

Housing Management Sub-Committee – 22 July 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Management Sub-Committee held on **22 July 2004** when there were present:-

P F A Webster (Chairman)

Cllr T Livings
Cllr P K Savill

Cllr Mrs M A Starke

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs J R Lumley.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr C J Lumley

OFFICERS PRESENT

R Crofts	- Corporate Director (Finance and External Services)
G Woolhouse	- Head of Housing, Health and Community Care
A Coulson	- Housing, Client and Strategy Officer
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Sub-Committee noted its terms of reference.

2 HOUSING NEEDS STUDY

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care, which was referred by the Parent Committee for more detailed consideration.

Officers advised Members that the Housing Needs Study was a fundamental element of the Council's housing strategy; it was essential that the Authority could articulate the housing needs of its District and, in addition, the Housing Needs Study formed an integral part of the housing options appraisal. The Government could withhold the Authority's housing subsidy if the Council's housing strategy did not achieve.

During debate, it was clear that Members all concurred that the Housing Needs Study should go ahead, but that there were various concerns that related to the specification particulars for the Study. Officers advised that the specialist consultants who would subsequently be employed to conduct the Study would be required, in advance, to submit details of how they would propose to fulfil the requirements of the Study. The Authority would have to agree to the consultants' proposed methodology before the Study was

conducted. It was the general consensus of the Sub-Committee that there would be merit in inviting the consultants, once appointed, to attend a meeting of the Sub-Committee in order to explain how they proposed to conduct the Study and to answer any questions.

It was also noted that there were likely to be core questions for the Housing Needs Study, agreed by the other partner Authorities in Thames Gateway South Essex on which there would be no flexibility. However, it would be feasible for the Council to identify any additional questions that it might want added to the Study. It should, however, be borne in mind that this would be at additional cost to the Authority.

During debate, Members identified the following additional questions that should be raised with the consultants appointed to undertake the housing market assessment and needs survey research project 2004 for the Thames Gateway South Essex Sub Region:-

- How will the research establish an indication of the needs of young people? Will the consultants be considering the future likely needs of those currently under 16?
- Will the enquiries concerning the financial status take into account the earnings of partners, children or other relatives in the household, tax paid, living expenses, pensions, benefits and other sources of income, including whether the survey will differentiate in respect of cash and cheque income?
- How will the accuracy of responses received be verified? What level of confidence do the consultants attach to responses by those surveyed?
- Will the analysis of 'affordability' take account of the potential for peoples' financial circumstances to change over the period of the results of the study to be used?
- Would it be possible for the consultants to propose, with reasoning, a definition of affordability appropriate for the Council's area and , if so, would that be based on national definitions?
- Will the consultants be able to comment on what is 'affordable' within this District compared to other parts of the country?
- What defined groups will be included with regard to 'vulnerable' people, as outlined in paragraph 3.1 of the specification? Do the consultants propose to include all those groups listed in paragraph 4.5 of the ODPM Good Practice Guidance? Will additional groups be included? What are the consultants' views on excluding any of the groups from the study?
- Can the consultants explain how they will assist the Council in negotiating the provision of affordable housing on strategic and windfall housing sites

as required in paragraph 3.1 of the specification?

- What area do the consultants envisage using in determining what 'local' income levels are?
- Do the consultants envisage making recommendations for cross border nominations to subsidised housing or shared housing registers?

Concluding the debate, Members agreed that they would notify officers of any additional questions relating to the Housing Needs Study by 26th July 2004. It was the general consensus of the Sub-Committee that there would be merit in notifying the other partner Authorities within Thames Gateway South Essex Sub Region and the Local Government Association of the full list of additional questions.

Recommended to Council

- (1) That, subject to the specific questions listed above the draft housing needs study specification be agreed.
- (2) That the other partner Authorities within Thames Gateway South Essex Sub Region and the Local Government Association be provided with this Authority's supplementary questions relating to the Housing Needs Study.
- (3) That this Council participates in a joint Study with the other South Essex Local Authorities, subject to (1) above.
- (4) That the consultants be invited to attend a meeting of the Sub-Committee in order to outline their proposed methodology in conducting the Study. (HHHCC)

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and closed at 12.10 pm.

Chairman

Date