

draft minutes

Committee	Housing Panel	
Date	18 July 2013	
Venue	CIPFA, 3 Robert Street, London WC2N 6RL	
Present	Ken Lee (Chairman)	<i>Wigan and Leigh Housing Company</i>

Housing Associations strand

Jane Harrison (Deputy Chair)	<i>Paradigm Housing Group</i>
John Butler	<i>National Housing Federation</i>
Tony Deakin	<i>Cartrefi Conwy (Wales)</i>
John Hawes	<i>livin Housing Ltd</i>
Pascale Mézac	<i>plan2moro (consultant)</i>
Philip Winter	<i>Homes and Communities Agency</i>

Local Authority strand

Bev Angell (Deputy Chair)	<i>Nottingham City Council</i>
John Kettlewell	<i>Independent (LAs)</i>
Rowann Limond	<i>SE ALMOs</i>
Brian Scott	<i>Northern ALMOs</i>
Ben Taylor	<i>CIH</i>
Steve Partridge	<i>QSH</i>
Lindsey Wishart	<i>Independent</i>

CIPFA

Louise Dunne	<i>Lead Housing Advisor</i>
Lesley Lodge	<i>Finance & Policy Manager</i>
Julian Smith	<i>Policy Support Officer</i>

By invitation

Stephen Biddulph	<i>DCLG</i>
Ronald Potts	<i>Consultant</i>
Philip Toni	<i>Midlands ALMOs</i>

1 chair's welcome and declarations of interest

1.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

- 1.2 Ben Taylor declared an interest in discussion at item 7.1 of the business case for a publication on the financial management of the Housing Benefit elements of welfare reform, from his having worked on a similar publication for another organisation.

2 **apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from Arthur Cockburn, David Ellis, Michael Heekin, Patrick McCarthy (also stepping down from the Panel), Julian Mund, Julie Robinson, Margaret Allen, Sukvinder Kalsi, John Craig-Sharples, Hilary Vaughan and Errol Williamson.

3 **minutes of the panel meeting of 11 April 2013**

The minutes of the meeting on 11 April 2013 were agreed.

4 **matters arising**

- 4.1 The Service Charges Guide was now available from the CIPFA website at <http://www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/technical-panels-and-boards/housing-panel> with thanks to Pascale Mézac for her work on the Guide.
- 4.2 Members were asked to let CIPFA know of any documents from the old website to be transferred to the new site.
- 4.3 The SORP initial consultation stage had received around 140 responses. The points made would be considered and the SORP Working Party planned to release a full draft for consultation around October or November 2013 (the timetable being subject to approvals needed from other bodies).

5 **membership matters and governance**

- 5.1 Patrick McCarthy had stepped down from the Panel but was happy to remain an email contact person.
- 5.2 The meeting asked that Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish membership of the Panel be considered with a view to increasing Panel links to those parts of the UK, and that CIPFA Wales be asked to increase its presence (for events and meetings etc) in North Wales.

6 **updates**

a **value for money reporting**

Board members have found recent Accounting Directions of help for Value for Money reporting, and for comparison of their own provider's Value for Money with that of other registered providers.

b **accounting direction**

The Homes and Communities Agency was planning ahead for a consultation later in 2013, on the next Accounting Direction. This Direction would need to reflect IFRS and FRS 102. Ahead of the HCA consultation process, members could advise the Agency of any points to be clarified / improved upon from the current Direction's content by contacting Philip.Winter@hca.gsi.gov.uk

c **income management**

John Hawes referred members to his supporting paper circulated prior to the meeting. Feedback at the meeting included: it would be helpful to cross-reference this document to Panel publications for board members. Further comments and feedback were encouraged – members should send any thoughts to help finalise the document to John.Hawes@lavin.co.uk so that the final content could be agreed at the next Panel meeting, ahead of it being made available on the CIPFA website.

7 **panel publications**

7.1 The business case for a publication on the *financial management of the Housing Benefit elements of welfare reform* was supported, with the following comments to be considered by Lesley Lodge and Louise Dunne with CIPFA colleagues:

- including both Housing Benefit administration teams at local authorities, and registered providers / housing associations, within the target audience
- referring in information about the publication to its aim of helping readers better understand welfare reform affecting their organisations' tenants
- referring to DWP information available on welfare reform
- referring to emerging lessons from pathfinder areas on welfare reform – perhaps via offering online updates to purchasers, to follow up the initial publication, as well as perhaps a CIPFA Housing event series
- putting the Housing Benefit changes in the context of wider welfare reform / Universal Credit changes
- linking with / avoiding duplication with work already carried out by Sheldon Wood, especially for the subjects of the first three chapters
- seeking sponsorship / consultancy opportunities
- considering scope to link this publication work with that of John Hawes and colleagues on income management

7.2 It was agreed that the former Housing Association Panel's 2008 Bulletin on *financial planning: a guide for board members* would be recovered from the past CIPFA website and then updated as a new electronic edition, this time including both housing associations (for their boards and tenant representatives) and local authorities (for their councillors and tenant representatives) within the target audience. Other points to be considered for the updating of the Bulletin were noted as:

- the growth in different types of tenure
- acknowledging the differences between registered providers and local housing authorities using the self-financed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) system
- smaller associations liaising with other organisations on financial planning
- larger associations adopting different approaches
- emphasising the board's / councillors' responsibilities in financial planning
- retaining a reader-friendly and concise document – for example, being clear that the document is aimed at helping readers deliver their core social housing service locally, albeit that different organisations within social housing will have different governance and tenure details to take into account

- reflecting regulatory changes since the previous 2008 edition
- reflecting the governance implications for local housing authorities of the move to a self-financed HRA
- circulating a Word version of the revised Bulletin in due course for Panel member feedback
- considering scope for linking CIPFA Housing events / sessions at events to the revised Bulletin

8 **welfare reform, universal credit**

The meeting shared experiences of welfare reform to date, suggesting that CIPFA could work with the National Housing Federation to help share each others' news and information on welfare reform and social housing more widely amongst finance practitioners and their organisations.

9 **spending review and capital investment**

The supporting paper from Lesley Lodge was considered and experience shared of reactions to the recent news from central government on these points.

10 **accounting in the HRA**

The supporting paper from Lesley Lodge was considered and the meeting suggested that CIPFA work up some options on accounting in the HRA, for consideration by DCLG. A meeting on 22 July for CIPFA staff, volunteers and government officials would also consider the self-financing system further, and Lesley would keep the Panel informed of that working group's progress and ideas.

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11 **work of the panel**

- 11.1 The meeting considered experience to date of the Panel since the merging of the former Housing Association and Local Authority Housing Panels.
- 11.2 Minutes would focus on action points with scans of handwritten notes available if needed for reference back to discussions at meetings.
- 11.3 The meeting agreed to continue with a single agenda style rather than separate strands/sessions.
- 11.4 The Panel supported Lesley's suggested key priorities for the next 12-18 months.
- 11.5 More practitioner members of the Panel would be sought, in particular from local housing authorities – members were welcome to suggest colleagues and contacts who may wish to be considered for Panel membership.
- 11.6 The second TISonline editorial panel minutes would be circulated to Housing Panel members, to provide updates on work on the Housing Finance Manual.
- 11.7 Other CIPFA minutes would be circulated as available, rather than as supporting papers for Housing Panel meetings.
- 11.8 TISonline colleagues would be asked whether its website could include more "what's on" type current information free of charge, without going into the detailed content of its pages and thus affecting sales.

12 **regulation and self-regulation**

- 12.1 Panel members were alerted to a potential consultation process by HCA later in 2013 on future regulation.
- 12.2 Ben Taylor and Louise Dunne would update the Panel when news is available on the LGA consideration of their work carried out earlier this year on self-regulation.

13 **courses programme**

- 13.1 Louise Dunne reported on events about commissioning on a low budget for services including housing, social care and health, originally planned for September / October 2013. These would now be taking place at a later date.
- 13.2 The CIPFA Housing Conference would take place in November 2013, looking at cost and value. Members were encouraged to email session ideas and speaker suggestions to louise.dunne@cipfa.org
- 13.3 CIPFA Housing events were also to take place on accounting subjects including depreciation and impairment.
- 13.4 The conference on treasury management held on 17 July had been well attended and supported, including a very helpful presentation by former Housing Association Panel Chair Anne Turner – Louise would look to base some future CIPFA Housing work around building on Anne's presentation.

14 **public finance and management board**

The latest board meeting notes would be circulated when available.

15 TISonline

One set of TISonline housing minutes were noted, with one to follow concerning the Housing Finance Manual.

16 any other business

16.1 Ben Taylor referred members to CIH research carried out for ARCH, the LGA and others, now available online from the ARCH website:

<http://www.arch-housing.org.uk/>

16.2 Tony Deakin reported on pensions developments, including the next triennial valuation of the Local Government Pension Scheme and the need to consider the effect this could have on social housing organisations' business plans. Running FRS 17 reports on the two different bases concerned can generate large differences. Such developments are likely to be of wide relevance for all types of social housing organisations. Where an organisation is unhappy or unsure about an actuary's assumptions, they should be queried. Longer term there may be a question in housing organisations' minds over the sustainability of continuing with LGPS pensions. The Chair would contact the CIPFA Pensions Panel Chair seeking any assistance or advice the latter can provide on this matter.

16.3 Steve Partridge flagged up the need for the Welsh Government to develop its accounting guidance approach for the self-financing HRA settlement in Wales – Lesley Lodge would report this to CIPFA Wales as a point to raise with the Government in Cardiff.

17 date of next meeting

The details of the next meeting were noted:

Date 21 November 2013

Time 11am (to finish by 4pm at the latest)

Venue CIPFA, 3 Robert Street, London WC2N 6RL