HOUSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 25 January 2000 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Byrd (Chair); Councillors Boad, Cleaver, Cockburn, Doody,

Dray, Evans, Mrs Evans, Gifford, Golby, Harris, Jackson, Kent, Kohler,

MacKay, Talbot, Wooller.

Mr J Roscoe) - Tenants and Leaseholder User Group

Mrs J Atkins)

596. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 1999, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

PART I

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

597. HOUSING REVENUE ESTIMATES 1999/2000 AND 2000/2001

The Committee considered a written report from Finance, Housing and the Commissioning Team on Revenue Estimates for the Housing Revenue Account 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 which had been compiled in accordance with the latest legislation and regulations.

The revised estimates for 1999/2000 were set out in the report. The latest estimates for the current year showed a forecast reduction in the deficit from £214,800 to £87,000, resulting from the effects of a high level of Council house sales and additional interest received.

The estimates for 2000/2001 formed part of a policy and financial strategy leading up to the fixing of rent for the year and had been used as a basis of the suggested capital programme for 2000/2001. The original estimates for the year 2000/2001 with the revised estimates for 1999/2000 were shown in the report together with the details of the main reasons for the variations between the original estimates for 1999/2000 and those for revised estimates 1999/2000 and estimates 2000/2001. In recent years it had proved necessary to reduce the "Contribution to Repairs Fund" each year in order to balance the Housing Revenue Account. The Repairs Fund provided financing for both revenue and

capital programmes and it had been possible in 2000/2001 to maintain the overall contribution to this fund at the same level as for 1999/2000. There had, however, been a transfer of resources between the Revenue Repairs Programme and that for the Capital Programme in the sum of £121,000 in order to fund the increased costs of the Revenue Programme.

This transfer of resources had not had a negative effect on the level of the Capital Programme as it had been possible to fund the required programme and still forecast a balance at 31 March 2001, which could be utilised to supplement the available resources in the following year.

There was additional subsidy payable to the authority in 2000/2001 to cover costs incurred in introducing Tenant Participation Compacts, (£15,800), and Resource Accounting, (£35,000). Budgets in these sums had been included within the cost centre for Housing Client expenses.

The suggested balance of the Housing Revenue Account has generally been £750,000 which would cover any fluctuations which might occur on both revenue and capital expenditure. There was, however, concern over the impact on the HRA as a result of the introduction of Resource Accounting in 2001/2002, which would affect the way in which allocations were made from Central Government for the financing of repairs and improvements. It was not possible at this stage to predict or quantify the effects this could have and it was, therefore, suggested that the Council maintain a balance of around of £910,000 at 31 March 2001. This could be used to offset, if necessary, any negative effects of the changes to maintain a reasonable level of repairs programme or to cover any effects due to the vagaries of the housing subsidy system.

If the Council wished to maintain the recommended balance on the Housing Revenue Account then there was a requirement to seek additional net rent income of around £681,000. The loss of subsidy resulting from the Government's guideline rent increase can be recovered by applying the guideline increase of £2.12 per week (4.97%). This would result in additional net income (after Rent Rebates and Subsidy implications) of £664,200.

The report set out the effect on the rent points for each kind of dwelling. The existing points multiplier was 57.76 pence and it was suggested that after allowing additional points resulting from previously "damped" increases, this be increased to 60.46 pence, (4.67%). This would produce an average increase of £2.12 per week and would produce £664,200. Individual increases would range from £1.35 to £3.19 though this did not take into account those properties where the cost of additional points were being phased in.

It was also suggested that garage rents be increased by the same percentage level as that for the guideline rent increase, namely 4.97%, although garage

rents were not subject to the rules on guideline rent increases. This would increase the current points level for garages from 21.62 pence to 22.70 pence giving an average garage rent of £3.18 an increase of 0.15 pence. This would produce an additional income of around £16,700.

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) the revised revenue estimates for 1999/2000 showing an expenditure of £16,249,800 and an income of £16,162,800 be approved;
- (2) the revenue estimates for 2000/2001 showing an expenditure of £15,805,700 and an income of £15,054,100 (prior to rent increases) be approved;
- (3) the level of increasing rents for dwellings for 2000/2001 be as follows:
 - the rents of dwellings for 2000/2001 be fixed at 60.46 pence per point value per week (from 57.76 pence at present), equivalent to an average rent increase of £2.12 per week, (details are shown in Appendix "E"); and
- (4) the points multiplier for garage rents for 2000/2001 be increased to 22.70 pence per week increasing the rents of most garages to £3.18, an increase of £0.15.

598. **HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 1999/2000 AND 2000/2001**

A written report from Finance, Housing, Environmental Health and the Commissioning Team was submitted on the notification from the Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions of the appropriate Annual Capital Guidelines and Basic Credit Approvals for 2000/2001. The Basic Credit Approval to cover all services for 2000/2001 amounted to £2,641,000. The Basic Credit Approval for 2000/2001 had been issued under the new regime of housing "Single Pot" whereby previous separate identifiable allocations had been brought together within the one credit approval. This new allocation encompasses what used to be separate allocations for the Capital Receipts Initiative and the cash grant for Private Sector Renewal Grants.

The report set out details of the changes to the 1999/2000 programme since the Committee considered a report in August 1999. The largest change was in the programme for Housing Associations where, in particular, the development of Warwick Gates had necessitated funding of £928,000 being carried forwarded to 2000/2001 to enable this scheme to commence. The DETR had approved the carrying over of the Capital Receipts Initiatives monies attached

to this scheme. The estimated capital resources available showed a net increase of £518,070 over the Original Estimate for 1999/2000 and this did not allow for the sum of £928,000 being carried forward into 2000/2001. Capital receipts arising from the sale of Council houses had increased by £778,900 in that time.

The programme for 2000/2001 was appended to the report and the column headed "Reserve" had been omitted because it was felt it was no longer needed. This was because the programme for 2000/2001 could be resourced fully and could still retain a balance of around £831,000 at the end of the year. The contribution from the Housing Revenue Account had been reduced by £121,000 from the Original Estimates of 1999/2000 in order to finance the increasing costs of Revenue Repairs arising from, in the main, the electrical and the gas contracts. This had not had a negative effect on the Capital Programme.

Following the introduction of Resource Accounting in the Housing Revenue Account in the year 2001/2002, the system for allocations from Central Government for repairs, maintenance and improvements would change. At present the Council received Basic Credit Approvals for capital purposes and a Maintenance Allowance within Housing Subsidy to cover revenue works. Guidance had yet to be issued on Resource Accounting and it was not possible to ascertain at this stage the impact of these changes. It was, therefore, felt that a balance of around of £831,000 should be carried into 20001/2002 in order to lesson any negative effects of the changes.

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) the Revised Capital Programme for 1999/2000 be approved;
- (2) the proposed Capital Programme for 2000/2001 be approved; and
- (3) this Committee urges Warwick District Council to write to both its MPs reiterating its support of its policy in respect of "positive retention".

599. **HOUSING SERVICE PLAN TO MARCH 2000**

The Committee considered a written report from the Commissioning Director and Head of Housing on the results of the monitoring of the Housing Service Plan for the first seven months of the Plan and gave details of the performance indicators which would be offered for inclusion in the Local Performance Plan which was being developed.

RECOMMENDED that the monitoring report from the period 1 April to 30 November 1999 be approved.

PART II (Matters delegated to the Committee by the Council)

600. HEATING, LIGHTING AND WATER CHARGES 2000/2001 - COUNCIL TENANTS

A written report from Finance and Housing was submitted which referred to the policy of reviewing annually the service charges for Heating, Lighting, Water and Miscellaneous Charges for 2000/2001. Charges for electricity, gas, water and miscellaneous charges were levied as a weekly service charge. Those for electricity and gas were based on an average consumption over the past three years, but updated for current costs. The charges for water were introduced at very sheltered schemes for the first time in 1998/99 and the charges recommended were based on information gathered since that time. In future years these would be calculated in the same way as for electricity and gas.

RESOLVED that the revised rates for heating, lighting and water charges, as set out in Appendix "F", be approved for the year commencing 3 April 2000.

601. HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

Members considered a written report from Housing on suggested changes to the Housing Strategy and proposals for additional publicity to address the outcomes of the 1998 Housing Need Survey.

The Housing Needs Survey represented a systematic approach to quantifying housing need which was often under represented on waiting lists. They were recognised by Government and house builders as an objective way of measuring social and affordable housing need for the Housing Investment Programme and Local Planning purposes. Fordham Research undertook a survey in 1998 and the results of this survey were presented to this Committee in November 1998. Subsequently, Strategy Committee had agreed that the survey justified a target of 30% affordable housing on major housing sites to be used by the Council as a basis for negotiations with developers.

Appended to the report was an Action Plan which followed a corporate review of the survey undertaken in 1999 and dealt with all outstanding issues arising from the survey.

RESOLVED that the Action Plan as set out in the appendix to the report be approved and the production of leaflet and poster campaign be included in the Service Plan for 2000/2001.

602. TENANTS CONTENTS INSURANCE

Members considered a written report from Housing which set out details of the outcome of investigations which had been completed in respect of the Council providing a Tenants Contents Insurance Scheme.

It was felt that the introduction of the scheme would provide the Council's tenants with easy access to a relatively low cost and convenient contents insurance scheme, from which otherwise they might be excluded. The Council would act as an intermediary for the insurance company and it was considered that this would help to overcome the barriers that tenants faced.

The Council's Brokers, Lambert Fenchurch, had trawled the market and had recommended two potential insurers, Norwich Union and ACE/CIGNA. A brief outline of the schemes offered were appended to the report, but there were no material differences between the two policies. The report gave details of the set up and ongoing costs and the total approximate cost of running the scheme in the first year would be £6,000. The Council would received 10% commission on the premiums collected.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposal for a tenants contents insurance scheme be approved for an initial three year term, and the preferred insurance company is Norwich Union;
- (2) a change in the Housing Management CCT Specification to accommodate the provision of this service, with additional costs falling to the client be approved;
- (3) the Marketing Strategy and policy decision recommendations as set out in the report be approved; and
- (5) the scheme be reviewed after a period of one year.

603. EXCELLENCE IS STANDARD - HOUSING'S APPROACH TO BEST VALUE

The Committee considered a written report seeking support to the Housing's proposal to utilise the Business Excellence Model (BEM), now known as the EFQM Excellence model, as the means to test and evaluate the Unit's approach to Best Value, as a pilot for the Council as a whole. Although the model was originally developed in the private sector, the Cabinet Office considered that it was appropriate for use by all public sector bodies, and was currently the Government's preferred approach to benchmarking.

Experience had shown that organisations had found it difficult to obtain the full benefit of the model unless they had some specialist outside support for the initial stages at least. Consequently, central contracts had been negotiated with four leading providers for a range of services related to self-assessment against the model. The report suggested that this Council did not confine its external assistance to Cabinet Approved agencies only, provided the prices

obtained from other companies were competitive and the companies concerned had been accredited with the EFQM.

It was anticipated that an assessment programme could be completed on a phased programme for £10,000 to £15,000. This did not include the Council's internal costs of staff time spent on training or the assessment process. It would, however, enable up to twelve members of staff to become fully conversant with the model, which would benefit the Council as a whole.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the EFQM Excellence Model be approved to assess Housing's approach to Best Value;
- (2) the Officers be authorised to seek tenders for the provision of the advice from properly qualified organisations; and
- (3) the estimated cost of the scheme of £15,000 be met from the Housing Best Value reserve.

604. DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY - 2 NEWBOLD STREET, LEAMINGTON SPA

The Committee considered a written report from Housing requesting approval for the disposal of 2 Newbold Street, in order to extend the facility for people leaving care. This Council owned property was in need of extensive renovations estimated to cost £30,000, and consequently it was decided to investigate alternative uses. A joint proposal had been developed between the Council, Christian Alliance Housing Association and Social Services for it to be used for specialist accommodation for young people leaving care. The Head of Housing reported at the meeting that the Housing Corporation had agreed that Social Housing Grant would be given.

The value of the property was £180,000 and in order to facilitate the proposal, and extend Social Housing Grant much further, it was suggested that the property be sold to Christian Alliance Housing Association at nil value in accordance with the Housing Strategy.

RESOLVED that 2 Newbold Street be sold to Christian Alliance Housing Association at nil value, the value representing the Council's contribution to Social Housing Grant.

605. INTRODUCTORY TENANCIES - APPEALS PROCESS

The Committee considered a written report from Housing on the problems arising from restrictive legislation in respect of possession proceedings for Introductory Tenancies and outlined two courses of action which could be

taken to address this issue. One option was for a review to be undertaken by the Head of Housing (or the Housing Services Manager, in the absence of the Head of Housing) and the other option was to extend the terms of reference to the Housing Appeals Review Panel to incorporate this review. This might however, necessitate extending the minimum notice period of twenty-eight days to allow the process to be completed.

RESOLVED that the review procedure for Introductory Tenancies be undertaken by extending the terms of reference for HARP to incorporate this review, with a facility to extend the notice period to 35 days.

606. LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL HOUSING GRANT

The Committee considered a written report from Housing on proposals to allocate LASHG for the provision of affordable housing at 27 High Street, Royal Leamington Spa. It was proposed to convert the three redundant upper floors of the site to provide seven, one bedroomed, two person flats. The total LASHG required was £200,000 of which £160,000, (80%), would be spent this financial year and the remaining balance of £40,000 (20%) would be spent in 2000/2001. Details of financing the scheme from the 1999/2000 HIP budget were set out in the report.

RESOLVED that the proposals as set out in the report be approved.

607. TENANT EMPOWERMENT GRANT - OPTION STUDY AT FALLOW HILL

Members considered a written report from Housing on progress on the DETR funded Option Study undertaken by Partners in Change and Warwick District Council with the residents of Fallow Hill.

Although the tenants of Fallow Hill had decided against forming a Tenant and Resident's Association, they did express a wish to participate in housing and other Council services affecting their estate. After examining all options for participation, a survey of the estate was undertaken. The results indicated that the tenants wished to be represented by a Customer Panel and that this Panel would seek to enter into an Estate Agreement with Warwick District Council. A detailed report of the Option Study, its outcomes and an Action Plan were attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the Option Study Action Plan, as set out in the appendix to the report, be approved.

608. AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IN COUNCIL TENANCIES

A written report from Housing was submitted which informed members that all requests for adaptations which were estimated to cost over £2,500 were referred to the Environmental Health Business Unit to be considered for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). Costs of adaptations had gradually increased over the years resulting in a greater number of routine referrals to the Environmental Health Business Unit for DFG consideration. This had not been the original intention of the policy agreed in 1992 and, therefore, required review. The existence of a monetary threshold inevitably meant that some applications from Council tenants would be means tested and others would not, dependent on the cost of the adaptations. In addition, all applications from private tenants were means tested, and the DFG system inevitably added delay to the process of a disabled tenant applying for an adaptation. Means testing tended to be complex and time consuming to administer. Under the DFG route, if it was felt that tenants needs could be resolved by way of a transfer, the case might be rejected.

The report set out details of three options which were available to the Council to address this situation.

RESOLVED that in order to reduce the numbers being referred for a Disabled Facilities Grant the current method of working be reviewed and the threshold be increased to £3,500.

609. **GENERAL REPORT**

(A) HOUSING ADVANCES - DETERMINED AND VARIABLE RATE

The Committee considered a written report from Finance on the Council's rate of interest for housing advances and the sale of Council dwellings.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the rate of interest for advances approved under the "Determined Rate of Interest" schemes continue to be 9.75% for the six months commencing 1 February 2000, in accordance with Schedule 16(1) of the Housing Act 1985; and
- (2) the rate of interest for advances approved under the "Variable Rate of Interest" schemes continue to be 9.75%.
- (B) RADCLIFFE GARDENS A REQUEST FOR COMPENSATION FROM THE RESIDENT'S ASSOCIATION

Members considered a written report from Housing on a request for compensation from the Radcliffe Gardens Residents' Association arising from recent major works.

RESOLVED that a compensation payment of £50 be made to tenants to take account of the dust, noise and additional costs incurred.

(C) STRATEGIC LIAISON WITH SOCIAL SERVICES/HEALTH

A written report from Housing was submitted on the arrangements for Strategic Liaison with Social Services and Health in compliance with the Service Plan.

RESOLVED that the current strategic liaison arrangements between Health/Social Services and Housing be endorsed.

(D) HOMELESS STATISTICS

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

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(E) VOID PROPERTIES

The Housing Needs Manager submitted a written report which advised Members of the current situation regarding void properties.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(F) ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF COUNCIL PROPERTIES

The Committee considered a written report from Housing on a project undertaken during January 1999 to identify illegal occupation in Council owned properties and proposals for the better detection of illegal occupation.

RESOLVED that the proposals as set out in the report be approved.

(G) CONCIERGE - THE CREST, LILLINGTON, LEAMINGTON SPA

Members considered a written report from Housing on proposals for the continuation of a Concierge system at "The Crest" Estate, Lillington and for the inclusion of The Royal Pump Room building in the contract.

RESOLVED that

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

(H) WINDOW CLEANING CONTRACT

The Committee considered a written report from Housing on proposals for the continuation of the Window Cleaning Contact at an estimated cost of £10,000.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposal as set out in the report be approved; and
- (2) the Head of Housing be authorised to seek tenders for the work and that he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the best tender.
- (I) CONCRETE REPAIRS AT LOW RISE FLATS, LILLINGTON, LEAMINGTON SPA

Members considered a written report from Property Services on proposals to carry out repairs to the exposed concrete to the balconies and balustrades to low rise flats in Lillington at an estimated cost of £25,000.

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 that he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the best tender.
- (J) CONTRACT FOR WORKS TO VOID DWELLINGS AND GARAGES

Members considered a written report from Housing on proposals for the repair and decorations (where applicable) to the Council's void dwellings and for repairs to void garages at an estimated cost of £475,000.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposals as set out in the report be approved; and
- (2) the Head of Housing be authorised to seek tenders for the work and that he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the best tender.
- (K) REPLACEMENT OF KITCHEN FITTINGS AND/OR BATHROOM/ SANITARYWARE 2000/2001

Members considered a written report from Property Services on proposals to improve the bathroom space and provide replacement kitchen and sanitaryware at an estimated cost of £200,000.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposals as set out in the report be approved;
- (2) authority be given to seek the necessary planning permission; and
- (3) 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 best tender.

(L) ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS

Members considered a written report from Property Services on environmental improvements to various areas within the district at an estimated cost of £60,000.

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 that he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the best tender.

(M) STRUCTURAL REPAIRS TO STAMFORD GARDENS HIGH RISE FLATS

Members considered a written report from Property Services on proposals to undertake repairs to the structure of the high rise flats at Stamford Gardens at an estimated cost of £320,000.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposals as set out in the report be approved;
- (2) authority be given to the seeking of the necessary planning permission; and
- (3) 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 best tender.

(N) RE-ROOFING PROGRAMME 2000/2001

The Committee considered a report from Property Services on proposals for the continuation of the re-roofing programme to flats in Kenilworth at an estimated cost of £90,000.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the proposals as set out in the report be approved;
- (2) authority be given to the seeking of the necessary planning permission; and
- (3) 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 best tender.

(O) ENERGY CONSERVATION WORKS - PERCY ROAD, WARWICK

The Committee considered a written report from Property Services on proposals to improve the Thermal Insulation of the living rooms to twelve dwellings in Percy Road, Warwick at an estimated cost of £12,000.

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 that he, in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee, be authorised to accept the best tender.

610. 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 items by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as set out below:-

Minute Number	Paragraph Number	
611	7 and 9	
612	3, 4 and 5	

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611. LAND ADJACENT TO 239 BRUNSWICK STREET, LEAMINGTON SPA

Members considered a written report from Property Services informing them of terms which had been agreed for the sale of housing land adjacent to 239 Brunswick Street, Royal Leamington Spa.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

612. BREACH OF COVENANT ON LEASEHOLD PROPERTY - ENFORCEMENT

The Committee considered a written report from Housing on the course of action to be taken against a leaseholder for breach of covenant/trespass. The report set out the background to the case and the options available to the Council to remedy the situation.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the situation be regularised for the sum of £1,000 (to include costs) to be paid immediately; and
- (2) a report be submitted to this Committee on the outcome of this issue.

(Councillor Butler attended the meeting and addressed the Committee on the above item).

613. INFORMATION REPORTS ON DISCRETIONARY/DELEGATED POWERS

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 8.10 pm)

APPENDIX "F" MINUTE NUMBER 600

HEATING AND LIGHTING CHARGES

Group and Situation of Dwelling	Present Charge Per Week 1999/2000	Revised Charge Per Week 2000/2001
		££
Radcliffe Gardens		
Bedsitters and One Bedroomed Flats	2.50	2.45
Two Bedroomed Flats	4.15	4.10
Fetherstone Court		
Nine Flats	6.70	6.05
Acorn Court		
Numbers 1-12, 14-41 Numbers 43, 44, 46 and 47 (Miscellaneous Services Only)	3.70 0.60	3.55 0.60
Tannery Court		
Numbers 1, 2, 4-6, 7a, 8-12, 22a, 14-40 Number 3	4.20 6.00	3.70 5.25
Yeomanry Close		
Numbers 1-12, 14-32	4.00	3.70
James Court		
Numbers 1-12, 14-26	4.40	3.85
Chandos Court		
Numbers 1-12, 11a, 25a, 14-46	4.25	4.00

WATER CHARGES

Group and Situation of Dwelling		Present Charge Per Week 1999/2000	Revised Charge Per Week 2000/2001
			££
(a)	Acorn Court		
	Numbers 1-12, 14-41, 42-47	2.20	1.75
(b)	Tannery Court		
	Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4-6, 7a 8-12, 22a, 14-40	2.10	2.20
(c)	Yeomanry Close		
	Numbers 1-12, 14-32, 33 and 34	1.60	2.00
(d)	James Court		
	Numbers 1-12, 14-28	2.50	2.60
(e)	Chandos Court		
	Numbers 1-12, 11a, 25a, 14-46, 47	2.30	1.80