

SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSITION & HOUSING COMMITTEE

17 JUNE 1997

Present: Councillor Anngell (Chairman); Councillors Bayle, Egan, Grayson, Harrison, Miss Haydon, Mrs Hayes, Mrs Hirst, Jones, McCormack, Mrs Pile, Ryan, Mrs Shillcock, Simonds, Mrs Sutcliffe and Worrall

75. Welcome.

The Chairman welcomed the members of the Committee and observers to the first meeting of the Social Services Transition & Housing Committee in the current municipal year.

76. Appointment of Director of Social Services & Housing.

The Chairman reported that Mr Trevor Farmer, presently Deputy Director of Social Services responsible for children and families with the London Borough of Hounslow had been appointed Director of Social Services & Housing to the Council. A start date was currently being arranged.

77. Urgent Actions Taken Under Delegated Powers.

The Committee was advised of urgent action taken under delegated powers by the Borough Housing Officer in relation to:

- (a) Authorising an increase in a Local Authorities social housing grant to the Toynbee Housing Association.
- (b) Tender acceptance for improvements to Swan House.

78. Scheme of Delegation and Related Topics. (Item 1)

In a report being circulated to all main Committees, the Borough Administrator reported that the Council required each policy Committee to commission a review of its functions, responsibilities and delegations to ensure completeness and accuracy.

In order to achieve this it was suggested that a Focus Group be established by each service Committee to comprise of five members plus appropriate Officers.

RESOLVED that a Focus Group be established comprising Councillors Angell, Bayle, Mrs Shillcock, Simonds and Worrall, plus the Borough Housing Officer, Borough Engineer & Surveyor, Borough Environmental Services Officer, Borough Solicitor, Borough Administrator (or their representatives) and representatives from the County Council Social Services Department with the following Terms of Reference:

- (a) To review the description of the functions assigned to the Committee to ensure they are complete and accurate;
- (b) to examine the scope for delegating decision making activities in respect of the functions to Officers or to Sub Committees;

- (c) to consider how best to achieve the strategic management functions assigned to the Committee; and
- (d) to report back to the next meeting with firm proposals.

79. **Housing Act 1996 - Introductory Tenancies. (Item 2)**

The Borough Housing Officer reported that Introductory Tenancies was a measure introduced within the Housing Act 1996 that Local Authorities may use if they wished to deal speedily with problems early in a tenancy. Introductory Tenancy was a prelude to a secure tenancy for those new tenants who conducted their tenancy in a satisfactory manner. An Introductory Tenancy automatically became secure tenancy after 12 months, provided that the Authority had not commenced proceedings to end it. Introductory Tenancies can only be applied to new tenants.

Where a new tenant did not conduct the Introductory Tenancy in a satisfactory manner the Authority had an automatic right to terminate the tenancy and recover possession of the property, providing that the correct procedure had been followed. Any decision to terminate Introductory Tenancies had to be accompanied by a right to a review of the decision.

In considering this matter the Committee noted that criteria for the Introductory Tenancy regime needed to be established, and this would be dealt with in due course.

RESOLVED that an Introductory Tenancy regime be adopted with effect from 1 October 1997.

80. **Council Houses. (Item 3)**

The Borough Housing Officer submitted a report recommending a promotional initiative with regard to the sale of Council houses.

RESOLVED that the proposed initiative to promote the sale of Council houses in conjunction with an appropriate revision of the procedure for processing applications be endorsed.

81. **Joint Working with Health. (Item 4)**

The Borough Housing Officer reported that in preparing its Community Care Plans, the Local Authority was required, under Section 46 of the NHS in Community Care Act, to consult with Health Authorities. Accordingly the Committee considered a paper detailing the formal planning and joint working arrangements essential to the fulfilment of its statutory obligations.

The report outlined the key issues in joint planning for day one, the present planning and purchasing structure and gave a brief guide to the terminology and membership of the planning groups.

RESOLVED that members, in particular the Council's representative on the JCC Health, support, in principle, the preferred options for joint planning and joint working, as detailed in the report.

82. **Social Services - A Caring Future. (Item 5)**

The Borough Housing Officer reported that the report 'Social Services - A Caring Future' was the summary of the work undertaken and recommendations made by the Social Services Panel over the last two years. The report had been summarised in the "Strategies & Options" document.

The report made a number of important recommendations about the kind of Social Services authority that would best address the needs of the new unitary Council, particularly with regard to the statutory framework in which Social Services functions must operate. The report had been agreed by the Strategy & Policy Committee at its meeting on 20 May 1997.

The Borough Housing Officer defined a number of policy statements which were aimed to turn the vision into reality to achieve the objectives identified and the Committee was asked to support these statements.

RESOLVED that the policy statements detailed in the Officer's report be adopted as a basis for more detailed working in the shadow year.

83. **Delivery of Specialist Services in a Unitary Setting. (Item 6)**

In a detailed report the Borough Housing Officer submitted future proposals for specialist services such as Out Of Hours Emergency Service; Registration and Inspection Services; Child Protection Arrangements; Guardian Ad Litem and Reporting Officer; Adoption and Fostering; Berksability and the Sensory Needs Service.

On each of the above services the current situation was stated, together with an appropriate recommendation with regard to the placing of the particular service.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the proposed joint arrangements and lead authorities for specialist services, as detailed in the Officer's report, be endorsed in principle in order that more detailed work and the delivery arrangements could follow; and
- (ii) the recommendations in the Officer's report be supported, particularly the recommendation relating to the Out of Hours Emergency Service arrangements for which Bracknell Forest Borough Council was proposing to be the lead authority.

84. **Housing Major Repair and Improvement Programme. (Item 7)**

The Committee received a report from the Borough Engineer & Surveyor detailing the status of the 1996/97 repair and maintenance programme and the 1997/97 programme.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the progress of the schemes for 1996/97 and 1997/98 be noted; and
- (ii) the schemes proposed for anti- condensation works to 1-10, 47-58 Lady Bank, 66-85 Liscombe and for the installation of a lift in Liscombe House be approved and the Borough Engineer & Surveyor, in consultation with the Chairman, be authorised to accept the lowest tender received.

85. Seminar - Registered Social Landlords. (Item 8(i))

The Borough Housing Officer sought approval to arrangements for training for members concerning a role of registered social landlords.

RESOLVED that a Seminar be held on a date to be arranged in the Autumn 1997 at 6.30 - 9.00pm in the Council Chamber at Easthampstead House on the role of registered social landlords and that invitation be extended to all Members of the Council.

86. Policy Seminars/Visits for Members - Social Services. (Item 8(ii))

The Borough Housing Officer submitted a report recommending policy seminars and visits for members appropriate to Social Services facilities and detailed proposals for five seminars with associated visits.

RESOLVED that approval be given to the proposals for policy seminars/visits, as detailed in the Officer's report, on dates to be agreed with the Chairman.

87. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 members of the press and public 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:

- (5) Information relating to business/financial affairs a third party (Item 9)
- (7) Terms of the proposed for a contract (Item 9)

88. Urgent Action taken under Delegated Powers.

In a report containing exempt information the Borough Housing Officer reported on urgent action taken under delegated powers with regard to authorising Local Authority social housing grant to the Magna Housing Association.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm
and concluded at 9.20pm

CHAIRMAN