

**HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 6 MARCH 2003**

Present:- Councillor Mrs S Flack – Chairman.  
Councillors 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 R Perry (tenant panel representative).

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

**HH36 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs C A Bayley and R D Green and from Mrs J Bolvig-Hansen, W Gladman and J Grimshaw (tenant panel representatives).

**HH37 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2003 and of the special meeting held on 21 January 2003 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**HH38 BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute HH30(i) – Hatherley House and Court, Saffron Walden**

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Head of Housing Services confirmed that some progress had been made since the last meeting in concluding an agreement for the proposed transfer of Hatherley House to the private sector. A successful negotiating position had been reached in principle with the provider concerned and a draft agreement was now being examined by legal officers of both the County Council and the District Council. It was hoped that a resolution of this matter would be achieved in the near future.

**HH39 RIGHT TO BUY**

The Head of Housing Services advised Members of recent changes to the Right to Buy (RTB) regulations and the ability of the Council to apply for restrictions to be placed on follow-on sales for some rural housing stock sold under the RTB scheme.

He explained that, in the light of serious pressures on their housing stock, a number of local authorities, mainly in London, had had restrictions placed on the operation of their RTB schemes. No Essex authority had been directly affected by these restrictions. The guidance issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in January this year had also incorporated

provision for local authorities in very rural areas to apply for special restrictions to be placed on properties sold under the RTB scheme to enable them to retain adequate stocks of affordable housing in these areas. These restrictions would have the effect that such a property could be sold only to another individual and not, for example, to a property company.

The report suggested that it would be appropriate for the Council to apply to the ODPM for a scheme of this nature to become applicable in Uttlesford and that, it should be limited to cover both residents and people working in the Essex county area.

The report included a chart indicating those locations where restrictions on future sales would be likely to apply. It was suggested that this chart should be used as the basis for an application to the ODPM.

In response to a number of questions from Members, the Head of Housing Services said that a restricted sales scheme would be difficult to monitor, but would help to offer a degree of protection for the retention of some affordable housing in rural parts of the district.

RESOLVED that an application be made to the ODPM for those parts of the district falling into the 'rural' category, to restrict after-sales of former housing stock to residents or people working in Essex, in accordance with the Right to Buy regulations.

#### **HH40**

#### **LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL HOUSING GRANT**

The Head of Housing Services presented a report updating Members on recently announced changes to the Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG).

The report reminded Members of the 'double spend' arrangement by which capital housing receipts raised via the Right to Buy scheme could be used to fund housing schemes operated by Registered Social Landlords and was then refunded to the Council for use on other capital projects. The ODPM had now written to advise the Council that the LASHG system would cease on 1 April this year, at least one year earlier than expected. It was noted that a letter of representation on the whole issue of housing capital receipts had been sent by the Leader of the Council to the Minister during February. A more detailed report would be submitted to the Resources Committee later this month.

To protect the Council's position on capital housing receipts, an incentive of £250 was now being offered towards applicants' legal fees to try to obtain as many sale completions as possible by the end of March. Members agreed with the action taken and it was

RESOLVED that the report on Local Authority Social Housing Grant be noted and the action taken regarding those RTB applicants who complete their transactions by the end of March 2003 be confirmed.

**HH41**

**FINAL MEETING OF COMMITTEE**

The Chairman said that this would be the last meeting of the Committee before the new Council was elected on 1 May and thanked Members for their help and support during the year. The Leader of the Council thanked the Chairman for the effective way in which she had chaired meetings of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm.