

Runnymede Borough Council

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 19 May 2004 at 7.30 p.m.

in the Council Chamber

at the Civic Offices, Addlestone



Members of the Committee

Councillors P.J. Waddell (Chairman), H.W.V. Meares (Vice-Chairman), J.R. Ashmore, E.G. Barrett, J. Broadhead, Ms. D.V. Clarke, Mrs. C.E. Gant, Miss M.N. Heath, C. Knight and Mrs. J. Norman.

and all other Members for information

## **A G E N D A**

Notes:

- i) Any report on the Agenda involving confidential information (as defined by section 100A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972) must be discussed in private. Any report involving exempt information (as defined by Section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972), whether it appears in Part 1 or Part 2 below, may be discussed in private but only if the Committee so resolves.
- ii) The relevant 'background papers' are listed after each report in Part 1. Enquiries about any of the Agenda reports and background papers should be directed in the first instance to **Mr. S. Rowan, Committee Section, Department of Administration and Leisure, Civic Offices, Station Road, Addlestone (Tel. Direct Line: 01932 425623). (Email: [stephen.rowan@runnymede.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.rowan@runnymede.gov.uk)).**
- iii) Agendas and Minutes are available on a subscription basis. For details, please ring Mr. B.A. Fleckney on 01932 425620.
- iv) In the unlikely event of an alarm sounding, members of the public should leave the building immediately, either using the staircase leading from the public gallery or following other instructions as appropriate.

## **LIST OF MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION**

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TERM	EXPLANATION
ADP	Approved Development Programme. This is the Housing Corporation's annual allocation for capital expenditure on Housing Association/Registered Social Landlord projects. The ADP is distributed to Housing Associations through the allocation of Social Housing Grant. (See HCSHG below).
ALMO	Arms Length Management Organisation. Where an organisation is established to manage Council stock. The properties remain Council owned and tenants retain their secure tenancies. This can provide opportunities for extra funds if all additional requirements are satisfied.
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic Groups. This is a collective name used by various bodies.
COMPACT	This is a recent requirement of Central Government. It entails developing an agreement between the Council and tenants or voluntary organisations about the way in which they will be consulted on the services they receive or deliver.
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment. An external process to assess the quality of individual Council's Performance (set out in the Local Government White Paper 2001). It brings together evidence from a range of internal and external sources, in addition to an on site inspection, in order to arrive at an overall category.
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant. This is a grant made available to disabled persons to provide adaptations to their property. Dependent on the type of work, it is a mandatory grant. The amount of grant awarded is subject to a test of resources of the disabled person.
DHCS	Director of Housing and Community Services.
DIYSO	Do It Yourself Shared Ownership Scheme. This scheme allows applicants with sufficient income to part purchase accommodation in the Borough. As the title suggests, the applicant is able to find their own accommodation for purchase. The scheme is run by Thames Valley Housing Association who purchase up to 50% of the property value. The tenant pays rent to the Housing Association for the share the Association retains.
EGAN	Sir John Egan chaired a Local Government Task Force, which produced a report entitled "Rethinking Construction" in 1998. The Task Force recommended that the construction industry should look to a partnering approach in future rather than the adversarial nature of contracts in the past.
ESP	Existing Satisfactory Property. This scheme involved working with a Housing Association to purchase low cost housing in the private sector. Originally the scheme involved the repurchase of ex-Right to Buy Council properties. However, the scheme was broadened to include any low cost housing in the Borough.
GOSE	The Government Office for the South East. This is the local office of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (formerly the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions) for the South East region of England. Its role includes development of the Regional Housing Strategy.
HCSHG	Housing Corporation Social Housing Grant. This is the main public subsidy paid to Housing Associations by Central Government, through the Housing Corporation to finance new homes. It can be used to pay for rented schemes as well as low cost home ownership schemes. (See ADP above).
HMO	House in Multiple Occupation. This is a property that under the Housing Act 1985 is defined as being "occupied by persons who do not form a single household". The definition used by Planning Authorities is slightly different in that they do not recognise a house to be an HMO unless there are 6 occupants.

HOUSING CORPORATION	This is the National Housing Agency for England. The Housing Corporation is a Government Agency and was created by the Housing Act 1964 to register, fund, promote and supervise the Housing Association (now Registered Social Landlord) movement.
HRA	Housing Revenue Account. This is a statutory account that sets out the expenditure and income arising from the provision of social housing by the Local Authority as a landlord. Expenditure in the HRA includes repairs and improvements, and the management of the Council's stock.
LASHG	Local Authority Social Housing Grant. These were Social Housing Grant payments which were initiated by a Local Authority but for which the cash was provided by the Housing Corporation. The scheme came to an end on 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2003. Transitional arrangements are in place but under these arrangements the funds, if approved, are paid direct to the Registered Social Landlord.
LDF	Local Development Framework. Government proposed replacement for the Local Plan.
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership – Leads on the Community Strategy.
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (Government Department).
PFI	Private Finance Initiative. This can provide an opportunity to raise extra funds for investment in housing stock. A number of issues would need to be addressed/considered. Several Councils are currently acting as pathfinders.
PPG3	Planning Policy Guidance. This is Guidance issued by the Secretary of State detailing National Planning Policy within existing legislation. There are many examples of Guidance and PPG3 is the one that is the most relevant to housing. This sets out the requirements relating to the provision of affordable housing.
RARP	Runnymede Accommodation Referral Panel. This group has been established to assess the accommodation requirements of people with mental health, learning disability and physical disabilities. The group considers each individual case and makes a recommendation as to the level of support required.  Representatives on the group include the following:  Officer from the Borough Council's Housing Department. Officer from the Community Support Team (Social Services). Officer from the Community Mental Health Team (Social Services/Health). Occupational Therapist.
RHB	Regional Housing Board. The RHB has been established by the Government to prepare and oversee the Regional Housing Strategy. The Strategy for the region will set out the approach to housing investment and give a clear framework for spending decisions. One RHB exists for the whole of the South East of England.
RSL	Registered Social Landlord. This is a Housing Association which is registered with the Housing Corporation. Registration entitles an association to bid for Social Housing Grant but requires that the association does not trade for profit. The association is established for the purpose of the provision, construction, improvement or management of social housing.
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure. This is the Government's procedure for assessing the energy efficiency of a property.
SMART	How targets should be set if they are to be effective – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely.

SNHSG	The Special Needs Housing Strategy Group was established to look at the level of housing needed by people with special needs. This includes those with mental health problems, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, young people leaving care, victims of domestic violence, those with drug and alcohol problems, and older people. The group has representatives from a number of different agencies. The Chairman from each of the Local Special Needs Forums is also represented on the Special Needs Housing Strategy Group.
TCI	Total Cost Indicator. This is a system used by the Housing Corporation for assessing the maximum cost for new Registered Social Landlord dwellings. The TCI varies both in relation to the size of the dwelling and the region of the country in which it is to be constructed.
TSG	Tenants' Services Group. This group was formed in February 1999. The members of the group are Council Tenants and Leaseholders. They meet prior to each Housing and Community Services meeting to consider policy and management issues that impact on Tenants and Leaseholders.

1. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

2. MINUTES

To confirm and sign, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 March 2004.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

If Members have an interest in an item please record the interest on the form circulated with this Agenda and hand it to the Legal Representative or Committee Administrator at the start of the meeting. A supply of the form will also be available from the Committee Administrator at meetings.

Members who have previously declared interests which are recorded in the Minutes to be considered at this meeting need not repeat the declaration when attending the meeting. Members need take no further action unless the item in which they have an interest becomes the subject of debate, in which event the Member must leave the room if the interest is personal and prejudicial.

5. RUNNYMEDE CARE ASSISTANT SCHEME (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the level of Grant Aid funding and the Service Level Agreement for Runnymede Care Assistant Scheme for the next 5 years.**

2. Background Information

2.1 Runnymede Care Assistant Scheme provides a day and night sitting service for carers in the Borough. This enables carers to have a much needed break from caring. The clients cared for include frail elderly people, people with Alzheimer's and dementia, children with special needs and adults with learning disability. The scheme is much valued by carers and clients as they are looked after in their own homes with support from other professionals and organisations.

2.2 For some years the level of grant has been linked to annual inflationary increases. Over the past 3 years the level of grant has been:

2002/3	£12,000
2003/4	£12,300
2004/5	£12,600

### 3. Report

- 3.1 In the past year services have been provided to 203 carers in Runnymede. There has been a growing demand for help with children with special needs, in particular those with autism. A specialist Care Assistant will be appointed to carry out work with children with special needs funded in the short term from a legacy of £27,000 given to the charity. A bid for Partnership Funding will be made for ongoing funding for this new post.
- 3.2 The Care Assistants are also supporting increasing numbers of people with dementia with complex needs. There is no doubt if the existing level of service was reduced carers health would suffer and some clients would need to go into residential care homes at a much earlier stage.
- 3.3 The 100 hours of care provided during the day is funded by Runnymede Borough Council, North Surrey PCT and Runnymede Community Care Team. The night sitting service and Activities Worker are funded from Carers Grant monies.
- 3.4 The past year has been difficult and demanding due to the implementation of the new care standards, which has detrimentally affected service provision in small voluntary organisations such as Runnymede Care Assistant Scheme. The Chairman and Co-ordinator have had to carry out a complete review of procedures and paperwork, as required by the Care Standards Commission. The Co-ordinator alone has spent 4 weeks of her time dealing with implementation issues.
- 3.5 The new care standards have generated extra administration and require Care Assistants to attend NVQ training. Consequently the service has not been widely advertised or promoted to avoid further increasing the demand for the service during the implementation of the National Care Standards process. The priority has been to continue to provide the service to existing clients.

### 4. Grant Application Service Level Agreement

- 4.1 Runnymede Care Assistant Scheme's current Grant Aid funding expires on the 31 March 2005 and the charity would like the existing level of Grant Aid plus inflation, to be maintained over the next 5 years.
- 4.2 There has not been a formal Service Level Agreement in existence for this scheme in the past. A new SLA, for five years, has therefore been compiled following the Standard format. Grant funding will be subject to the completion of the SLA at Appendix 'A'. This Committee is asked to approve the draft SLA.

### 5. Council Policy

- 5.1 This application for funding is in line with the policy aims and corporate standards set out within the Leader's Position Statement for 2004/5. The most relevant policy aims are as follows:
- i) Corporate Standards – 'Valuing, supporting, encouraging and acknowledging the many organisations, groups and individuals who voluntarily provide a wide range of services of benefit to our community'.
  - ii) Community Services – 'We shall continue, within the bounds of affordability to support our high level discretionary Community Services to reinforce and to complement the County Council Social Services, for the benefit of our elderly and vulnerable residents'.

### 6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 In 2003/4 it cost £96,840 to run the scheme and the funding from grants totalled £89,899. The shortfall of £6,000 was covered by donations.
- 6.2 A summary of Runnymede Care Assistant Scheme's projected income and expenditure forecast for 2004/5 – 2007/8, showing a gradual decline in reserves is at Appendix 'B'. Runnymede Care Assistant Scheme has calculated that it is prudent to retain reserves

equivalent to a minimum of 6 months running costs. Based on the schemes forecast reserves would not be reduced below this level were the Council to maintain the current level of grant.

- 6.3 It is clear that this organisation is providing a much needed service. However as there are so many demands upon the Council's funds it must only consider increasing funding where there is a clear need. In view of the healthy state of the scheme's current accounts it is proposed that the current level of funding (i.e. £12,600) be continued for the next 5 years but with no inflationary increase. This proposal has been discussed with the Chairman of the scheme who has acknowledged this to be a reasonable proposal.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

- i) Core Grant Aid funding in the fixed sum of £12,600 in 2005/06 and the next 4 years, be approved for the Runnymede Care Assistant Scheme; and**
- ii) the Service Level Agreement with Runnymede Care Assistant Scheme be approved.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

Grant Aid Core Revenue Funding 2004/5

6. RUNNYMEDE AND SPELTHORNE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **To update the Committee on the progress made by the Runnymede and Spelthorne Community Legal Services Partnership (CLSP) and to obtain Members views on the draft strategic plan for the CLSP area.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The Access to Justice Act 1999 disbanded the Legal Aid Board and created the Legal Services Commission and the Legal Service Fund (which has now replaced Legal Aid). The Legal Services Commission has a statutory duty to work with local authorities and create Community Legal Services Partnerships. The Committee agreed to the formation of the Runnymede and Spelthorne CLSP at their meeting on the 13 March 2002.

- 2.2 Community Legal Service Partnerships have been established nationwide to:

- Overcome the problems of fragmentation and inconsistency, which make it difficult for funders of legal information and advice to target their funding.
- Ensure advisers make the best use of their skills.
- Ensure the public can access the information, advice and help they need when they have a legal problem.
- Set up referral networks, which will ensure local people can find the right kind of help for their problem.

- 2.3 CLSPs bring together the funders and providers of local advice services. Partners work together to identify local needs and map local provision in order to plan how best to meet needs.

3. Report

- 3.1 The Runnymede and Spelthorne CLSP was launched in May 2002. Membership of the CLSP is at Appendix 'C'. The aim of the Runnymede and Spelthorne CLSP is to ensure that

advice, information and legal services are accessible and relevant to the needs of all sections of the community throughout the CLSP area.

- 3.2 Since the end of Legal Aid there has been a significant reduction in the number of solicitors who are willing to take on publicly funded work. In a report produced for the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux in February 2004, Surrey was identified as an 'advice desert'. Although there are over 210 solicitor firms in Surrey few undertake publicly funded work.
- 3.3 The CLSP has been considering the needs of the area and the current supply of services. There are no solicitors who are willing to provide publicly funded community care, immigration and welfare benefits representation in the Runnymede and Spelthorne CLSP area. However, the Legal Services Commission contract with the Surrey Law Centre does include legal advice in these subject areas. Although it should be noted that the Surrey Law Centre solicitors do not represent clients in court unless there are exceptional cases (e.g. a case that is setting a legal precedent).
- 3.4 The need has been identified by the CLSP for improved access to advice, information and legal services for:
- People with debt problems
  - Victims of domestic violence
  - People with learning disabilities

These proposals are included within the draft strategic plan, a summary of which is contained in the leaflet at Appendix 'D'. An action plan will be developed to improve access to these services after consultation on the draft strategic plan.

- 3.5 The Committee is asked to confirm acceptance of the plan and in particular the 3 priorities listed above (at 3.4). It is the view of the Officers that the priorities are a good starting point but that other client groups, e.g. people with mental health problems, should also be considered at some stage in the future. It is also felt that the section on current provision of services in the leaflet should be expanded to include the advice services provided by the Council e.g. Housing advice.

In addition to formulating the draft strategic plan a number of other steps have been taken to improve advice provision:-

- i) A referral handbook was produced in 2003 listing providers of legal information, advice and casework to improve referrals between agencies. The handbook will be updated annually.
- ii) The Legal Services Commission has introduced a quality mark to provide a quality assurance standard for all information, advice and legal services. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) have already obtained accreditation and Runnymede Borough Council Housing Advice Section are in the process of applying for the Quality Mark, which will improve the standard of service and assist achievement of a Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 177).
- iii) A Court Desk for housing repossession days has been provided at Staines County Court. The Court Desk is a two year pilot scheme and has been initiated by Runnymede, Spelthorne and Hounslow Housing Departments and CAB. The service is aimed at anyone defending possession proceedings (e.g. owner occupiers, RSL, Councils and private tenants). The aim is to prevent repossession wherever possible. During March 2004 the Court Desk assisted 10 people.
- iv) The Legal Services Commission will encourage solicitors that provide family law advice and with general civil contracts to consider expanding into community care, immigration and welfare benefits representation.

4. Council Policy

4.1 The Runnymede and Spelthorne CLSP meets the standards in the Leader's Position Statement by:

- Providing community leadership
- Working with other agencies to achieve community benefits while ensuring no dilution of accountability where there is clear responsibility
- Valuing, supporting, encouraging, and acknowledging the many organizations, groups and individuals who voluntarily provide a wide range of services of benefit to our community
- Improving the quality of life for residents.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

**the Committee approve the comments given at 3.5 as the response to the consultation on the draft strategic plan.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

Runnymede and Spelthorne CLSP 13 March 2002

7. ASHFORD AND ST PETER'S HOSPITALS NHS TRUST CONSULTATION ON THE RECONFIGURATION OF SERVICES (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **To inform the Committee on the outcome of the Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust's consultation.**

2. Background Information

2.1 The Committee considered the options for the reconfiguration of services at Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals on the 14 January 2004. Members agreed to support option 3b concentrating all emergency services at St. Peter's and the majority of day surgery and planned orthopaedic surgery at Ashford). The Council's response (see Appendix 'E') included the following concerns:

- The long term financial viability of option 3b.
- The need to make the best use of the St Peter's site.
- The provision of adequate public transport to the two hospitals.

3. Report

3.1 The public consultation has ended and North Surrey PCT gave a presentation to Members on the outcome of the consultation on 24 March 2004. A copy of the Summary of the Outcome of the Consultation is in the Members' Room.

3.2 The following responses were received from the public and stakeholders on whether they agreed with the overall vision for local health care:

<b>Responses</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Expresses No View</b>	<b>Total</b>
Public	23	103	73	199
Stakeholders	1	16	14	31

In addition, 39% of the public and 48.5% of stakeholders preferred option 3b. Although 6.5% of the public and 42% of the stakeholders gave no clear preference to any of the options.

3.3 The North Surrey Primary Care Trust Board at their meeting on the 15 March 2004 approved preferred option 3b subject to 22 recommendations being carried out, including:

- An Estates Strategy for the Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals sites will be produced.
- Protocols are produced for dealing with access to emergency services.
- Exploring whether children's day surgery could be safely maintained at Ashford for some specialities.
- Ensuring co-ordinated primary care services are developed for people West of Hounslow.
- Exploring the feasibility of a mid-wife led unit at Ashford Hospital.
- Ensuring outpatient appointments are made for the vast majority of patients at most locally accessible venues.
- Working with local partners to review the transport survey recommendations and to prioritise issues for early action.

A list of the full 22 recommendations is at Appendix 'F'. Implementation of option 3b is likely to be over a 2 year period.

**(FOR INFORMATION)**

Background Papers

Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Trusts Reconfiguration of Services 14 January 2004

8. NORTH SURREY HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2004 – 2006 (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **To seek Members' views on the North Surrey Health and Social Care Improvement Plan.**

2 Background Information

2.1 Over the past 5 years there have been significant changes in health and social care planning. Surrey County Council no longer have a duty to produce a Community Care Plan and the Health Improvement and Modernisation Plan has been superseded by the North Surrey Primary Care Trust Local Development Plan. The Local Government Act 2000 also gave local authorities additional powers, which include promoting the well being of the community.

2.2 The Primary Care Trust's Local Development Plan focused on national targets and it was felt that another plan was required that considered local social care and health issues. The new North Surrey Health and Social Care Improvement Plan has been created and brings together all these elements to provide a locally focused plan. A copy of the complete plan is in the Members Room.

3. Report

3.1 The plan is a multi-agency document covering Local Strategic Partnerships and local Community Safety Partnerships, housing, transport as well as health and social care issues. The plan has been developed by working with boroughs, voluntary organisations and other stakeholders ( eg Runnymede Forums for Older People, People with Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment, People with Learning Disability, Children with Disabilities and Carers).

3.2 The Health and Social Care Improvement Plan will inform the North Surrey Primary Care Trust partnership funding, and influence areas of service development in line with existing priorities. The Health Improvement Sub-Committee (which includes borough representation) will be responsible for developing an action plan and monitoring the performance of the Health and Social Care Improvement Plan.

3.3 The plan has now been published however Members' views are sought on what priority should be given to the elements within the action plan. The achievement of some of the proposals in the plan are dependent on resources and the capacity of partner organisations.

- 3.4 The priorities in the plan are not completely consistent with those of this Council. The main Health and Social Care Improvement Plan proposals which link with existing council policies and strategies, are at appendix 'G' . It is suggested that this Committee recommends that the following issues within the plan are prioritised by the Health Improvement Sub-Committee:
- To increase accommodation for vulnerable people e.g. schemes for people with mental health problems or learning disabilities.
  - To consider provision of more extra care housing.
  - To increase housing for those employed in core support services e.g. care assistants and occupational therapists.
  - To enable access to social and recreational facilities for disabled older people and increase awareness of services at day centres.

4. Council Policy

- 4.1 The Health and Social Care Improvement Plan meets the following Leader's Position Statement priorities:

- Providing community leadership.
- Working with other agencies to achieve community benefits while ensuring no dilution of accountability where there is clear responsibility.
- Valuing, supporting, encouraging, and acknowledging the many organisations, groups and individuals who voluntarily provide a wide range of services to benefit our community.

- 4.2 There are also links to the Housing, Homelessness, Community Safety, Runnymede Community strategies and the Borough Tasking and Co-ordinating Group Youth Project.

5. Resources

- 5.1 Several of the initiatives within the plan will require a commitment from other agencies. Where there are likely to be resource implications for the Council separate reports will be made to this Committee before commitments are made.

**THE COMMITTEE IS ASKED to -**

**consider the list of priorities set out in paragraph 3.4 and endorse them or makes amendments.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

None stated

9. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to:**

- Update Members on progress towards the Affordable Housing target.**
- Advise the Committee of the outcome of the bids made to the Housing Corporation.**
- Commit funds within the Housing Capital Programme.**

2. Background Information

2.1 The Council established a target to provide 750 new Affordable Housing units in 2001. The target was to be achieved over a five year period from 2001 – 2006.

3. Performance Against the Affordable Housing Target

3.1 Attached at Appendix 'H' is a report setting out the current position with regard to the Council's Affordable Housing schemes. To date the Council has provided 423 units against the 750 total. 52 units are currently under construction and a number of schemes are about to start on site. There are also additional possibilities to provide units for key worker accommodation under the new Key Worker Living Programme (see below).

3.2 Although the Council has made progress towards the target there is still a need to identify opportunities for a further 275 units. Officers are currently working on 17 different schemes, which have the potential to produce 342 units. However it should be noted that although some of the schemes are close to starting, others are at an early stage of development and are still subject to negotiations between parties.

4. Affordable Housing - Chertsey Bridge

4.1 Members will be aware of recent press coverage about the affordability of units at Chertsey Bridge. The Chertsey Bridge site will provide a total of 63 units (this includes provision of 9 units on the Radamec site).

4.2 The current tenure arrangements for the 54 units in the first two phases of the scheme are as follows:

Phase 1	
Shared Ownership	12 units
Intermediate Rent	9 units
Phase 2	
General Needs Housing	33 units
<b>Total</b>	<b>54 units</b>

4.3 The first phase of the scheme was funded through the Government's Capital Challenge scheme and was aimed at Key Workers. The second phase has been funded from the Housing Corporation's Annual Development Programme and will be for people on the Council's Housing Register.

4.4 For many years the approach to the Housing Programme has been to produce a range of options including shared ownership, Homebuy and rented units. This helps to ensure that households in housing need who have higher incomes have a housing option that fits their circumstances and it reduces the demand on rented accommodation.

4.5 In the past the Home Ownership element of the programme has been delivered by purchasing existing properties using Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG). There were two schemes used, the Do It Yourself Shared Ownership Scheme (DIYSO) and Homebuy. However with the withdrawal of LASHG it is no longer possible to have a significant DIYSO or Homebuy programme.

4.6 Elements of shared ownership have therefore been included in the Council's new build programme. However shared ownership only accounts for 16% of those units that are either completed, are now being built on site, or are about to be built (e.g. Barrsbrook, Fox Lane, Pooley Green Road, Cerotus Place, Chertsey Bridge).

4.7 It is important that the shared ownership units that are provided are affordable to people in housing need. Clearly applicants would be unable to pay the full market or a slightly discounted value. The units are therefore offered on shares as low as 40%. The remaining share of the equity is held by the RSL who levies a rent. Officers have ensured that the rental elements are also as low as possible to achieve affordability. On the Chertsey Bridge units the total cost per month of the 12 shared ownership units was an average of £784 per month. This includes mortgage payments, rent and service charges. There are currently 12

key workers being considered for the units and they have an average household income of £30,000.

- 4.8 It is fully acknowledged that not everyone in housing need is able to meet the cost of shared ownership. For this reason Officers will continue to try and secure rented accommodation on the majority of sites. However, this is more difficult to achieve without grant.

5. Results of the Bids Made to the Housing Corporation

- 5.1 The last meeting of this Committee considered an item regarding the new arrangements for the Housing Capital Programme, and in particular the future funding arrangement by the Government for Affordable Housing. The report drew to Members' attention the fact that the main source of funding (following the abolition of LASHG) would be through the new Regional Housing Pot, administered by the Regional Housing Board. The report confirmed that a significant proportion of the funds held by the Board were to be transferred to the Housing Corporation for allocation to Registered Social Landlords.

- 5.2 The South East region received £724 million for the period 2004 – 2006. In the autumn of 2003 the Housing Corporation invited Registered Social Landlords to bid to them for new housing schemes that would be delivered over the two year period. In March 2004 the Housing Corporation announced the outcome of the bidding round and the following schemes within Runnymede have been successful in attracting funding:

Scheme	Grant
1 – 7 Barker Road, Chertsey	£637,550
Barrsbrook Farm, Chertsey	£1,116,712
Fox Lane, Chertsey	£349,992
Second Phase of Chertsey Bridge	£1,650,000
Pooley Green Road, Egham	£562,321
Vicarage Road, Egham	£248,857

For more detail on schemes see appendix 'H'

- 5.3 There was also an amount of £205,625 awarded to Hanover Housing Association for their existing scheme at Hanover Court. The total amount awarded for schemes within Runnymede was therefore £4,931,862.
- 5.4 As there have already been a number of schemes for key workers within Runnymede the bids made concentrated on provision for general needs. Bids were also predominantly for rented schemes.
- 5.5 Attached at Appendix 'I' is a table that sets out the grant allocations by Local Authorities within Surrey. Runnymede's allocation is low in comparison to other Boroughs, however it must be remembered that Runnymede had one of the highest awards in Surrey under the Transitional Local Authority Social Housing Grant provisions.
- 5.6 There will not now be a further bidding round for another year or more. However the Housing Corporation have confirmed that there may be opportunities to bid for slippage funds during the intervening period. Officers will pursue this possibility for any new schemes.

6. Key Worker Schemes

- 6.1 A proportion (17%) of the annual development programme within Surrey has been allocated specifically to key worker schemes. This step was taken following a specific direction by the Government to apply funding towards key worker housing provision.
- 6.2 The key workers to benefit from the new provision will be
- nurses and other NHS clinical staff
  - teachers in schools, further education and sixth form colleges
  - police officers
  - prison service and probation service staff
  - social workers

- in London, local authority planners.
- 6.3 In addition to the funding that has been made available under the Annual Development Programme for Key Workers an amount of £690 million nationwide has been made available by the Government for a Key Worker Living Programme. The Key Worker Living Programme will replace the Starter Home Initiative.
- 6.4 Within Surrey the Starter Home Initiative has been very successful and 714 units have been provided across the County. Within Runnymede 91 key workers who currently work within the Borough have found homes with the help of the scheme. Under the new scheme an amount of £26 million has been made available for Surrey key workers.
- 6.5 The Starter Home Initiative was operated for the County by Thames Valley Housing Association. Thames Valley Housing Association bid to the Housing Corporation to administer the new Key Worker Living Programme. They were successful and will be supervising the delivery of the £26 million programme for Surrey.
- 6.6 The Government have also established Zone Agents for key worker housing. These have been appointed to market and administer all the key worker housing programmes across an area. The intention is that they will provide a one stop shop for applicants. Thames Valley Housing Association have been designated as the Zone Agent for the Surrey area.
7. Amendments to the Capital Programme
- 7.1 The Council has local funding of £2,855,525 within the Housing Capital Programme to spend on new Affordable Housing provision during the year. An amount of £500,000 has already been earmarked for the continuation of a small Do It Yourself Shared Ownership programme. An amount of £2,355,525 remains uncommitted.
- 7.2 It is proposed that, in the event that Housing Corporation funding is not available, part of the remaining funds be used to meet the cost of the additional 9 units in the final phase at Chertsey Bridge Wharf. The tenure and grant requirement for these units has not yet been determined and the RSL has not yet agreed terms with the developer. Officers will endeavour to minimise the grant requirement from the Council, however in the event that grant is required it is proposed that the Director of Housing and Community Services, in consultation with the Chairman, be given authority to approve the level of grant. The grant levels for previous schemes are to be used as a benchmark.
8. Council Policy
- 8.1 The provision of additional Affordable Housing is one of the three main priorities identified within the Housing Strategy Statement.
- 8.2 The Leader's Position Statement says that " we will find cost effective ways with strategic partners to meet our Affordable Housing target of 750 homes over five years."

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

**in the event that grant is required from the Council, the Director of Housing and Community Services, in consultation with the Chairman, be given authority to approve the level of grant for the third phase of Chertsey Bridge**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

None stated.

10. SOUTH EAST REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD GREEN PAPER (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to obtain the Committee's views on the recently published South East Regional Housing Board Green Paper.**

2. Background Information

2.1 In March 2004, a report was presented to this Committee outlining the new arrangements for allocating housing resources through the Regional Housing Board. In order to ensure that resources are appropriately used the Regional Housing Board are charged with the responsibility of publishing a Regional Housing Strategy. The first Regional Housing Strategy was published in July 2003 and set out the priorities for the following two years. However, this was very much an interim Strategy and it signalled the need to produce a more comprehensive Housing Strategy for the years to come.

2.2 The Regional Housing Board have now published a Green Paper which sets out the key issues to be addressed within the Region. The purpose of the Paper is to promote debate about the many housing issues across the Region and to identify the priorities for the new Regional Housing Strategy. The final strategy will be an important document that will determine the level of resources to be allocated to Authorities in the South East.

2.3 The Regional Housing Board have confirmed that there will be an extensive consultation process on the Strategy before it is finally completed in the spring of 2005. A response is requested to the current Green Paper by the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2004, following which a Draft Regional Housing Strategy will be compiled. There will be further consultation on the Draft Strategy in the autumn.

2.4 Attached at Appendix 'J' is a copy of the Executive Summary of the South East Regional Housing Board's Green Paper. A copy of the full document has been placed in the Members' Room and is available on the Government Office of the South East website at [www.go-se.gov.uk](http://www.go-se.gov.uk).

2.5 The Green Paper states that the vision for the South East is to ensure a better match between housing supply and demand. The document states that "this means increasing supply in the growth areas, but also elsewhere where homes are needed to support economic growth and sustainability and tackling affordability, so that more people can access housing and afford to live near to where they work."

2.6 The interim Strategy produced in July 2003 identified the following as key strategic objectives:

- i) Increasing the overall housing supply to meet supply targets, including the supply of affordable housing.
- ii) Improving the affordability of housing in the region through – for sale, rent or shared ownership.
- iii) Tackling areas requiring regeneration and renewal.
- iv) Tackling homelessness and the need for supported housing.
- v) Improving the quality and sustainability of the housing stock, both new and old.

The Regional Housing Board believes that the above strategic priorities are still relevant, but will obviously review these as part of the development of the new Strategy.

3. Report

3.1 The Green Paper has been divided into the following sections:

- i) Affordability.
- ii) Key Workers.

- iii) Sub Regions, Housing Markets and Growth Areas.
- iv) Housing Supply.
- v) Rural Housing.
- vi) Decent Homes.
- vii) Private Sector Renewal.
- viii) Homelessness.
- ix) Supported Housing.
- x) Neighbourhood Management.
- xi) Crime.
- xii) Equality and Diversity.
- xiii) Quality Design and Sustainable Construction.
- xiv) Sustainable Construction and the Environment.
- xv) Skills and Training.
- xvi) Investment Priorities.
- xvii) Supporting Innovation and Good Practice.

3.2 In each section a number of questions have been raised. Officers have identified those questions that are most relevant to Runnymede and have suggested responses (in italics) below. The question numbers used are those used in the original document.

### 3.2.1 Affordability

Q1. Is it appropriate for future strategies to seek to concentrate a significant proportion of funds for new affordable provision within the 3 regional growth areas, and other strategic sites, or should the funding be more closely targeted to areas of greatest need?

A. *Investment in the growth areas must not be at the expense of investment in other parts of the South East. The impact of provision within the growth areas must be properly assessed to ensure that it is linked to clearly defined need and the housing to be provided will assist with shortages elsewhere within the South East.*

*Provision of affordable housing needs to continue within other parts of the South East in order that those areas remain economically sustainable, have balanced communities and that housing pressures caused by the growth in population are addressed. People in housing need will require housing in their existing areas e.g. workers who need to stay within the area and vulnerable people who need to remain in an area to receive support. Providing new housing in the growth areas will not assist these groups.*

Q2. Should the definition of affordable housing be limited to subsidised social rented and shared ownership accommodation, or should it also include low cost market accommodation for rent or purchase?

A. *The definition of affordable housing will change according to the value of land and property within an area. If there are parts of the South East where low cost market accommodation is affordable to people in housing need then this type of housing should be accepted within that area as affordable housing. However in high cost areas like Runnymede low cost market accommodation is not affordable to people in housing need, including key workers. Shared ownership solutions can assist some households but the numbers of people who can access these options are limited. If there continue to be differences between the types of housing that meet need within different areas of the region then it is felt that a definition should continue to be adopted locally.*

Q3. What contribution can S106 agreements and tighter planning policies make to increase the subsidy available for affordable housing? How should that contribution be allocated between tenures? How can we ensure that increased pressure for subsidy for affordable housing does not choke off development?

A. *Section 106 agreements will for the time being be the principal mechanism for providing affordable housing in the future. However affordable housing can only be provided, without grant, through this route in very limited circumstances. Whilst this is somewhat easier with Greenfield sites previously developed lands (Brownfield sites) will have existing use value and may simply not come forward if the social obligations are too onerous. As Brownfield sites have played and are planned to play such a significant part of supply care must be taken.*

*In many parts of the South East rented accommodation remains the only type of accommodation that will assist large numbers of people in housing need. Recent research undertaken for Surrey by Knight Frank has shown that grant free rented accommodation cannot be provided without significantly impacting on the gross development value of a site. If local authorities do not have grant for schemes then developers will press for the forms of housing that produce higher values. This has the potential to lead to the overprovision of accommodation that does not meet need. Therefore, if affordable rented housing is to be provided, grant needs to be made available to facilitate this.*

*As indicated above, what classifies as affordable housing will differ across the Region. If there are parts of the South East where homeownership options will meet significant levels of need and these options can be delivered without grant then this should be pursued. However assessing the impact of the loss of grant on development opportunities is complex. There is limited expertise in this field and it is recommended that the Regional Housing Board should organise training and support on this topic.*

*The proportion of different tenures on any particular site should be determined locally. On very small sites it may be possible to provide a single tenure as a mix. This can be achieved from the different forms of tenure in the surrounding area. On larger sites the tenure base should be determined having regard to local need and demand and sustainability issues. To achieve this, the Government should introduce legislation to enable Local Authorities to stipulate tenure as part of Section 106 agreements.*

*To ensure that development continues at a good rate it is necessary for developers to be given a clear idea of the type of provision to be made as affordable housing and the funding of that provision. Developers do not wish to wait for annual or biannual bidding rounds and they need to have a decision about grant levels at the time that land is purchased. There is an urgent need for certainty to be given to both Local Authorities and developers about the level of funding that will be available for schemes. One of the strengths of the LASHG system was that developers could be given a very quick response to requests for funding for affordable elements within a Section 106 site. This is no longer possible and is already slowing down, and even preventing, development opportunities.*

- Q4. Will a substantial increase in overall housing provision in the region, through the South East Plan, bring about a step change in affordability, i.e. more housing to meet demand with less inflationary impacts on prices and affordability?
- A. *In the short-term it would be unwise to rely on an increase in overall housing provision to deliver a step change in affordability. The operation of the market generally, interest rates, sentiment, affordability ratios, earnings growth and employment levels are macro-economic issues which the Region has little capability to seriously influence. If increased housing provision is to be relied upon to meet affordable housing demand then this needs to be based on robust evidence. In the medium to long-term it is not unreasonable to expect extra supply to satisfy excess demand and it may not always be the case that South East England has a housing shortage. However it is sensible to avoid simplistic solutions to complex problems.*
- Q5. What should the balance be between investment in home ownership options and affordable rented homes?
- A. *The affordability of home ownership options is different from area to area. In high price areas such as Runnymede new build shared ownership units are only affordable to a relatively small proportion of people in housing need, albeit they are useful.*

*It should also be remembered that home ownership options are not available in perpetuity and as they staircase to full ownership they need to be replaced. This is a real concern in areas where there is a limited land supply for affordable housing.*

*It should also be acknowledged that new build home ownership is more expensive than Homebuy/DIYSO schemes and that significant funds are already being allocated to home ownership through the Key Worker Living Programme.*

*It is felt that in high price areas the investment in home ownership options on new build should be marginal and that affordable rented homes, for a range of people in housing need, ought to dominate the programme.*

### 3.2.2 Key Workers

Q1. How should scarce public resources be divided between key workers and other groups in housing need?

A. *Resources for new housing should be allocated according to housing need and performance within an area and the division of units between key workers and others should be locally determined following priorities identified by the Local Strategic Partnership. Existing systems are already in place to do this. Each Local Authority is required by statute to operate a Housing Register, which, since 2002, has had to be open to anybody wanting to register for housing in that area. The Local Authority is required as part of its procedure for drawing up its Allocation Policy to give thought to the needs of the area and can give priority to key workers for housing, if appropriate.*

*It is acknowledged that there is a need to address housing provision for key workers however making separate provision is divisive and there is now a real danger of over provision for some at the expense of others in housing need. Key worker schemes can also lead to a distortion in local housing markets where additional funds "chase up" the price of certain types or price ranges of housing.*

*There remains limited specific data on categories of key workers, their needs, affordability and the attractiveness, status or difficulties associated with particular jobs. More detailed analysis needs to be done, if the examples, already evident, of key worker units remaining unoccupied doesn't become more significant.*

Q2. Who should lead on defining broader and more local definitions of key workers, e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships, Regional Housing Board following more detailed research, local Economic Partnerships, other?

A. *The Local Strategic Partnership should be involved in determining who in the area is a key worker. A Regionally based definition is flawed as there may well be a need to prioritise particular types of workers in certain areas within the South East that are not common in all parts of the region. An example of this might be the current demand for residential care staff, planning and housing staff and Occupational Therapists within parts of Surrey.*

*If the Government is to persist with a national definition of key worker provision then it is essential that the extent of the demand from each of the current key worker categories is fully evaluated. The current grant allocations for key workers are not supported by rigorous assessments of the need for people to be housed. A clear evaluation of the volumes of people in need is also required. It is noted from the Green Paper that further research is to be undertaken on this issue and we would urge that this is completed as soon as possible.*

Q3. What responsibility do employers have to assist in tackling problems of recruitment and retention?

A. *There is a distinction between the abilities of public sector employers, large private sector employers and the small/medium business sector to deliver housing solutions. Public sector employers have the following roles to play in relation to key worker issues:*

1. *Undertaking an in depth assessment of recruitment and retention issues and being clear about the extent to which housing is a factor.*
2. *Assisting with the calculation of levels of housing need.*
3. *Ensuring that land in the ownership of the employer is made available for affordable housing provision. The requirement for non-housing authorities (i.e. Health, Police and County Councils) to sell land at market value works against their ability to use land holdings for affordable housing schemes.*

*It is not reasonable to expect the small/medium business sector to play a significant role in housing their workforce. Such businesses simply do not have the capacity to do so.*

### 3.2.3 Sub-regions, Housing Markets & Growth Areas

- Q1. How quickly should we move towards defining sub-regions?
- Q2. What should sub-regions be based on?
- Q3. Is it feasible to operate a multi-faceted approach, without the entire region being divided into sub-regions, at least at the outset?
- A. *It is not felt that the creation of sub-regions is necessary to achieve a step change in the provision of affordable housing. Local Authorities already work very closely with neighbouring Boroughs to achieve affordable housing provision and there are already very good examples of joint schemes between authorities. Deploying resources to the creation of sub-regions could in fact slow down the process of improving affordable housing provision rather than improving it. Of more relevance to the provision of real schemes is a much more flexible Housing Corporation funding system that reacts quickly to "windfall" or unexpected schemes at a local level.*

*If sub regions are to be established then, for affordable housing purposes, the existing Counties should be the basis of the sub-regions. This would enable coordination of the supported housing needs identified by the County Supporting People Strategy.*

*For wider housing issues, and the supply of housing generally, the areas identified within the South East Plan might be appropriate as sub regions.*

- Q4. What responsibilities should be delegated to sub-regions?
- A. *If sub-regions are to be created they should be responsible for:*
- *Strategic Planning*
  - *Assessing the extent of housing need, including supported housing requirements for the area.*
  - *Prioritising provision.*
  - *Disseminating good practice, sharing experiences, encouraging cross boundary provision.*

### 3.2.4 Housing Supply

- Q1. Will the housing sector (defined in a broad sense) be able to deliver more housing in the South East? If not, what more needs to be done to ensure that planned provision translates into homes?
- A. *Sustainable development is more difficult to deliver than green field development. Redeveloping brownfield sites with problems of site acquisition, decontamination and infrastructure provision makes it more costly and there is invariably a longer timeframe to deliver. Equally this has knock on effects for affordable housing. If a developer has to spend a lot of money preparing a site, there will be 'less of the cake' for other planning gain.*

*Surrey is heavily constrained in terms of Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and flood plain, which put huge pressure on urban areas. Whilst increased densities have started to make a difference, they have also led to a public and political backlash as being unacceptable town cramming.*

*There is a shortage in the number of people in core occupations required to deliver a step change in provision. Planning and housing staff are not defined as key workers but, due to high property prices in the South East, they are also difficult to recruit and retain. They should be included in the key worker definition, along with other employees who provide important services to the Community.*

*Skills and general labour shortages within the construction industry are also likely to be a major constraint in seeking to increase volumes.*

*The major house builders have many years of consented land supply. Shortening the period for which planning permission remains valid should lessen the land banking that is currently exacerbating supply and keeping prices exceptionally high.*

### 3.2.5 Rural Housing

Q1. What is the region's assessment of rural housing need?

A. *The Council is not in a position to assess or comment upon the rural housing requirements of the region. However the Regional Housing Board is asked to ensure that the level of investment within rural areas is appropriate, and that it has regard to the relative extent of problems and demands within both rural and urban settings.*

### 3.2.6 Decent Homes

Q1. How should funding be targeted (a) for social stock (b) for private stock? And how will this rank alongside new provision?

A. (a) *Social Stock*

*It is impossible to answer this question without knowing the level of funding that might be required. However, if the level of funding needed is significant then this should be addressed separately and not at the expense of new housing provision.*

(b) *Private Sector Stock*

*The achievement of the Decent Homes Standard for all properties in the private sector is an admirable aim but one that is difficult and expensive to achieve. In high value areas like Runnymede there is sufficient equity in most homes to enable the financing of works to meet the decent homes standard. However, this relies on the desire of the homeowner or landlord to carry out the work and to take on the funding responsibility. Experience has been that homeowners/landlords are not keen to use the equity in their homes for this purpose.*

*To address all non-decent private housing in an area would require a very significant increase in housing professional staff, to enable schemes to be established and to convince homeowners to act. Most housing authorities already have considerable demands on their resources and cannot accommodate a significant level of additional work. There are also very real difficulties with the recruitment and retention of staff with private sector housing experience. It is therefore felt appropriate to only tackle the worst areas of private sector housing, or specific problems e.g. dealing with areas that have a high concentration of HMO's/shared homes.*

Q3. What more could be done to tackle the problem/lever in more money?

A. *In areas where property values are high the property's equity should be the first resource that is considered for use to enable improvements.*

Q4. How feasible is a loan scheme and what are the benefits of a sub-regional approach?

A. *The Council has developed its own loan scheme for private sector housing but would support the development of a sub-regional scheme in which resources could be pooled and expertise built up. It is important that the scheme is seen as fair, secure and easily understood if significant numbers of homeowners are to be encouraged to take it up.*

Q5. For social housing what responsibility should the Board have to ensure funding is available (e.g. gap funding for negative stock transfers)?

- A. *The Council does not support the funding of negative stock transfers, as this could be at the expense of other more pressing issues e.g. provision of affordable housing.*

### 3.2.7 Private Sector Renewal

- Q1. How important is it for the Board to set aside ring fenced funding for private sector renewal set against other priorities such as increasing the supply of affordable homes?

- A. *At the current time it is felt that the need to fund more affordable housing is greater than the need to fund private sector renewal. However it is recognised that ensuring the worst private sector housing is tackled can reduce housing need. It is therefore felt that ring fencing of funds for the private sector should occur but only in a very limited number of areas.*

- Q3. What more could be done to tackle the problem/lever in more money?

- A. *There should be research to examine new mechanisms that help release equity in homes to fund repairs.*

*The concern about rogue builders, high costs and poor workmanship is often a major factor in discouraging owners to undertake repairs/refurbishment. A push for further accreditation schemes could help.*

- Q4. How can private landlords be encouraged to maintain and improve their properties?

- A. *There should be a mechanism whereby expertise and knowledge on tackling poor housing conditions in the private sector can be shared. Perhaps consideration should be given to regional training events on specific issues.*

### 3.2.8 Homelessness

- Q1. Irrespective of a Local Authority's performance on tackling homelessness should the Board increase its investment to ensure greater funding is provided to Authorities with the highest homelessness problems?

- A. *No. This would be a perverse incentive and would reward poor performance. If Councils were given funding, irrespective of their track record on tackling homelessness, then there would be no incentive for them to take measures that are aimed at reducing and preventing homelessness.*

*In Runnymede local resources have been committed over many years to keeping homelessness under control. By providing good quality housing advice and utilising opportunities in the private sector we have been able to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast and delay homelessness. However the households that have taken up short-term tenancies in the private sector still wait on the Housing Register for their opportunity to be housed permanently. It would be inequitable if funding for new housing provision were to only be given to Local Authorities that can demonstrate high numbers of homeless referrals without having regard to local measures that are being taken to prevent homeless applications.*

- Q2. What can be done to improve the prevention of homelessness so that the call on funds is reduced?

- A. *A great deal of work has been done by different Authorities within the Region to prevent homelessness. A number of initiatives have been piloted using the Government's homelessness funds. Events should be organised across the Region to share the experience of Authorities and promote good practice on tackling homelessness.*

*Since the changes that have been made for legal aid there has been a reduction in the number of solicitors willing to take on housing cases. More needs to be done to increase the availability of legal advice and representation.*

- Q3. How should homeless households be integrated into new or existing developments to create and maintain sustainable communities?

- A. *It is not felt that there should be separate provision for homeless families within affordable housing supply. Homeless applicants should have access to new or existing developments and allocation policies should be designed so that they recognise the need to prioritise homeless families, whilst ensuring sustainable communities.*

*The key to integrating vulnerable homeless families into new or existing housing is the provision of support. Funds for floating support schemes need to be made available so that vulnerable people going into new developments can receive the help that they need.*

- Q4. How can standards of temporary accommodation be improved while targets are met?

- A. *The current Best Value Performance Indicator targets are a disincentive to making improvements as if a unit of temporary accommodation is taken out of use to make improvements the authority runs the risk of falling foul of the performance indicators and the new requirements relating to use of bed and breakfast.*

*If significant numbers of units are being upgraded, a Local Authority should be able to negotiate directly with ODPM for dispensation e.g. a plan of improvements could be agreed during which time the Authority would be given a BVPI target holiday. Alternatively a revised definition exempting such dwellings should be proposed. This might encourage Local Authorities to improve temporary accommodation standards.*

### 3.2.9 Supported Housing

- Q1. How should the housing of vulnerable people be administered?

- A. *The separation of capital and revenue funding streams for supported housing is seriously affecting the delivery of much needed supported housing in the area.*

*New revenue funding for supported housing should come through the same route as capital funding i.e. through the Housing Corporation. There should be a Regional supporting people allocation for new supported housing schemes and the Supporting People Strategy should be used to determine how these funds are allocated between different need groups. Contact should be made with each Supporting People Team prior to allocation to ensure that needs remain current and allocations are appropriate. The monitoring of existing schemes would continue through the Supporting People Teams.*

- Q2. How should it (Supported Housing) be funded within the South East to maintain stability and sustainability?

- A. *Supported housing is equally, if not more, important than key worker housing in ensuring sustainable communities. For vulnerable people, tackling housing issues is significantly more difficult in high cost areas such as Surrey and the South East. Because of the lack of supported housing many vulnerable people are inappropriately housed in the community, leading to difficulties for other services. Providing additional supported housing can reduce the burden on health, social and police services and ensure sustainable tenancies and balanced communities. However the current uncertainty about the future level of funding for new schemes has stifled any new provision.*

*As indicated above revenue resources need to be set aside for new supported housing and there needs to be a clear mechanism for applying for funding. These mechanisms need to be sufficiently flexible to allow for sudden opportunities to be pursued. As indicated elsewhere in this response, in future, a significant proportion of new housing will come through the planning system. If any of this housing is to be supported housing mechanisms are needed that can commit revenue resources very quickly.*

- Q3. How can there be a recognition of the pressures that are being placed on Health, Social Care and Housing?

- A. *There are now a range of Strategies and Plans designed to identify Health, Social Care Quality of Life and Housing issues. These need to be brought together for each district or sub-region and evaluated and common issues highlighted.*

### 3.2.10 Neighbourhood Management

Q1. How is the objective of mixed tenure/socio-economic balance to be met in the South East?

A. *The Board should consider ring fencing some funding to assist Authorities to pilot/introduce local lettings policies or choice-based lettings.*

*As indicated above (homelessness question 3) floating support needs to be made available to vulnerable tenants moving into estates. This is particularly important if provision on smaller Section 106 sites is to be successful.*

Q2. Do the outcomes of choice based lettings justify use across the region?

A. *The introduction of choice based lettings should remain optional.*

Q3. Should Housing Associations play a greater role in community development and if so, how is this to be achieved?

A. *Housing Associations and the voluntary sector should contribute to the Community Strategy & LSP and delivery of the targets within it. Runnymede has taken this approach and RSL's and voluntary organisations are represented on Community Strategy Task groups that have been established to take forward the Strategy.*

### 3.2.11 Crime

Q1. How are community safety agencies working together and sharing information?

A. *Explicit S17 (Crime & Disorder Act 1988) reference and policy links should be made with Green Paper and resultant strategy. In Runnymede local agencies meet fortnightly to discuss problem locations and 10 times a year to discuss problem individuals.*

Q2. What is the involvement of communities in this process and how are they being re-assured about the action being taken?

A. *In Runnymede representatives of the community are members of a 'Safe and Secure' task group which reports to the local strategic partnership on the actions being taken.*

Q3. How is good community safety practice being mainstreamed into the work of housing providers and other community safety agencies?

A. *At Runnymede a Community Safety Officer is working with stakeholders to ensure the latest best practice available is incorporated into the work of departments and other agencies e.g. RSL's.*

### 3.2.12 Equality and Diversity

Q1. How do we ensure fair access to affordable housing for disadvantaged people?

A. *Sub-regions/Counties could develop and co-ordinate translation and advice services. The sub-regions/Counties could also be responsible for collection of data and the sharing of good practice.*

Q2. How should housing providers provide responsive services to BME people in areas with relatively small BME populations?

A. *Further research is needed in this area to develop mechanisms.*

Q3. In terms of Equality and Diversity what two or three groups should the Regional Housing Strategy give priority attention to?

A. *It is impossible to limit the priority to two or three groups. There is a level of need for a whole range of vulnerable people including people fleeing domestic violence, people with learning*

*difficulties, people with mental health problems, frail older people, homeless young people, people with substance misuse problems and vulnerable offenders.*

Q4. What housing related services should be provided for asylum seekers and travellers, and by whom?

A. *There is a need to consider provision for travellers. The current provision is uneven with some Boroughs having one or more sites and others making no provision at all. There is a need to examine the supply and demand for both transient and permanent sites across the region and to facilitate additional provision for this group.*

*Traveller liaison advice and advocacy services covering the Region would also be a good idea.*

Q5. What are the community cohesion issues in the South East to which the Regional Housing Strategy can make a positive contribution, and how?

A. *The provision of affordable housing is a key feature within Runnymede's Community Strategy. More affordable housing is required in the Borough to meet the growing number of households. The community, through a comprehensive consultation mechanism, has highlighted a particular need to provide accommodation for a wide range of key workers, vulnerable people and the homeless. Meeting this need is felt to be essential to the success of the Borough.*

*The Local Development Framework, and the local Housing Strategy, will be used as vehicles to ensure the delivery of the housing elements of the Community Strategy. However the Regional Housing Strategy also has an important role to play and can assist in achieving community cohesion within Runnymede by making available funds (both capital and revenue) and information (advice and examples of good practice) to ensure the delivery of additional affordable housing.*

### 3.2.13 Quality Design & Sustainable Construction

Q1. What more can be done to promote high quality design and sustainability so that people in the region recognise and demand high standards in both traditionally and non-traditionally built homes?

A. *Government pressure on Planning Authorities to produce speedy planning decisions works against negotiation to achieve better design or sustainability. This produces little incentive in the industry to improve the product, and the buying public are simply driven by cost. They may like better design or more sustainable homes, but not if they cost more. More needs to be done across the Region to promote examples of low cost/high standard accommodation that have been achieved.*

Q2. What would be the best mechanism to encourage planners, designers, architects, developers and others to explore how they can best work together at an early stage in the development process?

A. *This is already done to some extent but is constrained by the lack of staff in Planning Authorities and the continued failure of Governments to provide a fee and charging structure that reflects the full cost of the planning service.*

Q3. What contribution do you think modern methods of construction can make to the provision of housing (for sale and subsidised) in your locality?

A. *It is clear that new buildings constructed using modern methods can be provided far quicker than traditional housing. Modern methods of construction also provide opportunities for improvements to thermal values, thereby reducing energy consumption. However the lack of finishing trades is reducing the potential benefits.*

*In the past the emphasis on low cost or "modern" design has led to many of the housing problems (especially non-decent homes) that we see today. These range from inappropriate medium/high rise dwellings to appalling system built housing. Runnymede is currently having to replace unsatisfactory Pre-cast Reinforced Concrete buildings provided some*

*years ago. We must not be led by speed and cost and must learn from the mistakes of the past and build housing that is known to last.*

### 3.2.14 Sustainable Construction and the Environment

- Q1. Is eco-homes "v good" achievable now, if not when could it be achieved?
- Q2. Who are the key decision makers, what role can they play?
- Q3. How do we raise awareness with consumers?
- Q4. How can we galvanise the market?
- Q5. What would help overcome any objections?
- A. *Cost plays an important part. If developers can deliver a more sustainable product at no extra cost, then buyers will not be put off. Government already subsidises a whole range of energy management measures, can it also put in place some kind of tax incentive e.g. zero VAT on sustainable building materials/construction techniques?*

### 3.2.15 Investment Priorities

- Q1. Do you agree that the top priority is to tackle housing supply and affordability?
- A. *Yes. The Community Strategy has identified this as the key issue for housing within the Runnymede area. Reaching the right level of housing supply, and particularly affordable housing supply, is important to the economy and prosperity of the area in general.*
- Q2. How should funding be balanced between new affordable housing provision (currently through RSL's) and decent homes (funded through local authorities): in the short term (4/5 years) and longer term (5 years onwards)?
- A. *Whilst there continue to be significant levels of homelessness, high numbers of people in housing need and problems with the recruitment and retention of staff, the provision of new affordable housing must take priority over reaching new standards within existing provision. It should be noted that many local housing authorities in the South East have sufficient provision within their Housing Revenue Account or local housing capital receipts to meet the decent home standard in any case. The requirement for Local Authorities with stock to undertake Stock Options Appraisals should also address this issue without the need for Regional funding.*
- Q3. Should funding be directed to strategic sites where a higher number and range of new homes can be achieved?
- A. *No. (See answer to Affordability question 1). This would mean that problems outside the strategic areas would escalate and the opportunity for many local schemes to be financed would be lost.*
- Q4. On what basis should funds be allocated to Local Authorities (i.e. needs and/or performance)? Should it be a competitive process?
- A. *Funds must be directed on the basis of both need and deliverability. It would clearly be inappropriate to provide a high performing Authority with funding if they had no housing need. Conversely providing funding to those who performed badly, particularly when managing homelessness or delivering new housing would also be inappropriate.*

*When considering the level of need in each area the Board should not rely on bare statistics but should also consider whether or not the Local Authority is taking steps to manage the need in their area. There is a risk of need being misstated in order to secure additional resources. Runnymede has for many years tried to ensure that limited resources are properly targeted at those in need. An example of this is our use of local resources to continue the Do It Yourself Shared Ownership programme so that those with higher incomes do not place additional pressure on our limited rented vacancies. The Council is also taking steps to improve the supply of good quality private rented accommodation by working with private sector landlords to improve housing conditions. We have also worked with property*

owners to bring back into use several empty homes as affordable housing. All of these measures are designed to manage the current shortage of affordable housing and it would be inequitable if Runnymede's reward was to be reduced funding for new affordable housing.

The Council would also caution against the use of data from Housing Needs studies as a basis for allocating funds. There are clear differences in the way in which such surveys are conducted and the recent SERA publication, *Associating Housing Needs in the South East*, has highlighted a number of inconsistencies. The Council is in the process of reviewing its own housing needs information to take account of the SERA guidance. Others should be encouraged to do so and, only once the new surveys have been conducted according to the new requirements, should the information be used as a basis for allocating resources.

- Q5. Should some funding be allocated to the Local Authorities in the region to enable direct local provision in response to locally identified needs?
- A. Yes. The grant should be paid to Local Authorities in cash (rather than supported capital expenditure or borrowing approvals) so that they can administer it in the same way that Local Authority Social Housing Grant was dealt with. This will help address the problem of lack of timeliness in the current arrangement in terms of funding new Section 106 or windfall development for social housing purposes. The Local Authority Social Housing Grant system provided flexibility. The replacement system does not cater for this and there is a real need to ensure that there are local funds that can be applied when opportunities arise.

*If the above arrangement is not possible then each area should have a grant allocation, which the Housing Corporation should administer. However under this arrangement it would be very important indeed that local authorities decide where, and on what type of schemes, the funds are spent. During the last bid round Local Authorities were given a very short period in which to comment on the relative priority of bids made by RSLs for their area. In some cases the target group for the schemes was also agreed between the RSL and the Housing Corporation without any local authority involvement. This is not acceptable and it must be remembered that the local authority remain responsible for addressing the housing needs of their area and must therefore be involved throughout the allocation process.*

- 3.3 Members are invited to suggest additions to the above comments at the meeting.
- 3.4 Members are asked to note that this decision is identified as one where delay in implementation will prejudice the interests of the Council, namely the deadline for comments is 11 June 2004.

4. Council Policy

- 4.1 The Leader's Position Statement says that " we will find cost effective ways with strategic partners to meet our Affordable Housing target of 750 homes over five years."
- 4.2 The provision of additional Affordable Housing is one of the three main priorities identified within the Housing Strategy Statement and is a key element of the Community Strategy.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct resource implications at this stage.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

**the above mentioned comments on the South East Regional Housing Board Green Paper together with any other comments Members may wish to make thereon be submitted to the South East Regional Housing Board.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

None stated

11. HOMELESSNESS & TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of :

- a) **New legislation regarding the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for homeless families.**
- b) **Progress in improving the quality of temporary accommodation.**
- c) **The introduction of additional Best Value Performance Indicators for homelessness.**
- d) **Recent changes to housing allocation rules as a result of EU accession.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The Council is responsible for dealing with homelessness in accordance with legislation, associated codes of guidance and case law.
- 2.2 In the 2003/04 financial year 58 homeless households presented to the Council for assistance, 40 were accepted and 39 households were placed in temporary accommodation. There were 44 households in temporary accommodation at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004.
- 2.3 The Council has two hostels or "reception centres" with shared bathrooms, which provide temporary accommodation for homeless households. 25 units are provided at Ashdene and 12 units are provided at St Jude's. 22 self-contained mobile home units are also provided at Heathervale Mobile Home Park.
- 2.4 There are a number of vacancies in the Temporary Accommodation stock. Some level of spare capacity is necessary to ensure fluctuations in the level of homelessness can be managed without greater use of Bed and Breakfast.
- 2.5 The Council uses Bed and Breakfast accommodation on an occasional basis where no other suitable temporary accommodation is available or where a household presents itself in an emergency and it is not clear whether any accommodating duties exist.
- 2.6 In the year 2003/04 the Council placed 21 households in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. These were mostly short-term placements for single applicants where no other suitable temporary accommodation was available or where further enquiries were needed to take place to establish any entitlement.
- 2.7 In July 2003 the Council produced its first Homelessness Strategy in response to its new duty under the 2002 Homelessness Act. This Strategy set out a plan to tackle issues identified following a review of homelessness and homelessness services. Whilst the Council has a very good track record in dealing with homelessness, prevention of homelessness and minimising the use of Bed & Breakfast, the quality of temporary accommodation was highlighted as a weakness.

3. Report

3.1 The Homeless (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2003

- 3.1.1 This legislation came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 and allows families to take Local Authorities to Court if they have been placed in Bed & Breakfast for more than six weeks.
- 3.1.2 The purpose of the Order, and the associated guidance, is to end the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation as temporary accommodation for homeless households with children or where a family member is pregnant. Specifically though it is only periods of six weeks or more which have been effectively "outlawed" by the Order.
- 3.1.3 The effect of this Order for Runnymede is limited, given the overall low use of Bed & Breakfast. However families are occasionally placed in Bed & Breakfast for short periods

and these cases will need to be closely monitored by the Homelessness Officer and Housing Needs Manager to ensure they are moved on within the six week deadline.

- 3.1.4 The Order also reinforces the need for the Council to closely monitor and plan its homelessness services, the temporary accommodation stock and the move through of homeless families into permanent accommodation, to ensure an adequate supply of vacancies so that use of Bed & Breakfast remains at its low level.
- 3.2 Improving the Quality of Temporary Accommodation
- 3.2.1 In accordance with the improvement plan in the Homelessness Strategy, Officers have been working on both short term and longer term improvements to the Council's temporary accommodation.
- 3.2.2 At its meeting of the 11th June 2003, the Housing and Community Services Committee resolved to undertake a feasibility study to establish refurbishment options and costs for both Ashdene and St Jude's hostels. A sum of £15,000 from within the Housing Revenue Account was set aside to finance this piece of work.
- 3.2.3 The outline feasibility study for the Ashdene hostel has now been completed. Alterations and an extension have been suggested to convert the building into approximately 20 self-contained family units with private bathrooms, kitchen and laundry facilities, a small garden facility and installation of lifts. Officers are examining how this work could be financed. One option is the disposal of St Jude's hostel. It may be possible to replace some of the 12 units with other types of temporary accommodation. However, this possibility needs to be considered very carefully as a reduction in units could lead to greater use of bed and breakfast.
- 3.2.4 Officers intend to continue working on proposals alongside preparing predictions of long term temporary accommodation needs and will report back to Members in due course. The report will be made by the end of the year.
- 3.3 New Best Value Performance Indicators
- 3.3.1 The Audit Commission, following a period of consultation, has introduced two additional Performance Indicators relating to homelessness.
- 3.3.2 The first of these BV 202 requires the Council to indicate the number of people sleeping rough in the Borough. However Local Authorities are only required to carry out full rough sleeper "counts" where local information indicates the number may be more than 10. Runnymede has so far indicated that the numbers would be lower than this, but as part of the Homelessness Strategy action plan, has agreed to carry out some form of count or survey in conjunction with local voluntary agencies.
- 3.3.3 The second of these, BV 203, requires the Council to monitor and record the changes in the numbers of homeless households with children placed in all forms of temporary accommodation. Local authorities are required to show the percentage change from one year to the next.
- 3.3.4 By introducing these additional indicators, the ODPM is placing greater emphasis on Local Authority performance in tackling homelessness, including single homelessness and in preventing and minimising the use of all types of temporary accommodation.
- 3.4 EU Accession
- 3.4.1 Changes have recently been announced by the ODPM, to the housing allocation and eligibility rules. These come into effect from 1 May 2004.
- 3.4.2 Nationals of the 10 new countries acceding to the European Union will have the right to move freely throughout Member countries. Nationals of 2 of these countries also have automatic rights to seek and take up employment (Malta and Cyprus). Like all existing EU nationals, they will also be eligible for social housing and can apply to our register.

- 3.4.3 For the other 8 countries (known as "A8 states") existing EU member states can impose limitations on nationals of the 8 countries accessing their labour markets, benefit and social housing for a transitional period.
- 3.4.4 The Home Secretary has introduced a package of measures to allow nationals of A8 states to access the UK labour market. However this is subject to certain conditions. People from these states who do travel here and do not work must be self-sufficient and will not be able to access benefits or social housing. They will not be eligible to register for housing or for homelessness assistance. The majority of A8 nationals who do wish to work in the UK, will be required to register with the Home Office and will be expected to support themselves whilst they seek work. Once in work, they will be eligible to access social housing if they have registered with the Home Office that they are working in a specific job and this is checked by the housing authority before any offer of accommodation is made.
- 3.4.5 It is not known how many people from these countries are likely to travel to this area, nor how many might try to access housing. This will be closely monitored.
4. Resource Implications
- 4.1 The proposals for Ashdene and St Jude's hostels will be fully costed and this will form part of a future report to this Committee.
5. Council Policy
- 5.1 The Leader's Position Statement 2004/05 states a principal objective for the Housing and Community Services Department is to seek to keep homelessness to a minimum by providing advice, assistance and temporary accommodation according to need and available resources, and by working with outside agencies. The Council's Homelessness Strategy has a long-term vision to prevent and minimise homelessness and to ensure that no-one needs to sleep rough in Runnymede.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

**a report on the future use of the St Jude's and Ashdene hostels, including a fully costed analysis of the proposed scheme, be brought to this Committee in due course.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

None stated

12. STOCK OPTIONS APPRAISAL (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to advise Members on the progress that has been made in undertaking the Stock Options Appraisal.**

2. Background Information

2.1 The Government requires all Local Authorities with housing stock to carry out a Stock Options Appraisal.

2.2 The Committee has approved a budget for the appointment of two separate Consultants, one to undertake the strategic and financial assessment, and one to deal with the tenant support aspects of the project (known as the Independent Tenant Advisor).

2.3 The Committee has also authorised the establishment of a Member Working Group to deal with issues relating to the Stock Options Appraisal process that arise between meetings of the Committee.

3. Report

- 3.1 Since the last Committee meeting, arrangements have been made to interview Consultants interested in undertaking the two separate functions of the project.
- 3.2 Officers and Members on the Working Group interviewed the Consultant for the strategic and financial assessment aspects and have appointed Penningtons. Following satisfactory references they have now been appointed to the project.
- 3.3 In order to select the Independent Tenant Advisor two meetings were arranged with members of the Tenant Services Group. Other tenants who had expressed an interest in getting involved in the exercise were invited to the meeting. The first meeting set out the process that was to be adopted for selecting the Independent Tenant Advisor and the second meeting involved interviewing three separate Consultants who had expressed interest in undertaking the work.
- 3.4 Following a lengthy selection process it was agreed that TPAS (the Tenant Participation Advisory Service) would be appointed as the Independent Tenant Advisor. TPAS are already working with tenants on the Roakes Avenue and Wapshott Road projects.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Meetings are now being arranged with both Penningtons and TPAS to agree a detailed project plan.
- 4.2 Penningtons have also stated that they will hold meetings with key stakeholders to outline the Stock Options process. These meetings will be offered to tenants, Members and staff and will take place on the 20 and 21 May 2004. Separate invitations are being sent out to individuals.
- 4.3 One of the key issues to be agreed at the commencement of the appraisal process is the Communication and Consultation Strategy. This issue will be discussed with the Consultants and a proposed Strategy will be produced. It may be necessary for this to be approved prior to the next Housing and Community Services Committee and it is therefore proposed that the Director of Housing and Community Services approve the Strategy in consultation with the Member Working Group and the Chairman of this Committee.

5. Council Policy

- 5.1 The Stock Options Appraisal process is not a requirement of any of the Council's current policies but is a Government requirement.

6. Resource Implications

- 6.1 A budget totalling £71,000 has been set for the Stock Options Appraisal process (see Budget Book page 272/273). Both of the tenders received from the Consultants are within the approved budget provision.
- 6.2 The Authority currently has no experience of carrying out a full Stock Option Appraisal and therefore there is no benchmark to assess the potential full cost of the exercise. Due to the comprehensive and detailed nature of this work there may well be a need to commit additional funds at a later stage. The Member Working Group will be kept informed of expenditure against the budget.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

**the Director of Housing and Community Services be authorised to approve the Communication and Consultation Strategy, subject to consultation with the Working Group and the Chairman of this Committee.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

## Background Papers

The Director of Housing and Community Services Stock Options File

### 13. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (DHCS)

#### 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the outcome of the assessment of the Housing elements within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.**

#### 2. Background Information

2.1 As part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, the Council had to compile and submit reports on how it would achieve the Decent Homes Standard and balance the Housing market. These reports, called diagnostics, were submitted to the Audit Commission. The Decent Homes diagnostic was scrutinised during the inspection process.

#### 3. Report

3.1 Members will no doubt be aware that the Council's overall performance under CPA was assessed as "Excellent" by the Audit Commission. However, in addition to this the Borough also received an "A" (the top grade) for its Decent Homes diagnostic.

3.2 The full assessment of the Decent Homes diagnostic is set out in Appendix 1 of the full CPA report. A copy of the full report is available in the Members' Room. The summary of strengths and weaknesses is at Appendix 'K'.

3.3 The report identified many strengths and some weaknesses. Officers are working on those limited areas identified as in need of improvement.

#### **(FOR INFORMATION)**

## Background Papers

None stated

### 14. SERVICE PLAN 2003/4 – QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE (DHCS)

#### 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress with the Housing & Community Services Service Plan for the fourth quarter of 2003/4 (December 2003 – March 2004).**

#### 2. Background Information

2.1 At its meeting in July 2003 the Committee reviewed and adopted its Service Plan which forms the basis for monitoring and reviewing of the Committee's objectives and targets. The Service Plan has been updated to take account of the new Leader's Position Statement Aims and Targets that were approved at the last meeting of the Committee.

#### 3. The Report

3.1 The Service Plan attached at Appendix 'L' draws together objectives and targets from the following sources:

- i) The Leader's Position Statement.
- ii) The Housing Strategy Document.
- iii) The HRA Business Plan.
- iv) The Homelessness Strategy.
- v) Runnymede Renewal (the Private Sector Renewal Strategy).

- vi) The Best Value Continuous Improvement Plan.
- vii) Best Value Performance Indicators.
- viii) The Community Strategy.

3.2 The report has been updated to show progress against each of the targets and where corrective action has been required it has been recorded in the service plan accordingly.

**(FOR INFORMATION)**

Background Papers

None stated

15. RENT ARREARS RECOVERY INCENTIVE SCHEME (DHCS)

1. **Purpose of Report**

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to authorise the holding of a prize draw as part of an action plan to improve the level of rent arrears.**

2. Background Information

2.1 Runnymede has historically been very good at collecting rent. BVPI targets have been met, and the Council's performance has always been in the upper quartile when compared to other authorities.

2.2 Unfortunately during 2003/4 performance has slipped a little, and for the first time the target of keeping the arrears total to within 2% of the overall annual debit was not achieved. Whilst the current figure of 2.4% is not poor, it falls below the standard set and an action plan has been devised to improve the position so that by the end of the current financial year the previous upper quartile levels of performance are achieved.

3. Report

3.1 Part of the action plan revolves around setting targets and regular monitoring and channelling staff resources away from other activities to concentrate on arrears recovery. Officers, considering ideas that might improve the current position, have revisited the "Gold Standard" reward scheme promoted by Irwell Valley Housing Association. This was considered as part of this Authority's Best Value Review for Tenancy Management.

3.2 Members may recall that ultimately the view was that wholesale adoption of the Gold Standard would not be appropriate for Runnymede but that Officers would look at certain aspects of the scheme to see whether or not they could be developed to suit this Council's requirements.

3.3 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has also shown an interest in the Irwell Valley Scheme and appears keen that other social landlords adopt aspects of a reward scheme for their tenants.

3.4 Irwell's approach is based on introducing incentives to encourage good outcomes. As part of the Council's action plan to reduce rent arrears Officers have considered the idea of a prize draw for tenants who maintain a clear rent account.

3.5 The suggestion is that at the end of the financial year (March 2005) a draw is held of all tenants with a clear rent account. To encourage as many tenants as possible to take part in the draw it is suggested that the prize be substantial, and it is suggested that a first prize of £500 with two second prizes of £250 be offered. The scheme will be promoted heavily during the year and it is hoped that the draw, together with other measures taken as part of the action plan, will return the Council to its previous upper quartile performance.

3.6 An evaluation of the different levels of arrears has shown that 74% of tenants with rent arrears owe less than 5 weeks rent. Although the amounts they individually owe are small, the total debt outstanding from these tenants at the year end was £71,548. It follows

therefore that there is a significant number of tenants owing relatively small amounts who may be encouraged to keep a clear rent account to qualify for that draw.

- 3.7 Tenants who pay regularly, but frequently allow small arrears to accrue, pose specific problems to arrears recovery. Letters that refer to a contravention of the tenancy conditions, Notice and possession proceedings in the County Court are not appropriate for such small arrears, yet if statements and reminder letters are ignored, it is not possible to achieve the desired improvement in the Council's arrears statistics. It is hoped that the opportunity to win a substantial prize will encourage a significant number of these arrears cases to keep a clear account in future.
- 3.8 Over a four year period following the introduction of the "Gold Standard" at Irwell Valley, the percentage of arrears outstanding halved, so it is clear that incentive schemes can work.
- 3.9 The draw would take place in April 2005, and all secure tenants who had a clear rent account for the final week of that 2004/05 financial year would qualify to be entered into the draw.
- 3.10 A report will be brought to this Committee in May 2005, to evaluate the success or otherwise of the draw, so that a decision can be made as to whether or not the draw is continued for subsequent years.

#### 4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Outside of the prize money, the administration of the scheme would have minimal cost. The prizes would be taken from surpluses within the Housing Revenue Account and although it would be difficult to quantify subsequent savings it is likely that there would be a reduction in other costs e.g. the despatch of rent arrears letters.

#### **OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

**approval be given to the payment of £1,000, in three separate awards, as part of the Council's action plan to improve arrears recovery performance.**

#### **(TO RESOLVE)**

#### Background Papers

None stated.

#### 16. ROAKES AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT – HOME LOSS PAYMENTS (DHCS)

##### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to approve the commencement of home loss payments for residents who move from the Roakes Avenue Estate.**

##### 2. Report

- 2.1 Members will be aware that early in 2002 the Apex Housing Group was selected as a partner to help achieve the redevelopment of the Roakes Avenue Estate and that over the past two years our efforts have been directed at the development of surplus allotment land at Painesfield where a new scheme is to be provided by Apex.
- 2.2 Apex have agreed that they will accept nominations from Runnymede Borough Council and the proposal is to nominate residents of Roakes Avenue to the new properties. Although the tenants would then become assured tenants of Apex, Apex have agreed that they will contractually retain existing tenancy rights, including the Right to Buy.
- 2.3 At the time the redevelopment scheme commenced, there were 83 occupied properties at Roakes Avenue, and as it was anticipated that only 58 new homes could be built at Painesfield it was important that a process of decanting was started as soon as possible.

- 2.4 To facilitate the decanting, approval was obtained not to relet properties at Roakes Avenue that naturally became vacant. It followed therefore that when a tenant moved out, either by being transferred by the Council or for other reasons, the resultant vacancy was not relet. At the time of writing, there are approximately 30 empty properties on the estate. None of these vacancies were created specifically to facilitate the decanting, and in most cases the vacancies occurred because existing tenants qualified for a transfer in their own right and were anxious to move. It followed therefore that these tenants did not qualify for home loss payments as they did not have to move at the time.
- 2.5 Now that possession of the Painesfield Allotment Site has been obtained, the Council can anticipate Apex making a start on site as early as June of this year with an anticipated completion of the project in the Winter 2005.
- 2.6 The majority of residents have indicated a wish to move to the new development and when they do transfer across they will be entitled to home loss payments.
- 2.7 A small number of residents have indicated that they would rather not move to Painesfield and have asked that they be rehoused within the Council's existing stock. The Council anticipates being able to achieve these transfers within the timescale.
- 2.8 However, as the housing requirements of some residents are quite specific in relation to the size and type of the property needed, it would be unwise to wait to the last moment to facilitate these moves. The Council's allocations policy provides additional priority for the decanting of tenants, and it is suggested that consideration now be given to transferring the small number of tenants who do not wish to move to Painesfield when suitable properties becomes available to ensure the Council are able to achieve the total clearance of the estate by the end of 2005. As such transfers would be facilitated to achieve the required decanting of the Roakes Avenue Estate, tenants who transfer should qualify for home loss payments. It is suggested that any transfer that takes place after the date of this meeting qualifies for a home loss payment to be made.
3. Financial Implications
- 3.1 Home loss payments are made under the provisions of the Land Compensation Act 1973. When the Act was introduced in 1973 such payments were calculated as a multiple of the rateable value, and when the rating system was changed on the introduction of the Community Charge (subsequently Council Tax) the home loss payment was fixed at £1,500.
- 3.2 Over the years, inflation reduced the value of such a payment and more recently when tenants were required to transfer from Aldwyn Court as a result of the redevelopment of that scheme, the Council agreed to increase payments above the £1,500 stipulated by the regulations.
- 3.3 Recently the Government have increased home loss payments to £3,100. It is anticipated that such a payment would be adequate to meet the direct costs of moving.
- 3.4 The cost of meeting home loss payments will be treated as a cost of site disposal and will therefore be netted off from the Capital Receipt obtained for the site.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

**home loss payments be made to tenants who move from the estate after the date of this meeting.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

None Stated

17. RECOGNITION OF TENANTS' GROUP (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to formally recognise the creation of a Tenants' Group to represent residents living at Fair Oaks Court, Addlestone.**

2. Background Information

2.1 One of the main objectives of the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy is to "*provide all residents with a vehicle enabling them to participate*". To achieve this, the Council have recognised a number of residents' groups representing various estates. Providing such groups satisfy certain criteria relating to constitutions, elected Officers, membership and frequency of meetings, funding of up to £1,000 a year for training, printing, hall hire etc will be provided.

3. Lane Close Residents' Association

3.1 The residents of Fair Oaks Court have provided Officers with a constitution together with details of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer in respect of the group. The Group will represent both tenants and leaseholders living in Fair Oaks Court. Officers are satisfied that the group representing Fair Oaks Court meet the criteria for recognition and funding. They wish to be known as the Lane Close Residents' Association.

4. Council Policy

4.1 The Tenant Participation Strategy which was endorsed by the Community Services Review Board in June 2000 supports the creation of residents' groups. The recognition and funding of the Lane Close Group would be consistent with the principles and objectives laid out in the Strategy.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 It has been agreed that existing groups may be funded with up to £1,000 a year to cover running costs. The payments are made in quarterly tranches of £250. Additional payments are only made following an audit of accounts and Officers being satisfied that past expenditure has been consistent with the aims of the group and the principles in respect of the Tenant Participation Strategy.

5.2 There are sufficient funds within the existing Tenant Participation Budget to meet the cost of funding the Lane Close Residents' Association.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

**the Lane Close Residents' Association be formally recognised and be funded accordingly.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

Tenant Participation Strategy.

18. GRANT AID CRITERIA - REVISIONS (DAL)

(Ref: Minutes of Housing and Community Services Committee, June 2003, page 72, para. 75 and Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2003, page 184, para. 119)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to seek authority for revisions to the criteria for the award of grant aid to voluntary and community groups.**

**1.2 The revised criteria are being submitted for the approval of both the Housing and Community Services and the Leisure and Environment Committees in view of their respective responsibilities for grants to the voluntary sector.**

2. Background Information

2.1 The Council has made provision in the current financial year for grant aid of £409,000 to local voluntary and community groups, together with individuals involved in sporting, artistic, charitable and educational activities. The forms of funding include occasional grants, annual core revenue funding, bottle bank donations, rent grant aid and support for local community events. Discretionary rate relief, which is not part of the grant programme but included here for a complete picture in budgetary terms, accounts for a further £20,600.

2.2 The current criteria for the distribution of the funding was adopted by the Council in July 2003.

3. Report

3.1 Following discussions with the Chairman of Housing and Community Services Committee, it is now suggested that Members may like to revisit the role of the Community Strategy in the grant aid criteria.

3.2 At the time of the last review of the criteria, during the first half of 2003, it was decided to adopt a general statement of the types of scheme that the Council might be prepared to support, rather than explicitly link the grant regime with approved Council strategies. The prioritisation of funding applications which support the targets contained in the Community Strategy does, however, have the advantage of sharpening the focus of the Council's financial support so that grant aid can be directly targeted towards the achievement of specific policy objectives.

3.3 Section 2(i) of Part 1 of the criteria (attached at Appendix 'M' with the proposed changes italicised) has therefore been re-drafted to include projects consistent with the Community Strategy amongst the list of initiatives that are given precedence. This would not prevent support from being given to other applications which meet the needs of the priority groups previously identified, namely people with disabilities, the vulnerable and disadvantaged, young people and older persons. The criteria continues to emphasise that the grants programme is intended to complement, and not replace, existing sources of public funding. Assistance will therefore not be given to services and projects which are customarily the responsibility of other statutory agencies. Support is restricted to those initiatives which are both beyond the normal scope of the principal funding agency and meet the Council's policy priorities.

3.4 The opportunity has also been taken to propose a number of other minor updates and revisions to the criteria, principally in order to emphasise the Council's commitment to partnership working. The previously approved compact with the voluntary and community sector is now therefore highlighted (part 1, Section 10) as is the Council's participation in the development of a multi-agency approach to the revenue funding of social care and welfare type organisations, in the form of the North Surrey Joint Funding Protocol (Part I, Section 7). For the first time, reference is also made to the need for organisations in receipt of ongoing core revenue funding to be able to demonstrate that mechanisms are in place to secure the continuous improvement of their services (Part 2, Annual Core Revenue Funding).

3.5 The revised criteria also incorporate amendments to the discretionary rate relief guidelines in respect of community amateur sports clubs, approved by the Corporate Management Committee in March 2004, and the clarification of the policy towards non-sporting social clubs, as agreed by the Leisure and Environment Committee in the same month (Part 1, Section 1).

3.6 The Bottle Bank Donations Scheme commenced in 1986. At that time the Council received a net income from the sale of glass cullet. To encourage the use of Bottle Banks the net income was applied to the donations scheme to act as a community incentive to recycle glass. However, within a short period the sale price of glass cullet fell sharply (the Council had to pay to take it away) and therefore the net income disappeared. Nonetheless, it was agreed to keep the scheme running to retain the community focus. Having to continually

explain this history to applicants is a time consuming and rather confusing matter. Officers have therefore suggested rebadging the scheme as the "Community Recycling Donation Scheme" so that it more accurately reflects the scheme purpose. Minor changes to the criteria have been made to make clear the type of organisation eligible for donations and to give the DOF the authority to approve new entrants to the established list.

4. Resource Implications

4.1 The proposed revisions to the grant aid criteria do not require any increase in budgetary provision, although it is hoped that they will assist voluntary organisations to more easily access funds available to them.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -**

**i) Members indicate whether the grant criteria should be amended as set out in Section 2(1) of Part 1 of Appendix 'M', in order to prioritise funding applications consistent with the Community Strategy; and**

**ii) the revised grant criteria, attached at Appendix 'M', be adopted.**

**(TO RECOMMEND)**

Background Papers

E-mails dated 31 October and 5 November 2003 on DAL's file 69.25.17(99)

19. STANDING ORDER NUMBER 42 – URGENT ACTION (DAL)

Acting in accordance with Standing Order 42 the following actions have been undertaken by the Officer shown below after consultation with the Chairman:

<i>Officer</i>	<i>Action Taken</i>	<u>Central Index No.</u>
Director of Housing and Community Services	To authorise the allocation of Key Worker units at Chertsey Bridge Wharf to a wider group of Key Workers than those listed in the Council's Allocations Policy.	545
Director of Housing and Community Services	The out of hours letting of Day Centres to Strode's College at reduced rates for the next academic year to teach basic skills and adult courses.	548

**(FOR INFORMATION)**

Background Papers

Proforma on Assistant Borough Secretary's Standing Order 42 file.

20. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -**

**the press and public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following report under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the report in question would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

**PART II**

**Matters involving Exempt or Confidential Information in respect of which reports have not been made available for public inspection.**

a)	<u>Exempt Information</u>	<u>Paras</u>
21.	VACANT AND UNFIT PROPERTIES	7
b)	<u>Confidential Information</u>	
	(No reports to be considered under this heading).	