

-TENANTS ADVISORY GROUP

Tuesday 23 July 2002

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs POOLEY (Chairman); Councillor LEGGETT (Deputy Chairman); and Councillors ELKIN, Mrs MURRAY and SLATER.

TENANT REPRESENTATIVES:

Old Town Tenants Association - S Norwood

Hampden Park Tenants Association - Mrs J Mullen

Langney Central Tenants Association – M Bryan, B Elphick

Archery Court - D Lewis

Stirling Court - P Wallis

Willingdon Trees Tenants Association - D McGowan

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr NEIL FULLER (Director of Housing Health and Community Finance). Ms J CANNY (Head of Housing Management), Ms G MORGAN (Tenant Participation Officer), Mr A CHANNON (Tenant Services Manager) and Mr N ROSEWELL (Senior Housing Officer)

(Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Carter and Mrs S Burlumi).

1. CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION. The Chairman welcomed Members and Officers to the first meeting of the Tenants Advisory Group for the 2002/2003 Municipal Year.

2. STAFFING ISSUES. The Group considered the report of the Tenant Services Manager, detailing the current staffing structure for Housing. Members were last advised of the staff structures in January 2002. An updated set of structure charts was attached to the report together with a list of telephone numbers.

NOTED.

3. PROGRAMMED WORKS/MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS. The Group considered the report of the Property Services Manager updating Members on the progress of the works comprising Capital Improvements and Planned Maintenance Programmes.

Members noted that the report set out to highlight the major areas of work undertaken within the Housing Investment Capital programme together with the work planned for 2002.

Members were also advised that the purpose of the report was to ask members of the Group for feedback on the format of the report and how they would like it to develop, to ensure that it was providing the most relevant and appropriate information.

The Group were advised that the Window Replacement Contract was being let in four phases with the first set of tenders back on 24 July 2002. The Conversion works to Gwent Court would commence on 5 August 2002

and were scheduled for completion week commencing 20 January 2003 would commence on 20 January 2003 and a site visit would be arranged in the near future. The Group were asked for any additional Environmental Schemes they wished to put forward.

NOTED.

4. RESULTS OF THE ANNUAL TENANTS SURVEY - DECEMBER 2001. The Group considered the report of the Senior Tenant Participation Officer informing and updating the Members on the results of the Annual Survey December 2001.

Members were advised that a postal survey was sent out in December 2001, using the STATUS format (questions that the Council are required to ask) to 4,200 tenants. To date 1,021 replies had been received. The results were summarised within the report, a copy of the survey was also appended. The Complimentary tickets for the pantomime was a good incentive and it is hoped that this will continue to be an incentive in future years.

The Senior Tenant Participation Officer felt that there had been a reasonable response to the survey.

NOTED.

5. HOUSING STRATEGY 2003 / 08. The Group considered the report of the Strategy Development Manager informing Members about the Housing Strategy 2003/08 and requesting comments on its content and action plan. Members were advised that the Draft 5 year Housing Strategy 2003/08 would be submitted to the Government Office as part of the Council's overall Single Capital Pot submission.

The Government had stated that a five-year Housing Strategy should be prepared this year. They had also prescribed a range of issues, which should be included in the document in order to render it 'fit for purpose'. These were detailed within the report.

Members were advised that the Council's new Housing Strategy was framed around the corporate objectives, showing clear links to the Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan. It also showed the links to the emerging Community Strategy as well as other key cross cutting plans including the Borough Plan, Best Value Performance Plan, Crime and Disorder Strategy, the Health Improvement Programme and Supporting People.

The Council would also clearly show the ways in which it had consulted with all stakeholders on setting aims, and the monitoring and risk assessment processes the Council had in place to ensure delivery.

Members noted that the new 5 year Housing Strategy had been produced following comprehensive consultation with Members, in addition to staff, tenants and residents, partner agencies. An inclusive Housing Strategy Conference was held in March 2002.

The Group agreed that the Housing Strategy for the next 5 years provided a clear framework for addressing local housing need, and promoting economic and environmental regeneration, in line with corporate objectives. It also substantiated the level of investment required in order to achieve this.

NOTED.

6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN - JULY 2002. The Group considered the report of the Head of Housing Management regarding the key matters arising from the current year's HRA Business Plan and giving Members the opportunity to discuss those issues.

Members were advised that the Business Plan was still being written, full copies would be circulated shortly. The Plan would then need to be the subject of further discussions with Officers and Tenant Representatives. Members were also advised that a Decent Homes Standards Guide would also be distributed with the Plan.

Members were advised that the plan contained a number of key objectives and priorities. These were:

- Work relating to stock condition information.
- Finalise 10-year capital and investment programme.
- Ensure that the outcomes of the Best Value Review of Housing Management Part II are included into the future priorities for service delivery.
- That additional consultation with Tenants is undertaken.
- That the plan contributes to the final decisions in respect of Part I, Best Value Review of Housing Management.

Members were also aware that there needed to be adequate resources available to continue to offer an efficient and effective service. This would include issues over staffing levels, prioritisation of objectives, clear performance management systems and robust project and programme management.

NOTED.

7. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT (PART 2). The Group considered the report of the Head of Housing Management regarding the progress of the Best Value Review the Housing Management Part II.

Members were advised that the review concentrated on the following aspects of service provision, namely: Estate Management, Revenue Collection and Tenant and Leaseholder participation.

Members noted that the key recommendations made by the Review team to date were:

The review team had considered reports back from the working groups in respect of Estate Management, Rent Collection and Tenant Participation. Details of the full recommendations of those groups were in appendix 1 of the report.

The Review team had been in broad agreement with the recommendations to date. There were some matters, which had required further consideration, namely Introductory Tenancies, Leaseholder charging policies and also the issues surrounding Tenant Governance. The recommendations concerning rent collection services, detailed within the appendix, were also to be streamlined and grouped to give clarity to the priorities.

There had been much debate over the role of Tenants Advisory Group and the role of tenants in making key

decisions on how services were provided. The Review Team had asked that further information be sought as to how a Board Of Management may be established, with a view to allowing Tenants increasing involvement in service delivery. The Review team would consider this in August, and a further report would be brought to Tenants Advisory Group.

NOTED.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC.

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting as otherwise there was a likelihood of disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972. The relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A is shown beneath the item.

9. SUMMARY OF CONFIDENTIAL PROCEEDINGS FOR INFORMATION.

(NOTE: The full minute of the undermentioned item is set out in the confidential section of these minutes.

a) DOMESTIC GAS CONTRACTS TO COUNCIL HOUSING. The Head of Housing Management informed Members of the changes in the Domestic Gas Contracts to some of the Council Housing.

(Exempt information reasons – Para 9, Terms of a Proposed Contract & 12, Information on Legal Proceedings).

NOTED.

The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.

Mrs M POOLEY

Chairman