

HOUSING CONSULTATIVE GROUP**MONDAY 8 APRIL 2002 AT 2.00 PM**

PRESENT: The Executive Portfolio Holder for Health and Well Being:
Councillor Bloxham (Chairman)

Councillors Mrs Bowman, Farmer, Hodgson B and Joscelyne.

ALSO

PRESENT: Ms C Jamieson – HACAS Chapman Hendy
Mr P Anson - Assistant Director, Riverside Housing Group
Ms E Adams – Senior Consultant, Priority Estates Project (PEP)
North
Mr J Adams -Tenants' Advisory Group (TAG)
Mr D Thomas - City Treasurer
Mr T Bramley – Director of Housing
Mr D Steele – Accountancy Manager
Mrs M Durham - Committee Clerk

Councillor Morton attended the meeting as an observer

HCG.21/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Fisher, Ms R Notman (TAG) and Mrs L Dixon (Housing Transfer Project Officer).

HCG.22/02 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2002 were received.

HCG.23/02 STAGE ONE - OFFER DOCUMENT DRAFT

The Director of Housing presented a joint report with the City Treasurer (H.32/02) updating Members on progress on the development of the Stage One Offer Notice to tenants.

The Director commented that, since the last meeting of the Group, the document had been considered by the Executive, the Council's advisers, Riverside's advisers, Priority Estates Project (PEP), the Tenants' Advisory Group (TAG) and the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Where appropriate, the comments and revisions suggested by those individuals and Committees had been incorporated.

He then outlined the substantive changes to the document, which concerned stock investment, rents and other charges, and quality of life and regeneration, the most significant of which being Carlisle Housing Association's 5 year rent guarantee.

On that latter point, Ms Adams commented that the TAG felt that the table which appeared on Page 18 of the document was confusing, the main difficulty relating to people's level of understanding as regards percentage inflation and averages. It was therefore suggested that the table be entitled "Average Rents" and an explanation be included by way of clarification.

The Director and Mr Anson both acknowledged that it was difficult to strike a balance on the level of detail to be included. The figures which appeared in the table were average amounts and clearly certain rents would be above or below the same. It was agreed that the section regarding the rent guarantee be amended as suggested above.

The Director added that a revised version of the document, including the above amendments, would be considered by the Executive on 15 April 2002. The final offer would comprise a glossy document which would be more reader friendly and include an 8 page summary. A video, pocket sized card detailing common questions and answers, numerous road shows and a door knocking exercise would also follow to ensure that all tenants had the opportunity to make an informed decision on the transfer.

Ms Adams raised issues with regard to tenants' rights, in particular, the tenancy agreement, right to acquire and eviction on Ground 11, to which the Director responded.

The Chairman then thanked all those involved in the preparation of the Offer document.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Well Being undertook to recommend that the Executive:

- 1. Approve the final offer document, subject to any further final comments of the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) and the Community Housing Task Force (CHTF).**
- 2. Authorise the Portfolio Holder, in consultation with the Director of Housing and City Treasurer, to approve any consequent amendments necessary as a result of the DTLR/CHTF's requirements.**

HCG.24/02 HOUSING TRANSFER PROJECT PLAN PROGRESS

The Director of Housing presented a joint report with the City Treasurer (H.29/02) providing an update on the project plan for the housing transfer process in terms of preparations by both the City Council and Riverside Group.

The Director commented upon the key decision-making points contained within the Plan and reminded Members that the version attached to the report also showed for completeness the detailed plan on the associated corporate restructuring work.

He then outlined incomplete key events behind schedule, variances with major cost/policy implications and variances potentially affecting the transfer date or project delivery.

Mr Anson commented upon the consultants' final report on the Housing Demand Verification Study which had been received by the Council on 22 March 2002 and evaluated by Council Officers and advisers. In summary the report indicated that there should be a sustainable level of demand for Carlisle Housing Association (CHA) property over the next 10 years at or around the level presumed in the business plan, subject to CHA adopting a number of actions.

The Director added that the Officer Steering Group had reviewed the sequence of dates relating to the Stage 1/Stage 2 Ballot and outlined the revised key dates proposed.

The Housing Consultative Group noted progress against the Project Plan, some refinements to the proposed Stage 1/Stage 2 ballot dates, and the receipt of the Housing Demand Verification information.

HCG.25/02 TENANTS' ADVISORY GROUP

The Director of Housing presented report H.31/02 concerning the latest discussions of the TAG and PEP.

The Director reminded Members that the TAG had been involved in the development of the policy approaches presented by CHA at the last meeting of this Group. The intention was that, should the ballot prove positive, their role would continue in order that those policies could be further developed. In addition, CHA's proposed Tenant Participation Compact gave a continuing role to the TAG as part of its consultation framework.

The TAG had considered in detail the draft Offer document and their main concerns related to stock investment, tenancy rights, the rent guarantee and Board membership/co-opted members.

Independent validation of the draft Business Plan had been carried out on behalf of PEP for the TAG and tenants generally to ensure that the commitments made in the Offer document had been accounted for in the Plan. A report on the outcome of that exercise would shortly be considered by the TAG.

The Housing Consultative Group noted the content of the report.

HCG.26/02 HOUSING CONSULTATIVE GROUP – SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The Director of Housing presented report H.28/02 setting out the anticipated Housing Consultative Group meeting schedule for 2002 as provisionally agreed at the last meeting.

The Director commented that, following the Executive meeting on 11 March and the Officer Steering Group on 27 March 2002, a number of relevant meeting dates had changed, as a result of which three of the Housing Consultative Group dates required to be reviewed. He sought Members' instructions in that regard.

The Housing Consultative Group agreed that the meeting schedule for 2002 be revised as follows:

1. Monday 17 June - meeting to commence at 10.30 am, rather than 2.00 pm
2. Wednesday 7 August – meeting to be cancelled and rearranged for Friday 26 July at 4.00 pm
3. Monday 7 October – date and time (2.00 pm) confirmed.

[The meeting ended at 2.40 pm]