

Housing Best Value Sub-Committee – 17 September 2003

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Best Value Sub-Committee held on **17 September 2003** when there were present:-

Cllr P F A Webster (Chairman)

Cllr K A Gibbs
Cllr T Livings

Cllr P K Savill
Cllr Mrs M S Vince

VISITING

Cllr K H Hudson

OFFICERS PRESENT

G P Woolhouse
A Coulson
J Bostock

Head of Housing, Health and Community Care
Housing, Client and Strategy Officer
Principal Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

Trevor Burns and Lynn Macdonald of The Swan Housing Group

13 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2003 (adjourned) and 22 July 2003 (reconvened) were approved as a correct and signed by the Chairman.

Referring to Minute 10, the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care confirmed that the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be giving consideration to the terms of reference of the Housing Best Value Sub-Committee at its next meeting with a view to determining the way forward on aspects such as the Council's approach to key workers and affordable housing.

14 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Sub Committee noted its additional terms of reference.

15 FORMER PLAYSPACE – TYLNEY AVENUE, ROCHFORD - HOUSING SCHEME PROPOSALS

The Sub Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care, which was submitted to the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 2 September 2003.

Prior to any discussion on sites, the Chairman referred to the importance which the Sub Committee was to place on ensuring that the public is aware of

the Council's process and fully consulted prior to final decisions. He confirmed that public consultation meetings would be arranged in the vicinity of each site so that the views of all interested residents could be ascertained.

The Head of Housing, Health and Community Care outlined the background to the development of the Tylney Avenue proposals and confirmed that, should the Sub Committee feel that adjustment to the brief is necessary, then it may be appropriate to receive further submissions from Housing Associations.

During debate, particular reference was made to the background resulting in playspace closure. Referring to the need for effective public consultation, a Member commented on the value of utilising the Council's mobile exhibition unit and community transport system.

Responding to Member questions, the representatives from Swan Housing advised that :-

- In developing proposals detailed consideration had been given to the Council's strategic plans. Consultation had also been undertaken with the Council's Planning Division.
- Market research activity had pointed to a high likelihood that properties at the site would be saleable.
- The feasibility study stage had included site visits by contractors. Detailed consideration of the way forward on the build process would form part of the next stage when structural and highway engineers would be employed.

During debate the Sub-Committee agreed that, notwithstanding the need for full public consultation, the tenure mix proposed by the Swan Group would, in principal, be the most suitable. Detail on financial aspects would need to be considered in private session.

16 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND BY SWAN HOUSING GROUP

- Note:
- (1) Councillor T Livings declared a personal interest in the Hambro Close, Rayleigh site by virtue of activity undertaken through religious organisations.
 - (2) Councillor Mrs M S Vince declared a personal interest in the Tendring Avenue, Rayleigh site by virtue of being a Member of the Domestic Violence Panel.

The Head of Housing, Health and Community Care outlined the background to the development of the various site proposals and confirmed that, as

indicated under the previous item, there would be full public consultation in the first instance.

During debate Members agreed a motion, moved by Councillor K A Gibbs and seconded by Councillor P K Savill, that the Sub-Committee should undertake a visit to each of the sites. Members endorsed a suggestion of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care that it would be of value to visit an example of an existing property which provides supported accommodation to people with learning disabilities. The Sub-Committee recognised that it was important for the Council to establish a view on key workers and affordable housing.

The representatives from the Swan Housing Group presented their current proposals on a site by site basis. Responding to Member questions on the nature of specific facilities, the representatives advised as follows:-

Hardwick House and Adjacent Land

- Occupants of the general needs housing would have an assured tenancy for which there is a right of succession.
- Intermediate renting arrangements for key workers was a new scheme.

Bardfield Way, Rayleigh

- The type of persons requiring supported accommodation due to learning disabilities at this proposed development would need relatively minimal levels of support. Care arrangements were put in place for their own safety.

Hambro Close, Rayleigh

- Young people at risk were usually able to live independently in the community with minimum levels of support. For example, two to three hours per week to ensure they are settling into the community.
- Persons at risk had been identified as needing elements of support. They would be over 18 years of age and in receipt of assistance with areas such as finding employment.
- Persons selected for this type of accommodation are nominated by Social Services for assured shorthold tenancies. The housing association would undertake a risk assessment that involved full disclosure of an individual's background. Persons approved for accommodation were closely monitored. If there is non-compliance with tenancy agreements it is possible to implement eviction proceedings.

Warwick Drive, Rochford

- It is in the interest of a Housing Association to ensure that arrangements for move-on accommodation are successful, particularly given the high demand for schemes. Arrangements are normally on the basis of medium term settled accommodation, although opportunities are sometimes provided for longer stays.

Tendring Avenue, Rayleigh

- The proposal involved the provision of accommodation for persons at the secondary stage of escaping from domestic violence, i.e. they are in a position to be able to return from a refuge to accommodation within the vicinity of their original home. This accommodation would be used for persons from the Rochford or Castle Point areas. The proposal was for five units, plus an office.

The Chairman thanked the Swan Housing Group representatives for an informative presentation.

The Head of Housing, Health and Community Care reported on background work being undertaken to achieve effective public consultation and confirmed that use of the display bus and community transport scheme would be considered as appropriate. It was noted that officers were to produce written information on the process that is to be followed, which would be provided to all interested parties and the media. The Chairman confirmed that members of the public should raise any concerns they have with Members or officers.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining item of business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

17 FINANCIAL ASPECTS

The Head of Housing, Health and Community Care reported in confidence on the financial aspects of current proposals.

In that there was a financial value attached to each site, it was important for the Sub-Committee to be mindful of all possibilities. Land was a precious resource to the Authority and housing needs were significant. A key role of the Council as Housing Authority was to identify needs and facilitate a solution for balancing the housing market. The timeframes associated with Housing

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Corporation funding was a factor, such funding being relatively difficult to achieve. One stage of the process would be to finalise whether proposals affected the Housing Revenue Account or the General Fund.

During debate, Members noted that Rochford District Council residents would have access to a new housing association development in the Castle Point Borough, and that cross-boundary working could provide such opportunities. It was recognised that each site should be considered on its own merits. Reference was again made to the importance of consulting the public in full to ascertain their views. The Head of Housing, Health and Community Care confirmed that details of each proposal would be made publicly available as part of the consultation process.

With regard to Tylney Avenue, Members agreed that the Swan bid was capable of providing a preferred mix of facilities and that it should be endorsed for the purposes of developing proposals/public consultation (note – representatives of the Swan Housing Group were excluded from the meeting for this aspect of the discussions)

Resolved

- (1) That public consultation meetings be arranged in the vicinity of each site under consideration by the Sub-Committee so that the views of all interested residents can be ascertained.
- (2) That arrangements be made for Members to visit each of the sites in question together with an example of a location currently providing accommodation for persons with learning disabilities.
- (3) That a press release be issued on the process the Council is following.
(HHHCC)

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and closed at 12.58pm

Chairman

Date