

HOUSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 October 1999, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Byrd (Chair); Councillors Boad, Cleaver, Cockburn, Doody, Dray, Mrs Edwards, Evans, Mrs Evans, Gifford, Golby, Harris, Kent, Kohler, MacKay

Councillor Short (Vice-Chairman of the Council)

(Councillor Mrs Edwards substituted for Councillor Wooller)

Mr J Roscoe and Mrs J Atkins (Tenants and Leasehold User Group)

383. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 1999, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

384. **MR J ROSCOE AND MRS J ATKINS**

The Chair welcomed Mr J Roscoe and Mrs J Atkins, representatives from the Tenants and Leasehold User Group, to their first meeting of the Committee.

PART I

(Matters not the subject of powers delegated to the Committee by the Council)

385. **THE FUTURE OF THE HOUSING SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE**

A written report from Members' Services was submitted requesting the Committee to determine the future of the Housing Services Sub-Committee. Housing Committee, at previous meetings, had recommended that the business of the Sub-Committee be incorporated in the business of the main Housing Committee.

RECOMMENDED that the business of the Housing Services Sub-Committee continue to be incorporated in the business of the main Housing Committee.

386. **HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 1999/2000 - MONITORING REPORT**

Members considered a written report from Finance and Housing on the progress on the Housing Investment Programme for the current financial year. It was reported that although estimated expenditure for the year on certain heads within the Housing Revenue Account Capital budgets was higher than their respective budgets, it had been possible to find compensating savings.

Difficulties had also been experienced in committing all the available finance to specific schemes in connection with the Council's support of Registered Social Landlords. It was, however, pointed out that care should be taken with sites that did not fall within the Council's strategic approach. Due to a surge in sales of Council dwellings; it was estimated that additional useable receipts of at least £300,000 might be forthcoming this year. It was, however, suggested that the estimated additional receipts should not immediately be utilised in the current year's programme but taken into account in the revised estimates when HIP allocations for 2000/2001 would be known.

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the principle of the estimated additional resources, resulting from additional Council dwelling sales, be noted until such time as the estimates are fully reviewed following receipt of the HIP allocations in December 1999.

387. **CRIME AND DISORDER**

A written report from Housing informed Members of the current approach taken to victims of crime and the review of policy in respect of the Crime and Disorder Strategy. An Officer Working Group within Housing had already commenced looking at how Housing policies could be developed, in particular with respect to victims of crime, and would present its findings to a future meeting of the Committee. Members were asked to endorse the current practice of offering safety (toughened) glass as the preferred option when tenants experienced break-ins through doors.

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) the report be noted and the Committee await the current review of policy in support of the Crime and Disorder Strategy - Victims of Crime; and
- (2) the views expressed at the meeting be passed on to the Officer Working Group.

388. **BUSINESS SYSTEMS ANALYST**

The Committee considered a written report from Housing requesting that the post of Business Systems Analyst be made permanent. A Business Systems Analyst was employed in October 1997 on a two year contract and was originally concerned with developing the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of services to meet the CCT challenge. The tender price for the Housing contract and the current HRA estimates allowed for the continuation of this post. This post was considered to be of high value and important, bearing in mind the introduction of Best Value, and the ongoing review and comprehensive recording of performance which would be required.

RECOMMENDED that in view of the ongoing HRA budget which currently exists for a Business Systems Analyst, the value of the post to date and the considerable future challenges to Housing, Resources Sub-Committee be requested to approve that the appointment be made permanent on the establishment.

389. **TENANT COMPACT**

The Committee received a written report from Housing which referred to the method and timetable of undertaking the consultation and creation of a tenant compact and action plan by April 2000. The Warwick District Council compact must have two objectives - to provide the resources to ensure that an acceptable level of participation was maintained and to provide a range of support when the tenants required it. In order to achieve this, tenant participation must be subject to a formal review under Best Value principles and there should be at least a formal Council statement of the progress of the review by April 2000.

It was envisaged that the District Wide User Group and the Residents Association Federation would negotiate the formal agreement for tenants and leaseholders with Housing Spokespersons and Officers. Once the negotiating groups were established they would require a thorough training and briefing, and details of this was set out in the report. It was also suggested that a neutral facilitator should be appointed who would be knowledgeable on the requirements of the compact national framework. The brief for the independent facilitator was also set out in the report.

It was anticipated that the Government would provide "seed money" in region of £15,000 to £20,000 which would be available for two years only to help Councils support the startup of tenant compacts.

The current work on DETR work on Fallow Hill, under the Option Studies, was an example of the sort of delegated decision making within constrained budgets which the compact should formalise.

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) the approach outlined in the report be approved, including the principle of negotiating devolved budgets and decision making and the future establishment of key performance indicators for tenant participation as part of the tenant compact process, (including Option Studies), the outcome of which would be the subject of further reports; and
- (2) the Co-ordinator/Facilitator role as presented in the brief be contracted out to an organisation with a proven track record in tenant participation.

PART II

(Matters delegated to the Committee by the Council)

390. **PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

Members considered a written report from Housing on the contractors' performance for the year to date on key performance indicators and the comments of the Tenant and Leaseholder User Group on that performance. The report set out details of actual performance in respect of voids, repairs, rent arrears, use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

391. **INTRODUCTORY TENANCIES**

The Committee received a written report from the Housing Needs Manager which provided further information on introductory tenancies as requested by the Committee at its meeting on 15 June 1999. Neighbouring authorities who had introduced this scheme were consulted and the report illustrated how it worked for Rugby Borough Council.

RESOLVED that introductory tenancies be adopted, to be implemented on 1 April 2000 and the scheme be reviewed after a period of eighteen months.

392. **VISIONING WORKSHOPS IN SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION**

Members considered a written report from the Housing Services Manager informing them of initiatives being undertaken in respect of visioning workshops which would shortly be starting in the Council's sheltered schemes.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and the initiative be approved.

HOUSING COMMITTEE (Continued)

393. **RENT ARREARS RECOVERY REVIEW**

Members considered a written report from the Housing Services Manager advising them of the recent comprehensive review which had been completed by the Housing Business Unit in relation to the recovery of rent arrears. A copy of the Council's current processes and procedures was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and action taken be approved.

394. **ACCESS TO THE HOUSING REGISTER - EXCLUSION POLICIES**

The Housing Needs Manager submitted a written report which reviewed access to the housing register, in compliance with the Service Plan, and set out the implications of introducing an Exclusion Policy for certain categories of applicant.

The Common Registration Scheme Working Group comprising representatives from the larger housing associations had discussed this issue and the Group was satisfied with the current policies. It did not feel that there was any necessity for creating exclusion policies, a view which was also shared by Senior Police Officers.

RESOLVED that the current open policy for access to the Housing Register be maintained.

395. **GENERAL REPORT**

(A) HOMELESS STATISTICS

The Housing Needs Manager submitted a written report which provided homeless statistical information for July and August 1999.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(B) CONVERSION PROGRAMME

The Committee received a written report from Property Services on proposals to continue with the programme of converting two one-bedroomed/bedsit bungalows, at Saltisford Gardens, Warwick, into one two bedroomed accommodation at an estimated cost of £27,000.

HOUSING COMMITTEE (Continued)

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposal set out in the report be approved; and
- (2) the Head of Property Services be authorised to seek tenders for the work, and that he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee be authorised to accept the lowest tender.

(C) CONCRETE REPAIRS TO 91-129 CROWN WAY, ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA

A written report from Property Services was submitted on proposals to carry out repairs to the concrete stairwells and balconies to the flats at 91-129 Crown Way, Royal Leamington Spa at an estimated cost of £15,000.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposal as set out in the report be approved; and
- (2) the Head of Property Services be authorised to seek tenders for the work and that he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the lowest tender.

(D) ENERGY CONSERVATION WORKS - 1999/2000 - RENEWAL OF HEATING CONTROLS

A written report from Property Services sought approval for proposals for the continuation of the installation of thermostatic radiator valves to enable tenants to use energy more efficiently at a total estimated cost of £57,000.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposals as set out in the report be approved; and
- (2) the Head of Property Services be authorised to seek tenders for the work and he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the lowest tender.

(E) INTERNAL REDECORATION AND FLOOR COVERINGS TO COMMUNAL AREAS WITHIN BLOCKS OF FLATS

The Committee considered a written report from Property Services seeking approval for the internal decoration and new floor coverings, where necessary, to communal areas within very sheltered/sheltered accommodation at an estimated cost of £43,000.

RESOLVED that

HOUSING COMMITTEE (Continued)

- (1) the proposals as set out in the report be approved; and
- (2) the Head of Property Services be authorised to seek tenders for the work and he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the lowest tender.

(F) CANOPIES AND PORCHES

Members considered a written report from Property Services on proposals for the replacement of canopies/porches at an estimated cost of £10,200.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposals as set out in the report be approved; and
- (2) the Head of Property Services be authorised to seek tenders for the work and he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the lowest tender.

(G) RE-ROOFING PROGRAMME 1999/2000

Members considered a written report from Property Services on proposals for the continuation of the re-roofing programme to blocks of flats in Humphris Street, Warwick at an estimated cost of £50,000.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposals as set out in the report be approved;
- (2) authority be given for the seeking of the necessary Planning Permission; and
- (3) the Head of Property Services be authorised to seek tenders for the work and he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the lowest tender.

(H) ANNUAL REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS - 2000/2001

A written report from Property Services sought approval for the continuance of servicing/repair and maintenance within the Council's dwellings of gas appliances, electrical installations and passenger lifts at an estimated cost of £525,000, £220,000 and £35,000 respectively.

HOUSING COMMITTEE (Continued)

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposals as set out in the report be approved; and
- (2) the Head of Property Services be authorised to seek tenders for the work and he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the lowest tender.

(I) ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS 1999/2000

The Head of Property Services submitted a written report on proposals for environmental improvements to the communal areas serving flats/shops at Shakespeare Avenue, Warwick at an estimated cost of £19,500.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposals as set out in the report be approved; and
- (2) the Head of Property Services be authorised to seek tenders for the work and he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the lowest tender.

(J) HOUSING PROGRAMME AND PROGRESS REPORT 1999/2000

Members considered a written report from Property Services on information relating to housing major works schemes currently managed by the Property Services Unit.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(K) VOID PROPERTIES

Members considered a written report from Housing advising them of the situation regarding void properties.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

396. **PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

HOUSING COMMITTEE (Continued)

397. **INFORMATION REPORTS - GRANTING OF TENANCY**

The Committee considered a written report from Housing which informed Members of cases where discretionary/delegated powers had been exercised.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.20 pm)

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