

Item 10(c)

## HOUSING TRANSFER WORKING GROUP

THURSDAY 23 AUGUST 2001 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Bloxham (Chairman), Councillors Boaden, Dodd, Ellis, Farmer, Mrs Mallinson and Wilson.

ALSO

PRESENT: Mr H Evans - Deputy Chief Executive, Riverside Housing Group  
Mr P Anson - Assistant Director, Riverside Housing Group  
Ms E Adams - PEP North  
Mrs F Westmorland (representing Mr B Tolley) – Tenants' Advisory Group (TAG)  
Mr D Thomas - City Treasurer  
Mr T Bramley – Director of Housing  
Mr J Egan – City Solicitor and Secretary  
Mr L Brewis - Head of Housing Provision  
Mr D O'Brien - Conservative Political Research Assistant  
Mr J Shires – Labour Political Research Assistant  
Mr A Pateman - Liberal Democrat and Independent Political Research Assistant  
Mrs M Durham - Committee Clerk

### HT.56/01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr B Tolley and Ms L Tyson (TAG) and Ms I Davison, Unison representative.

### HT.57/01 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest affecting any item on the Agenda.

### HT.58/01 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meetings held on 24 July and 2 August 2001 be received.

### HT.59/01 PROPOSALS FOR THE RSL BOARD

Pursuant to Minute HT.55/01, the Director of Housing submitted report H.86/01 concerning proposals for the creation of a Shadow Board for the new RSL. It was anticipated that the Shadow Board would be established in October 2001 and eventually become the substantive Board of the new RSL should the transfer take place in December 2002.

The Director outlined the five key areas for consideration, which were:

- The size of the Shadow Board
- The composition of the Shadow Board
- Recruitment of the Shadow Board
- The timetable for the recruitment of Shadow Board Members
- The duration of the first Board of the new RSL.

He informed Members that the TAG had debated these issues at meetings held on 8 and 15 August 2001 and outlined their views in respect thereof.

RESOLVED – That it be a recommendation of the Housing Transfer Working Group to the City Council and the Riverside Group that:

- (1) The size of the Shadow Board should be limited to 12.
- (2) Those 12 places be made up of one third tenants, one third Carlisle City Council nominees and one third independent members.
- (3) The processes for tenant selection, City Council nominees and the selection of independent members of the Shadow Board be as detailed in Section 4.1 of report H.86/01.
- (4) The timetable, outlined in Section 4.1.1 of the report, be adopted for the selection of the Shadow Board in order that the Board may be in place by the middle of October 2001.
- (5) Subject to a successful ballot of tenants, the members of the Shadow Board of the RSL become members of the new subsidiary RSL Board and the first retirements from that Board would be at the RSL's Annual General Meeting in 2004.

#### HT.60/01 "WHAT'S IN A NAME?" – NAMING THE NEW RSL

The Director of Housing submitted report H.82/01 providing details of the results of the consultation exercise undertaken to establish a name for the new subsidiary RSL of the Riverside Group.

The Director reminded Members that, at the last meeting of the Working Group, it had been agreed that a newsletter would be circulated to every Carlisle City Council tenant and leaseholder seeking their views on the choice of a name for the new subsidiary RSL. Responses were requested by 17 August 2001 and, as an incentive, all returns were entered into a prize draw.

Approximately 7,640 tenants and 200 leaseholders were circulated with the newsletter requesting their views. 429 people had responded, giving a response rate of 6%, and the Director outlined the responses received. He added that each of the shortlisted names had been checked against the Companies House website on the advice of the National Housing Federation (NHF), their advice being that similar names should be avoided and that names used by another organisation in the last ten years could not be used.

In making a choice of the new name, Members were recommended to judge against the principles identified at the last meeting.

RESOLVED – That it be a recommendation to the City Council that “Carlisle Housing Association Ltd” be adopted as the name of the new subsidiary RSL of the Riverside Group.

#### HT.61/01 \*HOUSING TRANSFER PROJECT PLAN

The Director of Housing presented a report by the City Treasurer (H.85/01) providing an update on the Project Plan for the housing transfer process.

The Director drew Members’ attention to the Project Plan attached to the report, which was now being submitted to the DTLR (London) and Community Housing Task Force (Manchester) on a monthly basis. He then commented on certain key events currently behind schedule, which was a reflection of the huge volume of information which required to be processed, together with those which were being firmed up by the Officer Project Team.

RESOLVED – That progress against the Project Plan be noted.

#### HT.62/01 \*UPDATE ON DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RIVERSIDE GROUP

The Director of Housing presented a report by the City Treasurer (H.84/01) updating Members on discussions with the Riverside Group on preparations for the proposed transfer.

Discussions had focused on those functions previously listed as ‘requiring detailed evaluation’ and Riverside Group was continuing its detailed evaluation with the intention of reporting back with proposals by the end of August 2001.

With regard to support services, Riverside Group was working on an analysis and build-up of staffing and related costs for the new RSL and it was anticipated that they would be in a position to submit proposals around the end of August 2001. On the Council side, corporate issues would be reported through Chief Officers’ Management Team and subsequently to the Council Executive by September 2001. Considerable preparatory thought was also being given to the major issue of the legal and property requirements of the transfer.

The Director reminded Members that detailed work on options for the DSO required to be commenced at an early date, and the Project Plan set that work for the period up to the end of September 2001. The Riverside Group were also in direct discussion with staff involved.

He added that liaison arrangements continued to progress. The Riverside Group set-up team had grown to eight staff and the recruitment of another six was underway via local external recruitment. The team had relocated from the Housing Department's Repairs and Improvements portacabin to leased offices in West Tower Street on 13 August 2001.

A member questioned whether Riverside would in fact be in a position to report back with proposals on those functions requiring detailed evaluation by the end of August 2001. In response Mr Evans commented that the current Business Plan required to be more robust, as a result of which Riverside had been in discussion with the Director and his staff. In addition, an independent analysis of the Business Plan was being undertaken, the result of which was expected within the next ten days. The Director stressed the importance of ensuring that the proposals could be delivered and that involved a massive amount of work.

RESOLVED – That the current position be noted.

HT.63/01 FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HOUSING TRANSFER  
WORKING GROUP UNDER THE NEW POLITICAL  
STRUCTURES

The Director of Housing presented a joint report with the City Solicitor and Secretary (H.83/01) concerning future arrangements for the Housing Transfer Working Group under the new political structures of the Council.

The Director reminded Members of the Working Group's existing terms of reference, set out at Appendix 1 to the report, and outlined the need for change under the imminent new political structures. Officers were of the view that the nature of the Working Group (cross party, inclusive of tenant representation and staff trade union representation) had been a major benefit to the conduct of the transfer process to date, and the question was whether and how that inclusive process could be continued.

From research there appeared to be no standard approach and Authorities in similar circumstances appeared to have evolved their own differing solutions. The Director outlined two possible approaches, the preferred option being that detailed at Sections 3.1 – 3.6 of the report. The final decision would, of course, be a matter for the Leader and the Executive.

Subject to that decision, the Director requested that Members give consideration to the list of potential dates set out at Section 3.6 of the report.

In considering the matter, Members felt that it was important to continue to have some mechanism whereby tenants could be consulted and their views obtained.

It was agreed that future meetings of the Working Group be arranged as follows:

Monday 1 October 2001 at 2.00 pm; and  
Monday 12 November 2001 at 2.00 pm.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Leader of the Council's intentions under the forthcoming Scheme of Executive Delegation to adopt the arrangements set out in Sections 3.1 – 3.6 of report H.83/01 be noted.

(2) Subject to the above, that meetings of the Working Group be held on:

Monday 1 October 2001 at 2.00 pm; and  
Monday 12 November 2001 at 2.00 pm.

#### HT.64/01 \*RIVERSIDE'S CONSULTATION PROJECT PLAN

Mr Anson presented report H.89/01 outlining the Riverside Group's proposals for the Public Consultation Project Plan. The Plan had been produced from information gathered over the past couple of months and would be used as a guide from September 2001 to the ballot in June/July 2002.

Mr Anson outlined the current situation in Carlisle, commenting specifically that the consultation programme would be a high profile campaign, information would be clear and there would be five focused key messages, namely:

The Five Rs:

- Repairs
- Rents
- Representation
- Rights
- Regeneration

He then provided details of the information-checking protocol.

RESOLVED – That the Consultation Project Plan and proposals be noted.

#### HT.65/01 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the paragraph number (as indicated in brackets against the Minute) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

HT.66/01 \*APPOINTMENT OF LEAD HOUSING AND RESTRUCTURING  
CONSULTANT

(Public and Press excluded by virtue of paragraph 8)

The Director of Housing presented a joint report with the Town Clerk and Chief Executive, and the City Treasurer (H.87/01) concerning the appointment of a lead consultant to advise and support the housing stock transfer process and advise on the residual functions and consequential need to restructure the Authority post-transfer.

The Director commented on the outcome of the tender process, drawing Members' attention to the brief attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

The City Treasurer outlined the financial implications for the Council.

The Director and the City Treasurer then responded to Members' questions.

RESOLVED – (1) That the appointment of HACAS Chapman Hendy to undertake the housing transfer aspects of the brief attached at Appendix 1 to report H.87/01 be approved.

(2) That it be a recommendation to the Policy and Resources Committee that HACAS Chapman Hendy be appointed to undertake the consequential corporate review aspects of the brief.

(3) That the Policy and Resources Committee be requested to approve the release of £36,000 from the Housing Transfer Contingency Budget and approve the allocation of £316,000 to meet the total cost of appointment.

(4) That it be noted that the City Treasurer would report to an early meeting of the Executive on the reduced Budget requirements to meet the costs of transfer, on the split of costs between the City Council and Riverside, and on the amount required to be spent at risk in advance of the ballot of tenants in June 2002.

HT.67/01 CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The Chairman commented that this was the last meeting of the Working Group in its current format and expressed his appreciation of the considerable amount of work undertaken by Members, tenant representatives and, in particular, Officers.

[The meeting ended at 2.50 pm]