

**EXTRAORDINARY HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE held at
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.00 pm on
4 DECEMBER 2003**

Present:- Councillor C A Bayley – Chairman.
Councillors K R Artus, W F Bowker, E W Hicks, B M Hughes
and R M Lemon.

Tenant Forum representatives:- J Bolvig-Hansen and P Benfield.

Officers in attendance:- R Chamberlain, M R Dellow, H Frost, R Millership,
B D Perkins and P Snow.

HH37 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Flack, M A Hibbs,
A Marchant and V Pedder.

HH38 HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT AND HOUSING BUSINESS PLAN

The Head of Housing Services explained that this meeting had been arranged to consider the comments of GO-East on the draft Housing Strategy Statement (HSS) and 30 Year Housing Business Plan (30YHBP) 2004/07. The document had been submitted in draft form to GO-East following detailed scrutiny by the Housing Strategy Working Party earlier this year and the intention was now to recommend both documents, as now amended and updated, for Council approval following which they would be formally submitted to GO-East by the required date of 17 December 2003.

It was the intention of GO-East that all submissions by local housing authorities would ultimately receive 'Fit for Purpose' status. Once submitted, the documents would represent the Council's policy over a three year period and it would only be necessary to submit a yearly update during this period.

A number of additions and amendments to the original draft document had been highlighted and the officers now proposed two further additions to the text to further strengthen the passages concerned. The two amendments concerned, relating to homelessness and to the private sector, were duly agreed.

Councillor Bowker said that he was unable to read the colour coded amendments as highlighted in the two documents. The Acting Chief Executive said that he would ask whether it was possible to find another way of highlighting reports to answer Councillor Bowker's concerns.

Members asked a number of questions about the contents of the Strategy Statement. One of these concerned the possible operation of a rent deposit scheme and the Head of Housing Services explained the difficulties encountered by a similar scheme previously operated in the district by Wintercomfort. One problem associated with this scheme was that it had

been difficult to access privately rented accommodation within Uttlesford. Now that the new Housing Support Officer was in post he suggested that it might be possible to look again at options for introducing a rent deposit scheme. In this context, the Committee agreed that officers should be authorised to make appropriate editorial changes to the text prior to formal submission.

In connection with the 30 YHBP, the Head of Housing Services reported that the Council now had no real option other than to carry out a full stock options appraisal and that this would need to be fully completed by July 2005. A start on this process would have to be made during the early part of next year.

A suggested timetable for this process had already been drafted and it was agreed that, once finalised, this would be circulated to all Members. Wherever possible, further information would be provided periodically in the Members' Bulletin.

There was also a brief discussion about the recent change of method in compiling the housing waiting list. It was now a requirement to include applicants from outside the Council's district and it was acknowledged that this was likely to skew the figures in relation to those considered to be in housing need. The Head of Housing Services agreed to consider the impact of these changes and report back to Members in due course.

Councillor Lemon congratulated the officers for their work leading up to the completion and submission of these documents. In conclusion, the Chairman endorsed these comments and wished Members and Officers a Happy Christmas.

RECOMMENDED that the HSS and 30YHBP, as now amended, be adopted by the Council for submission to GO-East.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.