

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ROCHFORD HOUSING OPTIONS APPRAISAL BOARD TO THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL ON 13 APRIL 2005

At its meeting on 5 April 2005 the Board received a presentation and gave careful consideration to the contents of the report of the council's financial adviser, Graham Moody Associates, on the Rochford stock options appraisal.

It was proposed by Cllr Choppen and seconded by Ms Wade-Bain that, having looked at all the risks and benefits for current and future generations of tenants and the local community, the Rochford Housing Options Appraisal Board should recommend the Members of Rochford District Council to pursue the option of large scale voluntary transfer of the whole council housing stock to a local Rochford housing association (registered social landlord) in partnership with a parent group housing association and that in looking to realise the maximum benefit for Rochford the Council be asked to consider embracing the following suggestions:

- 1 That the local Rochford housing association should have charitable status within a group housing association structure, so as to obtain VAT shelter benefit
- 2 That the Council should seek the highest standard of investment in the housing service for tenant benefit in Rochford that government rules allow
- 3 That the Council should look positively to minimise the potential cost to the General Fund so as to avoid council tax increases
- 4 That the Council should look for staff to be protected throughout the process
- 5 That the housing association be required to make maximum provision of affordable housing in Rochford in consultation with the District Council
- 6 That the housing association should have an extremely robust business plan and to ensure that benefits for and commitments to tenants and residents are delivered
- 7 That the Council should retain the services of the lead consultants Graham Moody Associates, financial adviser, and Your Choice Housing Consultants, independent tenant adviser.

The voting members of the Board (tenant and leaseholder representatives and Council Members) unanimously resolved to support this motion.

In addition and to enable progression of the Transfer Process it is RECOMMENDED that:

- 1 The Council delegate authority to its Head of Revenue and Housing Management to take all necessary steps to prepare for the transfer and the related statutory ballot of tenants, reporting regularly to the Council on progress and in relation to key decisions.
- 2 The Head of Revenue and Housing Management should set up a steering group whose purpose will be to pursue all necessary actions to achieve a smooth transfer in accordance with ODPM guidance. The composition of the Group should be flexible to meet changing requirements but initially should comprise 4 Council nominees, 3 tenant representatives, 1 leaseholder representative, and a staff-side observer. The Group should be supported by appropriate Council staff including a senior Council officer who will be expected to remain with the Council after transfer and will be charged with the responsibility of securing Best Value for the Council) and in due course a representative of the partner housing association.