

**HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 27 MAY 2004**

Present:- Councillor C A Bayley – Vice Chairman in the Chair.  
Councillors W F Bowker, K J Clarke, S Flack, E W Hicks,  
R M Lemon and A Marchant.

Also present:-Mr I Blows and Mrs J Bolvig-Hansen – Tenant Forum  
Representatives.

Officers in attendance:- R Chamberlain, M Cox, E Petrie and W Cockerell.

**HH1 PRESENTATION ON SUPPORTING PEOPLE**

Martin Cooper, the Commissioning Body Manager for Supporting People, gave a short presentation to the Committee.

He explained that Supporting People was a Government initiative provided in partnership by Health, Housing and Social Services, which aimed to enable vulnerable people to live in the community. The main objectives were to reduce homelessness, crime and re-offending, less delayed stays in hospital, and to give the elderly more independence and choice. He explained how these services were provided in the Uttlesford area. He concluded by outlining the main challenges and opportunities for the future delivery of the service. This included a strategy for dealing with the increasing number of elderly people over the age of 85, support for people returning to the district from the Women's Refuge and specialist mental health provision.

Members then asked a number of questions.

The Chairman thanked Mr Cooper for his presentation and hoped he would be willing to address the Committee again in the future.

Mr Cooper then left the meeting.

**HH2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D W Gregory and M A Hibbs.

Councillor R M Lemon declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in item 10 Affordable Housing – Ardley Crescent, Hatfield Heath, as a member of the parish council and a near neighbour to the site.

**HH3 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2004 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

HH4

**BUSINESS ARISING****(i) Minute HH56 (ii) – Rowntree Way, Saffron Walden – Parking**

Members were advised that two further site visits had taken place with officers, residents and a representative from Essex County Council. The meetings had discussed further options for the parking to be provided either at the front or the rear of the houses. These options had been put in writing and sent to all residents on 18 March 2004. There had been no replies from any of the residents and officers had decided that no further action should be taken.

**(ii) Minute HH57 - Youth Shelter at Little Walden**

Discussions had been held with the Saffron Walden Town Council and residents at Little Walden regarding the provision of a youth shelter on district council owned land. The Council was now waiting to hear from the Town Council regarding the type of structure required.

**(iii) Minute HH59 – Housing Grant Assistance to Almshouses**

The Principal Environmental Health Officer reported that he had received a preliminary enquiry from the Almshouse Trust for a small grant towards work to a flat in the main almshouses, Saffron Walden.

**(iv) Minute HH60 – Service Plans 2004-2005: Housing and Health Services**

It was reported that further meetings had been held with the nominated Members regarding the implications for the service in the Quality of Life Plan. The ongoing actions had been taken out of the Plan and included in the Housing Services Plan. Items for action in the Quality of Life Plan would come to the Committee in due course.

Councillor Lemon referred to the problem of private sector empty homes and asked that a report on a strategy for addressing this problem be brought to the Committee in the Autumn.

HH5

**WELFARE SERVICES**

The Committee was advised of the work that had been carried out to help those tenants make alternative methods of payment for their rent following the decision made by the Committee in February to withdraw the rent collection service.

All of the 110 tenants had now agreed alternative payment methods. Councillor Bowker was concerned that those opting to pay rent via the post office were likely to incur a fee. Officers agreed to investigate this further.

The report then gave details of the level of service the Council currently provided to its more vulnerable tenants.

RESOLVED that the current position with regards to the Rent Collection Service and the Welfare Service to vulnerable tenants was noted and it was agreed that officers should continue to monitor the situation and report to the Committee in six months time.

## HH6 **INTERMEDIATE CARE ACCOMMODATION**

The Committee was advised that discussions had recently taken place between Social Services, the Primary Care Trust and this Council regarding the provision of intermediate care facilities. This type of care was for elderly hospital patients who were unable to return to their homes although their clinical needs did not need them to remain in hospital. Short term sheltered accommodation would be appropriate for this facility and Reynolds Court at Newport had been identified as a suitable site. This complex was near facilities and currently had several vacant difficult to let bedsit units available. The scheme would operate by rent being paid to the Council from Social Services and each patient being individually assessed and a short-term care package provided by the Health and Social Services Agencies.

The residents of Reynolds Court supported the scheme on the understanding that the assisted clients were elderly. The proposal would be subject to a number of legal and administrative arrangements being resolved.

The Committee welcomed this proposal, though some Members were concerned that the scheme would be limited to elderly persons. The Head of Housing Services replied that it was important to listen to the residents' views and also not to compromise the use of sheltered accommodation. However, he would bear Members' comments in mind during the development of future schemes.

RESOLVED that the use of part of the sheltered accommodation at Reynolds Court, Newport, and other possible sites, for intermediate care be approved in principle, subject to the necessary terms and conditions being negotiated by officers.

## HH7 **HATHERLEY HOUSE/COURT SAFFRON WALDEN**

The Committee was informed that negotiations had now been completed with all parties in question and the sale of the "joint link block" between Hatherley House and Court had been concluded and contracts exchanged. The necessary work relating to the separation of services was being carried out and completion was expected within the next few weeks.

The Chairman congratulated officers for bringing these negotiations to a successful conclusion and said it showed the extent of the Council's commitment towards this accommodation.

RESOLVED that the successful negotiation and arrangements regarding the future of Hatherley House were noted.

HH8 **CHOOSING HEALTH? A CONSULTATION ON ACTION TO IMPROVE PEOPLE'S HEALTH**

The Government had issued a consultation document asking for views on the role of individuals, central and local government, the NHS, the Voluntary Sector and others should have on helping people to be healthier. It posed a number of questions and the report suggested responses to those questions relevant to Uttlesford District Council.

RESOLVED that Members submit comments to the Principal Environmental Officer to be forwarded to the Department of Health.

HH9 **KEY WORKERS STUDY**

The Quality of Life Corporate Plan committed the Council to undertake a key worker study. This work would determine who represents a key worker and ascertain their housing needs. When the results were known, the Council would have more information on this group and be able to decide its policy regarding key workers. Government statements had made it clear that key worker policies were likely to attract financial support from Government agencies such as the Housing Corporation.

The survey was to be conducted by consultants and a provision of £30,000 had been made in the budget for 2004/05. Partner agencies had been approached to contribute to the funding but no offers had been forthcoming.

RESOLVED that officers be authorised to carry out a key worker survey in accordance with the Quality of Life Corporate Plan.

HH10 **COUNCIL HOUSING AFFECTED BY POTENTIAL EXPANSION OF STANSTED AIRPORT**

Members were informed that BAA Stansted had announced a voluntary scheme to allow owner occupiers within the proposed boundary of the expanding airport to sell their properties to BAA Stansted at full market value with reasonable disturbance costs and an ex gratia payment of 10%. No such scheme had been proposed for tenants or landlords. It was recommended that the views of the tenants of the 15 Council owned properties affected be sought, and if there was a desire to move away from the area, negotiations be initiated with BAA Stansted with a view to facilitating an orderly move to alternative accommodation.

Members asked questions about the details of this proposal including the implications for qualification on the local housing list. It was explained that a number of issues would need to be resolved once initial consultations had taken place with tenants.

RESOLVED that the views of the affected tenants be sought and negotiations be instigated with BAA Stansted.

**HH11 AFFORDABLE HOUSING – ARDLEY CRESCENT HATFIELD HEATH**

The Committee was asked to consider disposing of some Council owned land at Ardley Crescent, currently the site of four dilapidated bungalows, to a registered social landlord in order to provide eight shared ownership housing units. Members were informed that the Council had power under the Local Government Act 1972: General Disposal Consent (England), to dispose of a site at nil or reduced market price if it would assist with the provision of new affordable housing units. The properties would only be available to local people for perpetuity and the Council would have the nomination rights to the units.

RECOMMENDED that the Resources Committee be asked to agree to transfer the housing site (known as 1-4 Ardley Crescent Hatfield Heath), at nil cost, to a registered social landlord to enable the provision of new affordable housing in return for full initial nomination rights.

**HH12 STOCK OPTION APPRAISAL**

The Government required all stock owning councils to carry out a stock options appraisal regarding the future management of their stock by July 2005. This was also a commitment in the Quality of Life Corporate Plan. To carry out this, the Council was required to appoint independent consultants and this would be done later in the year. Before the consultants were selected an Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) had to be appointed to work with tenants and leaseholders to provide independent information and support through the process of the stock options appraisal. Tenant Forum Representatives would select the ITA in conjunction with advice from officers.

A total budget of £30,000 had been included in the budgets for the stock options work. It now appeared that the work of the ITA would be greater than first expected and this might have an impact on costs. It was not expected to be significantly over budget and any budget variation would be discussed with the Chairman.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the current situation and authorised officers to proceed with all the necessary arrangements for the appointment of the ITA and consultants.

**HH13 FORWARD PLANNING FOR COMMITTEE**

The Committee was advised of specific items that it might expect to consider during 2004/05.

**HH14 GARAGES AND CAR PARK AT HAMEL LANE WIDDINGTON**

The Committee was advised of a request from Widdington Parish Council to regularise the position relating to their use of district council owned land at

Hamel Way, currently used as a residents' car park, by granting them a formal lease of the land.

RESOLVED that the area of land in Widdington be leased to Widdington Parish Council at a nominal rent of £50 per year subject to any terms and conditions recommended by the Head of Legal Services in consultation with the Head of Housing Services.

#### HH15 **SALE OF LAND AT QUENDON**

The Committee was advised of the situation regarding two plots of land owned by the Council which had been identified as potential development land. The Council had explored the possibility of developing the sites with a registered social landlord but the RSLs were not in favour of developing such small sites due to the high build cost per unit. In order to achieve the best price for the land, officers were investigating whether they could be sold for private development and planning applications had been submitted.

A request had been received from the owners of 5 Woodside, to purchase an additional strip of one of the plots of land adjacent to their property, to form off street parking spaces. Officers considered that sale of this land would not be detrimental to the Council's planning application as there was still sufficient land left to build a detached property. The Committee agreed to this request on the condition that the land only be used for parking.

RESOLVED that the land be sold to the owners of 5 Woodside, Quendon, subject to

- 1 a price agreed by the District Valuer and terms of conditions agreed by the Chief Executive in accordance with the Council's standing orders and
- 2 a covenant be made to ensure that the land was only used for the purpose of parking.

#### HH16 **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 item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

#### HH17 **MARGARET STREET THAXTED PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

The Committee was asked to approve the sale of the redundant public lavatories at Margaret Street, Thaxted.

RESOLVED that the Resources Committee be asked to approve the disposal for the sum of £6,000.

The meeting ended at 10.00 pm.