

**HOUSING BOARD held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 2.00pm on 28 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Present:- Councillors S Barker, J Loughlin, J Menell, D Perry, V Ranger, J Redfern and D Sadler.

Tenant Forum representatives: Mr D Parish and Mr S Sproul.

Officers in attendance: Jack Burnham (Housing Enabling and Development Officer); Maggie Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Goodey (Building Services Manager) Martin Ling (Interim Housing Strategy and Planning Policy Manager), Liz Petrie (Housing Management Manager) Roz Millership (Assistant Director: Housing and Environmental Services) and Judith Snares (Housing Options/Homelessness Manager).

HB13 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Freeman, K Mackman and D Morson.

Councillor Ranger declared a personal interest as a council tenant.

HB14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2011 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

HB15 BUSINESS ARISING

i) Minute HB4 – Housing Regulation Panel

It was reported that officers were currently working on the terms of reference for the new panel. It would involve a new way of working and was likely to be a considerable commitment for the tenants involved. The Housing Management Manager and the Tenant Participation Officer would be coordinating the Panel and asked members to help by providing names of possible volunteers.

HB16 HRA 30 YEAR BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

The Assistant Director – Housing and Environmental Services reported that a further draft of the business plan would be prepared for the next meeting. The Council was using the Chartered Institute of Housing consultants to assist with the process and they would also help with devising a policy for setting rents under the new regime. The preliminary borrowing figure was expected at the end of November but the final figure would not be confirmed until the end of January. There was much work to be done before

the new system came into operation in April and preliminary meetings were taking place with the relevant Cabinet member. Councillor Barker said that all members should be aware of the process and suggested options for disseminating the information including, a question at the next Council meeting, a member workshop and discussion through the scrutiny process. A timetable for the decision would be placed in the member's bulletin.

HB17

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

The Building Services Manager outlined progress with various environmental improvement projects

i) Solar PV installation

It was expected that the solar PV project would be able to start shortly. There would be around 980 properties affected and the next stage would be to consult with the tenants.

ii) Sustainable Home – Wendens Ambo

There had been a delay due to the need to retender but a company had now been appointed and the property was likely to be completed by the end of November. A number of sponsors had now come on board to provide various supplies for the property. Good publicity was essential once the house was completed.

ii) Renewable Heat Premium payment

A bid had been submitted for a grant of up to 175K for air source heat pumps as part of the Renewable Heat Incentive.

iv) Sheltered Scheme heating upgrade

Surveys of the buildings had been undertaken and the performance specification had been prepared ready for the tender process.

HB18

NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

The Board received a draft of the Affordable Housing Policy which had been updated to reflect the recent Government changes in the way that affordable housing was to be funded. It recommended a change to require the 40% affordable element of a scheme to be made up of 100% affordable rented tenure.

The new document also included the following additional points. It included a mechanism for calculating off site provision for developments where building of affordable housing was not suitable, emphasised the need for older persons housing and the requirement to retain lifetime tenancies until the Uttlesford Strategic Tenant Policy was produced in 2012 and

highlighted the overall need for 2 and 3 bedroom houses and the requirement to use the housing quality index space standards.

The updated document would serve to strengthen the Council's position on negotiating affordable housing provision.

RECOMMENDED that the Affordable Housing Policy 2011 -15 be adopted by the Cabinet.

HB19

HOUSING POLICY ACTION PLAN

The Interim Housing Strategy and Planning Policy Manager updated the Board on progress on the Housing Policy Development Action Plan. The registered providers should shortly sign their contract agreements with the HCA which would then give a better idea of the full programme over the district. The Localism Bill was expected to be enacted next month, with a requirement for authorities to produce a strategic policy on tenancies in the next 12 months. The plan now included energy efficiency policies as a separate category.

Councillor Perry asked for details of the Place Scheme to be circulated to Board members. It was reported that the second property to be brought back into use through this scheme would soon be coming forward.

Councillor Barker asked how elements of this plan, like the provision of gypsy sites would fit into the LDF process. Councillor Menell asked about the use of Council house gardens as development sites and was informed that a land bank was being established and an asset management plan would come to the Board in due course.

HB20

CHANGE IN LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE

The Housing Options and Homelessness Manager presented a report which explained the changes made by central Government to the local housing allowance paid to tenants who were unable to afford to pay their rents in full. For Uttleford there was a particular problem in that the amount paid in the south of the district was £200 greater than for properties in the north of the district. There were few, if any, properties in Saffron Walden that would fall within the rate and the resulting shortfall was likely to cause problems for tenants.

There were resulting implications to the rent deposit scheme as this had previously guaranteed clients deposits on private rented properties but only on properties within the LHA rates.

The Board noted that these changes would put pressure on social housing and the housing options team's ability to encourage clients to look at housing options in the private sector.

HB21 **NEW CONDITIONS OF TENANCY**

The Housing Management Manager reported that the preliminary notice of the change to the tenancy conditions had been served. The Council was now consulting tenants on the draft conditions, and after considering the responses the next stage would be to serve notice of variation of the conditions. She explained that everything in the existing conditions was found in the new version but it had been expanded to provide more detail and clarity about what was expected from the tenants.

Councillor Perry was particularly concerned about the issue of anti social behaviour and asked to see a copy of the new conditions. It was agreed that they would be forwarded to all members.

HB22 **OVER 50'S HOUSING NEED SURVEY**

The Board received a report which summarised the findings of the over 50s housing need study of Uttlesford residents which had been conducted in July and August 2011. The survey would provide the required data on older persons housing need in the district. The results of the survey showed that there was a need for older persons housing and for affordable housing and the case could therefore be made for the 40% affordable housing figure to apply to all housing categories. The survey had also highlighted the types of properties and the number of bedrooms preferred.

This survey would be followed by the older person's background study which would analyse the current levels of private and affordable housing stock. The final document would be the plan itself which would look at supply and demand and provide a plan of how older persons housing could be improved to meet the medium - long term housing need.

AGREED that officer's produce a long term Older Persons Housing Strategy to deal with some of the current issues in the quality and quantity of older person's accommodation in the district and the issues raised in this research.

HB23 **MEAD COURT STANSTED UPDATE**

The Board considered a report that set out potential options for the currently under occupied older persons scheme at Mead Court, Stansted Mountfitchet.

The scheme was currently around 60% empty. Residents had been consulted on the potential for redeveloping the scheme and the feedback had been generally positive.

The options were considered in the light of the strategic objectives of the council which were to maximise the delivery of affordable housing and to ensure that the current stock met the demands of current housing need.

Since the last meeting officers had investigated the possible options for the redevelopment and the estimated costs and savings were set out in the report. It was established that it was not feasible for the flats to be refurbished or converted and the preferred solution was for the building to be demolished and redeveloped. The date for redevelopment was expected to be around 2013.

Members were advised that no final decision on options for development would be taken until the self financing settlement and debt cap had been confirmed. This would then enable the council to take a strategic view of its housing capital priorities.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that

1. Mead Court, Stansted be demolished and redeveloped.
2. The consideration of the options to secure redevelopment be deferred until the self financing settlement and related debt cap is confirmed in November.
3. Officers use management moves outside of the CBL system to relocate existing tenants to nearby accommodation.
4. The Local District Members and Stansted Parish Council be kept informed of progress at the site.

HB24

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The next meetings of the Board were agreed as follows, all at **2.00pm** in the Council offices, Saffron Walden

20 October 2011

23 November 2011

The meeting ended at 4.00pm.