

**HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 9 JANUARY 2003**

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

Also present:- Mr J Grimshaw and Mr R Perry (Tenant Panel  
Representatives).

Officers in attendance:- R Chamberlain, N Harris, B D Perkins, R M Secker  
and P J Snow.

**HH28 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R D Green and  
A C Streeter and Mrs J Bolvig-Hansen (Tenant Panel Representative).

**HH29 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2002 were received,  
confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to  
changing the reference to the “new internal care ward” to “intermediate care  
ward” in the final paragraph of Minute H20(i).

**HH30 BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute HH20 – Hatherley House and Court, Saffron Walden**

Councillor Hibbs again raised the question of the delay in concluding an  
agreement for the proposed transfer of Hatherley House to the private sector.  
The Head of Housing Services confirmed that there was no further progress to  
report. Councillor Hibbs reminded Members that the County Council’s  
portfolio holder, Councillor Derek Robinson, had stated at a meeting in  
October with Town Council representatives that the agreement would be  
concluded in a matter of weeks. He said that the lack of progress on this  
matter had caused a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty in the local  
community. The Leader said that he would contact the portfolio holder  
personally to check the current level of progress. The Director of Community  
Services confirmed also that he would write formally to the County Council.

**HH31 BUDGETS AND SERVICE PLANS 2003/04**

The Principal Accountant presented the Draft Revenue Estimates for final  
consideration by the Committee. The detailed figures attached to the report  
included savings and growth items approved at the previous meeting on  
7 November 2002, together with internal charges and developments since that  
meeting. The report also incorporated the key elements of Service Plans for  
2003/04.

The Leader advised Members that no further savings would be proposed at this stage. However, the overall financial settlement for the Council was at the lowest anticipated level and would remain in this position for the following two years. In the circumstances, it was essential to avoid further items of budgetary growth.

Councillor Hibbs raised a number of matters in relation to the Service Plans. He also asked about the operation of the border inspection post at Stansted Airport. The Head of Environmental Services explained the Council's statutory role and said that the control of passenger food imports was now entirely under the jurisdiction of the customs authorities. The Chairman felt that it might be helpful to invite the relevant Environmental Health Officers to explain the statutory services they provide at a future meeting.

Members were reminded that the report related only to general fund activity. The Housing Revenue Account would be dealt with as part of the rent setting report which would be referred to the Special Meeting on 21 January.

Reference was also made to the part-time administrative post in Environmental Services which had been identified in the report as a growth item. The Head of Environmental Services explained that the administration team was responsible for servicing activities spread over three committees, including Health and Housing, and the part-time post was effectively self-financing because of the increases generated in licensing income. He pointed out that Uttlesford had the second highest number of taxi and private hire operators in Essex.

Members agreed that the post concerned should be made part of the permanent establishment and recommended to the Resources Committee accordingly.

The Principal Accountant also explained the procedures relating to the operation of renovation grants which were part of the Capital Programme.

After further discussion, the Committee

RECOMMENDED to Council that the Draft Revenue Estimates be approved for inclusion in the overall budget for consideration initially by the Resources Committee, to include making permanent the temporary post of part-time Administrative Assistant in Environmental Services as a growth item.

HH32

## **HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT 2003**

A report was presented setting out options for consideration of the 2003 Housing Strategy Statement and Thirty Year Housing Business Plan. Members were reminded that a Housing Strategy Task Group had been established during the current financial year for this purpose which had included a tenant panel representative. The role of the task group had been to consider the Strategy Statement and Business Plan in detail and make appropriate recommendations to this Committee.

Another relevant factor was that information from the surveys on Housing Need and Decent Homes was expected shortly. It was suggested that a presentation on the outcome of the surveys could be made to Members in the form of a workshop and that the establishment of a task group could be delayed until after the District elections on 1 May. The scheduling of the workshop would depend on the outcome of discussions with the survey consultants.

RESOLVED that a workshop be arranged, if possible, to take place at 6.00 pm immediately prior to the next meeting of the Committee on 6 March 2003 to receive presentations of the Housing Needs and Decent Homes surveys and that the establishment of a task group to progress the preparation of the Housing Strategy Statement be deferred until after the District Council elections.

HH33

### **BEST VALUE REVIEW OF HOUSING SERVICES – DRAFT ACTION PLAN**

The Head of Housing Services presented a report outlining the Housing Best Value Action Plan as recommended by Scrutiny 1 Committee.

The Best Value Review had required intensive examination of those elements coming within the terms of reference within the Housing Service. The Committee noted the main areas that had been discussed and highlighted during the review and the conclusions drawn. A number of minor amendments to the text included in the report were also noted.

The Head of Housing Services said that new legislation had imposed a significant number of new duties on the Council and it was anticipated that some increase in the level of homelessness in the district would be likely to result in the long run. He said that there was a need to quantify the factors involved and that a future report to Members would deal with these matters. There might be future staffing implications as a result of these changes.

There was also some discussion about the possibility of tenancies being allocated to 16 and 17 year olds. Members were concerned that people of this age would not be legally responsible and some form of guarantor arrangement would be necessary in such cases. The Head of Housing Services replied that it was necessary to ensure that vulnerable groups continued to receive necessary support and that Social Services would be expected to carry on playing a role in assisting these groups.

Brief consideration was also given to the housing implications of asylum seekers within the district, but it was generally agreed that no significant problems had yet arisen as a result of this factor. The Committee supported the action that had been taken in approving the Draft Action Plan and

RESOLVED that the Action Plan as set out in the report be adopted.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm