

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

23rd August 2001

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Southern (Chair), Councillor Lauro (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Carroll, Dunn, Ford, Mrs. Mead, Mrs. Rose, Stone, and Whyman.

Conservative Group

Councillors Douglas, Hood and Mrs. Walton (substitute for Councillor Lemmon).

In Attendance

Councillors Bell, Evens, Harrington, Richards and Rose (Labour Group) and Councillor Mrs. Robbins (Conservative Group).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Taylor (Labour Group) and Councillor Lemmon (Conservative Group).

CS/21. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th July 2001 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

CS/22. **REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE – REVIEW OF PROPOSALS FOR THE SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICE**

The Chair of the Overview Committee, Councillor Bell presented its review of the Sheltered Housing proposals. The review was prompted by widespread concern about the proposals and their impact on the sheltered housing wardens, tenants and the management structure within the Housing Department. The report considered the review process, current arrangements, drivers for change, the consultation process, practicality of the proposals, finance and conclusions and recommendations. The Chair voiced his thanks to the Overview Committee for the work undertaken in reviewing the proposals. These sentiments were echoed by the Leader of the Council who explained that determination of this issue would be premature at this stage and that no decision would be taken until the full consultative process had been concluded. For the consultation to be meaningful it would be necessary to take into account all representations received and as the final tenants meeting had only been held earlier in the day it was felt inappropriate to make a decision at this time.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) *That the Overview Committee be thanked for its report and that the contents be noted.*

- (2) That items 10 and 15 of the agenda relating to the sheltered Housing Best Value Review be withdrawn and that the issue be deferred pending the completion of the consultation exercise for this Review.***
- (3) That the Finance and Management Committee be similarly requested to defer deliberation of this item.***

CS/23. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN**

It was reported that local authorities which owned housing stock were required to produce a thirty-year business plan for their Housing Revenue Account as part of the annual Housing Investment Programme. The Council's Business Plan had been submitted to the Government Office for the East Midlands at the end of July. It was proposed that a series of workshops be arranged for Members of the Committee, the Tenants Advisory and Consultation Team and frontline staff to explore the detail of the Plan and to start developing the Council's vision and aspirations for its landlord service.

RESOLVED:-

That a workshop be arranged in September for Members of this Committee and the Tenants Advisory & Consultation Team to explore the detail of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

CS/24. **CHANGES TO HOME REPAIR ASSISTANCE GRANTS**

It was reported that the Government had issued revised guidance, increasing the maximum level of home repair assistance grant from £2,000 to £5,000 per application. Demand for such grants exceeded the available resources and measures had been taken to limit the amount of grant per application to ensure that help was provided to more residents whilst targeting grants to those most in need of financial assistance. Exceptional circumstances would always arise and consideration was given to delegating authority to the Divisional Environmental Health Manager to deal with certain applications and, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee to determine applications for funding up to the statutory limit.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee restricts Home Repair Assistance Grants to £2,000 per application, other than in exceptional circumstances.***
- (2) That the Divisional Environmental health Manager be authorised to determine applications of grant assistance up to £2,000 and, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Community Services Committee to determine grant applications above this threshold.***
- (3) That Home Repair Assistance Grant be restricted to those persons over 60 years of age in receipt of an income related benefit and to disabled persons in receipt of an income related benefit.***

CS/25. REDESIGNATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER POST TO SCIENTIFIC OFFICER

It was reported that the vacant post of Environmental Health Officer in the Pollution Control Section had been advertised on three separate occasions with no suitable application being received. There was a recognised National shortage of Environmental Health Officers and it was felt unlikely that further advertisements would result in a suitable application being received. The post had therefore been reviewed and it was proposed to re-designate it to that of Scientific Officer. From consultation with a number of other local authorities there appeared no shortage of suitable applicants for such a post. It was hoped that a suitable candidate would be able to aid implementation of the contaminated land strategy work.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the vacant post of Environmental Health Officer in the Pollution Control Section of the Environmental Health Division be deleted and that a post of Scientific Officer be established.***
- (2) That the salary for the post of Scientific Officer be advertised at Scale SO1.***

CS/26. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)**RESOLVED:-**

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th July 2001 were received.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS

The Committee discussed the disclosure of Exempt information in a recent press article.

LOW COST HOUSING AT HILTON DEPOT (Paragraph 9)

The Committee considered the transfer of land in connection with a low cost housing scheme.

REQUEST FOR REHOUSING (Paragraph 3)

The Committee rejected a request for tenancy of a property in Newhall.

SALE OF COUNCIL LAND, MIDWAY (Paragraph 9)

The Committee approved the disposal of an area of Council-owned land to a Housing Association.

REQUEST TO SERVE NOTICE OF INTENTION TO SEEK POSSESSION (Paragraph 3)

The Committee authorised the service of a Notice of Intention to Seek Possession in respect of a property in Newhall.

R.W. SOUTHERN

CHAIR