

**HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 5 SEPTEMBER
2002**

Present:- Councillor Mrs S Flack – Chairman.
Councillors Mrs C M Dean, R D Green, M A Hibbs,
A J Ketteridge, Mrs C M Little and R W L Stone.

Also present:- Mrs J Bolvig-Hansen and Mr J Grimshaw (Tenant Panel
representatives).

Officers in attendance:- W Cockerell, Mrs H Frost, B D Perkins and
P J Snow.

HH12 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs C A Bayley and
R P Chambers.

HH13 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2002 were received, confirmed
and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

HH14 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute HH8 – Tertiary Cardiac Centre in Essex

Members noted that Basildon had been selected as the location for the new
Tertiary Centre in Essex.

(ii) Minute HH10 – Hatherley House and Court, Saffron Walden

It was reported that negotiations were still continuing with all interested parties
in connection with the proposed transfer of Hatherley House to the private
sector.

The Committee discussed briefly the proposed transfer arrangement in view
of the recent down grading of Government applied standards relating to the
running of residential elderly persons homes. The Director of Community
Services confirmed that the officers would continue to monitor developments
at Hatherley carefully.

**HH15 HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT AND 30 YEAR HOUSING BUSINESS
PLAN**

The Committee received a comprehensive report together with drafts of the
Housing Strategy Statement (HSS) and 30 year Housing Business Plan
(30YHBS) as now finalised and recommended for approval by the Member

Task Group set up for this purpose. The reports had been submitted to Go-East by the end of July to comply with the relevant timetables, but Members were advised that suitable amendments could be made where required.

Members considered the detailed content of the HSS and the 30YHBS in turn and made a number of minor editorial changes to the documents. It was accepted that the HSS in particular was essentially an updating exercise this year, although the 30YHBS was a far more detailed document than that submitted previously. It was emphasised that the latter document had been prepared based on current known data. The results of the Decent Homes Survey, available later this year, would be incorporated into the Plan in 2003. The outcome of the recently commissioned Housing Needs Survey and the implementation of proposals emerging from the current Best Value Review of Housing Need would be incorporated into next year's revised HSS.

It was noted that there had been a small net gain of social housing in 2001/02. A question was raised about the future status of the Takeley mobile home site and officers confirmed that the future use of this site would be closely monitored.

Councillor Hibbs declared a non-pecuniary interest in the development of Harris' Yard, Saffron Walden.

It was agreed to flag up for future reference the potential impact of service charges which would apply from 2003 in respect of communal facilities under the new formula rents system. This matter would be covered in a future report to this Committee.

Consideration was also given to the possibility of giving extra priority to work connected with the replacement of asbestos. It was noted that the majority of this work was programmed in garage areas and that the asbestos concerned was low level in nature. Officers nevertheless agreed to investigate whether it would be possible to accelerate this programme, although it was emphasised that this could only be done at the expense of other maintenance work.

Members expressed particular concerns about the possible redistribution of housing capital receipts which it was felt would have severe consequences for future social housing provision in Uttlesford. Councillor Hibbs proposed that officers should write to the Government immediately making clear the Council's concerns. The proposal was seconded, put to the vote and agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Council that

- 1 the draft Housing Strategy Statement and 30 Year Housing Business Plan be approved, subject to minor editorial changes as agreed at this meeting;
- 2 Officers respond to the consultation paper on Resource Accounting, as outlined in the report, regarding the extra resources available to the Housing Revenue Account resulting from the Supporting People arrangements in 2003; and

- 3 Officers make representations to the Government making clear that the introduction of a new system to redistribute housing capital receipts would have dire consequences for the future provision of social housing in the district.

HH16

BUDGET UPDATE AND STRATEGY

The Committee received a report detailing the list of priorities presented to Council on 16 July and inviting Members to make adjustments in the light of the latest budget projections for 2003/04. The overall position remained that £6.888m should continue to be used as the working target for budget purposes. An updated General Fund based budget projection (presented as an appendix to the report) now indicated that net savings needed to meet this target had reduced from £305,000 to £127,000. However, in a letter to all Councillors, the Leader of the Council advised that overall savings should achieve £345,000. This was because there were uncertain issues, including the Government's new formula grant system which could mean the Council losing up to £200,000 through the abolition of the area cost adjustment.

Members considered in this context the revised priority lists presented by the Administration and the Liberal Democrat Group, together with that agreed by Scrutiny Committee 2. These had been amalgamated in a separate appendix to the report.

Indicative target efficiency savings of £5,000 had now been identified for this Committee, leaving an overall General Fund based budget target of £729,000. Members discussed possible areas where savings could be achieved and highlighted the animal warden service (income from micro chipping), housing renovation grants and public health administration costs as areas for officers to examine.

In examining the list of priorities, Members expressed concerns about the ability of the Council to continue to provide sufficient affordable housing to enable a continuing net increase in housing supply. It was recognised that this position was only likely to be achieved through the planning system.

There was general agreement that the updated budget indicated in appendix BS06 could form the basis for the preparation of budgets for the forthcoming cycle of meetings, subject to the comments made at this meeting.

Concern was also raised about the position of this Committee in terms of the scrutiny of health provision and the developing role of the PCT. The Director of Community Services commented that policy matters would continue to be referred to the Committee where necessary although the specific overview and scrutiny role would be carried out by Scrutiny Committee 1, as agreed by the Council.

Councillor Hibbs proposed, as an addition to the recommendations contained in the report, that this Committee should support providing a means of making the new committee system work in terms of the scrutiny of health provision.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the list of priorities presented to Council on 16 July and summarised in appendix BS08 be noted as the basis for the preparation of budgets, but, in particular, that:
 - (a) there needed to be a link between encouraging Council house sales and increasing affordable housing to try to ensure an overall net increase in housing supply, and
 - (b) the new committee system needed to work in terms of the scrutiny of health provision;
- 2 the Committee noted the indicative target savings of £5,000 and that officers be asked to consider in this context the animal warden service, housing renovation grants and public health administration costs;
- 4 the updated budget projection for this Committee, as shown in Appendix BS06 and including the officer input from appendix BS07, be confirmed as the basis on which officers should prepare detailed estimates for consideration in the November/December cycle of meetings.

HH17

CHAIRMAN'S URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman advised Members of the contents of a letter sent by Epping Forest District Council concerning intended Government proposals to impose penalties where delays occurred as a result of bed blocking in National Health hospitals. Concern was being expressed because of the potential implications for local authorities in cases where elderly patients could not be discharged from hospital in time to meet these proposed targets.

Officers commented that it was understood the relevant County Scrutiny Committee was examining the potential consequences of delayed discharges as a pilot study. Members were concerned about the implications of this proposal and were anxious to ensure that the Council was in a position to react in an appropriate fashion. The Director of Community Services confirmed that officers would take advice on this matter and would continue to keep Members informed of developments.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm.