

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES GREAT DUNMOW at 7.30 pm on 18 JANUARY 2007

C54 HOUSING STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

The Committee received the minutes of the Housing Strategy Working Group held on 28 November 2006.

At Minute HS2, the Chairman said that he had recently visited Vicarage Mead and had been delighted at the quality of the work. These flats were now very popular. He commented that the work had been undertaken while some residents had still been living there with a minimum of disruption. He paid credit to all the officers involved and to the Council for the decision to do the scheme itself.

He then drew attention to the amount of adaptation work being carried out and the impact that this would have on the future programme.

At Minute HS4, Councillor Hibbs said that the meetings of the Community Committee had become overly long and focused more on housing issues, many of which were low level decision items. This meant that other items did not always get a fair hearing and there was not time to discuss the housing issues in sufficient detail. He suggested a solution would be to rename the existing Housing Strategy Working Group, the "Housing Board", that it should meet more regularly and be given certain delegated powers. He asked officers to prepare a report on this basis for the next meeting of Full Council.

Mrs Bolvig Hanson was concerned that the Board would be a more formal meeting and might reduce the input of the Tenant Forum representatives. Councillor Hibbs agreed that the status of the tenants in respect of the meetings should be reviewed.

Members asked for a report on the new structure of the housing department.

RESOLVED that the Committee approve the recommendations set out in Minutes HS2 – Capital and Revenue Programme 2006/07 and 2007/08 and Minute HS3 – Review of HRA business plan.

In relation to the recommendation in Minute HS4 it was

RECOMMENDED to Full Council that the Housing Strategy Working Group be renamed the Housing Board and given decision making powers. It should have a minimum of 5 meetings per committee year with additional meetings for rent setting and the housing strategy when required. Officers be asked to prepare a report to Council setting out proposed powers and responsibilities of the Board.