

**EXTRACT FROM EXTRAORDINARY HEALTH AND HOUSING –  
4 DECEMBER 2003**

HH37

**HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT AND HOUSING BUSINESS PLAN**

The Head of Housing Services explained that this meeting had been arranged to consider the comments of GO-East on the draft Housing Strategy Statement (HSS) and 30 Year Housing Business Plan (30YHBP) 2004/07. The document had been submitted in draft form to GO-East following detailed scrutiny by the Housing Strategy Working Party earlier this year and the intention was now to recommend both documents, as now amended and updated, for Council approval following which they would be formally submitted to GO-East by the required date of 17 December 2003.

It was the intention of GO-East that all submissions by local housing authorities would ultimately receive 'Fit for Purpose' status. Once submitted, the documents would represent the Council's policy over a three year period and it would only be necessary to submit a yearly update during this period.

A number of additions and amendments to the original draft document had been highlighted and the officers now proposed two further additions to the text to further strengthen the passages concerned. The two amendments concerned, relating to homelessness and to the private sector, were duly agreed.

Councillor Bowker said that he was unable to read the colour coded amendments as highlighted in the two documents. The Acting Chief Executive said that he would ask whether it was possible to find another way of highlighting reports to answer Councillor Bowker's concerns.

Members asked a number of questions about the contents of the Strategy Statement. One of these concerned the possible operation of a rent deposit scheme and the Head of Housing Services explained the difficulties encountered by a similar scheme previously operated in the district by Wintercomfort. One problem associated with this scheme was that it had been difficult to access privately rented accommodation within Uttlesford. Now that the new Housing Support Officer was in post he suggested that it might be possible to look again at options for introducing a rent deposit scheme. In this context, the Committee agreed that officers should be authorised to make appropriate editorial changes to the text prior to formal submission.

In connection with the 30 YHBP, the Head of Housing Services reported that the Council now had no real option other than to carry out a full stock options appraisal and that this would need to be fully completed by July 2005. A start on this process would have to be made during the early part of next year.

A suggested timetable for this process had already been drafted and it was agreed that, once finalised, this would be circulated to all Members. Wherever possible, further information would be provided periodically in the Members' Bulletin.

There was also a brief discussion about the recent change of method in compiling the housing waiting list. It was now a requirement to include applicants from outside the Council's district and it was acknowledged that this was likely to skew the figures in relation to those considered to be in housing need. The Head of Housing Services agreed to consider the impact of these changes and report back to Members in due course.

Councillor Lemon congratulated the officers for their work leading up to the completion and submission of these documents. In conclusion, the Chairman endorsed these comments and wished Members and Officers a Happy Christmas.

**RECOMMENDED** that the HSS and 30YHBP, as now amended, be adopted by the Council for submission to GO-East.

**Committee:** Council Meeting  
**Date:** 16 December 2003  
**Agenda Item No:** 7(i)  
**Title:** Housing Strategy Statement and Housing Revenue Business Plan  
**Author:** Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508

### **Summary**

- 1 The Council is requested to adopt the draft Housing Strategy Statement (HSS) and Housing Revenue Business Plan (HRBP) which is recommended to it from the Health and Housing Committee.

### **Background**

- 2 Appended to this report are the draft HSS and HRBP which were approved for recommendation to the Council at a special meeting of the Health and Housing Committee which was held on 4 December 2003. Copies of these documents with all the relevant appendices have been placed in the Members Room for reference.

### **Aims of the Housing Strategy Statement**

- 3 This is a more general policy document compared with previous years, as required by Government. The aims can be summarised as follows:

To ensure that the housing stock within the district, both public and private sectors, is maintained to a high standard.

To provide a first class customer focused service

### **Aims of the Housing Revenue Business Plan**

- 4 This again has to conform to Government requirements. In practice, it shows how the Council will achieve the Decent Homes Standard. The aims can be summarised as follows:

To ensure the Council's housing stock is maintained to a high standard and achieve the Government's Decent Homes Standard well in advance of the 2010 target

To ensure that planned and response maintenance work is carried out within targets and to a high sustainable standard.

To ensure that the Council obtains value for money from its contractors.

To ensure that there are resources available to achieve the objectives of the plan

**RECOMMENDED** that the draft HSS and HRBP be adopted by the Council and submitted to the Government Office for the Eastern Region.

Background Papers: Government Guidance 2003  
HSS and HRBP 2002

## EXTRACT FROM RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 20 NOVEMBER 2003

### RE48 GENERAL FUND POLICY PRIORITIES AND BUDGETS 2004/05

The Director of Resources introduced a detailed report bringing together developments from this cycle of Committees in preparing the Council's General Fund Budget for 2004/05. The Committee considered base budgets, proposals for budget growth and reductions and other key factors in setting the budget. The report proposed a three year indicative strategy to ensure that acceptable Council Tax levels were balanced with the Council's aspirations for service improvements. An overall budget summary covering a three year period as attached as Appendix 1 to the report was discussed.

#### RECOMMENDED to Council

- 1 that Committees be instructed to amend their budget to meet the revised 2004/05 Committee totals as below:

	2004/5 Budget from Appendix 1	Budget Review Items Agreed	Additional Target	Revised Committee Total
Resources	£4,459,870	(£51,550)	(£80,000)	£4,328,320
Environment & Transport	£1,842,410	(£166,000)	(£50,000)	£1,626,410
Dev't Control & Licensing	£374,600	£0	£0	£374,600
Health & Housing	£766,100	(£3,000)	(£10,000)	£753,100
Community & Leisure	£1,292,750	£85,800	(£20,000)	£1,368,550

- 2 Best Value reviews be funded from within the services to which they relate;
- 3 a maximum indicative Council Tax of 7.5% be confirmed for 2004/05;
4. Officers to advise on best practice for the construction & ownership of budgets & fees for semi- judicial committees;
5. that CAB & other relevant Groups be reviewed thoroughly by Community & Leisure Committee during 2004 with the intention of starting new 3 years agreements from 2005/06;
6. that budget consultations be carried out using existing focus groups.

## EXTRACT FROM RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 20 NOVEMBER 2003

### RE60            **COUNCIL TAX – CHANGES FOR SECOND HOMES AND LONG TERM EMPTY HOMES**

The Committee received a further report which advised the Members of the changes contained in the Local Government Act, which came into effect on 18 November 2003. The Government proposed to allow local authorities discretion to reduce or end the discount for second homes, discounts for long term empty properties and locally defined discounts. It also allowed Local Authorities to create their discounts and exemptions in response to local factors.

After further discussion, the proposal having been seconded was put to the vote and carried.

RECOMMENDED to Council that subject to the agreement by the Director of Resources (in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee) with the County Council that at least 50% of the County Council's share of the additional income should be returned to Uttlesford District Council through increased contributions to Local Service Agreements:-

- 1        the existing discount for second homes be reduced from 50% to the minimum 10%;
- 2        the existing discount for unfurnished long term empty homes be removed;
- 3        no locally defined discounts be approved at this time;
- 4        a letter to be sent to the Minister for Local Government requesting that the additional income received under (2) above should be allowed to be kept locally.

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Full Council</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>16 December 2003</b>
<b>Agenda Item no:</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Quality of Life Corporate Plan</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>John Rice, 01799 510400</b>

### **Summary**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the agreement of Council to adopt the attached Quality of Life Corporate Plan.

### **Recommendations**

2. I recommend that the Council agrees to:
  - 2.1. adopt the Quality of Life Corporate Plan;
  - 2.2. agree to formally review the Plan during the June of each Year.

### **Background**

3. The corporate governance component of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (see elsewhere on this agenda) places great emphasis upon the Council's ambition. The only way this can be expressed with evidence is through a Council Plan (corporate strategic plan).
4. The Quality of Life Corporate Plan has been developed through a combination of assimilating the Council's existing commitments in the Uttlesford Futures Community Plan; the Quality of Life Plan and key elements of the Best Value Performance Plan. It has also been developed following the strategic planning event with Members; three area based workshops; four focus Groups with the Community; from comments made at the four State of the District meetings; discussions with partners, managers and staff, etc. The final draft version of the Plan was also subject to a wide consultation with Members, managers, staff and partners.
5. The enclosed Quality of Life Corporate Plan is an ambitious change strategy that if delivered will make a substantial difference to the residents and visitors to Uttlesford. It will improve many things that can affect the way people live their lives in the District, whilst preserving what most people consider to be important. The Plan is now available for adoption by Members.

### **Consultation**

6. A consultation draft of the full Plan was circulated to all Members, managers and team leaders within the Council. At the same time, a reduced version (with internally focussed actions removed) was circulated to all Uttlesford Futures partners together with a broad range of community representatives. Two weeks was allowed for consultation, prior to finalising the Plan for consideration by full Council.
7. Responses to the Plan were received from Essex County Council, Uttlesford Primary Care Trust, BAA Stansted, Uttlesford Local Agenda 21 UK, Uttlesford Local Agenda 21 Transport Working Group, Saffron Walden & District Friends of the Earth; Council for the Protection of Rural Essex, and from respondents within the Council and operational teams.

8. All respondents were very supportive of the Council's initiative to produce a corporate plan and also of the content. In most cases the respondents supported specific actions and explained how they could add value or work with the Council to deliver the action. In addition some respondents made specific proposals for changes / additions. The most significant alterations suggested were:
- 8.1. No reference was made to the vulnerable adult agenda in relation to lifelong learning and the need to combat stigma and discrimination in Learning. Action: incorporated into the Plan;
  - 8.2. No mention of substance misuse. Action: No change has been made to the Plan as nothing more than the significant work already undertaken is proposed;
  - 8.3. Public transport systems should provide for the needs of disabled people. Action: incorporated into the Plan;
  - 8.4. Improving Uttlesford Futures was supported, but by working with and through the partnership. Action: wording clarified to make this explicit;
  - 8.5. Opportunities for young people to include advice and support around health issues. Action: to be incorporated in detailed implementation of Plan;
  - 8.6. PCT to become a statutory partner in Community Safety from 01/04/04 so should be included in list of partners relevant to community safety actions. Action: amendments made;
  - 8.7. Transport Coordinator should be funded by the Council. Action: funding not changed as Council should pursue sponsorship as a first action. If partial or no success then to reconsider options for funding;
  - 8.8. Strong representations were received that energy efficiency and renewable energy actions should be included. Action: new objection and set of actions included;
  - 8.9. Many felt that water conservation be included. Action: no changes as Council already provides for this in Planning Control. There is also an existing action to pursue environmentally friendly affordable housing which would include water conservation;
  - 8.10. It was suggested that the Councils' Green Transport Plan be extended to the Councils' own fleet of vehicles. Action: amendments made to actions to include in Green Transport Plan and to review use of LPG;
  - 8.11. A representation was made to explore innovative approaches to urban design & traffic engineering. Action: changes made to incorporate this suggestion;
  - 8.12. Support was given for the Council Chamber Cinema Project with local groups becoming involved. Action: none required at this stage.
  - 8.13. Action was suggested to include restoring hedgerows and encouraging take-up of the Arable Stewardship Scheme. Action: not included as whilst the Council would invariably support the suggestions, it does not have the means to implement change other than work already in place;
  - 8.14. Climate change should be included in the Plan. Action: whilst climate change is an important factor in planning, the 4-year timescale of the Corporate Plan means that it is unlikely climate change will have any significant impact during that timescale.

8.15.Preserve should be deleted from the Vision and replaced with protect and enhance. Action: change made;

8.16.The affordable housing aim should be changed from affordable housing for local people to deal with the needs of the local community. Action: change made.

### **Financial Implications**

9. The financial implications are explained in the Plan.

### **Legal Implications**

10. There are no immediate legal implications arising from adopting the Corporate Plan.

### **Risk Implications**

11. The risk implications are explained in the Plan.

### **Conclusions**

12. The Quality of Life Corporate Plan provides direction to the Council for the benefit of making a real difference to the lives of local people. It is both ambitious and deliverable. To realise the full potential of the Plan will require the Council to change the way it operates in the future.

Background documents

Copies of the Consultation Documents and the detailed responses are available from John Rice, Interim Director.