

Runnymede Borough Council

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 10 September 2003 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), E.G. Barrett, J. Broadhead, Mrs. P.I. Broadhead, Ms. D.V. Clarke, Mrs. C.E. Gant, C. Knight, A.M. Moore 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 **Miss M. Bootes, Committee Section, Department of Administration and Leisure, Civic Offices, Station Road, Addlestone (Tel. Direct Line: 01932 425623). (Email: molly.bootes@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**

### **PART I**

#### **Matters in respect of which reports have been made available for public inspection**

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### **PART II**

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

- a) Exempt Information  
(No reports to be considered under this heading)
- b) Confidential Information  
(No reports to be considered under this heading)

## 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 will seek to bring 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 of the past.
ESP	Existing Satisfactory Property. This scheme involved working with the 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). 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.
HMO	House in Multiple Occupation. Is occupied by more than one household.
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 – Smart, 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 23 July 2003, which are attached at Appendix 'A'. Please note that, to save paper, the Appendices to these Minutes have not been attached. However, these Appendices will be attached in full to the copy of the Minutes appearing in the Council Summons/Minute Book.

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 AND SURREY COMPACTS WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR AND PROPOSED NORTH WEST SURREY JOINT FUNDING PROTOCOL (DHCS)

(Ref: Minutes of Housing and Community Services Committee, June 2002, page 185, para. 93)

1. **Purpose of Report**

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

- i) **Provide feedback to Members on the first annual review of the Runnymede COMPACT;**
- ii) **Seek approval for the draft North West Surrey Joint Funding Protocol; and**
- iii) **Seek the Committee's views on the Surrey COMPACT consultation paper.**

2. Background Information

2.1 The Government has recommended that Local Authorities have a COMPACT with the voluntary sector in place before 1 April 2004. A COMPACT is an agreed way of working between the Council and the voluntary sector/community groups.

2.2 Runnymede Borough Council was the first Council in Surrey to develop a COMPACT with the voluntary sector. This was established following the meeting of the Housing and Community Services Committee on 13 June 2002 at which Members approved the COMPACT as a means of enhancing the existing working relationships with the voluntary sector. A copy of the current COMPACT has been placed in the Members' Room.

3. Review of the Runnymede COMPACT

3.1 A review of the Runnymede COMPACT has recently been undertaken with the voluntary sector. They have made the following suggestions:

- i) It is felt that more needs to be done to ensure that local Members are aware of the work of the voluntary sector. An evening workshop was recently held for Members and this was very successful. However, only a few Members attended and it is felt that more needs to be done to ensure that Members are familiar with the activities of the voluntary sector. It is proposed that a further workshop be held in the Spring of 2004. Inductions will also be arranged for new Members by RAVS.
- ii) The voluntary sector would like to see greater use made of Runnymede notice boards to inform residents of the work of the sector. Arrangements are being put in place to ensure that the voluntary sector is given an opportunity to put forward information for the boards.
- iii) It is requested that the Council accept a less formal statement of finances instead of fully audited accounts for small organisations that are in receipt of grant aid.
- iv) The voluntary sector has asked if consideration could be given to the Occasional Grant money being for 3 years and not a one off payment. Core funding is provided as a separate grant. Therefore, it is recommended that the Occasional Grant facility is retained to fund one off projects.
- v) Many of the voluntary sector organisations have difficulties with their current accommodation. They have asked for assistance and have suggested that the Council maintains a register of vacant, or shortly to be vacant, property for them to consider for possible use. It is rare that Council property is vacant, however, this issue will be raised with the Corporate Property Group.
- vi) The sector has renewed their request for 5 year Service Level Agreements for core grant funding. At the current time the Council has a 6 month break clause in the Service Level Agreement. In view of the 6 month break clause, Officers believe that the Council could change core funding service level agreements to 5 years. This is in line with the Joint Funding Protocol referred to in section 4 which seeks to address the security of long term funding to local organisations from other statutory organisations.

4. North West Surrey Joint Funding Protocol

4.1 At its meeting on 13 June 2002 the Housing and Community Services Committee agreed to develop a multi agency funding agreement for core funding voluntary organisations that operate in the North Surrey Primary Care Trust (PCT) area. The other funding protocol partners are:

Adult and Community Care and Children's Services (formerly Social Services)  
North Surrey Primary Care Trust  
Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead Primary Care Trust  
Elmbridge Borough Council  
Spelthorne Borough Council  
Elmbridge Voluntary Bureau  
Runnymede Association for Voluntary Services (RAVS)  
Voluntary Action In Spelthorne (VAIS)

4.2 The main reason for developing a joint funding protocol is to prevent one major funder withdrawing funding from a voluntary organisation that is multi agency funded. This has happened in the past and has resulted in the other funders having to contribute more or it has led to the service ceasing altogether.

- 4.3 A joint funding protocol also has a number of other benefits including:
- i) Joint monitoring of contracts with one major funder carrying out evaluation on behalf of other funders, thus saving time and avoiding duplication of effort.
  - ii) An alignment of the timing of bids so that the voluntary sector are not having to wait for multiple applications for funding to be determined.
  - iii) Although there will still be the separate application processes for each funding protocol partner, the possibility of a common section to all the different application forms is being explored to ensure parity and obviate the need for voluntary organisations to reproduce the same information in a different format.
  - iv) It will be possible to work in partnership to meet common needs across the North West Surrey PCT area.
- 4.4 The draft Joint Funding Protocol is attached at Appendix 'B'. The Committee is asked to comment on the current draft and any comments made will be fed back to the Funding Protocol Steering Group and taken into account in drawing up the final Protocol.
5. Surrey County Council COMPACT with the Voluntary Sector
- 5.1 The County Council has also decided to formulate a COMPACT for its working arrangements with the voluntary sector. Attached at Appendix 'C' is the draft COMPACT proposed by Surrey County Council. It covers a range of issues including:
- i) Shared principles
  - ii) Mutual benefits of the COMPACT
  - iii) Volunteering
  - iv) Equality and Diversity
  - v) Working with Community Groups
  - vi) Engagement Policy Planning and Consultation
  - vii) Funding
- 5.2 The aims of the Surrey COMPACT are:
- a) To provide an agreed way of working that will enable participants to work together positively.
  - b) To be a practical tool that clearly sets out the commitments and responsibilities of all participants.
  - c) To establish shared principles and practices that provide a sound basis for other existing and emerging partnership arrangements.
- 5.3 If this Council supports the Surrey COMPACT it will be required to become a signatory. It will, therefore, have to adopt the shared principles set out on pages 4 to 5 of the COMPACT.
- 5.4 There are likely to be benefits to local voluntary organisations that work across Surrey in supporting the Surreywide COMPACT. However, a lot of the detail of the COMPACT has yet to be developed and the full extent of any implications for the voluntary sector or the Council is unclear. It is suggested that the Council agrees to the shared principles proposed within the COMPACT and awaits the development of Codes of Practice in respect of the more detailed issues, before committing to the whole COMPACT.
- 5.5 It should be noted that there is a suggestion that the North West Surrey PCT is also considering developing a COMPACT with the voluntary sector.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

- i) **the recommendations made following the review of the existing Runnymede COMPACT be adopted as set out in paragraph 3.1 above;**

- ii) **Members consider and comment upon the draft North West Surrey Joint Funding Protocol so that any recommendations can be forwarded to the Steering Group; and**
- iii) **the Council agree to the shared principles within the Surrey COMPACT, but further information be requested on the Codes of Practice before the Council commits to the full COMPACT.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

None

6. THE HOUSING BILL (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- i) **Give Members an overview of the proposals contained in the draft Housing Bill;**
- ii) **Advise Members of the potential impact of these proposals, as they are currently drafted; and**
- iii) **Provide an update on the likely timescales for implementation.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The draft Housing Bill was published for consultation purposes in March 2003 seeking comments by 9 June 2003. The Government has also run a number of separate consultations on aspects of the Bill and has carried out a parliamentary scrutiny of the contents of the Bill.
- 2.2 This report is for information to update Members on the latest proposal only. It is not clear at this point when the Housing Bill will be laid before Parliament and to what extent there may be further changes to the draft bill following the various consultation exercises and the Select Committee report.

3. The Contents of the Bill

3.1 The draft Bill sets out specific legislation for five main areas:

- i) Replacing the existing housing fitness standard with the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) for assessing and enforcing minimum standards.
- ii) Improving the controls on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's), including a national mandatory licensing scheme to tackle poor physical and management standards in 'high risk' HMO's (known as mandatory licensing) and powers to extend the scheme locally to a wider range of HMO's (known as additional licensing).
- iii) Giving Local Authorities powers to licence all landlords in areas of low demand (known as selective licensing).
- iv) Requiring anyone marketing a home to assemble a home information pack so that the information needed by buyers and sellers is available when the property is marketed and abortive buyers' costs are reduced.
- v) Changes to the Right to Buy Scheme that lengthen the qualifying and repayment periods.

4. Implications for the Council

The Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and enforcement framework

- 4.1 Like the current fitness standard set out in the 1985 Housing Act, the proposed new enforcement framework would apply to all types of dwelling. The new system would not set a clear standard but provide an 'assessment framework'. The assessment of dwellings would cover risk assessments of 24 broad categories of possible hazards including things not previously covered by the housing fitness standard. The areas of assessment include damp, occupancy level, lighting, asbestos, hygiene, food safety and fire safety. The assessment would be based on the risk to the potential occupant, who is most vulnerable to that risk.
- 4.2 The system is complex and detailed technical guidance will form part of the new framework. Version 1 of the technical guidance was issued in draft in July 2000 and an updated version is due to be issued in 2004.
- 4.3 Enforcement action will be based on consideration of:
- a) The hazard rating determined by HHSRS.
  - b) Whether the Local Authority has either a *duty* or a discretionary *power* to act by the presence of a hazard above or below a threshold set down in the regulations. Hazards above the 'threshold' will be known as category 1 hazards and hazards below it, category 2 hazards.
  - c) The Authority's judgement as to which is the best means of dealing with the hazard.
- 4.4 The new system should ensure that Local Authorities target dwellings which are occupied by vulnerable persons.
- 4.5 Proposed actions to enforce standards, or to address the risks identified will include:
- i) Service of an Improvement Notice (similar to the current repairs notice).
  - ii) Issuing of a Prohibition Order (similar to the current closing order).
  - iii) Suspension of order/notices where the actual occupant is considered not to be vulnerable to the hazard.
  - iv) Service of a Warning Notice.
  - v) Issuing of a Demolition Order.
  - vi) Declaration of a clearance area.
- 4.6 At this stage it is not entirely clear whether the data this Council has on the number of unfit properties in the Borough (estimated at 1462 from the Stock Condition Survey) will equate with those requiring action under the new HHSRS.
- 4.7 This new framework will lead to a substantial change in the assessment and enforcement of housing conditions. There is not, however, unanimous support for the proposals from professional bodies.
- 4.8 The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Officers (CIEH) says in its response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

'The CIEH wishes to reserve any definitive comment on the Rating system until the guidance on enforcement and Version 2 of the system has been published.....There is a wide range of opinion among environmental health professionals on the HHSRS, with some opposed to its introduction altogether. Whilst, on balance of judgements, the CIEH does not share this particular view, we are concerned about the practical difficulties in implementing the system.....'

- 4.9 The Local Government Association (LGA) is generally supportive of the new rating system but is critical that links have not been made with the decent homes standard. In its response to the ODPM the LGA says:

'The application of the enforcement regime and the potential resource implications is an issue that we will wish to consider in more detail..... Whilst we recognise the good intentions behind the occupancy-based system in applying the HHSRS, many of our members feel it is essentially flawed in that occupancy patterns are too fluid both in terms of moves between properties and changes in family size or other vulnerability indicators. It may also encourage landlords to let to less vulnerable tenants and may make a strategic approach more difficult for local authorities.'

- 4.10 Some additional resources are likely to be required in moving over to the new system. It is possible that action and intervention to remedy hazards in private properties may increase. This will require additional staffing resources.

#### Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing

- 4.11 The Bill proposes a revised definition of an HMO which will include any dwelling which is occupied by more than one household where those households share bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities. People sharing a house who are not related (such as a group of students) will be treated as separate households.
- 4.12 This will ensure that most of the smaller shared houses in Runnymede (often student lets) are more clearly defined as HMO's for the purposes of the revised fitness standard and for HMO licensing proposals.
- 4.13 The draft Bill states that the Secretary of State will prescribe certain categories of HMO that must be "licensed". This is likely to cover just those HMO's which comprise three storeys or more and are occupied by five or more persons.
- 4.14 There will be specific procedures for how licensing must be operated and fees that can be charged. The main elements of the proposals are:
- i) A licence fee must be set locally (subject to a maximum set by Government) which must be paid by the owner to the Local Authority.
  - ii) Operating a relevant HMO without a licence would be a criminal offence and subject to a maximum fine of £20,000.
  - iii) HMO owners must apply for a licence and this will be granted if the prescribed conditions are met.
  - iv) The prescribed conditions, which must be assessed by the Local Authority, include whether the HMO is reasonably suitable for occupation by the permitted number of persons, that the licence holder is a fit and proper person (i.e. has no relevant convictions etc) and the management standards are satisfactory.
  - v) The licence will specify the maximum number of occupants who may occupy the property and include other conditions relating to management, behaviour of occupants, the condition and standard of amenities to be provided and any other conditions relating to work which must be carried out.
  - vi) Licences will be issued for periods of up to 5 years. If the licence conditions are breached, the licence holder will be committing an offence liable to a fine of up to £5,000.
  - vii) Local Authorities are responsible for enforcing any breaches and have powers to revoke licences. Appeals can be made to the local County Court over any negative decisions.

- 4.15 It is possible that some Government funding may be made available to assist Local Authorities in setting up the mandatory scheme. Any scheme will have to be advertised and landlords will have to be made aware of their obligations to obtain a licence. The Council would have to take enforcement action where a licence had not been obtained.
- 4.16 Such a scheme would only cover a very small number of dwellings in Runnymede and, therefore, this could make the costs of setting up and running it expensive in terms of cost per dwelling.
- 4.17 The draft Bill proposes that Local Authorities could operate “additional licensing schemes” as well as “mandatory licensing” for other categories of HMO. However, the Local Authority must follow a prescribed procedure which involves having justifiable reasons to show that voluntary schemes would not be successful and that consultation has taken place with landlords and others affected. Under the current draft of the Bill, Secretary of State approval would also be required.
- 4.18 This power to extend licensing to other categories of HMO to include student lets for example, may not be easy to achieve given the conditions which are likely to have to be met before it is permitted. It is likely that a voluntary registration or accreditation scheme would be a more appropriate way to try and improve standards in student HMO’s in the first instance.
- 4.19 There are a number of properties that are exempted from the HMO definition and licensing. These include all shared dwellings managed or owned by public bodies and Housing Associations.
- 4.20 New ‘Management Orders’ are also proposed for dealing with HMO’s. A Management Order would be similar to the current ‘closing order’ and it would transfer the management of the house to the Local Authority. This could be done in circumstances where a house ought to be licensed but no reasonable steps have been taken to license it, or where a licence has been refused or revoked because of inadequate conditions.
- 4.21 Responses to these licensing proposals from the professional bodies have generally been positive. Both the CIEH and the LGA are supporters of mandatory HMO licensing but both have stated in their responses that the proposals for the national mandatory scheme do not go far enough.

#### Selective Licensing of Privately Rented Properties

- 4.22 The selective licensing proposals allow Local Authorities to run wider licensing schemes for all private rented accommodation in an area (or part of an area) for periods of five years where an area has low demand and licensing would be necessary to improve the social or economic conditions. These conditions are not appropriate to Runnymede and, therefore, these proposals are not likely to have implications for this Council.

#### The Home Information Pack

- 4.23 This requires sellers to make Home Information Packs available. This pack should contain a prescribed ‘document list’ (including terms of sale, evidence of title, replies to standard preliminary enquiries, local searches and a home condition report).
- 4.24 Whilst this is to be generally welcomed and should help to make the process of home buying more efficient, it should not have any significant implications for the Borough Council. Responsibility for enforcing this requirement is likely to be part of the Trading Standards function which falls within Surrey County Council’s remit.
- 4.25 The LGA, however, does not support the proposal because of the difficulties in enforcing it. They say in their response to the ODPM:

‘Although the LGA would welcome measures that are likely to speed up the home buying and selling process, we feel the Home Information Pack is rather an onerous way of achieving this and will be difficult to enforce as a civil action..... The resource implications are unlikely, in our view, to yield sufficient results to constitute good value for money’

## Right to Buy

- 4.26 The proposed new measures will extend the initial qualification period before discount starts to apply, from two to five years. It is also proposed to extend the period after a sale during which Local Authorities may require owners to repay some or all of their discount from three to five years and change repayment provisions to a percentage of the resale value rather than the current flat rate basis.
- 4.27 These proposed changes are additional to other changes already made to lower discounts in some high pressure areas of the South East which came into effect in March 2003.

## 5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 The proposals set out in the Housing Bill will have staffing implications for the Council's Private Sector Housing Service. These are currently being considered alongside other service pressures based on existing legal duties and the new Runnymede Renewal Strategy.
- 5.2 The introduction of the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) will require additional resources in staff training. Local assessment systems, practices and procedures will need to be drafted and reviewed carefully. New computer hardware will also be required. Pilot schemes have made use of handheld computers to carry out the assessments and it is anticipated that this would be required and would need to be downloaded to the Council's existing software. Changes to software will also be required, although this is likely to be covered as a free upgrade to the existing FLARE software.
- 5.3 The introduction of HMO licencing will require additional resources. As mentioned earlier, some funding towards set up costs may be available from the Government, although this is unlikely to cover all the Authority's costs, particularly in relation to staffing, for the full cost of implementation and administration.
- 5.4 The proposed changes to staffing resources in Private Sector Housing will be brought to Members for consideration in November, alongside proposals for strengthening the Housing Advice Service.
- 5.5 Data on private stock condition will also need to be updated. The latest private sector stock condition survey was based largely on identifying those properties that did not meet the fitness standard. Re-assessments will need to take place in the future based on the clear guidance on the new HHSRS.
- 5.6 Data on the Council's own housing stock may also need to be updated through re-assessment. The current 'decent homes standard' definition includes a test of whether the property passes or fails the current fitness standard. If the Decent homes definition were to be changed to include an assessment under the HHSRS, then re-assessment would be required.

## 6. Timescale

- 6.1 The exact timescale for the enactment of this Bill is currently unclear. It has previously been indicated that the draft Bill would be laid before Parliament in October 2003. This is likely to be delayed in order to allow time to redraft some aspects of the Bill as a result of the consultation responses received and the Scrutiny Select Committee report.

## **(FOR INFORMATION)**

### Background Papers

Relevant papers on the files of the Head of Housing Needs and Strategy

7. HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT AND BUSINESS PLAN 2003 (DHCS)  
(Ref: Minutes of Housing and Community Services Committee, July 2002, page 368, para. 194)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Housing Strategy Statement and HRA Business Plan prior to submission to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE).**

2. Background Information

2.1 For many years the Council has been required to submit annually a copy of its Housing Strategy to the Government Office for the South East for assessment. More recently the submission has included the provision of a Business Plan for the Council's housing stock.

2.2 The Government Office for the South East will assess the Council's Housing Strategy and Business Plan against a set of "fit for purpose" criteria. Once the Council has had its Strategy assessed as "fit for purpose," then the Government will concentrate on assessing the Authority's performance in delivering the Strategy. This assessment will take place annually following the production of various statistics.

2.3 The Housing Strategy and Business Plan submitted by Runnymede Council in 2002 were assessed as being almost "fit for purpose". The areas in which the "fit for purpose" criteria were not achieved are listed in Appendix 'D'. It should be noted that only one Authority in the entire country managed to obtain a full "fit for purpose" ranking.

3. Report

3.1 Attached at Appendices 'E' and 'F' respectively are the draft Housing Strategy Statement and the Business Plan for 2003. (These Appendices are circulated separately). These documents have been compiled taking into account GOSE's feedback on the "fit for purpose" criteria and having regard to a large number of changes that have taken place in the last year. The Housing Capital Programme has been updated to take account of the changes introduced by the Government (e.g. abolition of Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) and the introduction of capital receipt pooling) and Council led initiatives (e.g. Runnymede Renewal). The Housing Capital programme is attached as an Annex to the Housing Strategy. The key changes to each of the documents are listed below.

4. Consultation on the Housing Strategy and Business Plan

4.1 The Council is required to consult widely on its Housing Strategy and Business Plan. This is achieved by undertaking the following:

- i) A copy of last year's Strategy document was sent to a wide range of stakeholders including neighbouring Authorities, statutory agencies, tenants' groups, voluntary groups, registered social landlords and other interested parties. During this process everyone was invited to comment on the content of the Strategy.
- ii) Regular meetings are held throughout the year with a range of partners, including Members and tenants, during which many issues covered by the Strategy are discussed.
- iii) A Housing Strategy Working Group and a Business Plan Working Group meet during the year to consider progress against the Strategy/Plan and any changes required.
- iv) Tenants from the Tenants' Services Group and local estate based groups have taken part in a discussion regarding the priorities for the Business Plan. A survey of over 200 tenants was also conducted by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service to ascertain the priorities that tenants would have for future work.
- v) A Housing Forum is held annually to which a wide range of stakeholders are invited. The Forum is used as an opportunity to provide feedback on performance as well as obtaining ideas and direction on priorities for future plans.

- 4.2 The Housing Forum was held in August of this year. Those attending the Forum were invited to comment on the aims within the current Housing Strategy and to prioritise them. The majority of those attending were content with the current aims of the Strategy and most of the attendees agreed that the provision of more Affordable Housing (“Homes First”) was the most important priority for the Council. This was also a theme within the Community Strategy and the recently adopted Homelessness Strategy.
- 4.3 A number of other priorities and ideas have been put forward by those attending the Forum. Many of the issues raised are already being addressed. Those that are not will be considered further by Officers and, if appropriate, included in future plans.
5. Housing Strategy 2003
- 5.1 The key changes in the 2003 Housing Strategy are:-
- i) The addition of information from the Homelessness and Private Sector Renewal Strategies.
  - ii) Amendments to the Supported Housing requirements as a result of more information being received.
  - iii) Substantial amendments to the Financial Resources section (see section 7 on the Capital Programme below).
  - iv) A prioritisation of the three main themes of the Strategy
- 5.2 In order to meet the “fit for purpose” criteria, the Council is required to give “a clear statement of priorities for action identified, with an explanation of their relative importance.”
- 5.3 The Council has listed three priorities for its Housing Strategy which are:
1. Homes First – to provide more affordable homes including supported housing and housing for essential workers.
  2. Housing Improvement Programme – to ensure that housing owned by the Council, or our Registered Social Landlord, meets the Government’s Decent Homes Standard.
  3. Runnymede Renewal – to identify private unfit property and seek to improve it, with particular emphasis on Houses in Multiple Occupation and empty properties.
- 5.4 The Council is required to rank the above priorities in order of importance and it is proposed that the order given above is adopted whereby the provision of affordable housing is the first priority.
6. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan
- 6.1 The key changes within the Business Plan are:-
- i) Amendments to stock information following completion of surveys for 60% of the housing stock.
  - ii) Updated financial projections following revised stock details, Government subsidy and rent decisions, and changes introduced by Supporting People.
  - iii) An extension of the aim to include an increasing level of Tenant Participation.
  - iv) A commitment that the Council will achieve the Decent Homes Standard by 2007.
  - v) An acknowledgement of the results from the recent tenants telephone survey that highlighted that tenants wanted the Council to move onto security improvements once Decent Homes issues were resolved.

- vi) A commitment to undertake a stock options exercise.
- 6.2 The Business Plan demonstrates that the Decent Homes Standard can be achieved prior to the 2010 date, provided that the current schemes proposed for Wapshott Road and Roakes Avenue/Painesfield proceed. At the time of writing this report the outcome of the application for the disposal of the allotment site at Painesfield is still unknown. The Business Plan has, therefore, been formulated on the basis that the proposal proceeds.
- 6.3 The Tenants' Services Group have received a copy of the Business Plan and will discuss the contents at their meeting on 2 September. Any comments received from the tenants will be reported verbally to this meeting.
7. Housing Capital Programme
- 7.1 The Capital Programme has had to be extensively reviewed to take account of:-
- i) The ending of Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) and the associated transitional funding arrangements.
  - ii) Proposals affecting Housing Finance within the Local Government Bill (e.g. capital receipts pooling, the proposed prudential system for capital finance, removal of rent rebates from the HRA).
  - iii) The new arrangements for funding new affordable housing via the Regional Housing Boards.
  - iv) The latest plans for improving the Council housing stock.
  - v) Approved budgets for the Runnymede Renewal Strategy.
- 7.2 Pages 27 to 30 of the Strategy set out how the Council proposes to fund the Housing programme over the next three years. A significant proportion of the programme is dependent on Government funding via the new Regional Housing Boards/Housing Corporation.
- 7.3 Runnymede's contribution towards the overall programme is contained within the Strategy. The specific contribution to be made to Affordable Housing is as follows:-
- i) 2003/04 - £1.1 million
  - ii) 2004/05 - £2.4 million
  - iii) 2005/06 - £4.8 million
- 7.4 These funds will be met from developers' contributions, general capital receipts, transitional offsets (capital receipts from the sale of Council housing that the Council is allowed to retain during the 3 year transitional period), and offsets from housing land sales that the Council can also use for affordable housing rather than pass to the Government pool. The receipts from land sales (e.g. Roakes Avenue site) can be significant but there is also a risk that they may not be achievable or are for less than estimated.
- 7.5 The Do It Yourself Shared Ownership (DIYSO) Scheme in partnership with Thames Valley Housing Association was previously financed through LASHG and it has, therefore, been a victim of the changes. It is, however, a very useful contribution to the Affordable Housing programme as it reduces the demand from people with moderate incomes for rented accommodation. It is also not reliant on new sites and helps new households move into home ownership. It is, therefore, proposed that a proportion of the above funds be used to continue funding a modest DIYSO programme.

8. Action Plan

8.1 The Council is required to provide an Action Plan along with the Housing Strategy and Business Plan. Details of the Action Plan (called the Service Plan) are given in report number 11 on this Agenda.

9. Review Board

9.1 The Housing Strategy was considered by the Review Board at its meeting on 2 September. A copy of the Board's comments will be made available to Members at the meeting.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 The financial implications are set out in detail in both the Housing Strategy and the Business Plan.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

**i) the Housing Strategy attached at Appendix 'E' and the HRA Business Plan attached at Appendix 'F' be approved for submission to the Government Office for the South East;**

**ii) the Director of Housing and Community Services be authorised to make any minor drafting amendments to the Housing Strategy and Business Plan prior to their submission to GOSE; and**

**(TO RECOMMEND)**

**iii) the Corporate Management Committee be asked to approve the revised Housing Capital Programme.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background papers

None stated.

8. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is

i) To inform Members of the current position in relation to existing Affordable Housing Schemes;

ii) To seek approval to use local funds within the Housing Capital Programme to finance the housing scheme at Cerotus Place, if Housing Corporation funding is not forthcoming for this scheme; and

iii) To seek approval to dispose of Council land at Pooley Green Road, Egham to Thames Valley Housing Association.

2. Background Information

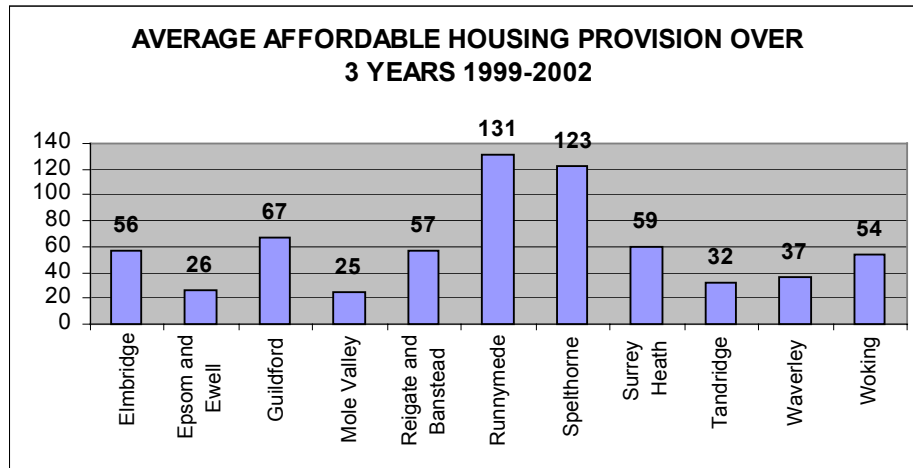
2.1 The Council has set a target to deliver 750 Affordable Housing units within the Borough over the five year period from 2001 to 2006.

3. Progress Against the Target

3.1 Attached at Appendix 'G' is a progress report for each of the schemes in the current programme. The total number of units provided under the schemes between 1 January 2001 and 31 July 2003 was 333. The position against the Affordable Housing target is as follows:

Target	750
Minus Completions 333 and Schemes in Development 60	<u>393</u>
Units still to be provided by 2006	357

- 3.2 A number of potential schemes have been identified and these will provide an additional 125 units if they are successful. The amended DIYSO programme contained within the Capital Programme will also provide an additional 30 units over the next 3 years.
- 3.3 Runnymede has made significant progress in the provision of Affordable Housing over the last three years. The graph below sets out Runnymede's position in relation to other Boroughs.



N.B. These figures are based on the average number of properties produced from April 1999 – March 2002

- 3.4 Progress towards the target in the future will be dependent on identifying additional sites and on obtaining funding from the new Regional Housing Boards via the Housing Corporation. The Council will continue to encourage Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) to bid for funding whenever opportunities arise.

#### 4. Transitional Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) Schemes

- 4.1 Registered Social Landlords have bid for transitional LASHG funding in respect of the following sites:

1. Chertsey Bridge Wharf (general needs provision) – Airways Housing Association Grant = £1,600,000
2. Cerotus Place – Rosemary Simmons Housing Association Grant = £145,396
3. Barrsbrook Farm – Chichester Diocese Housing Association Grant = £1,146,867

- 4.2 It is still not known whether or not these schemes will be successful in obtaining transitional funds. If this is not the case, then it is proposed that the RSL's be encouraged to make a further bid to the Housing Corporation for funding under the Regional Housing Board/Housing Corporation's annual bidding round in October 2003.

- 4.3 The scheme at Cerotus Place is the least likely to attract funding from the Housing Corporation. This scheme will provide 2 units of accommodation and now has planning consent. The units are to be provided on land owned by the Council and there will, therefore, be a capital receipt in respect of the land. It is proposed that, if the Housing Corporation funding is not forthcoming for this scheme, the local funds within the Housing Capital Programme (under "Runnymede Financed" section) be used to progress this scheme.

5. Pooley Green Road, Egham

5.1 This scheme will provide 7 three bedroom houses on an unpopular and heavily vandalised garage compound at Pooley Green Road. Thames Valley Housing Association (TVHA) will be submitting a planning application for the scheme in October of this year.

5.2 The Council needs to give its formal consent to the disposal of the land. Attached at Appendix 'H' is a site plan showing the area to be sold. This Committee is requested to give approval to the disposal of the land in order that this can be considered at the next meeting of the Economic Development Committee on 11 September.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The Housing Capital Programme is referred to elsewhere on this Agenda and gives a detailed account of the current funding for the Affordable Housing Programme.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

- i) in the event that the Housing Corporation does not allocate transitional LASHG to the housing scheme at Cerotus Place, this development be financed from the existing provision for new housing schemes in the sum of £145,396 from the Housing Capital Programme; and**
- ii) the Economic Development Committee be asked to approve the disposal of the land identified on the plan attached at Appendix 'H' to Thames Valley Housing Association.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

Relevant papers on DHCS's files on Affordable Housing generally and for specific schemes.

9. ASSISTED PRIVATE PURCHASE SCHEME (DHCS)

(Ref: Minutes of Housing and Community Services Committee, March 2000, page 1,056, para. 690).

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to recommend the adoption of a mechanism for revising price limits in the Council's Assisted Private Purchase Scheme.**

2. Background Information

2.1 Under the Assisted Private Purchase Scheme, Runnymede tenants can apply for a cash grant to help them to purchase a private property. The cash grant is up to £20,000. It is intended to pay the difference between the amount that a tenant can raise by mortgage and savings/capital and the price of a suitable home. This enables the surrender of the tenancy of a family property which is then available for reletting.

2.2 The Scheme has traditionally helped tenants to move for work or family reasons to other parts of the U.K. where property prices are lower than in the South East. There is provision within the capital programme to deal with two cases each year.

2.3 A maximum price level is in force to discourage applications to buy more expensive homes. This has been increased from time to time when trends in prices nationally justified it. Although the grant is not influenced by the property price, regard has to be made to it when an applicant is considered. Without a maximum, some tenants might apply for a grant where they could afford to buy, say, a terraced house in their chosen location from their own resources. This could be the case for many tenants and their spouse/partner, for whom the joint household income exceeds £35,000 p.a. Such applications defeat the Scheme's purpose. They are unfair to genuine applicants who would otherwise have been approved.

- 2.4 The price limit was last revised by Members in March 2000 when it was increased to £125,000. This price level is now out of step for most parts of England and Wales.
3. Report
- 3.1 Until 2002/03, there was no readily accessible information about local and regional price trends in property prices throughout the U.K.
- 3.2 Setting one maximum price can act as a deterrent to potential applicants. It may frustrate tenants who wish to stay in the South East if it is unrealistic. There are of course wide regional variations in prices, though these have been getting narrower in the last 2 years.
- 3.3 Several websites now provide and update average prices for all property types analysed by County or Unitary Authorities. Among the indices, the Land Registry is regarded as the most reliable. Each Quarter, it collects and publishes prices recorded for all sales in each property type for every County or major conurbation. The details can be seen at [www.landregistry.gov.uk](http://www.landregistry.gov.uk).
- 3.4 This is a simple and accurate method for establishing a realistic maximum price when an application is approved. The average price for terraced houses in the chosen location could be used for family applicants who have dependent children. Those who are single or childless couples could be subject to the average price for flats/maisonettes in the area to which they intend to move.
- 3.5 The data allows for a degree of flexibility in assessing applications. Tenants would not be discouraged from seeking properties in the South East. It would not be necessary to consider regular adjustments to keep pace with trends in prices which vary between and within regions.
- 3.6 Occasionally, it might be necessary to consider a more expensive property than the indices would otherwise indicate. It is proposed that the Director of Housing and Community Services be allowed to approve such cases, provided that they do not exceed 10% above the average price for that type of property and area. Examples of such circumstances might include:
- i) Where special reasons exist such as disability or ill health. These may require accommodation which has adaptations or an extension particularly suited to an applicant's needs.
  - ii) Where the size of the applicant's family justifies a 4 bedroom property.
  - iii) Where the actual location in a County or Unitary Authority is more expensive than the average. The applicant would be asked to produce evidence, which can be checked with local Estate Agents.
  - iv) Where there is evidence of price increases in the last 3 months i.e. after the last published Quarter index. Again, this can be checked with local Estate Agents.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 An amount of £40,000 per annum has already been included in the capital programme for this scheme. The above changes will not affect the amount of grant required from the Council.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -**

- i) when purchasing properties under the Assisted Private Purchase Scheme, information be obtained from the Land Registry to determine the maximum price of a property for each applicant. Using the most recent Quarterly Report for the area concerned, the applicant be advised at approval to seek a property -**

- a) **for applicants who have dependent children, up to the average for terraced houses,**
  - b) **for single applicants or childless couples, up to the average for flats/maisonettes; and**
- ii) **the Director of Housing and Community Services be authorised to agree prices up to 10% above these levels in exceptional circumstances where evidence justifies such action.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background papers

Relevant papers on Enabling Officers file on Assisted Private Purchase.

10. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (DHCS)  
(Ref: Minutes of Housing and Community Services Committee, June 2003, page 77, para. 79)

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the proposed self-assessment documents to be submitted as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process.**

**2. Background Information**

- 2.1 On 11 June this Committee considered the requirements for Housing of the CPA regime.

**3. Report**

- 3.1 Attached at Appendices 'I' and 'J' respectively are the proposed self-assessment documents that the Council is required to complete relating to Decent Homes and Balancing the Housing Market. These documents will need to be submitted to the Audit Commission for consideration by the CPA team prior to their visit in December.
- 3.2 In compiling the self-assessment documents, Officers have had regard to the guidance issued by the Audit Commission. A copy of the guidance details has been placed in the Members' Room.
- 3.3 There is a restriction on the length and size of the documents. For this reason they have been presented as a summary of the Council's Housing activities.
- 3.4 It is important that tenants are involved in the process of drafting the self assessment documents, particularly the one relating to Decent Homes. The Tenants' Services Group will, therefore, be asked to comment on the draft and any points that they make will be reported verbally at this meeting.
- 3.5 This Committee is invited to comment on the content of the self-assessment reports and to approve the final documents for submission to the Audit Commission.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

- i) **the Committee approve the content of the self-assessment documents attached at Appendices 'I' and 'J'; and**
- ii) **the Director of Housing and Community Services be authorised to make minor amendments to the self-assessment documents prior to their submission to the Audit Commission.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

### Background papers

Relevant papers on DHCS' files on CPA.

## 11. SERVICE PLAN (DHCS)

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to review the targets within the Service Plan to take account of recent changes, and to update Members on the current position in respect of previous targets.**

### 2. Background Information

- 2.1 Service Plans have now been adopted for each area of the Council's activities. The Plans bring together targets set within the Leader's Position Statement, the Community Strategy, and for Housing, the Housing Strategy, Business Plan, Homelessness Strategy and Private Sector Renewal Strategy. The Plans also incorporate targets set as part of the Best Value Reviews and any subsequent Best Value inspections.

### 3. Report

- 3.1 Attached at Appendix 'K' is the Housing and Community Services Plan for 2003/04. Beneath each target is an explanation of the action that has been taken.
- 3.2 A number of targets have now been completed and these have been removed from the Plan. Some targets are no longer appropriate and again these have been deleted. Attached at Appendix 'L' is a list of all of the achieved/deleted targets.

### **(FOR INFORMATION)**

### Background Papers

Relevant computerised records on Service Plan.

## 12. DAY CENTRE LETTINGS CHARGES AND CONDITIONS (DHCS)

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval for the proposed 2003/04 Day Centre Lettings Charges and Conditions.**

### 2. Background Information

- 2.1 The Council's five Day Centres are available for hire throughout the year. Their availability is advertised across the Borough via leaflets and posters. To increase the take up of lettings, details have recently been sent to many of the organisations listed in the Runnymede Information Directory. Letting arrangements are administered directly by the Centre Managers.
- 2.2 Hairdressing salons are also an integral part of the Centres' Services. The salons are let per annum to qualified Hairdressers who hire the facilities by the hour. A schedule of charges is attached at Appendix 'M'.

### 3. Report

- 3.1 Schedules of fees and charges are set out each year in the Budget Book and become effective from 1 April. During a recent audit of letting arrangements it was noted that the current hire charges for Day Centres had not been included within the Budget Book details. This report, therefore, seeks to address this and to formalise the current charges.

- 3.2 It is proposed that the charges set out in Appendix 'M' be approved for the remainder of 2003/04. The proposed charges will then subsequently be included in the Annual Schedule of Fees and Charges as part of the Annual Budget Recommendation.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -**

**the Day Centre Lettings Charges and Conditions for 2003/04 be approved as set out at Appendix 'M'.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background papers

None stated.

13. STANDING ORDER NO. 42 - URGENT ACTION (DAL)

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

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Action Taken</u>	<u>Central Index No.</u>
Director of Finance	Providing the Chairman of Runnymede Association of Voluntary Services (RAVS) with written confirmation that the Council's grant of £21,000 in 2003/04 is the agreed core funding for their organisation. Confirmation of Runnymede's grant was required prior to the September meeting of this Committee, to enable RAVS to apply for a corresponding grant from Surrey County Council.	532 A

**(FOR INFORMATION)**

Background Papers

Proforma on Head of Corporate Administration's Standing Order 42 file

14. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

If the Committee is minded to consider any of the foregoing reports in private session, it is the

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -**

**where appropriate, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of reports under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the reports in question would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in the appropriate paragraph 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) Exempt Information

(No reports to be considered under this heading)

b) Confidential Information

(No reports to be considered under this heading)