

HOUSING MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

12 September 2001

Minutes of the meeting of the **Housing Management Sub-Committee** held on **12 September 2001** when there were present:

Cllr Mrs J Hall – Chairman

Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr C C Langlands
Cllr T Livings
Cllr J R F Mason

Cllr C R Morgan
Cllr Mrs L I V Phillips
Cllr Mrs W M Stevenson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P A Capon, R A Pearson and Mrs M A Weir.

SUBSTITUTES

Councillor P F A Webster.

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Clarkson - Head of Revenue and Housing Management
A Coulson – Housing Client & Strategy Officer
J Bostock – Principal Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

W Norfolk – Adviser from Rayleigh and Rawreth Tanants Association.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting there was a few moments silence for reflection on the tragic events associated with the terrorist attacks in the United States of America.

135 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C C Langlands declared a non-pecuniary interest in all items by virtue of being a leaseholder of a former Council property.

136 RACIAL HARRASSMENT POLICY IN RENTED HOUSING

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Managing which proposed the adoption of a racial harassment policy.

It was noted that, to date, there had been only one reported incident of harassment and any action taken would be in consultation with the

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appropriate Police team. It was also noted that the Tenancy Agreement covered a number of forms of harassment. The Council's policy was judged against Audit Commission performance indicators.

Responding to Member questions, the Head of Revenue and Housing Management confirmed that Paragraph 6.11 could be expanded to provide for a situation whereby a person suffering from harassment had the option to return to their property once problems were resolved. Within Paragraph 6.16, the term "must" could be replaced with the term "will".

A Member expressed particular concern about Paragraph 4.3 in that there could be value in providing some balance to allow for the possibility of vexatious or false accusations. Whilst victims needed full support, it was important to avoid false accusations if at all possible.

It was accepted that any change in proposed wording would need careful construction. A common feature of harassment was that the person suffering was in the minority. Victims can be invisible within a community.

The Head of Revenue and Housing Management advised that it would be possible to submit a revised document to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee scheduled for the 7 November.

Following a motion moved by Councillor J R F Mason and seconded by Councillor P F A Webster relating to Paragraph 4.3, it was:-

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That Paragraph 4.3 be referred back for detailed assessment with a view to introducing balance to allow for the possibility of false accusation (taking account of other existing policies, including those relating to staff).
- (2) That a revised document incorporating all the changes suggested above be submitted to the meeting of the Sub-Committee scheduled for 7 November 2001. (HRHM)

137 COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management on whether to deregulate one-bedroom flats currently designated for aged persons' occupation.

Responding to Member questions, the Head of Revenue & Housing Management advised that all seventy-two aged person designated dwellings were occupied at the current time. Observations within the

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report about the situation of Sudbury Close, Hawkwell have been made by tenants.

The Sub-Committee concurred with the view of a Member that, given current demand, it would be inappropriate to recommend further deregulation at this time. It could also be seen as reasonable to maintain a situation whereby pensioners had a shorter wait than some other applicants for accommodation.

On a motion moved by Councillor Mrs W M Stevenson and seconded by Councillor T G Cutmore it was:-

RECOMMENDED

That no change be made to the designation arrangements at the current time, an update report to be submitted to the Sub-Committee in six months time. (HRHM)

138 BED AND BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATION AND VACANT PROPERTIES

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management on the provision of bed and breakfast accommodation and vacant properties.

It was noted that the average time shown to repair, redecorate and re-let vacant properties had been distorted due to one particular dwelling within Hardwick House having been empty for 52 weeks. If this property was excluded from statistics the Authority would be in the top quartile. The Authority was currently on target for a figure of just under four weeks for this year. Bed and breakfast statistics were included in the quarterly performance report.

139 SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME UPGRADES

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management on determining the priority ranking for sheltered housing scheme upgrades in the light of the recent decision of Full Council to earmark £125,000 as an additional contribution towards upgrade work. A report on the Housing Capital Programme (including Sheltered Schemes) would be submitted to the next meeting.

It was recognised that, whichever accommodation was selected, work to sheltered housing had to be carried out with the utmost consideration given to tenants. The Head of Service confirmed that the housing officers were very experienced in such work and that Ward Councillors would be closely involved with any project.

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The Sub-Committee agreed that, on the basis that design drawings are already available and the Council can proceed with some speed, it would be appropriate for priority to be given to The Lavers, Rayleigh. Given its alternative location, and that a relatively high number of tenants would see benefit, Hockley should be given second priority.

Resolved

That Sheltered Scheme Upgrade work at The Lavers, Rayleigh, be first priority, with second priority going to Spa Court, Hockley. (HRHM)

140 HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Manager on the adoption of a revised housing allocation policy and points scheme.

During debate Members received a copy of the Housing Allocations document produced by Torridge District Council. It was noted that the Housing Best Value Review Working Group would be recommending that Rochford adopt a similar format in the future.

The Head of Service advised that some alterations would be required to the draft document to take account of recent changes in the law. On the suggestion of a Member, the Head of Service confirmed that the officers would consider whether it is possible to include the term 'unintentionally' in front of references to homeless within the document. There was budgetary provision for the production of this document.

The Sub-Committee endorsed adjustments to paragraphs 3.2; 4.3; 4.6; 4.10; 4.11(e) and 8.4.

RECOMMENDED

That, subject to further investigation into the possibility for including the term 'unintentionally' in front of references to homeless, the Housing Allocation Policy and Points Scheme, as revised and appended to these Minutes, be approved. (HRHM)

The Meeting closed at 9.07 pm.

Chairman

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Date _____