

**HOUSING SUB COMMITTEE
7 SEPTEMBER 1999**

Present: Councillors Harrison (Chairman), Barnard, Miss Haydon, Mrs Hirst, Mrs Pile, Ryan, Mrs Shillcock, Worrall and Wheaton

11. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 11 May 1998 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12. Housing Major Repairs & Improvements Programme (Item 1)

The Sub-Committee considered a report outlining progress on the 1998/99 and 1999/2000 Housing Major Repairs & Improvement Programmes and which also sought approval to action taken on window renewal and associated works contracts.

In response to a question about why not all the original contracts had included the cladding works, the Sub-Committee was advised that more window works than had originally been intended were now being undertaken.

RESOLVED that

- (i) additional expenditure as indicated in the report be approved to enable completion of the PVCU cladding works.
- (ii) the action taken in respect of single tender action under urgency powers be endorsed in order to extend existing window replacement contract No 1 in respect of 61No. properties in Great Hollands.

13. National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts (Item 2)

The Sub-Committee considered a report providing it with the latest details relating to the development of Tenant Participation Compacts. Following the recent consultation exercise, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions had published further guidance to local housing authorities setting out recommendations for a National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts. This reinforced the Government's commitment to the introduction of Tenant Participation Compacts and set out how councils must involve their tenants by introducing Tenant Participation Compacts by 1 April 2000.

The Sub-Committee's attention was drawn to the fact that the proposals were based on the premise that all council tenants, especially those who don't normally get involved, needed and deserved the opportunity to participate in the local decisions that affect them. It was therefore important that imaginative methods were found to involve all tenants. In addition, it was acknowledged that the process would also involve leaseholders and other stakeholders, but that, at this stage, the specific requirement placed on the Council was to negotiate a compact with its tenants.

With regard to the concerns about engaging all the tenants, the Sub-Committee was advised that this was one of the issues which would need to be considered at the next meeting, having regard to the funding available. It was hoped that more effective ways of communicating with the tenants could be developed and that, to some extent, the Council could act as a facilitator for inter-tenant communication and assist the Tenants Panel to disseminate accurate information.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the requirements of the National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts be noted;
- (ii) the work currently underway to develop the tenant participation strategy and Compacts be endorsed;
- (iii) a further report outlining the draft Compact strategy within the Best Value framework be presented to the next meeting of the Housing Sub Committee; and,
- (iv) a representative of the Tenants Panel be invited to attend the next meeting of the Housing Sub Committee.

14. Fire Danger Awareness in Council Properties (Item 3)

The Sub-Committee considered a report arising from a recent incident which had raised the question of the dangers of fires in council properties and the steps taken to minimise such risks.

The Sub-Committee was advised that each serious incident was investigated and any lessons learnt, however small, were taken into consideration. The report suggested a number of steps to be taken in the light of the recent fire that it was anticipated would be beneficial in further reducing the risk of fire and consequent injury in the future.

It was stressed to the Sub-Committee that, in relation to smoke detectors, the Council was only providing the devices and that responsibility for their installation and maintenance would rest entirely with the tenants. With regard to the estimated costs, it was advised that these were considered to be maximum figures and that, in reality, the scheme was likely to become self-financing if the number of serious fires and consequent damage were reduced.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the steps being taken to increase awareness of fire risks in the home be endorsed;
- (ii) the rewriting and issue of a revised Tenants Handbook during the next financial year at a cost of £20,000 be approved;
- (iii) a scheme to make available, free of charge, one smoke detector per tenanted property be approved; and,
- (iv) a free replacement be made available after five years and/or on a change of tenancy, whether by the re-let of a void property or by mutual exchange.

15. Information Items

The Sub Committee noted the following items submitted for information only on which the officers answered a number of questions:

- Housing Strategy Update – Consultation (Item 4)
- Beacon Council Application – Housing Repairs & Maintenance (Item 5)
- Social Housing Programme – Position Statement (Item 6)
- Housing Services – Activity Report (Item 7)

In relation to the Council's bid for Beacon Status (Item 5), a presentation on the main elements of the application was made to the Sub-Committee which generally welcomed the initiative and thanked the officers who had put the bid together.

16. Exclusion of the Public and Press

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

- (3) Information relating to occupiers or former (Item 9)
occupiers of Council property
- (7) Information relating to the financial or business (Item 8)
affairs of any particular person (other than the
authority)

17. Request for Local Authority Social Housing Grant (Item 8)

The Committee considered a report seeking approval to switch a grant from the Local Authority Social Housing Grant budget 1999/2000 to assist with the funding of the purchase and repair of 10 two- and three- bedroom houses rather than a block of 12 flats.

The officers answered a number of questions relating to the proposal itself and the type of properties required to meet housing need within the Borough.

RESOLVED that an allocation to Parkside Housing Group (Windsor & District Housing Association) of £556,898 (+/-5%) be approved from the 1999/2000 Local Authority Social Housing Grant budget to assist with funding the purchase and repair of 10 houses, in place of a block of 12 two-bedroomed flats, to be offered to applicants on the Housing Register or existing Council tenants.

18. **Information Item**

The Sub Committee noted the following item submitted for information only:

- Possession Proceedings (Item 9)

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 9.15pm

CHAIRMAN