

**HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.50 pm on 8 JANUARY 2004**

Present:- Councillor C A Bayley – Chairman  
Councillors W F Bowker, S Flack, D W Gregory, E W Hicks,  
B M Hughes, A Marchant and V Pedder.

Tenant Representative:- J Grimshaw

Officers in attendance:- R Chamberlain, W Cockerell, P O'Dell,  
B D Perkins and P Snow.

**HH39 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M A Hibbs and J Bolvig-Hansen (Tenant Forum Representative).

**HH40 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2003 and of the extraordinary meeting held on 4 December 2003 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Chairman advised Members that the extraordinary meeting of the Committee due to take place on 20 January to consider rent setting arrangements for the coming year had been postponed and the meeting would now take place on Monday, 2 February at 8.00 pm.

**HH41 BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute HH29(i) – Hatherley House and Court Saffron Walden**

It was reported that agreement had now been reached with Essex County Council regarding arrangements for the disposal of Hatherley House and it was expected that the matter would be concluded in the very near future.

**(ii) Minute HH32 – Listening Lunch with Housing Staff**

There was widespread agreement that the listening lunch that had taken place recently with Members and the housing staff had been a great success and had generated a number of ideas and suggested changes that would be considered.

**HH42 ADAPTATION WORK TO A HOUSE IN WHITE RODING**

*Councillor Flack declared her personal, non prejudicial interest in this item because she knew the resident of the property concerned. She remained present during the consideration of this item.*

The Director of Community Services explained that the Head of Legal Services had advised that this item should not be considered in Part II of the meeting as he did not consider the information given in the report to be exempt under either paragraph 3 or paragraph 8 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

It was noted that a request had been received from Essex County Council Social Services Department for adaptation work to be carried out to a Council house in White Roding. The request had been made because a member of the household suffered significant mobility problems and the existing arrangements were proving unsatisfactory for day to day living arrangements. The work was estimated to cost in the region of £39,000. If approved, the work would be included within the planned programme and would commence within the current financial year.

RESOLVED that adaptation work to a Council house in White Roding, as requested by Essex County Council Social Services Department, be approved, subject to planning permission being granted.

**HH43 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

It was then proposed that the meeting be adjourned to allow a member of the public to make a statement and answer questions from Members regarding parking at Rowntree Way, Saffron Walden.

RESOLVED that the meeting be adjourned.

**HH44 STATEMENT BY A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

Mr John Parry-Williams, a resident of 25 Rowntree Way, made a statement expressing the concerns of residents in Rowntree Way (nos 17 to 27 – odd numbers only) who did not have access to off street parking. A summary of what he said is appended to these Minutes.

At the conclusion of the statement by Mr Parry-Williams, the meeting resumed.

**HH45 ROWNTREE WAY SAFFRON WALDEN – PARKING**

*Councillor Flack declared her personal, non prejudicial interest in this matter as a County Councillor.*

The Head of Housing Services explained the difficulties caused by unauthorised parking on the green at the junction between Rowntree Way and

Fulfen Way and reported the outcome of discussions that had taken place with Essex County Council, as the highways authority concerned, and with local residents. He said that parking at this location had been an escalating problem over a period of time and that concern had been expressed about the state of the green.

In an attempt to control unauthorised parking, signs had been erected on the green stating that parking there was prohibited. However, although the District Council had maintained the grass area concerned, it was classified as highways land under the ownership of Essex County Council. The County Council had advised that the signs prohibiting parking were not enforceable and should be removed. They had also stated that vehicles should not block the sight splay at the junction, that vehicular crossovers into the front gardens was not a solution and that any scheme for parking in the verge at this location was not a viable option on safety grounds because it was too near to the junction.

He considered that the two principal questions to be addressed at this meeting were how best to prevent unauthorised parking and to limit the damage it was causing and whether it was possible to assist the residents by providing a parking facility. It appeared that rear access parking might be possible for those properties remaining in Council ownership at an estimated cost in the region of £10,000. It was also noted that a number of Council garages were located at the rear of these properties which could be let to tenants providing their rent accounts were clear.

The Committee discussed possible solutions to this problem and considered the Council's policy in relation to the letting of garage units. Members were generally in favour of pursuing the possible provision of rear access parking in discussion with all interested parties.

RESOLVED that the "no parking" signs located on the grassed area at the junction of Rowntree Way/Fulfen Way, Saffron Walden be removed and that officers be authorised to continue discussions with Essex County Council, and with residents, with a view to arriving at a solution to resolve the parking problems at this site, including the option to create parking spaces at the rear of 17-27 (odds) Rowntree Way.

## HH46

### ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

It was proposed that the meeting be adjourned to enable a presentation by Mr A Maasz who was Senior Operations Manager and Divisional Commander responsible for the Ambulance Service in West Essex.

RESOLVED that the meeting be adjourned.

Mr Maasz gave a presentation about the operation of the Ambulance Service in the Uttlesford area and in West Essex generally and explained operational procedure and practice.

He was responsible for a total of 31 ambulance stations, three of which were located at Great Dunmow, Stansted Airport and Saffron Walden. The

operation of the Ambulance Service was organised to reflect the areas administered by the various Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in West Essex.

One major recent advance was that the first community paramedic in the county was now operating in the Dunmow area. Mr Maasz explained that there were three categories of emergencies set by the Government and that the West Essex Ambulance Service was currently ahead of schedule in all three categories. All vehicles under his control now had access to satellite navigation systems and he expected that this development would help to resolve some of the difficulties encountered in the more rural parts of the area in locating the place where emergencies had occurred.

He referred to the introduction of first response groups in the area and said that the Ambulance Service would do their best to help the public undertake the role of first responder. The aim was to maximise the resources available to the Ambulance Service in those areas where demand was likely to be the greatest but it was important to achieve a balance by providing proper cover in the most rural parts of the West Essex area at all times. As a result of these policy aims he had now revised the practice of ambulances travelling to more highly populated areas which used to affect locations such as Great Dunmow.

Members asked Mr Maasz a number of questions about the operation of the Ambulance Service and agreed that it would be beneficial to arrange for him to speak to the Committee on a more regular basis.

Following a short adjournment for the presentation by Mr Maasz, the meeting resumed.

## HH47

### **POLICY PRIORITIES AND BUDGETS 2004/05**

The Financial Services Manager presented a report containing details of the Committee's base budgets, including direct costs and recharges, and proposals to meet the savings target set by the Council in December. The intention now was to finalise the Committee's general fund budgets for 2004/05, based on guidance previously issued, and subject to an overall review of the Council's financial position by the Resources Committee.

The report contained a number of options for budget reductions to meet the revised savings target of £5,450. The options identified amounted to a total of £11,680. However, the Director of Community Services explained that some of the suggested savings would not necessarily be able to take effect during 2004/05. A formal approach had not yet been made to Felsted Parish Council regarding the potential saving in respect of the public toilets there and it did not seem feasible to retain this item as a potential saving during the forthcoming year. He also confirmed that the possible deletion of the discount offered to pensioners taking advantage of the pest control service had been discussed by this Committee on a number of occasions and it seemed unlikely that such a proposal would find favour with Members. This was indeed the case. However, he considered it would be feasible to bring in additional fee income and this could be in the region of £3,000.

Councillor Flack asked how the service analysis figures on the front page of the budget sheets could be reconciled to the more detailed figures in the report under the service headings. The Financial Services Manager acknowledged that there may appear to be a discrepancy in the way the figures were recorded because the first page listed the direct budget figure only and the more detailed figures included overheads which were referred to as internal charges.

A question was also asked about whether the pest control service could be expanded to incorporate anti pest measures at public houses and other buildings used by the public. The Principal Environmental Health Officer confirmed that the Council already carried out this type of service for many private companies and he felt that it might be helpful to provide Members with more information about these services.

After further discussion, it was proposed and agreed that potential savings arising from the closure or transfer of the Felsted public toilet be deleted and the figure for the increase in pest control income be revised from £5,000 to £3,100.

RESOLVED that the submitted draft budgets for 2004/05 be approved and forwarded to the Resources Committee for consideration subject to:

Income arising from advertising on superloos	-	£1,000
Savings arising from less use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless people	-	£1,000
Increased charges for food hygiene courses	-	£ 350
Increase in pest control income	-	£3,100

#### **HH48 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2004/05**

It was noted that the report dealing with the capital programme for 2004/05 would now be referred directly to the Resources Committee meeting on 22 January. Members of this Committee would be invited to that meeting.

#### **HH49 VICARAGE MEAD THAXTED**

The Head of Housing Services presented a progress report regarding the proposed refurbishment of the Council's sheltered housing scheme at Vicarage Mead, Thaxted. He advised Members that only one housing association had expressed an interest in becoming involved in a refurbishment scheme. Further details would be submitted to a future meeting. In the meantime, it was agreed that a note regarding current progress should be sent to all residents at Vicarage Mead as well as to those ward members concerned.

RESOLVED to note that one RSL had expressed an interest in carrying out refurbishment work at Vicarage Mead, as previously agreed by the Committee.

**HH50 RIGHT TO BUY – GRANT**

The Committee received a report proposing that a grant of £250 should be paid to tenants who could complete their right to buy applications by the end of March 2004. This would replicate a similar scheme which had operated successfully last year. Under the transitional arrangements announced by the Government for pooling capital receipts, the Council would be able to retain 75% of the receipt in year 1, 50% in year 2 and 25% the following year. Therefore, all completions that could be achieved by the end of March would have a beneficial impact on the Council's capital receipts.

Councillor Flack proposed that a grant of £500 should be offered to tenants able to complete their applications by the end of February. Under her proposal, the figure of £250 would be retained for completions during the month of March. The proposal was put to the vote and agreed.

RESOLVED that a grant of £500 be paid to RTB applicants who were able to complete their sales between the date of this meeting and the end of February 2004 and that a reduced grant of £250 be paid to applicants completing during the month of March 2004.

**HH51 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

The Performance Manager reported on progress towards the introduction of a performance management system within the Council. The report recommended the layout of the reporting mechanism and the process to resolve reported cases of under performance. The intention was that performance monitoring would be reported to the Scrutiny Committees with any relevant issues being referred back to the appropriate policy committee.

A range of more than 60 performance measures had already been identified as forming the basis of the pilot performance management framework. An additional performance indicator had now been added to measure homelessness and officers had also been asked to explore additional methods to measure access to services and customer care. Under performance had been reported in respect of two indicators relating to the housing service. The Head of Housing Services was able to provide figures updated to the end of December indicating that performance had improved in both of these service areas.

RESOLVED that :

- 1 The suggested range of performance measures and targets, including the use of a traffic light system and "smiley faces", together with a requirement for any red indicator to incorporate a rescue recovery package from the service manager concerned, be approved; and
- 2 The intention to report performance review data to the Scrutiny Committees be noted.

**HH52            CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF HOUSING CONFERENCE 2004**

A report was submitted requesting the Committee to indicate what level of representation it wished to have at the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference to be held at Harrogate in June 2004.

RESOLVED that arrangements be made for attendance at the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference by the Chairman of the Committee (or a substitute Member), a tenant forum representative and one officer.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm.

**APPENDIX****STATEMENT TO THE HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE ON 8  
JANUARY BY MR JOHN PARRY-WILLIAMS**

The following is a summary of the statement made by Mr Parry-Williams about the concerns of residents in Rowntree Way, Saffron Walden regarding parking facilities.

He referred to the increasing use of Rowntree Way as a through route and said that the existence of yellow lines near the junction with Fulfen Way restricted opportunities for residents to park their cars on the street. As a result of the difficulties he had referred to, a car owned by one of the residents had been struck on three occasions.

The solution he suggested was to use the green at the junction between Rowntree Way and Fulfen Way as an authorised parking area providing for eight parking spaces in such a way as to preserve as much as possible of the existing trees and shrubs.