
Report to
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

15th June 2011

Report of
Councillor K. Maton

Title
Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies – Whitefriars Housing Association 2010-2011

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report sets out details of the work of Whitefriars over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The recommendation is that the current arrangements for the governance of Whitefriars should be continued and that the Council continues to appoint four individuals to the organisation.

3 Information on Work of Outside Body

- 3.1 2011 will mark the 11th anniversary of the creation of Whitefriars Housing Group. As is well known, in its first 5 years the priority and focus was the delivery of over £240m of desperately needed investment in Coventry's former council housing. Since 2005, Whitefriars has been working with Coventry City Council and the private sector to regenerate some of the neighbourhoods in the Northeast of Coventry. Much of this has focused on the former NDC WEHM area.
- 3.2 The economic crisis and the bursting of the UK housing bubble had an impact on these developments and the subsequent massive cuts in Central Government spending threatened to undermine the regeneration aims of Whitefriars and the residents of the WEHM area. However, thanks to the commitment of Whitefriars and Council staff, along with private sector partners and backed up by the residents, these initiatives of Whitefriars remain generally on track.
- 3.3 Whitefriars has recognised the need to build new homes and to diversify beyond the management and maintenance of post-war council estates. These ambitions led to the housing association linking with WM Housing Group (previously known as West Mercia

Housing Group) as a partner association in 2008/09. WM's federal structure has allowed Whitefriars to maintain its name, autonomy and local influence in Coventry.

- 3.4 This amalgamation means that Whitefriars is part of a regional force of more than 24,000 homes and therefore one of the largest not-for-profit social housing businesses in the West Midlands. The organisation enjoys the status of being a lead investment partner of the HCA and the lead member of the Spectrum Development Consortium. Geographically WM Housing spans Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Coventry, Birmingham and the West Midlands. What links Whitefriars and the other members of the WH Housing Group are agreed key values: to provide excellent service; value people; act with integrity; and deliver creative solutions. Thanks to its changed status Whitefriars' resources and opportunities have grown, but its autonomy and local specialisms remain.
- 3.5 During the 2010/11 year a new Chair of Whitefriars was confirmed; Mick Rawson and this appointment has led to a review of governance structures within Whitefriars which aim to improve its effectiveness and responsiveness.
- 3.6 Obviously the majority of Whitefriars properties are for social rented. But the nature of demand for housing and the reduced central government support for the building of new social rented homes means that the organisation is looking at properties for leaseholders, shared owners, intermediate and market renters. In addition to this, there is current planning for the possible provision of homes for sale on the open market as part of a varied and responsive housing portfolio. This will in turn help Whitefriars to fund increasingly needed affordable homes for local people.
- 3.7 Whitefriars governance arrangements are undertaken through a Board of 12, made up of 33% tenants; 33% Council nominees; and 33% independents, with the Council retaining the 'golden share'. In a recent report to SB3, In relation to regeneration and new homes, it was reported by Whitefriars that there had been 1500 demolitions of unpopular, unlettable houses; 1800 right to buy sales and 300 new homes.
- 3.8 The partnership work undertaken as part of the NDC project has meant that the first 154 homes in the WEHM area are now nearing completion and a second phase is being planned. Jobs and apprenticeships associated with these developments are provided by the Whitefriars Training Agency.
- 3.9 Over the next few years key issues for Whitefriars will be:
 - Further significant negative impacts as a result of the comprehensive spending review with reduced capital funding for new homes and the impact on welfare and housing benefits.
 - Maximising opportunities provided by the sustainability and green agenda.
 - Maintaining a strong and productive relationship between Whitefriars Housing and the City Council with an open and straightforward approach to challenging issues.
 - Continuing to reduce duplication and provide stream-lined services.

4 Benefits to the City Council of the Appointment

- 4.1 Supporting a governance structure that maintains a close connection to Coventry City Council.

4.2 Reinforces the link between the Council's strategic housing function and the delivery of social housing in the City and surrounding area.

5 Attendance Record and Remuneration for the Appointment

5.1 Coventry City Council's representatives on the Whitefriars Housing Group are Councillors Maton, Mrs Bigham, Ruane and Skinner. During the period May 2010 to April 2011 inclusive, five meetings were held. Councillor Maton attended the five meetings, Councillors Mrs Bigham and Councillor Skinner each attended 4 meetings.

5.2 The post attracts remuneration of £1000 per year.

List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper
Schedule of City Council Appointments to outside Bodies

Location CH59