTINY COMMISSION - FEEDBACK

This item is included on the agenda to enable feedback from the meeting of Scrutiny Commission on 10th February 2004 to be given.

16. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

An updated Forward Plan was published on 16th February 2004. Currently, there are no matters within the scrutiny remit of this Committee in the Forward Plan.

17. WORK PROGRAMME

The current position with the Committee's work programme is attached at page 43. The Committee is asked to review the programme, any amendments and additions it might wish to make and business for future meetings. This will enable planning for the next two or three meetings to be undertaken, for relevant background information to be prepared and for the attendance of officers and/or others to be arranged.

At its meeting on 13th January 2004 the Committee had considered the Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2003/04. During that meeting members had expressed concern at the continued rise in support services and had requested that the Cabinet be informed of the Committee's concerns. The Chair has requested the Committee to consider including the matter in its work programme.

Scrutiny Check-list

- What is the current approach, policy, practice, etc.?
- What are the strengths?
- What are the weaknesses?
- What improvements could be achieved by changing it?
- What examples of good practice exist elsewhere?
- Should the views of other interested parties be sought?
- What are the financial and other resource implications?
- Overall, would there be an advantage in changing the approach?
- How would such a change sit with other policies, practices, etc.?
- What proposals should be made to the Cabinet, if any?

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
Following meeting on 27th January 2004

Issue	Progress	Meeting Date
Voids Performance	<p>How voids are dealt with/process involved between tenancies considered 5th August 2003 (with exception of allocations part of process). Visits to void properties also undertaken.</p> <p>Committee has agreed a working party approach to in depth scrutiny of matter. Membership not yet decided.</p> <p>Voids performance as a general issue to be included on an on-going basis in work programme due to outcome of Best Value Review of Housing Services.</p> <p>Future reports to be considered in three parts: difficult to let properties; major or capitalised works and re-lets. Report requested on the three issues.</p> <p>Report outlining proposed revisions to the voids procedure to be submitted to the Cabinet in February 2004. Report to be considered by the Committee.</p>	9th March 2004
Replacement Multi-Trade Contract	<p>Report requested on issues related to the item which was identified from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.</p> <p>Report to be submitted to the Cabinet 29th January 2004. Committee to consider that report.</p>	9th March 2004
Warden Services Restructure	<p>Report requested on issues related to the item which was identified from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.</p>	

Issue	Progress	Meeting Date
	Report to be submitted to the Cabinet in February 2004. Committee to consider that report.	9th March 2004
Recovery of Housing Benefits Overpayments	Approach being taken considered 5th August 2003. Issue to be considered further following case monitoring by Head of Benefits and Revenues Services and The Bridge for six months.	9th March 2004
East Midlands Hotel, Loughborough – Use as Temporary Accommodation for Homeless People	Issue to be considered at the next meeting of the Homelessness Working Party and feedback to be considered by the Committee.	9th March 2004
Homelessness	To be considered by working party set up by the Committee. Next meeting to be held 18th February 2004. Work programme to be agreed and submitted to the Committee.	9th March 2004
PRC Options	<p>Progress report in respect of renovation programme on the PRC properties in Mountsorrel requested.</p> <p>Report on issues related to the item considered on 28th October 2003. Committee to continue to be updated.</p>	<p>9th March 2004</p> <p>29th June 2004</p>
Housing Support Services	To be considered by a working party set up by the Committee. Next meeting to be held on 24th March 2004.	18th May 2004
Review of Introductory Tenancies	<p>Issue identified by the Chair for future consideration.</p> <p>Report on the review to be submitted to the Cabinet in March 2004. Committee to consider that report..</p>	18th May 2004
Allocations Policy	Report reviewing the Council's Allocations Policy following its implementation 12 months ago considered 27th January 2004.	

Issue	Progress	Meeting Date
	An update report reviewing the “unlimited offers” policy and related issues requested.	29th June 2004
Appointments System for Repairs and Maintenance of Council-Owned Properties	<p>Report reviewing the proposed appointments system to be introduced in Contract and Public Services considered 27th January 2004.</p> <p>An update report on the progress of the implementation of the repairs appointments system for council tenants requested.</p> <p>The Contact Centre Manager has been requested to attend that meeting.</p>	29th June 2004
Rent Arrears	<p>Issue remains of concern to the Committee. Committee has agreed a working party approach to in depth scrutiny of the matter. Membership yet to be agreed.</p> <p>Report on issues related to rent arrears considered 4th December 2003. Further report to be submitted in six months time in respect of issues raised by the Committee.</p>	29th June 2004
Domestic Abuse Service	Progress last considered 24th June 2003. Presentation by representatives of Loughborough Women’s Aid and new outreach worker, once in post, on work to be undertaken and services being provided. Arrangements to be considered.	7th September 2004
Housing Strategy	Following Committee’s request, Cabinet agreed to involve it in consideration of the issue at the earliest opportunity. Report considered on 28th October 2003. An additional meeting of the Committee to be arranged to review the Strategy at the end of the consultation period.	To be programmed
Housing Services	Presentation received on restructure	To be

Issue	Progress	Meeting Date
Restructuring	16th September 2003. Report on staff recruitment considered 9th December 2003. Report on proposals to improve recruitment and retention requested.	programmed
Housing Stock Options Appraisal	Verbal report received 16th September 2003. Further report requested with the involvement of the ACT following completion of the consultation process.	
Monitoring Implementation of the Best Value Review of the Housing Group of Services – Improvement Plan	Progress reports, in format agreed by the Committee, to be considered every six months. Additional meetings to be held for the purpose. Last meeting held 4th December 2003.	To be programmed
Review of Tenant Participation in Housing Services	Issue identified by the Chair for future consideration.	To be programmed
Proposed Housing Capital/MRA Programme	Proposals for programme considered 27th January 2004. Committee to continue to be updated.	To be programmed
Performance Indicator Information	On a quarterly basis. Last considered 27th January 2004	To be programmed

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