

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 15 February 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **15 February 2005** when there were present:-

Cllr P K Savill (Chairman)

Cllr K H Hudson
Cllr C A Hungate
Cllr R A Oatham

Cllr Mrs M A Starke
Cllr M G B Starke

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs T G Cutmore, K A Gibbs, T Livings, C J Lumley, Mrs J R Lumley, G A Mockford, Mrs M S Vince, Mrs M J Webster and P F A Webster.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P A Capon, Mrs H L A Glynn and Mrs S A Harper.

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton	- Head of Planning Services
G Woolhouse	- Head of Housing, Health and Community Care
S J Neville	- Residential Services Unit Manager
A Coulson	- Housing, Client and Strategy Officer
J Pritchard	- Housing Manager (Housing Services)
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

D Couttie - Managing Director, David Couttie Associates

59 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

60 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee received the Schedule.

61 ROCHFORD DISTRICT HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care informing Members of the key findings of Rochford's draft Housing Needs Survey completed in December 2004.

The Committee welcomed Mr D Couttie, Managing Director David Couttie Associates, to the meeting. During the presentation, the following key points were noted:-

- The study was undertaken by means of a postal questionnaire to 10,650 households in 19 wards across the District, which returned 3,499 responses; face-to-face interviews with 250 households in the District; a housing market survey utilising the Land Registry and Halifax House Price databases and a telephone survey of estate agents; and analysis of data on the flow of social stock and need drawn from the Housing Investment Programme (HIP) and Housing Register, the 2001 Census, household and population research and other national research.
- The overall aim of the study was to determine the levels of housing supply and demand within the District; to support the annual HIP bid and development of the housing strategy; to provide robust information at a local level in accordance with PPG3; and to help co-ordinate housing and community care strategies.
- Although the results of the study showed that 92% of residents were satisfied with their housing, around 2,519 existing and new forming households anticipated moving away from the District within the next three years, 25% of these would be as a result of there being a lack of affordable housing to buy within the District.
- In the case of concealed households, ie, people unable to afford to be in the housing market and therefore living within another household, a third would move because of a lack of affordable housing to buy, and a further quarter would move because of a lack of affordable housing to rent.
- In 1990 the average age of a first time buyer was 21; in 2004 the average age had risen to 34.
- On average, incomes within the District had risen by around 18% in 5 years, which equated to the level of inflation during that same period.
- 50% of concealed households within the District earned less than £25,000 per annum, 22% had under £1,000 savings, which would be required for a rent deposit, and only 12% had up to £10,000 savings, £8,500 being an average deposit required in order to buy a small property.
- A one-bed flat in Rayleigh would cost around £119,000, requiring an income of around £40,000 per annum.
- 69% of the concealed households wanted to owner occupy, 17% preferred Council rented property and 3% preferred private rented property. However, there were important differences between the levels of preference for property types and the actual stock supply levels. In particular, there was a much higher preference for flats than existed in the

current stock.

- Out of 255 households forming within the District, 171 were unable to find homes.
- The annual turnover level of Council housing stock within the District was 3.6%, compared to the national average of 5.7%.
- 17% of the District's households were special needs households, 67% of which comprised residents over the age of 60 and 30% over the age of 75.
- 11% of dwellings within the District comprised adapted housing, compared to the national average of 9%. However, there was a mismatch between supply and demand, particularly in the social sector.
- It was anticipated that by 2011 there would be around 15% more people aged over 65 within the District and 25% more aged 80 and over, compared to a reduction of 5.6% aged 0 – 19 and a reduction of 17.3% aged between 20 – 29.

The study made the following recommendations:-

- That the supply of small units should be improved in order to address housing needs and preferences and to address housing stock imbalances.
- That a register be developed for adapted properties and disabled people needing such accommodation in order to address mismatches between supply and demand.
- That a strategy be developed to address future elderly housing and care needs.
- That, on all suitable future development sites, 35% subsidised affordable homes should be negotiated.

Responding to a Member concern about to the costs of implementing the recommendations, the consultant confirmed that this was a problem for all Local Authorities. However, the Council was in a better position than many others by virtue of its location within the Thames Gateway, which was receiving extra Government funding. In response to a further point raised relating to bungalows facilitating elderly residents to stay in their own home, the consultant advised that 22% of the housing stock within the District comprised bungalows, more than double that of many Local Authorities.

In response to a Member enquiry relating to the number of ground floor flats and maisonettes within the District, the consultant informed Members that the survey had not included this data, as it was perceived that there was no difference between, for example, a first floor flat with a lift and a ground floor flat. However, only 9% of the housing stock in the District was made up of

flats, which was well below the national average.

Responding to a question relating to the Land Registry, the consultant confirmed that 99% of all transactions were registered in this country with the Land Registry.

In response to a Member query about divorced couples, the consultant advised that it was most common for divorced couples to form two single households, post divorce.

The consultant confirmed, in response to a further enquiry relating to affordable housing, that since 1992 Planning Guidance has decreed that financial contributions be made by landowners wishing to develop land, for affordable housing.

Responding to a question relating to key workers, the consultant advised that it was for individual Local Authorities to determine which of its applicants should be considered key workers, but that it was worth noting that applications for funding could be made centrally, relating to housing for key workers.

In response to an enquiry relating to a recommendation within the survey about the adoption of Lifetime Homes standards for all new housing, the consultant confirmed that given the scale of special housing needs within the District, consideration should be given to applying the standard to all new development, and particularly for social housing.

Resolved

- (1) That the findings of the Housing Needs Survey and housing market assessment be accepted.
- (2) That the findings be referred to the Rochford Housing Options Appraisal Board. (HHHCC)

62 A LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME FOR THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services seeking Members' approval for the Rochford Local Development Scheme (LDS) to be adopted and submitted.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to the nature of any minor amendments that might be made to the LDS, officers confirmed that a typical example would be a small change to the timetable. The intention was for the document to become a living document. Any future requirements to make more significant changes to the document would be reported to Members for consideration, and Members would be circulated a revised version of the document, clearly highlighting any minor adjustments.

Recommended to the Environmental Services Committee:-

- (1) That the Local Development Scheme for the Rochford District be agreed for submission to GO-East, in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; and
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning Services to carry out minor amendments to the LDS to ensure consistency and correctness. (HPS)

63 CHANGES TO THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL SYSTEM – CONSULTATION PAPER

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services outlining several changes proposed to the development control system as a result of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

During debate it was noted that Members welcomed the proposed change to planning consents, altering their validity from 5 years to 3 years.

There was also a general consensus that, in order for a planning consent to be considered fulfilled, a building should be significantly built before the expiry date of the initial consent.

Resolved

That, subject to the following Member comments, this report forms the basis of the Council's response to the consultation paper:-

- The proposed reduction in planning consents, from 5 years to 3 years, was to be welcomed.
- In order for a planning consent to be considered fulfilled, a building must have been significantly built before expiry of the consent. (HPS)

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm.

Chairman

Date