

**HOUSING SUB COMMITTEE
4 MARCH 1998**

Present: Councillor Angell (Chairman), Councillors Grayson, Miss Haydon, Mrs Pile, Mrs Shillcock, Ward and Worrall.

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Hirst and Jones.

46. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 20 January 1998 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

47. Capital Funding (Item 1)

The Sub Committee noted that the Council's Housing Investment Programme (HIP) allocation for 1998/99 was £625,000, made up as follows:

Annual Capital Guideline	£504,000
Private Sector Grants	£53,000
Disabled Facilities Grant	<u>£68,000</u>
	£625,000

The Annual Capital Guideline, in line with the remainder of the South East, represented a reduction of 21% over the 1997/98 guideline.

The Sub Committee considered a Supplementary Credit Approval (SCA) of £450,000 issued by the Department of Transport, Environment and the Regions (DETR) under the Capital Receipts Initiative for 1998/99. The Sub Committee noted that this was an approval to spend rather than a grant. As the Council was debt free, further use of capital receipts would reduce the amount of interest earned and the Sub Committee concluded that it would not be beneficial for the Council to take up the SCA.

The Sub Committee was advised of the availability of Supplementary Credit Approval from the DETR to provide for a Cash Incentive Scheme. Such a scheme would enable local authorities to give grants to tenants in Council property to purchase dwellings in the private sector, thus releasing properties to let to families with priority need. However, as with the Supplementary Credit Approval issued under the Capital Receipts Initiative, the Sub Committee agreed that it would not be financially beneficial for the Council to make a bid under the scheme.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Housing Investment Programme allocation for 1998/99 of £625,000 be noted;
- (ii) the Supplementary Credit Approval issued under the Capital Receipts Initiative for 1998/99 be not taken up; and

- (iii) no bid be submitted for Supplementary Credit Approval to support a Cash Incentive Scheme in 1998/99.

48. Voids (Item 2)

The Director of Social Services and Housing submitted a report on the handling of voids, i.e. empty properties. The Sub Committee noted that for every week that a property remained empty there was a loss of income to the housing revenue account. A certain proportion of properties were “difficult to let”, such as sheltered bedsit flatlets, which were no longer attractive to older people. The Sub Committee noted that options for these properties would be considered as part of the forthcoming allocations review. The Sub Committee agreed a revised format for the statistical information relating to the Council’s performance on void properties.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) options for addressing “difficult to let” properties be addressed in the forthcoming allocations review; and
- (ii) statistical information for the Sub Committee about void properties be revised on the basis of Appendix A of the report.

49. College Hall (Item 3)

The Sub Committee considered a report by the Director of Social Services and Housing on the future of College Hall. The Hall had been empty since July 1997 when a lease on the building had been surrendered by the Bracknell Family Baptist Church, which had provided accommodation for young single people. The Council, in the light of its assumption of unitary status, had undertaken a review of available property and as a result the possibility of using the building as a pupil referral unit had been suggested. In the event of College Hall being unsuitable as a pupil referral unit, alternative social housing options targeting the needs of young, single people would be considered. The Sub Committee agreed to these proposals, which would be subject to the confirmation of the Social Services Transition and Housing Committee, which was ultimately responsible for the stewardship of the site.

RECOMMENDED to the Social Services Transition and Housing Committee that:

- (i) College Hall be made available to the Education Committee to enable a feasibility study to be carried out for the provision of a pupil referral unit, subject to capital funding becoming available; the outcome of the study to be available by 1 May 1998;
- (ii) in the event of the building being found suitable for provision of a pupil referral unit, the transfer of College Hall to the Education Committee be approved;
- (iii) in the event of the building being found unsuitable for a Pupil Referral Unit, housing officers investigate alternative social housing options, targeting the needs of young, single people; and

- (iv) subject to the receipt of advice from the Borough Finance Officer, any interim costs associated with the security of College Hall be the responsibility of the transition budget.

50. Capital Programme 1998/99 - 2000/01 (Item 4)

In accordance with the decision of the Strategy and Policy Committee on 11 February, the Sub Committee reviewed its capital spending requirements for the forthcoming year. The Sub Committee was advised that the housing capital programme, excluding private sector improvement and disabled facilities grants, would be funded from both the general fund (£1.486 million) and the housing revenue account (£1.7 million). The programme, subject to the approval of the Strategy and Policy Committee, would include a heating and insulation programme; an anti-condensation programme; and general improvement programmes. The detail of these schemes would be considered at a future meeting of the Sub Committee.

The Sub Committee also considered the proposed Glenfield House lifts scheme and agreed that this scheme should be withdrawn from the programme and the funding allocated to garage improvements.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the schemes, summarised in Annexe B of Item 4 of the agenda, (subject to the amendment of the housing revenue account funding to £1.7 million) be submitted to the Strategy and Policy Committee for inclusion in the draft capital programme form 1998/99; and
- (ii) the proposed lift scheme for Glenfield House be withdrawn from the 1997/98 programme and the funding be allocated to improvements on garage areas.

51. Information Items

The Sub Committee received the following reports submitted for information only:

- Housing Major Repair and Improvement Programme (Item 5)
- The Housing Corporation Approved Development Programme - Schemes in the Borough of Bracknell Forest (Item 6)
- Development Programme - Position Statement (Item 7)
- Housing Statistics and Performance Indicators (Item 8)

52. Exclusion of Public and Press

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 members of the public and the press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following items which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following categories of Schedule 12A of that Act:

- (3) Information relating to a particular occupier or former occupier of accommodation provided by the Authority (Item 15)
- (5) Information relating to an applicant for (Items 10, 11, 12 & 13)

financial assistance from the Authority

- (9) Information relating to the terms proposed in negotiations for the acquisition or disposal of property (Items 9 & 14)

53. 2/2A Hurst Close, Crowthorne Road, Bracknell (Item 9)

The Sub Committee considered a progress report on this site.

RESOLVED that the current situation be noted and a further report on progress be made to the next meeting of the Sub Committee.

54. Request for Local Authority Social Housing Grant by Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association - Yorktown Road, Sandhurst (Item 10)

The Sub Committee considered an application for Local Authority Social Housing Grant from the Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association in relation to a development in Yorktown Road, Sandhurst. The Sub Committee expressed the view that the scheme should be developed for older people. It concluded that the Director of Social Services and Housing should negotiate with the Housing Association to secure its commitment to letting the properties only to older people. Subject to this agreement, the application would be determined by the Director of Social Services and Housing, in consultation with the Chairman.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Director of Social Services and Housing negotiate with the Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association to provide an agreement whereby all lettings on the development are made only to older people, and subject to the satisfaction of this condition, the Director of Social Services and Housing, in consultation with the Chairman, determine the application for Local Authority Social Housing Grant; and
- (ii) in the event of the agreement in (i) above not being achieved, a further report be submitted to the Sub Committee.

55. Request for Local Authority Social Housing Grant by Magna Housing Association - Moonhills, Rectory Close, Bracknell (Item 11)

The Sub Committee considered an application for Local Authority Social Housing Grant from the Magna Housing Association, which would assist the Housing Association in providing a development of 15 two bed flats at Moonhills, Rectory Close, Bracknell.

RESOLVED that a Local Authority Housing Social Housing Grant of £330,000 to the Magna Housing Association be approved.

56. Request for Local Authority Social Housing Grant by Cheshire Foundation Housing Association - Cambridge Road, Owlsmoor (Item 12)

The Sub Committee considered an application for Local Authority Social Housing Grant from the Cheshire Foundation Housing Association, which would assist in the provision of a bungalow to be offered to a family with members with physical disabilities.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) an allocation of Local Authority Social Housing Grant of £52,362 (+/-10%) to the Cheshire Foundation Housing Association be approved, to develop a shared equity opportunity for a family in housing need and with members with physical disabilities; and
- (ii) the Finance and Property Sub Committee be requested to approve the sale of the land at Cambridge Road, Owlsmoor, at a price to be negotiated by the Borough Surveyor.

57. Request for Additional Local Authority Social Housing Grant by Surrey Heath Housing Association - 147-153 Branksome Road, Sandhurst (Item 13)

The Sub Committee considered a request for an additional allocation of Local Authority Social Housing Grant by the Surrey Heath Housing Association. A grant of £187,000 had been approved by the former Housing Committee in March 1997 to assist in a development at Branksome Hill Road, Sandhurst. In view of increased construction costs and the necessity to control rent levels since that date, a further £65,870 was requested by the Housing Association in order to undertake the scheme.

RESOLVED that approval be given to increase the Local Authority Social Housing Grant to Surrey Heath Housing Association by £65,870 (+/-10%) from £187,000 to £252,870 toward the funding of seven units of affordable housing at Branksome Hill Road, Sandhurst.

58. The Future of Wroxton, London Road, Bracknell (Item 14)

The Director of Social Services and Housing reported on the current position relating to Wroxton, London Road, Bracknell and the Sub Committee was informed of the range of possibilities for the future use of the property.

RESOLVED that officers evaluate the planning and valuation issues with a view to reporting on appropriate special needs schemes and alternative options as soon as possible.

59. Information Item

The Sub Committee received the following report submitted for information only:

Possession Proceedings

(Item 15)

The meeting commenced at 7.30
pm and concluded at 8.45 pm.

CHAIRMAN