
Minutes of the meeting of the **Housing Management Sub-Committee** held on **18 January 2001** when there were present:

Cllr Mrs M A Weir (Chairman)

Cllr R S Allen
Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr Mrs J Hall
Cllr C C Langlands
Cllr Mrs S J Lemon

Cllr T Livings
Cllr C R Morgan
Cllr R A Pearson
Cllr Mrs L I V Phillips
Cllr Mrs W M Stevenson

The adviser from Rayleigh and Rawreth Tenants Association was also present.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr P A Capon.

OFFICERS PRESENT

D Deeks	Head of Financial Services
S Clarkson	Head of Revenue and Housing Management
G Brazendale	Committee Administrator

115 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 September 2000 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

116 MATTERS ARISING: CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2001/2002 (Minute 113)

The Head of Revenue and Housing Management reported that, since the last meeting, tenders for fire prevention works had been submitted at a significantly lower cost than previously estimated and, as a result, an additional £70,000 would be available in 2000/2001 for building maintenance work. It was suggested that replacement of the boiler at the Goodmans sheltered housing scheme at Great Wakering would be an appropriate project which could be carried out using this source of funding, and a motion to this effect by Councillor R A Pearson and seconded by Councillor Mrs S J Lemon was agreed.

RECOMMENDED

That replacement of the boiler at Goodmans, Great Wakering, at an appropriate cost of £70,000 be included within the Capital Programme for 2000/2001. (CD(F&ES))

117 RENTS AND CHARGES

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) which outlined proposed increases in the rents and charges applicable to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) in 2001/02. A draft summary of the HRA from 1999-2002 was appended to the report.

Members were informed that the proposed increases had been considered, and agreed, by tenants representatives and the trustees of Finchfield and Dutch Cottage.

Members noted the mechanism by which financial support for the HRA was made available by Central Government, through the Housing Subsidy System. A major part of this system was the determination of a guideline rent increase, which would influence the extent of support provided for the HRA. The guideline for Rochford for 2001/2002 would be 3.5% and the Sub-Committee agreed to recommend that the Council should adopt this level of increase for its rents. The Head of Financial Services undertook, at a Members' request, to obtain information from a neighbouring Authority concerning the level of their proposed rent increase.

The Sub-Committee also considered proposals regarding the level of rents and charges to be levied for the following:-

- **Finchfield and Dutch Cottage**

Traditionally, rents for these properties keep pace with the Housing Revenue Account, and it was therefore agreed to recommend that the general increase of 3.5% be applied.

- **Charges – Sheltered Accommodation**

It was noted that the level of these charges was based upon the need to recover the costs of sheltered housing. It was agreed to recommend that there be no increase for 2001/02.

- **Charges – Garages**

Garages are let to housing and non-housing tenants. The current charge is £5.60 per week and it was agreed to recommend an increase to £5.80 per week for both categories of hirer.

Members noted that, for 2001/02, the Government would be introducing a Major Repairs allowance for capital-type work. Further guidance on its use was awaited, and would be reported to the Sub-Committee at its meeting on 15 March.

The Sub-Committee considered the draft HRA in some detail, during which Officers advised as follows:-

- Resource accounting. Property values were being obtained for the purpose of a new accounting system required by Central Government, hence the significant increase in the estimated figure for this item. However, this would be funded by a direct government grant.
- Giro charges. The large reduction in the estimated figure was due to the introduction of swipe cards.
- Tenant Participation Compact. Government funding was available for the development of the compact, and a bid for approximately £10,000 would be submitted. This sum had been included in the overall block subsidy figure.
- Salaries for supervision and management of special wardened services. Officers undertook to provide Members with further details on the reasons for the increase in this item of expenditure.
- Frail elderly survey. Members were reminded that this item referred to the consultants' survey of levels of future support for the frail and elderly, with the likelihood that a more advanced level of care at the sheltered schemes would be required.

The Sub-Committee agreed the schedule of income and expenditure for the HRA as shown in the summary (a copy of which is appended to these minutes)

RECOMMENDED to Council on 23 January 2001:-

- (1) That the rents be increased by an average of 3.5%.

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- (2) That the rents for Finchfield Trust bungalows and the Dutch Cottage Trust be increased by 3.5%.
 - (3) That there be no increase in the charges in respect of sheltered accommodation.
 - (4) That garage rents be set at £5.80 per week.
 - (5) That the summary of estimated income and expenditure for the HRA (as attached to these minutes) be agreed. (CD(F&ES))

118 STORAGE FOR 'PAVEMENT BUGGIES'

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which sought Members' views concerning the provision of storage for 'pavement buggies' at elderly persons' sheltered housing accommodation.

It was noted that all sheltered housing had been visited to determine the potential for providing storage space, and the likely costs of the associated building adaptations. The necessary funding would not be available within the day to day budget, and financial provision would need to be included within the Capital Programme over a three year period.

During discussion of this proposal, Members highlighted the likelihood of such purpose – built individual storage spaces becoming redundant upon the tenant(s) with buggies leaving the sheltered accommodation. It was instead suggested that a larger structure could be provided to accommodate up to three buggies which, when no longer required for that use, could be rented out for garage purposes. Members also referred to existing garages at two sheltered housing schemes which could be used in a similar way. At other schemes, consideration could be given to enlarging the car parking area upon which to construct storage accommodation for buggies if this could not be located elsewhere on the site. It was therefore agreed that Officers should further investigate the provision of garage-type storage for pavement buggies at all the Council's sheltered housing accommodation with a further report being made to the Sub-Committee's next meeting. A survey of all tenants in due course would be appropriate, to identify the need for the proposed storage, and to seek views upon the proposal.

In reply to a Member question, the Head of Service indicated that the Fire and Rescue Service's recommendations concerning the health implications of tenants charging batteries in their homes had been incorporated within advice issued to tenants prior to entering the accommodation.

Resolved

That Officers investigate the possibility of garage-type storage accommodation for pavement buggies being provided at the Council's sheltered housing accommodation, with a further report to the Sub-Committee's next Meeting. (HRHM)

119 TENANT PARTICIPATION COMPACT REVIEW

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which invited Members to consider an update of the Tenant Participation Compact Action Plan following its review at the Tenant Liaison Meeting on 31 August 2000.

The Action Plan, showing progress with a number of initiatives, together with revised target dates for their completion, was appended to the report. The Head of Service, in responding to Member questions, provided further information concerning action taken on a number of initiatives since August.

Resolved

- (1) That the revised programme dates be accepted.
- (2) That the Action Plan be further reviewed in March 2001.
(HRHM)

120 RACIAL HARASSMENT POLICY

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which outlined the background to the need for a racial harassment action plan. A copy of the proposed plan was appended to the report.

It was noted that, in order to fully comply with the Audit Commission's Performance Indicator on Racial Equality, it would be necessary to establish a Harassment Policy to complement the Council's Racial Equality Policy.

The Sub-Committee agreed the Plan reproduced in full below, with a number of additions, shown underlined.

"The Housing Management team recognises the importance of eliminating racial harassment and will tackle it from both within the Council and make efforts to influence partner agencies to tackle it in the Community.

As part of this initiative we aim to:-

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- establish a protocol for exchange of information with partner Housing Associations and other Councils to develop local strategies to deal with anti-social behaviour, nuisance and harassment
 - develop a private sector racial harassment policy to strengthen the support available to private sector victims of harassment.
 - work with other Council departments to support and encourage reporting of all categories of harassment and nuisance
 - improve the level of satisfaction recorded by tenants and leaseholders as to our positive action towards harassment and nuisance incidents
 - introduce recording mechanisms for incident recording, monitoring and reporting
 - evaluate the success of our policy at periodic intervals
 - continue to include articles on harassment and nuisance in 'Your Home' Tenants Newsletter
 - have 'Racial Harassment' as a regular agenda item at Tenant Liaison Meetings
 - monitor every racial harassment transfer request to ensure that a suitable offer is made wherever possible within six months.

Regarding the final point, Members requested that Officers undertake a review of tenancy conditions regarding racial harassment to determine whether it would be possible to remove the perpetrator of the harassment, if identified.

Resolved

That the Racial Harassment Action Plan, as amended, be agreed (HRHM)

The Meeting closed at 9.15pm

Chairman _____

Date _____