

## SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Wednesday, 29 October 2003  
(6:00 - 8:20 pm)

**Present:** Councillor H J Collins (Deputy Chair), Councillor W F L Barns, Councillor L A Collins, Councillor Mrs J Conyard, Councillor J R Denyer and Councillor Mrs M M West.

**Also Present:** Councillor Mrs P A Twomey (Lead Call-In Member); Councillor D F Best, Councillor M A McCarthy, Councillor Mrs V M Rush and Councillor L R Waker (Call-In Members) and Councillor B M Osborn (representing the Executive) and Councillor T J Justice, Councillor S Kallar, Councillor M E McKenzie and Councillor L A Smith

**Apologies:** Councillor R C Little

### 39. **Call-In - Selection of Registered Social Landlords for Barking & Dagenham's Preferred Partners Panel and Allocation to New Housing Projects**

The Board received for consideration a Call-In following the Executive's decision of 7 October 2003 selecting a number of additional Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to the panel of preferred partners of the Council in developing and managing new affordable homes. The Call-In concerned the following points, which the Call-In Members addressed in turn:

- the involvement of Members, the remit and recommendations of a Selection Panel which had not been reported clearly to the Executive
- lack of consistency in the criteria and the RSL selection process, particularly informal meetings following the Selection Panel session
- the capability of the companies concerned, particularly around:
  - past and present performance
  - quality management and support systems
  - complaints about non or poor service delivery
  - local access to the companies' service point contacts

Councillor Osborn responded on behalf of the Executive. He referred to the following:

- reasons for establishing a panel of RSLs:
  - strong partnership relations with RSLs to ensure the efficient delivery of high quality innovative affordable projects to meet the community's needs
  - better planning for future project delivery with greater certainty for the Council and the RSLs
  - approach to help drive up standards of both development delivery and

estate management services of RSLs

- innovative approaches to funding and resources of schemes are more likely to be achieved as a result of the certainty and better lead in time for the RSLs working with the Council
- the purpose of the selection process as a vehicle to address Members' previous concerns and interview/evaluate the RSLs with a view to making recommendations to the Executive
- performance of companies based on Housing Corporation Assessments

Councillor Kallar commented in relation to regeneration. Although he participated in the original selection process, he recognised the need to extend the panel of preferred partner RSLs to realise the potential of land disposal sites as well as other new housing projects and regeneration programmes for the community.

Board Members asked a number of questions regarding the protocol for the Selection Panel and reporting clearly its recommendations to the Executive.

The Board asked all parties to withdraw at 7.45 p.m. so that it could deliberate.

After weighing up all the evidence the Board reconvened at 8.10 p.m. and informed those present of its decision. It agreed unanimously that the matter should be referred back to the Executive for reconsideration, including an additional report detailing the following:

- the views of the Portfolio Member
- the written views of all the other parties involved in interviewing the Housing Associations at the Selection session

The Board also recommend the Executive to:

- consider the views of the Housing Associations Scrutiny Panel on the performance of the RSLs
- review, clearly define and agree the current criteria for the selection of RSLs
- set out in detail the Annual Review Process, including the criteria and decision making processes to be used
- ask the Head of Democratic Support to write a protocol for ad-hoc Member meetings

In view of the above, Councillor Mrs Rush asked the Chief Executive to ask Southern Housing Group (SHG) to withdraw its reference to Barking and Dagenham in its Press Release dated 9 September 2002 which states that SHG "has been selected as a preferred landlord for local authority stock transfers" in this and other London Boroughs.