

Committee: Health & Housing Committee
Date: 27 May 2004
Agenda Item No: 4
Title: WELFARE SERVICES
Author: Elizabeth Petrie (01799) 510362

Summary

- 1 This report advises the Committee of the work that has been carried out to help those tenants make alternative methods of payment for their rent following the decision made by Health and Housing Committee on 26 February 2004 to withdraw the rent collection service and report on the level of service, provided by the Council as a Landlord, to its most vulnerable tenants.

Rent Collection

- 2 All 110 tenants have been visited by the Rent Collector, their circumstances have been fully discussed and alternative payment methods have been agreed, and any help/assistance has been given where necessary to set up new arrangements.
- 3 The outcome is as follows:-
 - 20 intend to pay by cheque
 - 28 will pay at the Council Offices
 - 23 have set up to pay by Direct Debit
 - 25 will pay through the Post Office
 - 11 are going to pay through their bank
 - 2 have not made alternative arrangements yet
 - 1 deceased
- 4 As agreed at the last meeting Housing Officers will be carrying out visits to a number of these tenants on a welfare care arrangement to ensure there are no problems emerging. This will commence after the rent collection service ceases on 30 June 2004. Visits will only be terminated with the agreement of the tenants

Welfare Services

- 5 Research work has been carried out by Officers regarding the level of service the Council currently provides to its more vulnerable tenants.
- 6 Out of 2917 tenancies, 490 receive the Sheltered Housing Service and 151 tenants are now connected to the Lifeline Service (within this figure there is a considerable amount of movement).

32 people are in Temporary Accommodation (these tenants now receive a more formal support service from the Housing Support Officer).

18 people receive Floating Support (these are new tenants who need assistance with conducting their tenancy)

207 receive the Welfare Garden Service and 132 receive help with Internal Decorating (these tenants needs are recorded and reviewed as and when required)

173 tenants received some form of adaptation to their property in 2003/04, as a result of requests from Social Services (this work enables tenants to lead a better quality of life)

- 7 An age profile has been carried out of all Elderly Persons currently living in bungalows as at April 2004.

58 are occupied by tenants under 60 years (24 of these are currently being used as temporary accommodation for the homeless)

162 are occupied by tenants aged 60 – 70 years

270 are occupied by tenants aged 71 – 80 years

182 are occupied by tenants aged 81 years plus

- 8 Housing Officers visit every new tenant within a target of three months to ascertain if there are any welfare problems or outstanding issues with starting a new tenancy. Also during 2003 all tenants received a tenant handbook which gives information on all services available to tenants. This information is regularly supplemented by information in the Tenant Newsletter.

- 9 It is also important to note that all Housing Services Officers who visit tenants homes are conscious of reporting any day to day concerns they may have to welfare agencies such as Social Services. In addition, if a problem is brought to the Council's attention, urgent welfare visits can be arranged. There are regular discussions with other statutory agencies relating to issues of welfare and concern.

- 10 It is felt that the Council, as a Landlord, takes its social care responsibilities very seriously. In view of the current level of services provided it is the view of officers that there is no immediate need to expand the welfare service. However it is important to keep this under close review in the future.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the current position and Officers continue to monitor the situation.

Background Papers: Rent Collection Report to Councillors February 2004

Committee: Health and Housing Committee
Date: 27 May 2004
Agenda Item No: 5
Title: INTERMEDIATE CARE ACCOMMODATION
Author: Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508

Summary

- 1 This report advises the Committee of a request for the Council to provide Intermediate Accommodation at a sheltered site and recommends the proposal be approved in principle.

Background

- 2 Discussions have recently taken place between officers of Essex County Council Social Services, Uttlesford Primary Care Trust and this Council regarding the provision of Intermediate Care facilities.
- 3 Intermediate Care is provided for elderly hospital patients who are unable to return, for a number of reasons, back to their homes although their clinical needs do not need them to remain in hospital therefore blocking up valuable beds for other patients.

The Current Position

- 4 It has emerged during the discussions that short term sheltered accommodation would be ideal for this client group. In this context Reynolds Court, Newport has been identified as a suitable site. This is because Reynolds Court is near facilities and currently has several vacant difficult to let bedsit units available. The former Warden accommodation would be ideal for a group facility. In the case of accommodation being used in this way the rent is paid to the Council from Social Services.
- 5 It is important to note that patients provided with this type of accommodation would not be cared for by the Council's Sheltered Housing Officer staff. Each patient would be individually assessed and a short-term care package provided by the Health and Social Services Agencies.

The Way Forward

- 6 The Committee should note that if this proposal was acceptable in principle it will be subject to a number of legal and administrative arrangements being resolved. The views of the residents of Reynolds Court have now been

sought at a residents meeting. The overwhelming majority support the proposal on the understanding that clients assisted are elderly.

- 7 Should this proposal prove to be successful it will be a significant step forward for all the relevant agencies in achieving partnership working for the benefit of this client group. It would also maximise the use of the Council's facilities and have no adverse impact on the sheltered client group currently in occupation at Reynolds Court. Should a successful negotiation be achieved the scheme will need to be reviewed within 12 months of commencement. This would clearly have to be negotiated with the other agencies involved.
- 8 The Committee may also wish to authorise the use of difficult to let units for this use in other sheltered schemes subject to residents being consulted and in accordance with agreement on the terms and conditions.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee approves the use of part of the sheltered accommodation at Reynolds Court and other possible sites in principle for Intermediate Care subject to the necessary terms and conditions being negotiated by officers.

Background papers:- Correspondence from Essex County Council Social Services 2003/4.

Committee: Health and Housing Committee
Date: 27 May 2004
Agenda Item No: 6
Title: HATHERLEY HOUSE/COURT SAFFRON WALDEN
Author: Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508

Summary

- 1 This report advises the Committee of the successful outcome of negotiations regarding the future of Hatherley House, Saffron Walden.

Background

- 2 The Committee has received a number of reports over the last three years, both written and verbally, regarding the progress of negotiations to ensure that Hatherley House, Saffron Walden remains a residential facility for elderly people albeit via the private sector.

The Current Position

- 3 It can now be reported that negotiations have been completed by all the parties in question and the sale of the 'Joint Link Block' between Hatherley

House and Court (the Council's sheltered housing scheme) has been concluded. Contracts have now been exchanged.

- 4 As agreed the necessary work relating to the separation of services is in the process of being carried out. When this work has been finished completion of the transaction will take place. This is expected within the next few weeks.
- 5 The new arrangements for services will be much better regarding administrative arrangement in the future. This Council's contribution is £16,500 which is equal to the Capital receipt received for the sale of the link block.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee notes the successful negotiation and arrangements regarding the future of Hatherley House.

Background Papers:- Hatherley House/Court File and Correspondence 2001-4.

Committee: Health and Housing
Date: 27 May 2004
Agenda Item No: 7
Title: Choosing Health? A Consultation on action to improve peoples' health
Author: Will Cockerell (01799) 510581

Summary

- 1 The Government has issued a Consultation document asking for views on the role individuals, central and local government, the NHS, the voluntary sector and others, should have in helping people to be healthier. It poses a number of questions and the report suggests responses to those questions relevant to Uttlesford DC.

Background

- 2 The Consultation acknowledges that treating people when they are ill is not enough, and it is just as vital to take action to safeguard health and prevent disease. However there are barriers which prevent individuals following healthier life styles and local government, along with many other bodies, have a role to play in identifying and overcoming those barriers.
- 3 The responses to the Consultation will feed into a new White Paper setting out what the Government will do to achieve change across the public sector and in partnership with other organisations.

The Questions

What would make a difference to what individuals eat and spend their time at home, work and leisure?

Is the balance right between one person's choice spoiling or harming the health of others?

Should Regulation be used to support people in making healthier choices and avoiding temptation?

What impact can employers have in helping their employees make healthier choices?

What opportunities are there to work in partnership to influence healthy choices?

What can be done to create and maintain a healthy environment and ensure that everyone has equal access to a decent local environment?

RECOMMENDED that the views of the Committee are submitted to the Department of Health.

Background Papers: Choosing Health? A Consultation on action to improve peoples' health, Spring 2004

Examples of Possible Actions

Support for Farmers' Markets and provision of good leisure facilities readily accessible to all. Promotion of local sports teams.

Creation of no smoking areas.

Amendment of Health and Safety at Work laws to ban smoking in public areas and workplaces.

Restrictions on advertising certain foods to children.

Help to stop smoking, health check ups, stress management, healthier menus. Encouragement to walk to work.

GP referral schemes to leisure facilities.

'Heartbeat' awards for healthy menus and high hygiene standards. Cycle routes and promoting walking. Promotion of 'Health Fairs'

20 mph speed restrictions in residential areas. Decent Homes standard.

Committee: Health and Housing Committee
Date: 27 May 2004
Agenda Item No: 8
Title: KEYWORKER STUDY
Author: Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508

Summary

- 1 This report recommends that a keyworker study is carried out in accordance with the Quality of Life Corporate Plan.

Background

- 2 There is a commitment within the Quality of Life Corporate Plan for a keyworker study to be undertaken. The target is for consultants to be instructed by September 2004. The purpose of this piece of work would be to determine who represents a keyworker and ascertain their housing needs. In this context it is envisaged consultants will carry out interviews with agencies and individuals to assess the local situation. This is seen by the Government as a key component in addressing the housing needs of economically active members of the community, particularly those who provide public services to ensure good public services are maintained. This issue is of special relevance to Uttlesford because of high housing prices and because of the possible impact from the Government's Communities Plan. When the results are known, it is expected that the Council will have significantly more information on this group of the community plus their aspirations to remain as residents in this area. It will then need to decide its policy regarding key workers in January 2005.
- 3 It is clear from Government statements that keyworker policies are likely to attract financial support from Government agencies such as the Housing Corporation.

Current Position

- 4 A survey of this nature, conducted by consultants, has been estimated at costing £30,000 and provision has been made in the budget for 2004/05. It was envisaged that partner agencies would contribute to the research costs. In this context, a number of agencies have been contracted (such as PCT, NHS, Essex County Council) but unfortunately there have not been any offers to help fund this work although all are keen to share relevant information.

The Way Forward

- 5 If this work is to be undertaken this calendar year, the Committee must decide whether to pay for the whole project (subject to the estimated budget). This research falls within the General Fund.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee authorises officers to carry out a keyworker survey in accordance with the Quality of Life Corporate Plan.

Background Papers: Quality of Life Corporate Plan 2004
ODPM Sustainable Community Plan 2002

Committee: Health and Housing
Date: 27 May 2004
Agenda Item No: 9
Title: Council Housing Affected by Potential Expansion of Stansted Airport
Author: Will Cockerell (01799) 510581

Summary

- 1 BAA Stansted have announced a voluntary scheme to allow owner occupiers within the proposed boundary of the expanded 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 has been proposed for tenants or landlords.
- 2 This report recommends that the views of the tenants be sought and, if there is 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.

Background

- 3 On the 27 January BAA Stansted issued a press release stating that the Managing Director had written to all home owners whose properties would fall within the proposed boundary of a two runway Stansted setting out the scale of compensation they will be offered for the loss of their homes. The Home Value Guarantee Scheme applies only to owner occupiers and was extended to include some properties outside the proposed boundary in Bambers Green and Molehill Green where the boundary 'would cause the loss of part of their community'.
- 4 There are 15 Council owned properties within the proposed boundary and there may be private tenants as well. The loss of community and uncertainty associated with the proposals is as relevant to tenants and their landlords as it

to owner occupiers. As properties are sold, including ex council owned homes, and perhaps relet on a short term arrangements, the nature of the community and living environment will change.

- 5 The views of individual tenants have not yet been sought but there is likely to be a range of views including a desire to remain in situ and a wish to move away to an unaffected area. The numbers of tenants are such that a personal approach should be made to each family to ascertain their views.
- 6 Once individual views and concerns have been obtained an approach should be made to BAA Stansted making a robust case for a similar compensation scheme to that available to owner occupiers, with the Council, as owner of the property, being able to sell the houses to BAA at market value and use the capital receipt to enable new accommodation to be provided, and the tenant being entitled to the home loss and disturbance allowance and to be rehoused by the Council. Any resulting compensation package should enable alternative accommodation to be provided in a manageable manner with a phased approach to relocating tenants that want to move. There may also be scope to use empty property for the temporary housing of homeless families.
- 7 Tenants that choose to remain in their homes until any planning application has been determined and compulsory purchase orders made should not be disadvantaged by exclusion from any improvement or repair schemes that are planned or required.

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

Background Papers: BAA Correspondence 2004.

Committee: Health & Housing
Date: 27 May 2004
Agenda Item No: 10
Title: AFFORDABLE HOUSING – ARDLEY CRESCENT
HATFIELD HEATH
Author: Helen Frost (01799) 510543

Summary

- 1 This report asks the Committee to consider disposing of some Council owned land at Ardley Crescent (currently the site of four dilapidated bungalows) to a Registered Social Landlord for less than best consideration in order to provide eight shared ownership housing units.

Background

- 2 The two pairs of semi-detached bungalows (nos. 1 – 4 Ardley Crescent) were proving hard to let to the elderly client group they were originally intended for, and had been used as temporary accommodation for homeless families up until the beginning of 2001.
- 3 Following the Government's policy statement 'The Way Forward for Housing' published in 2001, which stated that all social housing must be made decent by 2010, an analysis of the bungalows revealed the need for extensive refurbishment in order to bring the bungalows up to the Decent Homes Standard. It was also recognised that the bungalows had large gardens which, as the accommodation was only being let on a temporary basis, were not being adequately maintained. This resulted in the Council paying for grounds maintenance work to be undertaken in order to keep the gardens in a reasonable order placing a financial burden on the HRA. The bungalows are now unfit for occupation and are 'boarded up'. The local community are anxious that action is taken to utilise this site.
- 4 The Parish Council has recognised the need for more affordable housing to be provided in the village and during the early 1990's began working in partnership with the Rural Housing Trust (RHT) in trying to identify a suitable exception to policy site. Unfortunately at that time there were no willing landowners willing to sell land at a price that would enable an affordable housing scheme to progress.
- 5 The Council is under an obligation to obtain the best price for any land it sells and in this context the District Valuer has valued the Council owned land, based on Best Value Principles, at £180,000. This figure takes into account the fact that any permitted development would be subject to a highly restrictive covenant regarding occupancy and tenure on the development of this and the adjoining land. It is expected that eight of the units (flats) would be built on this site.

The Way Forward

- 6 In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972: General Disposal Consent (England), the Council has a power to dispose of this site at nil or reduced market price, if it assists with the provision of new affordable housing units. Should the site be disposed of at nil cost, this would be a significant contribution of the Council to the scheme. Planning permission has now been granted.
- 7 Should the Council agree to this it would result in the new shared ownership units receiving a higher level of public subsidy meaning the initial developers cost would be significantly reduced with the occupants benefiting from the reduced rate. These properties would only be available to local people, under this arrangement, for perpetuity and that the Council would have the nomination rights to the units created.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agree to transfer the housing site (known as 1 – 4 Ardley Crescent Hatfield Heath) to a Registered Social Landlord to

enable, at nil cost, the provision of new affordable housing in return for full initial nomination rights.

Background Papers: Local Government Act 1972 and General Disposal Consent (England)

Committee: Health and Housing Committee
Date: 27 May 2004
Agenda Item No: 11
Title: STOCK OPTIONS APPRAISAL
Author: Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508

Summary

- 1 This report advises the Committee on the progress made regarding arrangements relating to the forthcoming Stock Options Appraisal.

Background

- 2 It is a requirement of the Government that all stock owning Councils carry out a Stock Options Appraisal regarding the future management of their stock. The Government has laid down a timetable which requires this exercise to be completed and signed off by GO-East by July 2005. This is also a commitment of the Council in accordance with the Quality of Life Corporate Plan. With regard to the process, it will be necessary for the Council to appoint independent consultants and this will be done later in the year.

The Current Position

- 3 Before consultants are selected it is necessary for an Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) to be appointed, for a specified period of time, to work with and for tenants and leaseholders to provide independent information, advice, training and support throughout the process of the Stock Options Appraisal. It is expected that the ITA will need to communicate with tenants via a number of ways which will include newsletter(s), workshops to interested groups, meetings with targeted groups such as sheltered tenants and a number of road shows throughout the district. It is important for the Committee to note that if GO East are not satisfied that the guidelines are being followed there is a possibility that the Appraisal may not be signed off.

The Way Forward

- 4 To ensure that the guidelines are followed, Tenant Forum representatives will be required to select the ITA in conjunction with advice from Officers. Following further guidance on this point it is becoming clear that the duties of the ITA will be greater than at first expected which will impact on the costs involved. An advert inviting Expressions of Interest for the ITA closed on 21 May 2004 and a verbal update on the situation will be provided to the Committee at the meeting.
- 5 When setting budgets for the Stock Options work a total budget for consultants and the ITA of £30,000 was agreed out of the Housing Revenue Account. It is possible, following further consultation with GO East and other Councils that this may not be adequate. It is not expected to be significantly over budget and decisions need to be taken now in order to meet the Government timetable. Any budget variation will be discussed with the Chairman.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee notes the current situation and authorises officers to proceed with all the necessary arrangements for the appointment of the ITA and consultants.

Background Papers: Correspondence and Guidance from GO East Regarding Stock Options 2002/3/4.

Committee: Health and Housing Committee
Date: 27 May 2004
Agenda Item No: 12
Title: FORWARD PLANNING FOR COMMITTEE
Author: Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508

Summary

- 1 This report advised the Committee of specific reports that it may expect to consider during 2004/05.

Background

- 2 There is an expectation in accordance with the Quality of Life Corporate Plan that the Committee indicates issues that it expects to consider during the year 2004/05.
- 3 It should be noted that during the year there will be a number of other issues that will occur that will need to be considered by the Committee, therefore, the following can only be regarded as a guide for the year. The date an item is scheduled to go to Committee is, in some cases, provisional.

Future Items to Committee

4

DATE OF COMMITTEE	ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION
September 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report re strategic housing role• Budget Control 2004/05• Budget 2005/06
November 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report on under occupation and incentives to encourage transfers• Report on Housing Strategy Statement and 30 year Housing Business Plan• Decide whether to carry out a Private Sector Housing Condition Survey• Budget Control 2004/05• Budget Control 2005/06
January 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keyworker Study Report• Single Housing Register
January 2005 (special)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rent Setting

DATE OF COMMITTEE	ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION
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March 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress Report – Decent Homes• Progress Report – Vicarage Mead• Stock Options Report• Budget Control 2004/05
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RECOMMENDED that the Committee notes the Housing Services Forward Planning timetable.

Background Papers: Quality of Life Corporate Plan 2003-07

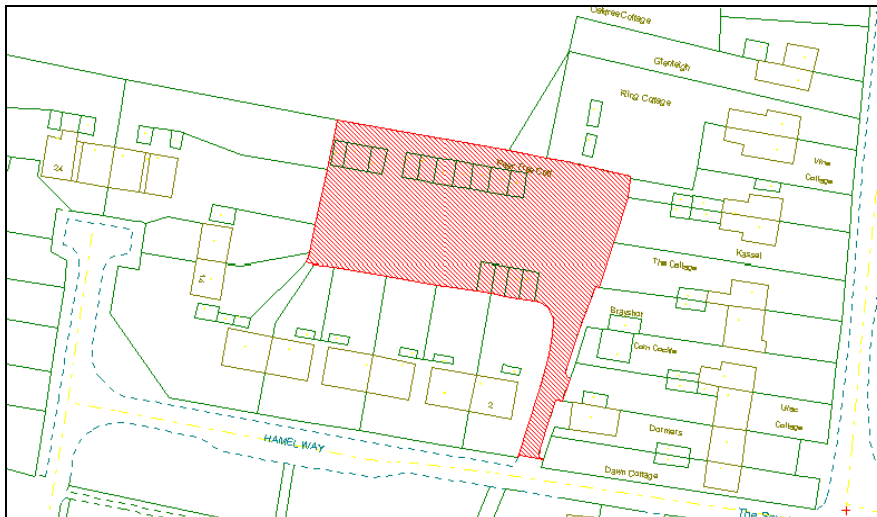
Committee: Health and Housing Committee
Date: 27 May 2004
Agenda Item No: 13
Title: Garages & Car Park at Hamel Way, Widdington
Author: Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508

Summary

- 1 This report advises the Committee that the Council has received 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 for this land.

Background

- 2 The District Council is the Freehold owner of the car park area at Hamel Way Widdington, which it inherited from Saffron Walden Borough Council as a result of local government re-organisation in 1972.



- 3 For a number of years Saffron Walden Borough Council, and in its turn the District Council, have allowed Widdington Parish Council to manage/occupy the car park, shown on the above plan, for the purpose of resolving parking difficulties within the village. There is no trace of any formal lease or management agreement relating to the arrangement.
- 4 Over the years residents have been allowed to build garages on the land for which no formal agreements exist. However, the Parish Council has been charging residents an annual "ground rent" for these garages. Some of the garages have been used for storage rather than parking and the Parish Council has also been allowing some commercial vehicles to park on the land.

The Way Forward

- 5 In order to regularise the position the District Council are able to grant a 7 year full repairing and insuring lease to the Parish Council at a nominal rent. The use of the land would be restricted to the purpose of residential parking only. A condition of the lease would be that the Parish Council must formalise its agreements with the owners of the garages on the site and indemnify the District Council against any liability that may arise as a result of their use of the land.

RECOMMENDED 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 Service in consultation with the Head of Housing Services.

Background Papers: Letters from Widdington Parish Council.

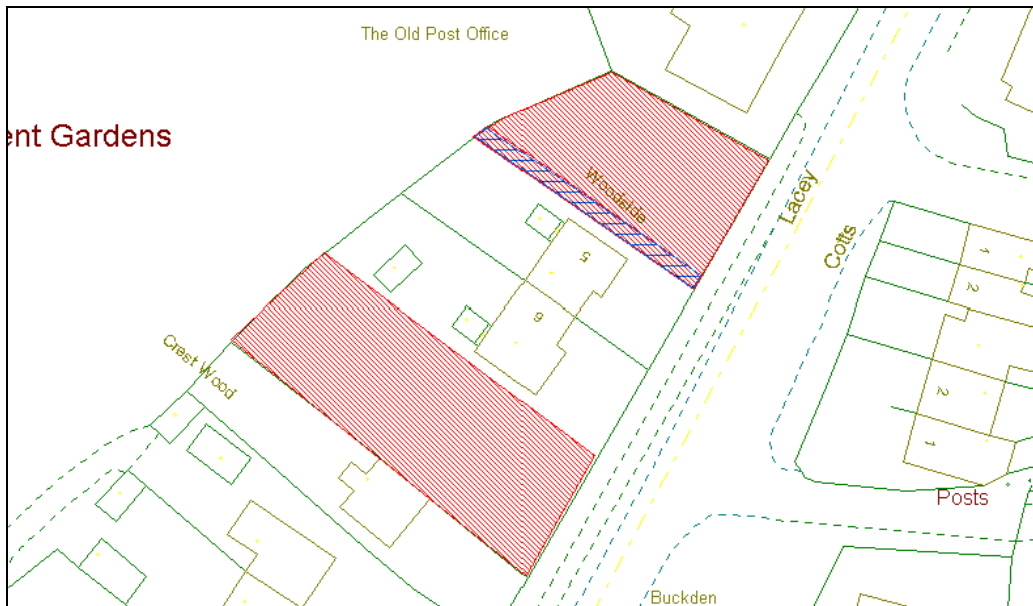
Committee: Health and Housing
Date: 27 May 2004
Agenda Item No: 14
Title: Sale of Land at Quendon
Author: Rod Chamberlain

Summary

- 1 This report advises the Committee of the current position regarding 2 building plots in Quendon and recommends a way forward.

Background

- 2 The Council owns two plots of land adjacent to 5 and 6 Woodside, Quendon of approximately 310m² and 450m². The plots were first identified as potential development land some years ago following tenancy changes at both these properties. This gave the Council the opportunity to annex the land and explore the possibility of developing the site in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord (RSL).



- 3 The Council has held lengthy discussions with RSL partners concerning the feasibility of using the sites on either side of 5 and 6 Woodside for social housing. A scheme was discussed but was not advanced. This was because, as a general principle, RSLs are not in favour of developing such small sites due to the high build costs per unit involved. Consequently Officers have been investigating whether the sites could potentially be sold for private development.

- 4 It should be noted that under these circumstances, the Council is under an obligation to obtain the best price for this land, and Officers are of the opinion that obtaining planning consent and selling the plots as residential building land can best achieve this outcome.

- 5 Planning applications have been submitted to establish whether the land has development potential. Outline planning permission has been granted on the site adjacent to 6 Woodside in the past, but this has now lapsed. Should planning permission be granted, a further report will be submitted to committee for members to decide the way forward. It is accepted that this issue has been ongoing for a long time but in view of high land prices the receipt to the Council could be significant.

- 6 A request has been received from the owners of 5 Woodside, who bought their home under the Right to Buy scheme, to purchase an additional strip of land adjacent to their property, to form off street parking spaces, subject to planning approval. After careful consideration it is the opinion of Officers that the sale of the strip of land will not be detrimental to the Council's planning application as there will still be sufficient land left to build a detached property.

- 7 If the Committee were minded to approve this request it would be on the understanding that the sale would be subject to a price specified by the District Valuer with appropriate terms and conditions agreed by the Chief Executive in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee determines the request by the owners of 5 Woodside, Quendon.

Background Papers: none