

**TO: HOUSING SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE**

**ON: 23 JANUARY 2001**

**Agenda Item No: 5**

**Title: HOUSING BEST VALUE REVIEW – ACTION PLAN**

**Author: Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508**

### **Summary**

- 1 This report advises the Sub-Committee of the Housing Best Value proposed Action Plan and recommends its approval.

### **Background**

- 2 Appended to this report is a copy of the Housing Best Value report that was submitted and approved by the Best Value Sub-Committee on 27 November 2000 following its recommendation to that Sub-Committee by the Member Reference Group.
- 3 The Action Plan was considered at the Policy & Resources Committee on 19 December 2000 and no objection to the Plan was raised. It was however agreed that the service committee should consider the action plan formally. It is essential that an Action Plan receives approval before the Best Value Inspectors carry out their inspection during week commencing 12 February 2001 otherwise the Inspectors will not be able to comment on it.
- 4 The inspection will be comprehensive involving desk study as well as fieldwork. It is expected that this will be a whole service review which will include interviews with tenants, members and officers. When completed there will be a summary report on how we are doing which may influence the action plan in guiding the way forward.

### **The Way Forward**

- 4 Most of the points within the Action Plan will require further detailed work and further reports to Committee. There is one action that is subject to a separate report to this Committee proposing immediate action (advertising Sheltered Vacancies).

RECOMMENDED that the Housing Action Plan be approved.

Background Papers: Best Value review documentation

**Agenda Item No: 6**

**Title: SHELTERED HOUSING VACANCIES – ADVERTISING**

**Author: R Chamberlain (01799) 510508**

### **Summary**

- 1 This report advises the Sub-Committee of a proposal, emerging from the Best Value Housing Review, to advertise difficult to let sheltered housing vacancies.

### **Background**

- 2 It is a key Performance Indicator (PI) of the Government, that Councils keep the void figure (the time a Council property is vacant) to the very minimum. The calculation takes into account all vacancies which range from general needs houses to sheltered bedsit units.
- 3 In the case of Uttlesford the average void figure for 2000-01 is expected to be about three weeks with a target to gradually reduce this figure. This statistic places the Council in the top quartile of Council performers for this PI. However, the Council is expected to do all it can to improve on performances.
- 4 Addressing the void period was an area of work covered as part of the recent Housing Best Value Review. It was established that if the void figure for difficult to let sheltered accommodation, mostly bedsits, could be improved it would have a significant overall impact as often the void figure for some of these units can be many weeks/months.
- 5 Housing Officers encourage take up of this type of accommodation on all occasions, but the waiting lists for some schemes are very small or do not exist.
- 6 As part of the Best Value Action Plan it was proposed that such vacancies could be advertised in local newspapers and possibly at both Council offices. The objective would be to try and encourage appropriate elderly applicants to consider specific vacancies. Advertising vacancies had never happened before in Uttlesford.
- 7 It is not Council Policy to rehouse applicants under retirement age into sheltered accommodation and it should be noted that priority would still be given to Uttlesford residents although where no suitable Uttlesford applicant exists, applicants from outside Uttlesford will be considered.

- 8 It is hoped that selected advertising could reduce void levels, increase revenue and utilise resources.

RECOMMENDED that the Sub-Committee approve the policy of advertising hard to let sheltered units as outlined in the report.

Background Papers:- Best Value in Housing  
Review documentation 2000/01

**Agenda Item No: 7**

**Title: CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF HOUSING CONFERENCE 2001**

**Author: R Chamberlain (01799) 510508**

### **Summary**

- 1 This report invites the Sub-Committee to appoint representatives to attend the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference at Harrogate between 19 – 22 June 2001

### **Background**

- 2 The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIOH) Conference will be held between 19 – 22 June 2001 in Harrogate. The Council has always been represented at this conference, during which a great deal of information can be obtained by attending the formal sessions plus also networking with representatives from other Councils.
- 3 In June 2000, Councillor A R Row represented the Council in his capacity as Chairman of the Community Services Committee. It had been agreed that the Chairman of this Sub-Committee should also represent the Council, but due to other commitments by the Chairman this booking was cancelled. The officer attending the Conference was Rod Chamberlain, Housing Services Manager.

RECOMMENDED that the Sub-Committee decide and appoint the number of representatives to attend the 2001 CIOH Conference.

Background Papers:- Correspondence from CIOH re: 2001 Conference.

**Agenda Item No: 8    REPORT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

**Title:                            REPORT TO HOUSING SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE AND  
    COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**Author:                         Councillor Susan Flack**

**Dunmow and District Over 60's**

- 1     Having attended a meeting of this group on January 8<sup>th</sup>, I would like to draw to the Committee's attention the matter of "Break ins" at a number of Sheltered units in recent months.
  
- 2     Opportunist break ins have occurred where entry is not forced but rather residents have left their windows/doors open and are in another part of the building. Handbags left in the kitchen are then the easiest target where the thief removes the purse from the handbag, returns the window/door to the original position and it is some time until the victim realises anything is missing.
  
- 3     Although we can warn residents of the danger, many are set in their ways.
  
- 4     In speaking to a warden at Leaden Roding about the issue I established that the sash windows at this building have no "stop" on them, so when a resident opens them for fresh air they can easily be pushed fully open with little trouble or effort. As half the windows are inevitably on the ground floor this makes for easy access and makes the security on the front door look rather silly.
  
- 5     I would ask that Housing Services are instructed to investigate fitting "stops" to these windows and chains on any external doors. I would feel that this is something that we should fund ourselves to give our residents a little extra security as I believe the small cost would be far outweighed by the benefits to our Community.

Background Papers:

PART II  
(Paras 7 and 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act)

**Agenda Item No: 11**  
**Title: SCHEDULE OF RATES CONTRACTS**  
**Author: David Demery (01799) 510520**

**Summary**

- 1 This report recommends Members to approve an extension to the Schedule of Rates Contracts.

**Background**

- 2 The current contracts were awarded through competitive tendering. The contract period is for 3 years and 6 months with an option to extend for a further 18 months. The contract was awarded in October 1996. The contract has been extended by 1 year in accordance with the contract conditions (terminating in April 2001) and can be extended by a further 6 months within the option to extend to terminate in October 2001. With mutual agreement the contract can be further extended.
- 3 Schedule of Rates contracts are of their nature, contracts with a long duration, any new contract would now probably be set for a period of 5 years. There is some uncertainty with regard to the future of the housing stock and the impact of the Best Value review of housing consequently, officers have negotiated an extension to the existing contracts so as to terminate in April 2003. This will ensure that continuity in the delivery of a good quality value for money repairs service whilst at the same time providing flexibility in the interim as stock options and Best Value initiatives are resolved.

RECOMMEND that Members approve an extension to the Schedule of Rates Contracts to terminate in April 2003.

Background Papers: Tender Report HS45 29 October 1996  
Contract documents