

**HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 5 JUNE 2003**

Present:- Councillor C A Bayley – Chairman.  
Councillors K R Artus, W F Bowker, D W Gregory, M A Hibbs,  
R M Lemon, A Marchant and V Ollier.

Tenant representatives:- J Bolvig-Hansen, W Gladman, J Grimshaw and  
R Perry.

Officers in attendance:- R Chamberlain, W Cockerell, M Dellow,  
R Haylock, M Perry, B D Perkins and R Secker.

**HH1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Flack and  
B M Hughes.

**HH2 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2003 were received, confirmed  
and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**HH3 BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute HH38 – Hatherley House and Court, Saffron Walden**

The Head of Housing Services informed Members that a successful  
negotiating position had been reached, but the agreement had not yet been  
concluded as there were still some legal and technical issues to be resolved.

**HH4 GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON REFORMING HOME BUYING AND  
SELLING**

Members considered the above report. The Head of Legal Services reported  
that the Government has concerns regarding delays in buying and selling.  
The report proposed the introduction of a Compulsory Home Information Pack  
which sellers or their agents would have to supply to potential buyers on  
request. Members agreed that this was a good idea in principle.

Councillor Gregory expressed concern regarding central heating regulations  
in publicly owned properties. He suggested an amendment be made to the  
recommendation to take this into consideration.

RESOLVED that the Council respond to the consultation document as  
recommended in the report, subject to the additional requirement that  
the Pack should include a current gas safety appliance certificate  
where relevant.

HH5

## **HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT / 30 YEAR HOUSING BUSINESS PLAN**

The Head of Housing Services informed Members that the Housing Strategy Statement and 30 Year Housing Business Plan needed to be submitted to Go East during the year and that a draft could be submitted earlier for initial comments. In previous years there have been very tight timetables regarding the submission of these documents to Go East, but this year the process had been changed and a more flexible approach has been adopted by Go East. There was also a need for a homelessness strategy, a draft of which would need to be submitted to Go East in July.

Members discussed the appointment of a Housing Strategy Working Party. It was agreed that it would consist of 4 Members and 1 tenant panel representative. Members agreed that the 4 Members of the Working Party would be Councillors Bowker, Bayley, Lemon and Hibbs. The tenant panel representative would be Mrs Bolvig-Hansen.

RESOLVED that a Housing Strategy Working Party be appointed and that it reports back to the October meeting of this Committee.

HH6

## **HOUSING CAPITAL DEVELOPMENTS**

The Chief Accountant outlined the key aspects of the report on Housing Capital Developments. The report updated Members on Government proposals included in the current Local Government Bill for the national redistribution of housing "right to buy" capital receipts and its amendment to introduce some short-term transitional arrangements for debt-free authorities. Members were concerned that debt-free authorities such as Uttlesford would lose a significant capital income stream from the sale of their Council houses. However, the Government had recently outlined transitional arrangements for such councils for the three years from April 2004. Under these, it has estimated that over the three year transitional period the Council could retain approximately £2.5m for housing purposes. If so there were various options as to how the money could be expended.

Councillor Hibbs expressed concern that this government policy effectively constituted subsidising other, less careful councils at the expense of Uttlesford. The Chief Accountant informed Members that through the Capital Receipts Group the Council was continuing to lobby for the proposals to be funded directly by Capital Grant. This way the Council would benefit as a debt free Council. Funding by credit approvals (permission to borrow) would not benefit this Council.

RESOLVED that this Committee

- 1 supports continuing the lobbying of the Government through the Capital Receipts Group on issues including Capital Grants for debt-free authorities.
- 2 instructs the Housing Strategy Working Group to initially prioritise suggested schemes included in Appendix 1 as part of

developing the Housing Strategy in advance of the Government's funding decisions.

**HH7 ASSISTANCE FOR PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL**

The Principal Environmental Health Officer presented the above report, which proposed a new scheme for providing assistance for private sector housing repairs and adaptations following changes to the legislation effective from July 2003. The report referred to detailed survey information on the condition of private sector housing in the district.

Members discussed two principal options for providing assistance for private sector housing repairs and adaptations following legislative changes. They considered that Option 1 was the most appropriate for the Uttlesford District. It would be similar in character to the current Home Repairs Assistance and a maximum grant of £3,000 in any 5 year period was suggested.

In response to a question from Councillor Lemon, the Principal Environmental Health Officer informed Members that the current budget of £70,000 had always been sufficient. Following a question from Councillor Artus it was agreed that if assistance was given to the owner of a long term empty property it would be conditional on the Council having the nomination rights to the first tenancy after the completion of the works.

RESOLVED that the Council adopts a scheme for Housing Renewal Assistance from July 2003 and gives public notice to that effect as required by the Regulatory Reform Order. This was subject to the addition of a further condition to the offer of assistance to the owners of long term empty property on low income, which was that the Council would have nomination rights to the first tenancy immediately after the payment of the assistance.

**HH8 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT**

Members noted the forthcoming Housing workshop on 8 September 2003.

**HH9 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in paragraphs 7 and 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**HH10 VICARAGE MEAD THAXTED**

The report advised the Committee of letting problems at some sheltered housing schemes and highlighted specific problems at Vicarage Mead. It was

recommended that a consultation/feasibility of opinions exercise is undertaken concerning Vicarage Mead, Thaxted.

RESOLVED that Officers carry out a consultation and feasibility exercise about the future of Vicarage Mead and report back to the October meeting of this Committee.

HH11

### **ADAPTATION TO A BUNGALOW**

The report discussed a request for a major adaptation of a 2 bedroom Council bungalow in Great Chesterford. A member of the family was severely disabled. The work in question would provide the family with another large bedroom and also a shower room. The cost had been met from the Housing Capital budget, a sum of which was included each year for work of this nature.

RESOLVED that the Committee approves the adaptation request as outlined in the report.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm.