

## **Community Services Committee – 1 October 2002**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Services Committee** held on **1 October 2002** when there were present:

Cllr K A Gibbs (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Cllr Mrs R Brown  
Cllr T E Goodwin  
Cllr Mrs L Hungate  
Cllr C C Langlands  
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr J R F Mason  
Cllr P K Savill  
Cllr Mrs M S Vince  
Cllr Mrs M J Webster  
Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J M Pullen.

### **SUBSTITUTES**

Cllr G A Mockford

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| G Woolhouse   | Head of Housing, Health & Community Care |
| Mrs H Drye    | Corporate Policy Manager                 |
| C Burton      | Housing Manager                          |
| Mrs P Colwell | Housing Projects Officer                 |
| Mrs M Martin  | Committee Administrator                  |

### **452 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2002 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **453 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr C C Langlands declared a personal interest in the items on Tenants Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, Review of Current Allocation and Letting Policy by virtue of being the leaseholder of a former Council property

Cllr Mrs M S Vince declared a personal interest in the item on Domestic Violence Policy by virtue of being a member of the Rochford Domestic Violence Panel in a voluntary capacity.

### **454 ISSUES ARISING**

The following issues arising from the meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 September were considered:-

### **Leisure Contract – Holmes Place (Minute 425/02)**

#### **Resolved**

That the option for a district wide leisure card scheme, with no addition to the unitary charge, be adopted as follows:-

Residents would pay a lower initial joining fee than non-residents based on a 25% reduction. They would then pay on each visit the current members' rates which would be available to both resident and non-resident members.  
(CD(F&ES))

### **Falls Collaborative (Minute 429/02)**

#### **Resolved**

That the falls collaborative be supported and that a contribution of £2000 be made from the Housing Revenue Account. (HHHCC)

## **455 OUTSTANDING ISSUES**

The Committee noted the progress of the outstanding issues and the following matters arising:-

### **Best Value Review – Homelessness and Housing Advice – Service Action Plan (Minute 139/01)**

The progress report will be submitted to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 11 February 2003.

### **Pigeons – Rayleigh High Street, Rayleigh (Minute 415/01)**

This Council has agreed to assist the Rayleigh & District Chamber of Trade with the purchase of proofing materials. However, a response is still awaited regarding the materials required and officers will continue to pursue this matter.

### **Motion on Notice – Crime Stoppers Logos**

The logos have been ordered and will then be fixed to Council vehicles, although they are already on the Council's yellow vehicles.

### **Issues arising from Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Council Housing Stock**

As flats become available they are treated as a sensitive letting and every attempt will be made to try and match new occupants to those tenants already in residence.

### **Proposed Designation of Public Places in terms of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 and Local Authorities (Alcohol Consumption in designated public places) Regulations 2001 (Minute 285/02)**

A response is still awaited from the Police Licensing Officer and when this has been received it will be reported back to the Committee.

A Member reported that Essex Police were due to receive an increase in numbers to the current workforce. The Corporate Policy Manager agreed to contact Essex Police to request whether this would have an impact on this District with increased numbers in the Rayleigh Police Division.

### **A Specialist Heart Centre for Essex – Consultation**

This will be a major regional centre, from which Rochford residents will benefit.

### **Housing Strategy/Housing Investment Programme 2002 (Minute 292/02)**

A response from the Local Government Association is still awaited and once received will be circulated to Members via the Members' Bulletin.

Outstanding issues would be carried forward.

## **456 FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care which asked Members to approve the Food Safety Service Plan which had been appended to the report.

In March 2001 the Food Standards Agency had started to require local authorities to produce an annual plan and had issued a "Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement".

Members noted that:-

- the Monitoring Scheme builds on existing arrangements under which local authorities have to submit returns on food law enforcement activity to the Agency.
- costs for 2002/03 are being met from existing staffing budgets and the budget requirement for 2003/04 will be included within the draft estimates.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Food Safety Service Plan be approved.
- (2) That the plan to complete the production of all food law enforcement documents and to implement a peer review system by April 2006 be approved. (HHHCC)

### **457 TENANTS ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which invited Members to approve a new housing policy statement to deal with the anti-social behaviour of tenants.

Appended to the report were a list of legal remedies that exists for dealing with the anti-social behaviour of tenants. The Housing Management section does not currently have a written policy on dealing with this, although following the Housing Act 1996, the tenancy agreement was amended to make tenants aware of their responsibilities in respect of anti-social behaviour.

Members noted that a tenants Anti-Social Behaviour Policy had been drafted in the light of progress made through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy and was appended to the report.

Members welcomed the report and noted that eviction is always the last resort, once discussion, mediation and the intervention of appropriate agencies such as Citizens' Advice Bureau, Community Psychiatric Nurse, Social Services has failed to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

#### **Resolved**

That a Tenants Anti-Social Behaviour Policy be adopted. (HHHCC)

### **458 REVIEW OF CURRENT ALLOCATION POLICY**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which invited Members to consider the implementation of some minor changes to the current Allocation Policy which had been in place since October 2001.

Members noted the following:-

- in general the points scheme works efficiently and gives most priority to those in the greatest need.
- Not enough priority is currently given to those tenants placed in accommodation by the homelessness section
- No points are currently given for any person needing to recover from the effects of violence, threats of violence, physical, emotional or sexual abuse. 10 points would give some enhancement to the applicant, without escalating them up the register too far, thus placing them out of context with others. However, if reports received from the Domestic Violence officer and the Police indicated a severe case, the Head of Service would have the discretion to increase those points.

#### **Resolved**

That the following changes to the current Allocation Policy be agreed:-

- (1) 10 additional points for every three months that an applicant is living in any accommodation provided by the homeless section.
- (2) 10 points if any applicant or member of their household needs to recover from the effects of violence (including racial attacks) or threats of violence or physical, emotional or sexual abuse and the allegations have been investigated and proved on a balance of probabilities. (HRHM)

### **459 LETTING POLICY**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which invited Members to agree to amendments in order to comply with the Homelessness Act 2002.

Members noted that the Homelessness Act had been introduced on 28 February 2002. It had introduced legislation that amended the Housing Act 1996 Part 6, which deals with the allocation of social housing. In order to comply with this Act, the current scheme needs to be reviewed. A copy of the draft Policy, incorporating these amendments had been circulated to Members.

Members welcomed the fact that most priority needs to be given to people living within the District and requested that this be widely publicised through the Council's publications "Your Home" and Rochford District Matters.

Members considered that those working within the District should receive local connection points and agreed the definition of a key worker.

### **Resolved**

That the draft Letting Policy, together with the following recommendations be approved:-

- (1) Consideration be given to the implementation of a choice based letting system, following a detailed report on its costs and benefits to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- (2) A more user friendly style of policy be distributed with the application form.
- (3) The name 'Housing Register' is retained.
- (4) A 50/50 split of letting properties between transfer applicants and new applicants to continue in order to maintain movement, nomination rights and minimise management problems.
- (5) To point all applicants under one scheme, as set out in the new Letting Policy for Social Housing, in order that new applicants and transfer applicants are treated in the same way.
- (6) To grant 100 local connection points to key workers who:-

- have permanent or fixed term employment of at least two years in this District for over 25 hours per week
- live more than 25 miles outside the District
- have no relocation package available from the employer
- have insufficient income, saving, or equity in a property to be able to rent privately or purchase a home locally.

A key worker to be defined as an individual or class of employee employed by any of the following: a local authority, Rochford and Castle Point Primary Care Trust, Fire Authority, or Police Authority, where they have written to the Council stating that they have difficulties in recruiting staff within the District due to the high cost of housing accommodation. (HRHM)

### **460 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which proposed the adoption of the Domestic Violence Policy for front line Rochford District Council staff. The Policy had been appended to the report.

Members noted that whilst there is no statutory requirement to have a Domestic Violence Policy, it is of benefit to both staff and management to have guidelines to work with and a reporting method to ensure accurate statistics are recorded.

Members were particularly pleased to note the section on “Good Practice for Staff” and recommended that publicity should be given to the fact that this Council treats the issue of domestic violence seriously

#### **Resolved**

That the Domestic Violence Policy be adopted, with the following addition to paragraph 2.4, so that it reads as follows:

Emotional abuse can range from:-

- Threatening behaviour or threats to cause harm, including to other members of the family. (CEX)

### **461 DEVELOPMENT OF FORMER ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL DEPOT SITE IN RAYLEIGH ROAD, THUNDERSLEY**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care which appraised Members of the opportunities of entering into voluntary partnership arrangements with Castle Point Borough Council and New Essex Housing Association to develop the former Council depot site in Rayleigh Road, Thundersley. The proposed development includes supported housing and general needs accommodation.

### **Resolved**

That the proposed voluntary partnership arrangements with Castle Point Borough Council and New Essex Housing Association to develop the former Essex County Council Depot site in Rayleigh Road, Thundersley be agreed. (HHHCC)

### **Exclusion of the Press And Public**

### **Resolved**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

## **462 UNFIT HOUSE**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care which invited Members to consider what action should be taken in respect of a long term empty property.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Council serves a Repair Notice on the property identified in the exempt report under the provisions of the Housing Act 1985, Section 189.
- (2) That in the event of a representation from the owner following the service of the "Minded to take Action" Notice, authority be delegated to the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care to determine the matter.  
(HHHCC)

The meeting closed at 8.28 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....