

HOUSING SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE held at 7.30pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 12 SEPTEMBER 2000

Present:- Councillor R C Dean – Vice Chairman in the Chair
Councillors Mrs C A Bayley, R A E Clifford, M A Hibbs,
A J Ketteridge, Mrs C M Little and A R Row

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman:- Councillor M A Gayler

Tenant Panel Representatives:- Mr Smith and Mrs Bolvig-Hansen

Officers in attendance:- Mrs M Cox, R Chamberlain, D Demery,
J B Dickson, Ms H Frost and P J Snow

HS14 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R A Merrion, G Sell and R W L Stone.

HS15 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting on 20 June 2000 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

HS16 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute HS5 – BAA Compensation

In answer to a question from Councillor Row it was confirmed that the further noise insulation work to the properties had commenced.

HS17 OAKROYD HOUSE GREAT DUNMOW

At the meeting of the Sub-Committee in March 2000, Members had been advised of letting difficulties at the sheltered housing scheme at Oakroyd House, Great Dunmow, which provided mostly bedsit accommodation. The Sub-Committee had asked officers to carry out a consultation exercise with the tenants at the House and to consider further options for the scheme. A general meeting with residents and individual interviews had concluded that the majority of tenants were totally opposed to having to move from Oakroyd House and were happy for the present arrangements to continue. A number, however, would welcome some modernisation of the building.

There had been no change in demand for the vacancies since the March meeting and 8 bedsit units were currently empty. Officers had undertaken a survey of elderly persons on the housing register and there were no applicants specifically requesting bedsit accommodation. The survey concluded that there needed to be some change at Oakroyd House as the current bedsit accommodation with shared facilities was very unattractive.

Officers had looked at options for the site and these were considered by the Sub-Committee. The preferred option was to carry out works within the building to create self-contained one bedroom units and eliminate all the bedsits. It might also in the future be possible to provide some other units, possibly bungalows in the grounds of the scheme.

It was hoped that this work could be carried out in partnership with a housing association and using LASHG. This would enable the Council to reclaim the payment to the housing association from the housing corporation and to spend it on a non-housing capital project under the "double spend" arrangements. This process would require the tenants to agree to transfer to a housing association.

The Chairman stressed that nothing would be decided without consultation with the tenants. Councillor Gayler, the local Member, then spoke on behalf of the residents. He reiterated the tenants' total opposition to being moved from the site. He said that this site should not be used to sort out the housing problems of other groups in the district and asked that it remain as sheltered accommodation. Councillor Clifford also agreed with the preferred option and mentioned the conversion of the Fuller's House flats in Stansted from bedsits to single person flatlets which had been a great success. He then proposed the recommendation that

"The Sub-Committee indicate that its preferred option is for Oakroyd House to remain a sheltered scheme and that negotiations take place with RSLs and tenants regarding the future type of accommodation provided on site."

Other Members felt that the recommendation could be ambiguous and that the tenants should be reassured that there were no plans to demolish the site and that it was likely to remain as a sheltered scheme.

Councillor Mrs Little then proposed the following amendment that

"The Sub-Committee indicates that Oakroyd House should remain a sheltered scheme and that negotiations take place with RSLs and tenants regarding the future type of accommodation provided on the site".

On being put to the vote the amendment was carried on the casting vote of the Chairman.

RESOLVED that the Sub-Committee indicates that Oakroyd House should remain a sheltered scheme and that negotiations take place with RSLs and tenants regarding the future type of accommodation provided on site.

HS18

BUDGET STRATEGY GROUP

The Sub-Committee received a report giving information on the estimated impact on shire districts of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's comprehensive spending review for 2001/2003. It was expected that shire district services would be afforded a low priority but the impact at the individual council level would not be known until the provisional settlement was announced in late November/early December. The report also updated Members on guidance that had been given to Business Centre Managers on the budget planning

process for 2001/02 and beyond. The Budget Strategy Group had met to discuss a number of options to meet the savings targets and it had been recognised that over the next few years areas for service savings would need to be prioritised. It would not be possible to meet all the targets solely by efficiency savings.

Some Members felt that the budget planning process should have started earlier and that proposals for each Committee should have been available at this meeting. The Corporate Director – Finance said that more detailed figures would be available for the next round of Committee meetings. Other Members pointed out that it was very difficult to plan for savings when the details of the government's provisional settlement and the amount of transitional relief were not yet known. Councillor Clifford said that the Council should review its services, and in particular those that were already carried out by other organisations.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 The Budget Strategy Group meet with Business Centre Managers and Committee Chairmen to critically examine all budgets and to examine the impact and collate a corporate approach.
- 2 Members endorse that there is a need for expenditure reduction.
- 3 Further reports be submitted as necessary to the next cycle of Committee meetings.

HS19 TENANTS PANEL MEETING

The Minutes of a joint panel meeting held on 17 July 2000 were received. This meeting had been arranged so that tenant panels could meet and ask questions of a consultant from HACAS who was currently looking into options regarding the stock option appraisal.

HS20 REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The Chairman advised Members that the tapes from the Housing Conference were available in the Members' Room.

HS21 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 items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in paragraphs 7 and 8 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

HS22 LAND FRONTING USTERDALE ROAD AND CASTLE CROSS SAFFRON WALDEN

The Sub-Committee received a revised proposal to develop a site fronting Usterdale Road and Castle Cross, Saffron Walden. Members were informed of the background to this matter and details of a new proposal which would provide a smaller shop and flats on the site. Members generally welcomed this latest development but made a number of comments about the details of the proposal.

RESOLVED that the proposal as outlined to provide a smaller shop on the site be supported.

HS23 TENDERS

Members noted tenders which had been approved since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee. In answer to a Member's question it was reported that the Sub-Committee would be asked to approve a new standing list of contractors at its meeting in December.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm.