



**Report to**  
Transport and Infrastructure Development (Scrutiny Board 6)

9<sup>th</sup> April 2013

**Report of**  
Councillor K. Maton

**Title**  
Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Whitefriars Housing Group 2012-2013

---

## **1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report sets out details of the work of Whitefriars Housing Group 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 Housing Group should be continued and that the Council continues to appoint four individuals to the organisation.
- 2.2 A copy of the latest Customer Report can be found at <http://www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk/publications/customer-annual-report-2012>

## **3 Information on Work of Outside Body**

- 3.1 2012 will mark the 12th anniversary of the creation of Whitefriars Housing Group. 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 reduced commitment to social housing of the Coalition Government 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 tangible if reduced in scale.
- 3.3 Whitefriars linked 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. The real benefits of this relationship are now becoming clearer. The reduction in resources from Central Government to invest in social housing has driven Whitefriars to look at how it can meet the desperate and recognised need to build new homes and to diversify beyond the management and maintenance of post-war council estates. During this financial year, with the wider backing of the WM Housing Group, Whitefriars was successful in raising an additional £100m of investment finance through a Bond. Though not all will be spent in

Coventry, this finance will allow £50m of estate improvements and £50m of new development to take place.

- 3.5 Obviously the majority of Whitefriars properties are to meet demand for social rent accommodation. 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'.
- 3.8 The partnership work undertaken as part of the NDC project has meant that the first 192 homes in the WEHM area have been completed and a second phase has been started. As a Housing Association Whitefriars is subject to the Social Value Act but the organisation is already well placed to meet many of its obligations as jobs and apprenticeships associated with these developments are provided in part by the Whitefriars Training Agency.

As part of its sustainability Agenda Whitefriars has sponsored the cladding of over 2,000 of its properties in specialist insulating material which has had an immediate and measurable impact on residents energy bills. A large number of additional homes will benefit from similar works over the coming year as the bond monies are invested.

Whitefriars is also planning to construct a purpose built residential centre for homeless people to replace the out of date and inappropriate Chace hostel. It is hoped that work will commence on site later this year with completion by early 2015.

Additionally, working in partnership with the Council, plans are being developed for a new elderly person's scheme in Canley.

- 3.9 Over the next few months 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 regressive impact of welfare and housing benefit changes as a result of Government policy.
  - Identifying development opportunities to secure the use of available investment in new social housing and estate improvements within Coventry.
  - 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.
  - Continue 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 and other types of 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, T Khan and Skinner. During the period January to December 2012 inclusive six Board meetings were held. Councillors Maton, Mrs Bigham and Skinner each attended five of these meetings. Councillor T Khan, who was appointed to the Board in May 2012, attended one meeting.

5.2 The post attracts remuneration of £1000 per year.

List of background papers

Proper officer:

Author:  
Councillor K. Maton  
(Any enquiries should be directed to the above)

Telephone: 024 7683 3156

Other contributors:  
None

Papers open to Public Inspection

**Description of paper**  
Schedule of City Council Appointments to outside Bodies

**Location** CH59