



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Held: THURSDAY, 15 APRIL 2010 at 5.30pm

P.R.E.S.E.N.T.

Councillor Bhavsar – Vice-Chair (In the Chair)

Councillor Bajaj (for Cllr Glover)	Councillor Johnson (for Cllr Grant)
Councillor Joshi	Councillor Newcombe
Councillor Potter	Councillor Senior
Councillor Suleman	

Also In Attendance

Councillor Westley

Cabinet Lead Member for Housing

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187. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Councillors Glover and Grant.

188. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they had in the business on the agenda, and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

Councillor Senior declared a personal interest in Item 6 'Tracking of Petitions – Monitoring Report' as she had been consulted as a Ward Councillor in respect of the petition opposed to the Spinney Hills Schools Cycle Link.

Councillor Senior declared a personal interest in Item 10 'Remodelling of YMCA, East Street, Leicester' as she was a Member of a group that regularly used the room.

Councillor Potter declared personal interests in Item 7 'Youth Justice Planning Improvement Framework 2010-11' and Item 10 'Remodelling of YMCA, East

Street, Leicester' as she was a member of the Safeguarding Children's Panel.

200. DIVISIONAL FEEDBACK ON THE ADULTS AND HOUSING TASK GROUP REVIEW OF HOMECOME LEICESTER

The Director of Housing Services and Director Housing Strategy and Options submitted a joint report that provided a response to the Adults and Housing Task Group Review into HomeCome Leicester.

The Director, Housing Services introduced the report and explained that it considered five areas of concern that were detailed in the Task group report. In response to the first issue around the possibility of HomeCome tenants facing financial difficulty due to the rent levels being higher than Council tenants, it was explained that all tenants were entitled to apply for housing benefits. It was also stated that out of 125 HomeCome tenants, 34.4% of them did not receive maximum housing benefit.

In response to the issue of HomeCome tenants finding themselves locked in tenancy agreements and not fully understanding the procedures, Members heard that tenants were never locked in such agreements as they had the ability to give four weeks notice at any time. The Director, Housing Services, acknowledged that tenants expressed confusion about how to access customer services and repairs and maintenance services. He gave several examples of ways in which this was to improve.

The Task Group had previously expressed concern around the standard of works carried out and inspections to HomeCome properties being prepared for let. In relation to this, the Director, Housing Services confirmed that the standards should be same for both HomeCome and City Council properties.

In response to a specific issue raised by the Task Group report in relation to a property in Mowmacre Hill where a former bathroom had been converted to a small bedroom, it was noted that officers had carried out further investigations into the property and it had been confirmed that it not contravene building regulations. It was also explained that HomeCome had agreed to install a large window into the bedroom.

Councillor Potter, Adults and Housing Task Group Leader, stated that she accepted the responses supplied by officers. She also suggested that an additional recommendation be put forward to ask officers to consult with HomeCome tenants on an annual basis. This suggestion was supported by the Board and agreed by the Director of Housing Services. She did question the result of the health and safety inspection to permit the use of the former bathroom as a bedroom at the Mowmacre Hill property, and a copy of the health and safety assessment was requested. Councillor Westley, Cabinet Lead Member for Housing was in attendance and shared the concerns around the property, but gave further assurances that it met the appropriate regulations. He also stated that the tenant had expressed no dissatisfaction in terms of the property.

The decision round granting £15 a month allowance to HomeCome tenants was questioned. It was stated in response that this was a Government initiative for private sector tenants and it would not be feasible to consider giving City Council tenants £15 per month, and that this was supplied to HomeCome tenants to compensate for them occupying properties with rents below the market average for that type of property. It was also pointed out that only 10 HomeCome tenants were in receipt of the additional £15pm. In response to a question regarding the communication around repairs and maintenance services, it was reported that clear information for tenants on the repairs service was being prepared. Furthermore, all HomeCome tenants were now in receipt of City Housing news and a consultation with tenants was to be undertaken in respect of a checklist of the information they would like to receive.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Adults and Housing Task Group Review of HomeCome Leicester Final Report along with the divisional response be forwarded to Cabinet for their consideration.
- (2) That Cabinet is also asked to support a further recommendation to instigate a mechanism to consult with HomeCome tenants on an annual basis.