

**HOUSING SUB COMMITTEE
1 SEPTEMBER 1998**

Present: Councillors Angell (Chairman), Flood, Mrs Hirst, Jones,
Mrs Pile, Ryan, Mrs Shillcock and Worrall

Substitute Member: Councillor Egan (for Councillor Miss Haydon)

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Miss Haydon

18. Substitute Members

The Sub Committee noted that Councillor Egan was present as a substitute for Councillor Miss Haydon in accordance with Standing Order 38.

19. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 19 May 1998 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20. Review of Housing Allocations Policy (Item 1)

The Sub Committee considered a report advising it of the outcome of a review of the Council's Policy for the Allocation of Housing with a view to approving a revised policy document in the light of the review.

It was noted that the review had been carried out to ensure that the Council's policy:

- a Addressed the Council's objectives;
- b Reflected the legislative requirements of the Housing Act 1996; and,
- c Dealt with issues of shared concern in the joint Social Services and Housing Department.

The officers answered a number of detailed questions regarding the document and it was noted that the Council did not currently recognise married people as opposed to unmarried couples applying to go on the housing register.

With regard to the above point, a number of Members expressed the view that the establishment of stable communities was an important issue in housing management and that marriage should be taken into account by the award of some points. The Committee was advised that it would be legitimate for the Council to incorporate this in their housing allocations policy, providing it was undertaken for housing management considerations, including the need to build stable communities. In that regard, the Sub Committee was advised by the Director and the Borough Solicitor that, under the relevant legislation, the Council could not award priority to married couples for the purpose of promoting particular moral or religious views and that it would only be legitimate for the Council to adopt a policy of allocating points to "married" couples if it was done having regard to housing need and wider housing management considerations including the need to build stable communities.

After receiving this advice, a proposal to award 3 points as a balancing factor in the scheme to those couples who were legally “married” was moved and accepted.

In accordance with standing order 47, on the request of one quarter of the Members present this motion was referred up to the Council as a recommendation.

RECOMMENDED: that, in order to assist in building stable communities within the policy for the allocation of housing, an award of three points be given to couples who are married to each other

It was further:

RESOLVED: that, subject to the decision of the full Council, the revised Policy for the Allocation of Housing as set out in Appendix A of the report submitted,, with appropriate amendments, be issued for formal consultation and referred back to the Sub Committee for final approval in the light of the responses arising from the consultation exercise.

21. Introductory Tenancies (Item 2)

The Sub Committee received a report on the progress and effectiveness of the Introductory Tenancy Scheme that had been introduced under the Housing Act 1996.

RESOLVED that the progress made by the Council on the Introductory Tenancy Scheme be noted.

22. Housing Major Repairs & Improvement Programme (Item 3)

The Sub Committee considered a report outlining progress made under the 1997/98 and 1998/99 Housing Major Repair & Improvement Programmes, focussing on those schemes that had not previously been reported as complete. In addition, the report sought approval to the appointment of a term contractor for structural repair works.

RESOLVED that Luff Construction Ltd be appointed as the Council’s term contractor for undertaking works to stabilise ground floor slabs and associated work.

23. College Hall, Old Wokingham Road, Bracknell (Item 4)

The Committee considered a report seeking approval to declare the property known as College Hall, Old Wokingham Road, Bracknell surplus to housing requirements in order to make the property available for use as a Pupil Referral Unit by the Education Department.

RESOLVED that, subject to the consent of the Secretary of State for Environment, Transport and the Regions, the property known as College Hall, Old Wokingham Road, Bracknell, be declared surplus to housing requirements.

24. Tenants Panel – Appointment of Councillor Members (Item 5)

The Sub Committee considered a report inviting it to determine representatives on the Council's Tenants Panel.

RESOLVED that Councillors Mrs Pile and Ryan be appointed to represent the Sub Committee on the Tenants Panel.

25. Buying Back Ex-Council Flats and Houses – A Consultation Paper (Item 6)

The Sub Committee considered a report on a Government Consultation Paper seeking views on proposals to provide financial incentives to buy back flats or houses previously sold under the "right to buy" legislation.

On the basis that the proposals offered no benefits for a debt-free authority such as Bracknell, the Sub Committee agreed that it could not support the proposals.

RESOLVED that the Director of Social Services & Housing, in consultation with the Chairman of the Sub Committee, be authorised to submit an appropriate response to the Government's consultation paper on buying back ex-Council flats and houses based on the view that the Council does not support the proposal as it stands as there is no financial incentive to debt free authorities such as Bracknell Forest.

26. Secure Tenant's Right To Buy – A Consultation Paper (item 7)

The Sub Committee considered a report on a Government Consultation Paper seeking views on proposals to change the maximum discount cash limit on the "Right to Buy" and other home ownership incentive schemes in England.

The Sub Committee noted that, if implemented, the proposals could adversely affect a third of its tenants. It was considered therefore that the proposals could not be supported. Moreover, it was agreed that the issue should be raised with tenants, as the implications were that anyone considering purchasing their property under existing legislation could be disadvantaged if not proceeding quickly.

RESOLVED that:

- 1 the Council does not support any changes to the current discount arrangements in relation to the "Right to Buy" scheme, preserved "Right to Buy" and any local sale schemes;
- 2 the Government's proposals be reported in the Tenants Newsletter and the Tenants Panel with a view to securing their views; and,
- 3 the Director of Social Services & Housing, in consultation with the Chairman of the Sub Committee, prepare an appropriate written response to the Government's consultation paper.

27. Items for Information

The Sub Committee received and noted the following information items:

- “Home Alone – The Role of Housing in Community Care” (Item 8)
- Development Programme - Position Statement (Item 9)
- Housing Statistics (item 10)

28. Exclusion of Public and Press

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

- (3) Information relating to occupiers or former occupiers of Council Property (Items 11, 14, 15)
- (9) Terms proposed for a contract (Items 12 & 13)

29. Difficult to Let Properties – Results of Tenant Consultation (Item 11)

In a report containing exempt information, the Sub-Committee was informed of the results of the pilot resident consultation exercise that had been undertaken in accordance with the decision of the Sub-Committee on 19 May 1998.

RESOLVED that:

- 1 the results of the tenant consultation exercise be noted;
- 2 the flats identified in the report be re-designated;
- 3 further ongoing consultation with tenants in similar difficult to let flats be approved; and,
- 4 where the results of future consultation produce a positive response to re-designation, the Assistant Director (Housing Services) be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman of the Sub-Committee, to re-designate the flats as general needs accommodation.

30. Request for Local Authority Social Housing Grant – Greenacres, Warfield (Item 12)

In a report containing exempt information, the Sub Committee considered a report seeking approval to allocate a Local Authority Social Housing Grant to Warden Housing Association, to top up funding given by the Housing Corporation. The funding was to be used to provide three affordable housing units to be offered on a shared ownership basis to existing tenants or applicants on the housing list.

RESOLVED: that a Local Authority Social Housing Grant of £14,400 be awarded to Warden Housing Association in relation to the development of three affordable

housing units at Greenacres, Warfield, to be offered as shared ownership opportunities.

31. Request for Local Authority Social Housing Grant –Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association (Item 13)

In a report containing exempt information, the Sub Committee considered a report seeking approval to allocate a Local Authority Social Housing Grant to Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association in relation to the development of seven social housing units. The applicant had previously been allocated a grant towards an alternative scheme at 123 Yorktown Road, Sandhurst. As the site had since been sold to a private sector purchaser, the current application was to switch the funds previously allocated to that scheme to a purchase and repair programme to provide the new properties.

RESOLVED: that the request from the Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association to switch an earlier Local Authority Social Housing Grant of £312,800 (+/- 10%) for the development of social housing units at 123 Yorktown Road, Sandhurst to a purchase and repair programme to provide three and four bedroomed properties be approved.

32. Tenants' Debts – Request to be Written-Off (Item 14)

In a report containing exempt information, the Director of Social Services & Housing sought the Sub Committee's permission to write-off a number of debts.

RESOLVED that the debts detailed in the report be written-off.

33. Possession Proceedings (Item 15)

The Sub Committee received and noted a report on possession proceedings.

The meeting commenced at 7:30 pm
And concluded at 10:00 pm

CHAIRMAN