

Runnymede Borough Council
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 11 September 2002, at 7.30 p.m.

in the Council Chamber

at the Civic Offices, Addlestone



Members of the Committee

Councillors D.P. Easton (Chairman), P.J. Waddell (Vice-Chairman), E.G. Barrett, M.J. Brown, J.M. Edwards, Mrs. C.E. Gant, C. Knight, H.W.V. Meares, A.M. Moore, and Mrs. J. Norman.

Non-voting co-opted Member for Tenant Services

Mr. D. Wheeler

and all other Members for information

AGENDA

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 S. Lawrence, Committee Section, Borough Secretary's and Leisure Services Department, Civic Offices, Station Road, Addlestone (Tel. Direct Line: 01932 425627).**
- 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.

COMMITTEE SECTION



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

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

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 22 July 2002 (attached at Appendix 'A').

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. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

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

- i) **Advise Members of the new staffing arrangements for the Private Sector Housing function;**
- ii) **Outline the requirements of the new Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order;**
- iii) **Update the Committee on the current position regarding the Home Improvement Agency; and**
- iv) **Seek consent for the Private Sector Housing Manager to sign all statutory notices, and to grant approvals.**

2. Background Information

2.1 There are a number of internal and external changes taking place that will impact on the services that the Council provides to owners of Private Sector Housing.

Internal Changes

2.2 In recognition of the growing number of links to other housing services the Corporate Management Committee agreed in March 2002 (Minute reference page 867, para 539) to transfer the Private Sector Housing function from the Environmental Services Department to the Housing and Community Services Department. A new staffing structure has now been established and Appendix 'B' sets out the new arrangements which will operate from the 1 September 2002.

2.3 Under the new arrangements the Private Sector Housing Manager will be responsible for taking action to deal with unsatisfactory housing conditions. Authority therefore needs to be given to him by this Committee to serve the appropriate statutory notices. In his absence the Head of Housing Needs and Strategy should also be authorised to take this action.

External Changes

2.4 The Government has given a commitment to improving housing quality across all tenures including that occupied by owner occupiers. It feels that poor quality housing can have an impact on people's health and that local Authorities have a role in trying to assist homeowners to maintain their properties in good repair. The Government has therefore introduced new powers and duties designed to bring about improvements in poor private sector housing conditions.

3. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order
- 3.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order came into force on the 18 July 2002. This Order has important implications for Local Authorities because it repeals much of the existing prescriptive legislation governing the provision of renewal grants to homeowners. It replaces it with a new wide ranging power to provide assistance for housing renewal. The most significant changes are:-
- i) With the exception of Disabled Facilities Grants, all existing types of Housing Grant will cease to be available from the 18 July 2003.
 - ii) A new general power, to enable Local Authorities to provide assistance for Housing Renewal, is introduced by the Order. Such assistance can include grants, loans or purchase of property.
 - iii) In order to continue providing Housing Renewal Assistance, Local Authorities are required to adopt and publish a 'Housing Renewal Policy'. This policy must state how the Council is going to use the provisions within the Order. Any Local Authority not making provision for Housing Renewal Assistance will be considered by the Government as failing in its duty as a Housing Enabler.
- 3.2 When considering the Housing Renewal Policy the Council will need to ensure that it is:-
- i) Taking account of wider strategic objectives such as the Housing Strategy, Community Strategy, Best Value etc.
 - ii) Identifying local issues such as needs and particular problems that might be revealed in a Housing Stock Condition Survey.
 - iii) Establishing set priorities, based on client groups, property types or particular initiative types e.g. Hospital Discharge Programme.
- 3.3 At its meeting in June 2002 the Committee gave authority for a Stock Condition Survey to be undertaken. Some delay has arisen in commissioning the survey, due to the departmental reorganisation, however discussions are now taking place with the consultants and it is anticipated that the survey will be underway within the next few weeks. The information obtained from the survey will be crucial to the development of the new Housing Renewal Policy.
- 3.4 It is proposed that whilst the Stock Condition Survey is underway Officers examine the various types of assistance that are now available under the Regulatory Reform Order. A report will be brought to Members in the Spring 2003 outlining the outcome of the Survey and suggesting a proposed draft Housing Renewal Policy that takes account of the types of assistance that can be offered.
4. Home Improvement Agency (HIA)
- 4.1 The HIA was established in April 2000 and has been successful in providing help and advice to elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people in need of repairs to their homes. The service is closely linked to other services such as the community alarm and is extremely well regarded by those people who receive it. As an introduction to this item a short presentation will be given to Members of the Committee outlining the operation of the scheme and giving examples of some of the outcomes the service can achieve.
- 4.2 In the 2 years that the service has been operating 183 residents have been given advice and 112 have been assisted by having works carried out for them.
- 4.3 The annual running costs of the service are estimated for 2002/03 as £80,700. The Council receives a grant from the Government of £28,900 towards the service. This grant is likely to continue until 2004. From 2004 onwards it is the Government's intention that the grant will be incorporated within the Supporting People Grant for Surrey and will be allocated by the Supporting People Commissioning Body.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 It is not possible to estimate the likely financial implications of the Regulatory Reform Order until such time as a full review has been undertaken. However any potential financial implications will be included in the report that will be made to Committee following completion of the Stock Condition Survey.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

- i) the Private Sector Housing Manager, and in his absence the Head of Housing Needs and Strategy, be authorised to serve any statutory notices required to deal with poor housing conditions and to grant approvals; and**
- ii) Members note the requirements of the new Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order and a further report be brought to Members on the full implications when the outcome of the Stock Condition Survey is known.**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None

6. HOMELESSNESS ACT 2002 - HOMELESSNESS (PRIORITY NEED FOR ACCOMMODATION) ORDER 2002 (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to -

- a) Advise Members of the implications of the Homelessness Provisions of the Homelessness Act 2002, the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) Order 2002 and Homelessness Code of Guidance;**
- b) Agree a response to the Government's consultation; and**
- c) Obtain approval to appoint a consultant to assist with the review of homelessness and production of the Homelessness Strategy.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 On 8 July 2002 the Government announced that it intended to bring the main homelessness provisions of the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) Order 2002 into force during July 2002. The Order was approved by Parliament and commenced on 31 July 2002. It has had the effect of extending the categories of people that are classified as being in priority need and therefore entitled to assistance with accommodation from the Council. The Council is now required to consider the following group of applicants:-

- a) a person aged 16 or 17 who is not a 'relevant child' or a child in need to whom a local authority owes a duty under Section 20 of The Children Act 1989 (a 'relevant child' is a 16/17 year old who has previously been in care but has now left care).
- b) A person under 21 who was (but is no longer) looked after, accommodated or fostered when they were between the age of 16 and 18.
- c) A person aged 21 or who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered.
- d) A person who is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of Her Majesty's regular naval, military or air forces.

- e) A person who is vulnerable as a result of having -
 - i) served a custodial sentence;
 - ii) been committed for contempt of court or any other kindred offence; or
 - iii) been remanded in custody.
 - f) A person who is vulnerable as a result of ceasing to occupy accommodation because of violence from another person or threats of violence from another person which are likely to be carried out.
- 2.2 An extensive Code of Guidance has been issued by the Government and all local Authorities and Authorities with Social Services responsibilities are required to have regard to the Guidance when exercising their homelessness functions. Although the Guidance has come into effect on the making of the Order, the Government has asked for comments on the Guidance and has indicated that the final version will take account of any consultation responses.
- 2.3 In addition to broadening the Council's responsibilities towards homeless people, the Act has placed a responsibility on the local authority to undertake a review of homelessness and produce a Homelessness Strategy. The Strategy, which must be available by April 2003, must assess current provision for all homeless people, including those not in priority need. In addition, it must determine what action is needed to prevent homelessness and to secure accommodation and support for homeless people.
3. Report
- 3.1 The most immediate effect of the new legislation and Order is to increase the range of people for whom the Council has a responsibility. Many of these will be vulnerable people who may have some difficulty living independently and who need support.
- 3.2 In anticipation of the new duties imposed by the Act, Officers have been working with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) who provide supported housing to develop new schemes. However opportunities to provide new units are limited and future revenue funding is uncertain because of the introduction of the Supporting People regime. A proposal to utilise the Cemetery Lodge scheme in Englefield Green, to increase provision for young people, failed to succeed because of difficulties with obtaining revenue funding for the support that was required.
- 3.3 The Government has announced that £15,000 will be made available to Runnymede during 2002/2003 to implement the requirements of the new Order. It has also said that the Council can bid for a one-off payment to provide new supported housing schemes. It is proposed that the £15,000 be used to employ a consultant to assist with the review of homelessness and production of the Strategy. A bid is also being made towards set up costs for the proposed floating support scheme (see item elsewhere on this Agenda). However, no additional funds have been made available to provide new supported housing services that might be identified beyond April 2003.
- 3.4 In view of the above it is felt that the Council should respond to the Government's request for comments on the Code of Guidance by stating the following:-

Runnymede Council has for many years taken a proactive approach to dealing with homelessness and has, through the application of a range of initiatives, managed to keep the use of Bed and Breakfast to a minimum. The Council has also been responsive to new demands and differing circumstances and has provided a range of new schemes to help people with special needs, including applicants not in priority need. However, fresh opportunities to provide new schemes are very limited. This is because of the high cost of land and property in Runnymede and the limitations on expenditure within the Housing Corporation's Total Cost Indicator levels.

Eighteen months ago, in anticipation of the new Priority Need Order, Runnymede identified a potential scheme for young people. However the support provider, who was also the leaseholder of the property, withdrew from the scheme because of

problems regarding the uncertainty of future revenue funding from the Supporting People regime.

The Council feels strongly that insufficient time has been allowed for Authorities, in high cost areas like Runnymede, to provide for the new categories of priority need introduced by the Priority Need Order.

The requirement to undertake a review and compile a Homelessness Strategy will help to ensure that any gaps in provision are identified. However, the Council feels that this process should have preceded the additional Priority Need Order. This would have provided an opportunity to review and assess whether existing provision could be remodelled to meet new needs.

The Council is pleased that funds have been made available within the current year to introduce the new Order, and is considering different ways of utilising these. However as these funds are only available for one year it is unlikely that they alone can be used to provide the new supported housing schemes that are needed. Unless some commitment is given about future revenue funding for supported housing schemes it is likely that many Authorities will struggle to meet the requirements of the new Code of Guidance in full.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

- i) paragraph 3.4 form the basis of the response to Government; and**
- ii) the £15,000 funding obtained from the Government be used to employ a Consultant to assist with the homelessness review and strategy.**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Relevant Papers on BHCSM's files

7. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME – PROGRESS REPORT (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the position on the affordable Housing Programme and to seek approval, where necessary, to revise the individual schemes.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The new affordable housing target and Affordable Housing Programme was included in the Housing Strategy Statement adopted in July 2002. Attached at Appendix 'C' are details of the affordable housing units that have been produced. By 28 August 2002, 228 units, out of the 750 required, had been provided.

3. Progress on Individual Schemes

- | | | | |
|------------|--|-----------------|--|
| 3.1 | Guildford Street / Fox Lane North,
Chertsey | 24 Units | Thames Valley Housing
Association |
|------------|--|-----------------|--|

A planning application has been lodged for the site by Countryside Properties PLC, the joint developer in the Revitalisation Area. Discussions on the external appearance are in progress.

- | | | | |
|------------|------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| 3.2 | Barker Road, Chertsey | 15 Units | Thames Valley Housing
Association |
|------------|------------------------------|-----------------|--|

A planning application has been made and a decision is expected in late September 2002. Preliminary site surveys are in progress. Consideration is also being given to the decanting

of two existing residents and to the demolition of existing garages. It is anticipated that work will start on site in January 2003 and be completed during January 2004.

3.3 Pooley Green Road, Egham 9 Units Thames Valley Housing Association

Further discussions are taking place regarding this site. There are a number of issues to resolve e.g. any requirements in relation to the flood plain. TVHA propose to submit a planning application for the site in October 2002.

3.4 Kings Lane Garage Area, Englefield Green 13 Units Surrey Heath Housing Association

The legal process required to transfer the land and the various site surveys are in progress. Demolition of garages is expected in September. It is anticipated that work will start on site in October and be completed in the summer of 2003.

3.5 Mead Lane, Chertsey 17 Units Apex Housing Group

Construction of the properties is now underway and it is anticipated that the units will be completed in October 2003.

3.6 Sandgates, Guildford Road, Chertsey 83 Units for health workers Berkeley Homes, Pavilion and Homewood Housing Association

This scheme is also currently under construction and it is anticipated that it will be completed in the spring of 2003.

3.7 St. George's College, Weybridge 26 Units for teachers Pavilion Housing Association

This scheme is at an early stage and the Council is currently negotiating the terms of the Section 106 Agreement with the College.

3.8 Vicarage Road, Egham 8 Units Apex Housing Group

This scheme is also at an early stage and further discussions are taking place with the landowner.

3.9 Chertsey Bridge Wharf, Chertsey

The owners of the above site have contacted the Council to discuss the affordable housing provision required on the site. The overall site will provide 198 new units of accommodation. Under the current Affordable Housing Policy within the Local Plan the developer will be required to make available 25% of the units as affordable housing.

Subject to planning consent, it is proposed that there will be 36 x two bedroom and 18 x one bedroom affordable units. The majority of the units will be for rent, however it is proposed that there will be some shared ownership provision.

As the site will provide more than 20 affordable housing units the Council's policy requires that a competition is held between different Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Arrangements have therefore been made to invite three housing associations to submit proposals for the site. The submissions made will be assessed taking into account the amount of private finance and reserves that the RSL is prepared to invest in the properties and other issues such as their performance on estate management issues.

Provision of £2.5 million has already been made within the Capital Programme for this particular project. To minimise the use of Local Authority Social Housing Grant it is also intended that an application would be made to the Housing Corporation for Grant from the Annual Development Programme.

3.10 **Barrsbrook Farm, Guildford Road, Chertsey**

At its meeting on 14 March 2002 the Economic Development Committee approved the release of a small, previously developed portion of the above land for use for affordable housing. The site will yield approximately 20 units of affordable housing.

Consideration has been given to the potential use of the site, having had regard to the other schemes that are already underway. The Housing Strategy, adopted in July, has identified a need to provide additional supported accommodation for people with a range of special needs, but in particular people with mental health problems.

An increasing number of people that are accepted by the Council as homeless and in housing need are suffering from mental illness and find it difficult to live in accommodation without support. The Council has in the past provided a very successful scheme for this client group at Manor Farm in Egham but unfortunately the number of units in this scheme is insufficient to meet demand.

It is therefore proposed that this particular site be developed to provide a mix of accommodation, including some supported housing units for those with mental health problems. Ward Members have been consulted about this proposal.

Hyde Housing Association (now known as Chichester Diocesan Housing Association) was responsible for the refurbishment and management of the Manor Farm scheme. It has a great deal of experience of providing supported housing services and is very interested in producing another scheme within Runnymede.

Were this site to produce 20 or more units then it would normally be necessary for the Council to hold a competition amongst RSL's for the development opportunity. However in view of Hyde's track record and its expertise in providing supported accommodation for this and other client groups, authority is requested to negotiate with Hyde Housing Association to provide a mixed development and to waive the requirement for competition.

A further report will be brought to this Committee in November to approve the LASHG requirement and final details for the scheme.

3.11 **Starter Home Initiative (Key Worker Accommodation) – Thames Valley Housing Association**

There has recently been a second bidding round for this particular initiative and Thames Valley Housing Association has been successful in obtaining funds to assist a further 78 key workers in Surrey. To date 17 key workers within Runnymede have been assisted under the scheme.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

- i) Members note the progress that is being made towards the Affordable Housing Target; and**
- ii) the scheme at Barrsbrook Farm be allowed to proceed without the requirement for a competition between Registered Social Landlords.**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None

8. SUPPORTING PEOPLE (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

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

- a) **Obtain agreement in principle to using the funds retained within the Housing Revenue Account to meet supported housing costs for those existing Sheltered Housing tenants ineligible for relief from charging through Housing Benefit or other arrangements; and**
- b) **To seek comments on and approval for proposed final Supporting People Strategy for Surrey.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 This is the fifth report to Members regarding the changes resulting from the new Supporting People arrangements. Reports setting out the likely impact of the changes for tenants, housing providers and the Council were previously submitted to the January 2002, June 2001 and January 2000 meetings of this Committee and to the January 2001 meeting of the Executive Committee.
- 2.2 The new arrangements will impact housing schemes where support is provided to residents, in particular sheltered housing. This system will come into effect on 1 April 2003. The changes are far reaching and this report sets out the position regarding:
 - The proposed charging arrangements for tenants and in particular the Council's own sheltered housing tenants; and
 - The intended Supporting People Strategy for the County.

3. Charging Policy

- 3.1 New guidelines relating to the proposed charging arrangements for supported housing services were issued in June 2002 by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The following sets out the key points that will be reflected in the final charging policy for Supporting People in Surrey:-
 - i) The ODPM has given each administering authority (i.e. in Surrey, the County Council) discretion to decide whether they will charge for supported housing services. However, the amount of supporting people grant that the administering authority will receive will be based on the full charges being made. Therefore the administering authority must choose to meet the cost of services from other budgets or make a charge. Not surprisingly it has been agreed that within Surrey charges will be made for supporting housing services.
 - ii) Short-term services, of less than two years' duration, will be exempt from any charging. This means that those tenants in such circumstances will not have to pay for any support that they receive. This would include people who are in hostel or refuge accommodation. Within Runnymede this arrangement will apply to schemes run by other providers e.g. the women's refuge and LIFE hostels provided for young mothers.
 - iii) Long-term services, such as sheltered housing, will be subject to charging. Tenants within these schemes will be assessed to determine if they should pay the charge. Those who are entitled to housing benefit will be automatically exempt. Those that do not qualify for benefit can ask for relief and will be assessed by Social Services under the Fairer Charging Assessment. This assessment will ignore earned income but will take account of other financial funds that the tenant may have.

Providers of long-term supported housing services, such as the Council, must arrange to collect any charges from its tenants. This income is then used to off-set expenditure for the service. The Supporting People Team will arrange for a payment to be made monthly in advance for those people who are entitled to relief from the support charges.

The amount that will be paid from the Supporting People Grant for tenants entitled to relief will be based on the last year of expenditure (under existing arrangements) plus an increase for inflation. It is uncertain whether the inflation increase will fully meet future costs, and there is a risk that the Grant and charges received will not cover the full cost of the service that is provided.

Implications for the Council's own Sheltered Housing Service

- 3.2 At the present time the cost of providing support to tenants in sheltered schemes is met from within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Residents of the schemes are not charged separately for support. The cost of support services is met from overall HRA income. Therefore, tenants pay a small amount towards this service and it is referred to as a 'pooled' cost.
- 3.3 From the 1 April 2003 it will no longer be possible to account for supported housing services within the HRA. Instead the expenditure will appear within the General Fund and tenants will either be required to pay the charge, or, if they are entitled to relief as described above, an amount will be paid to the Council from the Supporting People Grant.
- 3.4 Although the HRA will no longer have the burden of expenditure for sheltered housing support services, it will retain the pooled income from rents. The Government has said that rents should not be reduced to reflect this. Originally it was intended that the additional funds should be used to achieve the Decent Homes Standard. However, the Government has recently informed Local Authorities that they can choose to use income retained in the HRA to protect existing tenants who would now become liable for charging under the new arrangements.
- 3.5 At the present time there are 254 sheltered housing residents. 215 of these are currently in receipt of housing benefit and will not therefore have to pay any support charges. The remaining 39 may be required to pay if they are not entitled to relief under the Fairer Charging Assessment.
- 3.6 It is estimated that £300,000 of sheltered housing support costs will be transferred from the HRA to the general fund. Assuming none of the 39 tenants would be entitled to relief, and assuming an average support cost for sheltered housing of around £15, it is estimated that it would require £31,000 per annum of the pooled rent to protect existing tenants against these charges. An amount of £10,400 would also be required in respect of community alarm charges. The remaining pooled rent would be retained in the HRA for use towards the various initiatives the Council is pursuing to meet the Decent Homes Standard.
- 3.7 All new tenants to Sheltered Housing Schemes would, from the 31 March 2003, have to pay the full cost of support, unless they were entitled to relief. The proportion of the pooled rent that would have to be used for existing tenants would therefore reduce over the years as the number of existing tenants within the scheme declined.
- 3.8 The Council could choose to use the full amount obtained under the rent to achieve the Decent Homes Standard and to charge any tenants who are not entitled to relief for support charge. However this approach is considered to be harsh, given the client group and the fact that many of these tenants may have already taken on other financial commitments assuming a continuous level of disposable income.
- 3.9 Officers must complete a return to the Government by December 2002 confirming how the additional income to HRA will be used. It is recommended that agreement, in principle, is given to the use of these funds to protect existing tenants who are not entitled to any form of relief and that the remainder is used towards work being undertaken to meet the Decent Homes Standard.
4. Supporting People Strategy
- 4.1 The Supporting People Team has been required to assess the current provision of supported housing across the County and to draw up a Supporting People Strategy that identifies current resources and future needs. A full version of the Supporting People Strategy has been placed in the Members' Room. Attached at Appendix 'D' is a copy of the Executive Summary, Vision and Options that are contained within the Strategy.
- 4.2 The Council is required to comment and approve the Supporting People Strategy before it is finally submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. As comments are required by the end of September, prior to the next Council meeting, the Chairman is asked to treat the matter as urgent and therefore a delegated function under paragraph 1.3 of the Council's Constitution.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are a number of indications that the new Supporting People Grant will not cover the current level of expenditure for supported housing services. The full impact of the new regime will not become apparent until the final level of grant for Surrey is known. A further report will be made to Members as soon as the full implications are known.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION that –

- i) agreement in principle be given to using the funds retained within the Housing Revenue Account to pay for the support charges of those existing tenants of sheltered dwellings that are ineligible for relief through housing benefits or other forms of assistance; and**
- ii) approval be given to the proposed Supporting People Strategy for the County.**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Relevant papers on BHCSM's 'Supporting People' files.

9. FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICE (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to obtain approval to the commissioning of a Floating Support Service for vulnerable tenants.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The proportion of vulnerable tenants housed by the Council has increased over recent years. The new duty towards a wider range of vulnerable people within the Homelessness Act 2002 is also likely to lead to a greater proportion of vulnerable people being housed.
- 2.2 The Council does not have sufficient resources, or expertise, to provide vulnerable tenants with ongoing regular support. Some tenants are entitled to assistance from Social Services under various statutory provisions e.g. Mental Health legislation. However, many vulnerable people do not fulfil the criteria for receiving these statutory services but still struggle to live independently without support.
- 2.3 Officers have identified at least thirty individual tenants in both temporary and permanent accommodation who would benefit from receiving regular support. It is anticipated that if the support was provided to these tenants they would be in a better position to sustain their tenancies and problems with arrears, nuisance and deterioration within the property would be minimised.

3. Report

- 3.1 An opportunity currently exists to fund the provision of floating support services, whereby a worker would regularly visit vulnerable tenants and provide them with support. The services would be aimed at the following:-

- young people e.g. 16/17 year olds;
- people with learning disabilities;
- people with mental health problems; and
- older people not in sheltered housing

- 3.2 Up until 1 April 2003 the provision of such services can be funded through the transitional housing benefit system. From April 2003 the service would be funded from the Supporting People Grant and monitored closely by the Supporting People Team.

- 3.3 Officers have had discussions with 'Look Ahead Housing and Care' (LAH&C) regarding the possibility of providing supported housing services to tenants within the Council's temporary and permanent accommodation. Attached at Appendix 'E' is a proposed Service Legal Agreement for the kind of services that 'Look Ahead' would offer to vulnerable tenants.
- 3.4. LAH&C is a registered social landlord that specialises in the provision of support services for vulnerable people. It currently provides supported housing services to tenants in many of the London Boroughs and Windsor and Maidenhead. It is also Elmbridge Borough Council's preferred provider for supported housing. A copy of a brochure providing more information about LAH&C has been placed in the Members' Room.
- 3.5 Officers have visited a scheme operated by 'Look Ahead' and have contacted other Boroughs where it operates. Feedback from these Boroughs is awaited and will be reported to the meeting.
- 3.6 If tenants wished to receive the service from LAH&C a charge would be made within their rent. The level of charge would depend upon the number of staff employed to provide the service. It is estimated that the charge would be around £85 per week. Those tenants who are in receipt of housing benefit would not be required to pay the charge.
- 3.7 Some funds are required for the initial set up of the scheme. It is estimated that these would amount to a maximum of £9,235. This would cover the cost of training the new staff and payment of their wages prior to raising of charges for the service.
- 3.8 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has confirmed that a fund has been made available from which Councils can bid for the establishment of supported housing schemes for vulnerable groups identified in the new Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) Order. Officers have submitted a bid for resources to cover the above costs from this grant and a reply is awaited. If the application is not successful it is proposed that, as the beneficiaries of the service would be tenants, the cost should be met from the Housing Revenue Account. Other ways of reducing the set-up costs are also being considered including working with Elmbridge Borough Council to establish the service and reducing the hours of Officers in the initial stages of the scheme.
4. Financial Implications
- 4.1 There was a working balance on the Housing Revenue Account of £1,233,000 as at 31 March 2002. It is proposed that, in the absence of any grant being made available from the ODPM, the set-up costs, up to a maximum of £9,245, be met from the Housing Revenue Account.
5. Legal Implications
- 5.1 For the period from the introduction of the scheme until 1 April 2003 it will be necessary for Runnymede Borough Council to enter into a contract Service Level Agreement with LAH&C to deliver the service. From 1 April 2003 it is proposed that LAH&C would have a contract with the Supporting People Commissioning Body for the service.
6. Conclusion
- 6.1 Increasingly the Council has been required to house a greater number of vulnerable people. For many such people it is important that they are not only given Housing, but are also given support to help them live independently. Although those in high need will be eligible for support from Social Services, many people in lower need will remain without help. This scheme proposes to help such individuals with a range of issues e.g. benefit maximisation, payment of rent, budgeting, accessing other services, dealing with issues affecting their neighbours etc. The Council is not required to provide supported housing services, however there are benefits to be gained from doing so e.g. reduced estate and tenancy management problems, reduced arrears and a lower risk of evictions.
- 6.2 There currently exists an opportunity to provide the support using the Transitional Housing Benefit system and Supporting People Grant. It is therefore felt appropriate to develop a floating support scheme in partnership with LAH&C.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

- i) approval be given to developing a Floating Support Service, in partnership with 'Look Ahead Housing Association', for vulnerable tenants; and**
- ii) the Corporate Management Committee be asked to approve a supplementary estimate for £9,425 to be raised within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Relevant documents on BHCSM's files

10. 'THE WAY FORWARD FOR HOUSING CAPITAL FINANCE' - CONSULTATION PAPER (BT)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **To propose a response to the Government Consultation Paper on 'The Way Forward For Housing Capital Finance'.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 In December 2001 the Government published its Local Government White Paper, '*Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Service*'. This Paper set out proposals for a reform of the Local Government finance regime, including the removal of the requirement for central Government approval before Councils could borrow and the introduction of a new prudential borrowing regime. Proposals were also made for the simplification of the housing finance regime, including the introduction of a new housing capital pooling regime to replace the current housing set-aside arrangements.
- 2.2 In June 2002 the Government published for consultation a draft Local Government Bill to give effect to those proposals in the White Paper which require new primary legislation. The proposals in this Consultation Paper are closely related to the draft Local Government Bill. The contents of the Bill were given detailed consideration by a Member Working Group and a copy of its response to the Government is attached at Appendix 'F'.
- 2.3 Runnymede is a "debt free" Authority under the present capital control system. Authorities that have housing debts currently have to set-aside a proportion of their housing capital receipts as a provision to repay debt. Therefore, the requirement to set-aside receipts currently does not apply to Runnymede.

3. Report

Consultation Process

- 3.1 A copy of the Consultation Paper has been placed in the Members' Room. Comments are sought by Friday 18 October 2002.
- 3.2 The Consultation Paper deals with two specific proposals surrounding the introduction of the new housing capital finance regime:
- Operation of the proposed housing capital receipts pooling regime; and
 - The future of the Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG).
- 3.3 The Consultation Paper also seeks to start a debate on options for a radical reform of the Housing Revenue Account capital finance regime. Here the Department has no specific proposals to float and wishes to provoke a wide-ranging debate.
- 3.4 Because of the importance of the proposals, and the impact on the overall finances of the Council, this report is also being put to the Corporate Management Committee for comment.

- 3.5 Members' comments and observations on the Consultation Paper will be consolidated and put to the full Council meeting on 17 October 2002 for approval.

The Government's Proposals

- 3.6 The Paper lists a number of particular questions on which views are requested. The report sets out the points made in the Consultation Paper, followed by Officer comments (printed in italics), and then suggested response (printed in bold).

Capital Receipts Pooling

- 3.7 The Government states that the housing capital receipts pooling regime is intended to be a simpler and more flexible successor to the current housing set-aside system. It should be noted that the Government sees the ownership and use of HRA (Housing Revenue Account) assets in a different way to that traditionally adopted by Councillors. The Consultation Paper states that:

"Most HRA assets have been funded in large part by Central Government subsidies and it is therefore reasonable that a substantial proportion of the proceeds of disposals should be recouped by Central Government and used to fund spending where the need is greatest."

- 3.8 Debt-free Authorities like Runnymede currently have significant flexibility as to the use of capital receipts from housing disposals and are, in effect, excluded from participation in any re-distributive mechanism. The Government proposals would change this position. The Consultation Paper states that in many cases the relative need of debt-free Authorities to spend is less than that of Authorities with debt. The Government therefore proposes that the new capital receipts pooling regime would apply to all Councils. This part of the consultation is about the detail of how the new capital receipts pooling regime should be applied, not whether it should be extended to debt-free Authorities.
- 3.9 The Government states that the current 75% set-aside (for Authorities with debt) rate for sales of HRA dwellings does not encourage the active management of that asset base. There is little incentive, for instance, to replace elements of the stock with either more modern or attractive properties (e.g. in areas of low demand) or with dwellings better suited to the delivery of good quality housing. On the other hand, the re-distributive mechanism that set-aside underpins is essential if the current level of support is to be provided to more needy Authorities without increasing public expenditure.
- 3.10 The Government therefore suggests distinguishing between receipts from disposals which a local authority has chosen to make and Right to Buy (RTB) receipts, which are not the result of any decision by the Authority. The Government does not propose to make any change to the current treatment of transfer receipts (for either debt-free or with-debt Authorities) although the LSVT (Large Scale Voluntary Transfer) levy would probably be put into the capital receipts pool.
- 3.11 Therefore the Government proposes that Right to Buy receipts would be subject to pooling. Other proceeds would not be pooled, provided they were used either to replace existing HRA assets with accommodation that was better suited to today's needs or to fund new social or affordable housing in areas of housing need.

Officer Comment

- 3.12 *The suggestion from the Consultation Paper that the Government is prepared to distinguish between types of capital receipt in calculating the proportion payable to the pool is welcome. It seems very likely that the Government will require Councils to pay a proportion of RTB receipts to the pool. The likely rate of the contribution would seem to be set quite high, possibly the 75% rate currently used in the set aside arrangements. This is very unwelcome as it removes a source of capital from the Council (reducing ability to spend and investment income).*
- 3.13 *It does seem that the Government is considering that other receipts might not be subject to the pooling arrangements. This is a very useful relaxation of the proposals. It would allow*

the Council to manage land sales without the encumbrance of having to pay a proportion of receipts to the Government. This will be particularly useful in the case of estate redevelopments, better use of unpopular assets (e.g. garages), and other asset management opportunities. The suggested comments aim to encourage the Government to exempt all housing capital receipts, except RTB receipts, from the pooling proposals.

3.14 *The suggested comments also aim to encourage the Government to keep the pooling rules as simple as possible and to maximise local discretion.*

i) **Consultation Issue 1**

The proposal that certain types of receipt should be exempted from pooling provided they are used for specified purposes.

Suggested Response

The Council strongly objects to the proposal that the Council should pay an unspecified proportion of its capital receipts to the Secretary of State. The reasons for this were set out in the Council's response to the draft Local Government Bill (copy appended).

Whilst not accepting the concept of transfer of receipts to the national pool, the proposal to exempt certain types of receipts is supported. This would give Councils a genuine incentive to manage their assets in a holistic way that benefits their local communities. It would also allow Authorities to support the implementation of cross-cutting measures without the financial penalty that pooling would bring. Furthermore, it would avoid the adoption of unsuitable policies or mechanisms that Authorities might adopt because of the perverse incentives that a contribution to the national pool would encourage.

ii) **Consultation Issue 2**

Which receipts should be excluded from pooling under such a system?

Suggested Response

The Council does not agree with the concept of pooling capital receipts. However, at the very minimum, all receipts except Right to Buy receipts and stock transfer receipts, should be excluded. Otherwise the problems highlighted above would arise. This would also be a simple and easily understood concept.

iii) **Consultation Issue 3**

What limitations should there be on the expenditure on which excluded receipts might be spent?

Suggested Response

There should be no limitations as this would inevitably restrict the ability of local Authorities to meet the main priorities affecting its area. Local Authorities should be trusted to use local resources to meet the needs of communities. The framework of local elections, the Community Strategy, the Housing Strategy and Best Value Inspections and other national and local programmes sets a framework that meets this aim. Any imposition of limitations would restrict this freedom to act in the best interests of the community and would also give rise to perverse incentives to act in certain ways. It would also be very difficult to frame any limitations in a way that would enable them to be easily understood and administratively straightforward.

Pooling Rate

- 3.15 Broadly speaking, the current set-aside rates are 75% for HRA dwellings and 50% for other HRA assets. The Consultation Paper points out that any reduction from the current rates would mean a lower amount of central resources for capital expenditure unless public expenditure were to be allowed to rise. The Department therefore proposes that the current rates should be retained and would apply to all Councils. The current arrangements for setting-off certain administrative costs incurred could continue to apply.

Officer Comment

- 3.16 *The suggested response reinforces the points made to the Government in the responses to the Local Government Bill. The aim of the suggested response is to influence the Government to impose a lower rate than 75% on RTB receipts. The suggested response also makes a plea for clarity in the rules that the Government will need to set to introduce pooling.*

iv) Consultation Issue 4

Views are invited on the pooling rates that should apply.

Suggested Response

The rate of 75% on RTB receipts seems unreasonably high. The assumption that the relative need of debt-free Authorities to spend is less than that of Authorities with debt is strongly challenged. Debt-free Authorities are usually in areas of high demand for social housing and RTB and other receipts form a vital part in meeting local housing needs. These local resources are vital because the current method that the Government uses to distribute housing capital resources does not properly recognise needs in high demand areas. Although the Council recognises the highly visible needs of Authorities in low demand and declining areas, the social housing needs of people in high demand (and high price) areas are no less important.

A lower rate (say 25%) seems to give a fairer balance between the wishes of the Government to introduce a redistributive mechanism, and the ability of the local community to retain a reasonable share of resources to meet local needs.

Should the Government restrict the pooling regime to RTB and stock transfer receipts, these should be the only percentages required. If the Government wishes to pool other housing capital receipts, the rate should be set at an even lower level for the reasons set out in the responses to earlier issues.

The continuation of the rule that allows the setting-off certain administrative costs incurred is welcome. The rules for this should be clear; for instance, should setting-off be applied to the amount of the transfer to the pool, or to the gross RTB receipts?

Capital receipts pooling mechanism

- 3.17 The Paper explains options for pooling of capital receipts for Authorities with housing debt and for debt-free Authorities. The Paper proposes that the pool be used for housing investment purposes and distributed through the Housing Investment Programme (HIP) and Approved Development Programme (ADP). As now, it is envisaged that decisions will be made in each Spending Review on how much the Exchequer should add to the pooled receipts.

Officer Comment

- 3.18 *Much of these arrangements are of a technical nature. The transfer of local receipts to a Government pool is an increase in central control. The Government has stated that it sees this as a process for transferring receipts from rich to poor areas. Given this policy*

statement, it is difficult to see that the Runnymede area will receive much back from the pool despite the acknowledged high demand for housing in the area.

v) **Consultation Issue 5**

Comments are invited on these proposals.

Suggested Response

None.

Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG).

- 3.19 Local Authority Social Housing Grant is a mechanism by which local Authorities help support the provision of new social housing by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). This approach has the advantage that RSLs can use the resources to lever in private funding (borrowing) with the result that more houses can be built for a given amount of public expenditure than if the Councils were to acquire new housing themselves. It also contributes to greater choice and competition in the provision of social housing. Councils normally have a right to nominate the tenants that occupy homes built through LASHG.
- 3.20 The mechanics of the current LASHG system are complex, involving a loan by the local authority to the RSL, and a repayment of that loan by the Housing Corporation. LASHG is subject to the same provisions as to eligibility, assessment, regulation and monitoring etc as the Corporation determines for SHG (Social Housing Grant).
- 3.21 Current local authority capital finance arrangements require Authorities to set aside 100% of the repayment made by the Housing Corporation as provision for credit liabilities. This means that it may only be used for certain prescribed purposes, primarily repayment of debt. If the Authority is debt free, the set-aside requirement is effectively waived, and the Council is free to use the repayment for any capital spending, apart from another loan to an RSL which would generate further LASHG.
- 3.22 The Government sees little merit in seeking to perpetuate such a complex regime, assuming the introduction of the new, simplified capital finance system. Options might include:
- Providing resources through the ADP (Approved Development Programme) in the normal way; this would enable the resources to be directed to support the priorities in the Regional Housing Statements which are produced in each region by regional and local stakeholders including local Authorities.
 - Replacing LASHG with a regime in which local Authorities made grants to RSLs. This would not require any form of repayment from the Housing Corporation or any other body. Such an arrangement would be outside the provisions of Section 18 of the Housing Act 1996, but Authorities might be expected to consult the Housing Corporation on applications for grant made by RSLs, development proposals, grant rates etc. In considering bids from RSLs, the Department would also expect Authorities to have regard to the priorities established in the Regional Housing Statement and their own housing strategies.

Officer Comment

- 3.23 *The rules surrounding LASHG are complex and not widely understood. However they have enabled Runnymede to attract large sums of Government money into the area to support new social housing provision. To the extent that direct ADP finance replaces LASHG there would be no change to this arrangement.*
- 3.24 *However, there seems little likelihood that the amount of ADP would compensate for the loss of LASHG under these proposals. This is especially so in high demand areas like Runnymede where the method of distributing national capital resources does not recognise this need. This means that Runnymede would have considerably lower capital resources for new affordable housing schemes under these proposals. The table below shows the actual and projected level of ADP and LASHG support for RSLs in Runnymede over recent years and estimated for future years:*

Support to RSLs in Runnymede through ADP and LASHG funding		
Financial Year	ADP	LASHG
	£000	£000
2000/01 (actual)	1,004	6,217
2001/02 (actual)	945	4,737
2002/03 (estimated)	1,180	5,786
2003/04 (estimated)	1,000	5,988
2004/05 (estimated)	1,000	5,300
Total	5,129	28,028

3.25 *The table shows that the amount of ADP would have to increase by around 5 times to meet the removal of LASHG funding. This seems highly unlikely. It would be difficult to see how Runnymede could meet affordable housing targets should the current LASHG system be discontinued.*

vi) **Consultation Issue 6**

Comments are invited on these proposals.

Suggested Response

The proposal to replace the LASHG arrangements is not supported.

Despite the complexity of the current regime, LASHG does allow Authorities in high demand areas the ability to provide affordable housing. It encourages partnership working between local Authorities and RSLs at a local level and is effective in generating small scale but important schemes that meet real local needs.

There seem very few incentives for local Authorities to support RSLs under a regime where outright grants are the only option. The cost to local Authorities would be considerable in terms of interest lost on receipts and use of scarce local capital resources. Given the current demands and constraints on local authority revenue and capital budgets, it is difficult to see that many cash grants would be made to RSLs.

Other Options For Reform

3.26 The housing capital funding arrangements are by far the most complex part of the HRA. The Consultation Paper invites ideas on:

- Different approaches to providing support for HRA capital investment; and
- Options for dealing with debt servicing costs in the HRA.

Officer Comment

3.27 *Whilst the opportunity for debate is welcome, the desire of the Government to keep strict control over the local authority role in housing means that the benefit of such changes is limited to administrative or marginal improvements. Therefore, the different approaches to providing support for HRA capital investment are very much subservient to the mechanism by which the Government distributes the resources it devotes to housing capital. The options for dealing with debt servicing costs are not very relevant to the debt-free position of the Runnymede HRA.*

Suggested Response

None.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 It is clear that in their current form the proposals will involve redistribution of resources away from Authorities like Runnymede to areas assessed as being in greater need.
- 4.2 The first year of implementation of the pooling regime would be 2004/05, assuming that the Government makes the necessary legislative changes in time. The tables below show the estimated housing capital receipts from 2004/05 onwards and the potential transfer of capital receipts to the Government pool based on various scenarios:

Based on 75% of RTB and 50% of other capital receipts transferred to the pool					
	Housing Capital Receipts		Contribution to the National Pool		
Year	RTB	Other	RTB	Other	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
2004/05	1,850	75	1,387	38	1,425
2005/06	1,850	1,075	1,387	519	1,906

Based on 75% of RTB capital receipts only transferred to the pool					
	Housing Capital Receipts		Contribution to the National Pool		
Year	RTB	Other	RTB	Other	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
2004/05	1,850	75	1,387	0	1,387
2005/06	1,850	1,075	1,387	0	1,387

- 4.3 The implications of the new regime on the General Fund will be factored into the forthcoming financial forecast. The main immediate impact on the General Fund would be the loss of investment income on capital receipts transferred to the Government. Further costs may arise if Government capital resources granted to the Runnymede area under the new regime are insufficient to meet local needs. These costs may include making cash grants to RSLs to support new housing schemes and higher homelessness provision if affordable housing becomes even scarcer.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The implementation of all of these proposals will require some changes to primary legislation.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The Government seems intent on the capital receipts pooling proposals and they will almost certainly be less beneficial to the Council than the current arrangements. However, the apparent moderation of the proposals for capital receipts pooling is welcome.
- 6.2 The long-term prognosis for the level of capital resources available for the provision of affordable housing is unfavourable. The removal of the LASHG mechanism will almost certainly mean that the level of Government funding in Runnymede will be reduced. This will have a serious negative impact on housing strategy and the ability to meet housing needs targets. It also comes at a time when the demand for additional housing for vulnerable groups, the homeless and key workers has never been greater.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

the comments made in this report form the basis of the Council's response together with any others this Committee, the Corporate Management Committee, and full Council resolves to make.

(TO RECOMMEND)

Background Papers

Letter from ODPM dated 2 August 2002 on 'The Way Forward for Housing Capital Finance' together with the accompanying Consultation Paper.

11. BEST VALUE - UPDATE ON BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE TARGETS, INDICATORS AND REVIEWS (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the progress being made on Best Value Targets and Performance Indicators.**

2. Report

2.1 Members will be aware that a number of Best Value Reviews have been completed over the last eighteen months.

2.2 The various targets that were set as part of each of the Best Value Reviews have been incorporated, along with the targets from the Leader's Position Statement, Housing Strategy and Business Plan, into a Service Plan for Housing. This currently contains the Housing Services targets but will, from November 2002, also include Community Services targets.

2.3 Attached at Appendix 'G' is a report setting out the progress against all of the current targets within the Service Plan.

2.4 At Appendix 'H' are details of the current performance against the National Performance Indicators.

2.5 It was originally proposed that a Best Value Review of Private Sector Housing would take place prior to April 2003. However, Members will be aware that the Private Sector Housing function is currently being transferred from Environmental Services to the Housing and Community Services Department. It will take several months for the new working arrangements to be fully settled and in view of this it is proposed that the commencement of the Best Value Review of this service be delayed until Spring of 2003 and that it be completed in Autumn 2003.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

the Best Value Review of Private Sector Housing be delayed until October 2003, to take account of the transfer of the function between departments.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None

12. BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN - TENANCY MANAGEMENT SERVICE (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **To report the main findings and recommendations of the Review of the Tenancy Management Service. The Service Review and Continuous Improvement Plan are attached at Appendix 'I'. Each of the four C's are summarised below.**

2. Challenge

2.1 The Scoping and Challenge report was reviewed by the Housing and Community Services Committee on 16 January 2002. This report was endorsed by the Committee and it was agreed that the proposals raised at the Challenge stage should be investigated further. The various proposals are considered in more detail within the Service Review and Continuous Improvement Plan.

3. Compare

3.1 A number of Performance Indicators have been used to compare all aspects of the service. This includes Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's), the STATUS survey results, a Tenants' Panel Questionnaire and participation as part of a local/regional Benchmarking

Group. The results of the comparison work undertaken are shown in the Service Review and Continuous Improvement Plan.

- 3.2 It is to be noted that the Tenancy Management Service reported on six National Best Value Performance Indicators up until 2001/2002. Now there is only the requirement to report on two Indicators from 2002/2003. These are BVPI 66a, percentage of rent collected, and BVPI 74, tenant satisfaction with the overall service (to include figures of Black Minority Ethnic Breakdown):-
- a) Current performance 2001/2002 for BVPI 66a is 98.7%, which is within top quartile national performance.
 - b) Current performance for BVPI 74 is 91%, again within top quartile performance nationally.
- 3.3 In general the Council performs well in the six areas that are currently reported on for Best Value Performance Indicators.

4. Consult

- 4.1 The Tenancy Management section consults widely on different aspects of the service. Every three years a STATUS survey is undertaken, and is due to be repeated later this year. The STATUS survey was developed by the Government and the National Housing Federation to ensure consistency across the Social Housing sector.
- 4.2 Regular meetings are held with the Tenant Services Group, made up of tenant representatives from all areas of the Borough. Staff also meet regularly with established area tenants' groups. A recent questionnaire was sent out to a Tenants Panel and the Council has consulted with tenants from Roakes Avenue and Bowes/Wapshott Road on the proposed improvements by holding a number of public meetings, carrying out one-to-one home visits and by sending out questionnaires.
- 4.3 The Council produces an annual newsletter, "Streets Ahead", and also a calendar that has proved to be very popular since it was introduced. Tenants form part of an editorial board which considers the content of both these publications.
- 4.4 Regular Bulletins have also been sent out over the past two years to keep tenants who live on the Roakes Avenue and Bowes/Wapshott estates informed of the Council's plans for improving their homes. A newsletter, "Fresh Start", has been produced jointly by the Council and its RSL partner, Apex Housing Group, for the tenants affected by the proposals and this will continue to be produced throughout the consultation process.
- 4.5 The Government has also required Local Authorities to produce Tenants' Compacts. Compacts are agreements made between landlords and tenants on how tenants are involved in local decisions relating to their homes. Copies of the Compact were delivered to each tenant in December 2001 to raise awareness that Compacts existed and to encourage more tenants to become involved in how the Housing service is delivered. Local Compacts are also in place with three area groups and all Compacts are reviewed on an annual basis.

5. Compete

- 5.1 All of the work in the Tenancy Management Section is undertaken in-house, with the exception of the recovery of former tenant rent arrears. A member of staff is responsible for the initial recovery of former tenants' arrears after which cases are written off and passed to an external organisation.
- 5.2 Runnymede Borough Council's performance is above average for arrears recovery, being within the top quartile nationally. However, the Council is required to demonstrate value for money as well as good performance. Therefore, as part of the Compete exercise, the private company that pursues the former tenant arrears was asked to provide a price for the recovery for current arrears. Whilst it is believed that they were unlikely to be able to improve upon performance, it was possible that they might be able to provide the service at a lower cost.

- 5.3 The findings from this analysis demonstrated that it would not be cost effective to outsource the recovery of current tenant rent arrears. The full analysis, showing the breakdown of costs of recovering current tenant rent arrears for a batch of 1,000 properties is contained in the Service Review and Continuous Improvement Plan.
6. Continuous Improvement Plan
- 6.1 The proposed Continuous Improvement Plan is attached at Appendix 'I'. The Continuous Improvement Plan, targets and timescales for their conclusion is set out below.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

- i) **the Service Review and the Continuous Improvement Plan attached at Appendix 'I' be approved with particular reference to the following:**

<u>Targets to be implemented at Officer Level:</u>	<u>Timescale:</u>
a) Hold regular estate-based surgeries to provide a more local service to those who find it difficult to come to the Civic Offices. To consider linking this with other Council services, i.e. Housing Benefits.	September 2003
b) Consider other less formal ways of consulting with and involving tenants in the planning and provision of the Tenancy Management Service.	March 2003
c) Develop more estate walkabouts with Tenants Groups or in areas where these are not held.	March 2003
d) To deal with anti-social behaviour more effectively.	Ongoing
e) Consider requesting Money Judgement Orders at Court for arrears recovery in some circumstances rather than a Possession Order.	December 2002
f) Consider the possibility of Tenancy Management Staff representing the Council at Court instead of using Legal Services for straightforward cases.	December 2002
<u>Targets with Policy Implications requiring a further report to Council:</u>	<u>Timescale:</u>
a) Investigate the advantages of a 'One Stop Shop' approach to service delivery.	2005/2006
b) Establish a Corporate Debt Recovery Strategy.	2003/2004
c) Consider separating the Housing part of the grounds maintenance service from the contract.	March 2004
d) Consideration to be given to the introduction of the "Gold Star Service" pioneered by Irwell Valley Housing Association.	Decide whether or not to proceed by April 2004

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| e) | Consider providing caretaking and cleaning services to other parts of the Borough. | March 2004 |
| h) | Consider the establishment of specialist Rent Recovery and Tenant Participation Officers. | 2005/06 |
| ii) | the Borough Housing and Community Services Manager report to a future meeting of the Committee regarding implementation and monitoring of the Continuous Improvement Plan. | |

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers:

Relevant papers on Head of Tenant Services Best Value Files

13. INSULATION OF COUNCIL PROPERTIES (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the position in respect of Council properties without wall cavities.**

2. Background Information

2.1 Members will be aware that we are currently progressing with a programme to install central heating into every Council owned home. Supplementary to this programme is the insulation of properties, which enables the Council to maximise the level of thermal comfort and efficiency, and achieve the 'Decent Homes' Standard.

2.2 The insulation programme is well advanced, and should be completed by the end of this financial year.

3. Report

3.1 Approximately 230 properties have been identified with solid or part solid wall construction that prevents cavity fill insulation being considered.

Alternative Insulation Methods:

3.2 It might be possible to consider alternatives to cavity fill, but each method has significant disadvantages.

3.3 Dry lining of internal walls would improve insulation, but such a programme might necessitate the relocation of electrical sockets and switches, plumbing, bathroom and kitchen appliances, skirting board, etc, which would add to the cost. Extensive redecoration would also be required once the work was completed. The internal dimensions of each room would be reduced, and in certain situations, it may not be possible to refit kitchen and bathroom fixtures as there would be insufficient room once the work had been completed. In addition the disruption to residents would be considerable, and therefore it is not recommended that such a solution be pursued.

3.4 External cladding would be the alternative to dry lining. This would involve the fixing of insulating material to the external wall, covered with a high performance cement-based render. This solution has a number of disadvantages: -

- It requires the relocation of rainwater goods and gullies;
- There could be edge detail and cold bridging problems at junctions with solid properties;

- Cladding may mask future structural problems;
- Some alleyways between properties may be reduced to unacceptable widths; and
- Window and door reveal, head and sill details would need to be altered.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 In addition to the technical difficulties identified, the major drawback of external cladding is the cost. On average, it will cost £8,500 per property to provide external cladding. In the worst-case scenario, this may be as much as £15,000 per property, with all 230 solid wall properties in Council ownership costing in excess of £1.6 million.

5. Other Implications

- 5.1 A decision not to clad solid wall homes would mean that the Council would not meet the target of a minimum SAP rating of 65 points for all Council homes. However, when considering the cost of external cladding it is difficult to make a case for pursuing a programme of insulation for these solid wall properties, particularly at the present time when the Council is facing considerable expenditure in meeting the 'Decent Homes' Standard for many of the homes in its ownership.
- 5.2 It is not currently necessary to improve the thermal qualities of solid walls to meet the 'Decent Homes' Standard. There is a criterion to provide efficient heating systems and effective insulation, but in the case of solid wall properties the insulation requirement is limited to loft areas only.
- 5.3 It is suggested that no insulation work be undertaken to these properties for the time being. Once the full implications of the stock condition survey are established, and progress is made in developing programmes to bring all properties up to the 'Decent Homes' Standard, the issue of insulation for the Council's stock of solid wall houses can be readdressed.
- 5.4 A full report identifying the properties in question, and providing detailed information of the cost, advantages and disadvantages of the various systems available to improve insulation of solid wall properties is available in the Members' Room.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION that –

- i) the Council's stock of solid wall homes be excluded from current insulation programmes; and**
- ii) the insulation of these properties be reconsidered once the full implications of meeting the 'Decent Homes' Standard is established. (TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

Relevant Papers on Head of Tenant Services 'Central Heating and Insulation' files

14. RENT GRANT AID – ROTARY CLUB OF CHERTSEY (BT)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **To propose the letting of a Council garage to the Rotary Club of Chertsey for storage of its Christmas fund raising equipment.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The Council provides grant aid towards the rent of Council owned property to a number of local organisations. Where grant requested exceeds 50% of the rent payable, or the request is outside the normal forms of grant aid, a report is made to the relevant Committee for decision. The current criteria for rent grant aid is set out in Appendix 'J'.

3. Report

- 3.1 The Rotary Club of Chertsey has collected monies from the Chertsey and Addlestone area at Christmas for many years. Over a number of days in December the members of the Rotary Club tow a colourful and seasonally presented 'Santa's Sleigh' carrying Father Christmas through the streets and draw the attention of residents to the display through the use of amplified carols. The sleigh is also parked outside Sainsburys on Saturdays and visits Childrens' wards at St. Peter's Hospital. A local celebrity often plays the part of Santa. It has become a traditional part of the local Christmas scene and is well received by residents.
- 3.2 The members of the Rotary Club collect donations from residents who have been drawn to the display. The donations are used in the Rotary Club's charitable activities in the local community.
- 3.3 The Rotary Club has had difficulty for some time in finding a secure place to store the equipment used in this event. For the last few months the Club has been allowed to store its equipment on an informal basis in a Council garage at Barker Road, Chertsey pending development of the site. The Barker Road site will be developed shortly and a new home will need to be found for this equipment.
- 3.4 It will be possible to identify a suitable new Council garage for the equipment without detriment to the availability of garages to existing or potential users. However, this would be in a garage block not earmarked for development and the previous informal arrangements would be inappropriate.
- 3.5 The Rotary Club could pay the normal charge for a Council garage (£6.50 a week, £338 a year), but this would in effect be paid from the Christmas collection and therefore reduce the funds available for charity. It is therefore suggested that this is funded from rent grant aid.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 A small provision for new awards of grant aid is available within the grant aid budget.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 This decision is ultimately a matter for Members. Given the modest and specific nature of this request, and the benefits to the community of both the Christmas event and associated charitable collection, Officers have suggested that the request be granted in full.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

- i) rent grant aid be granted to the Rotary Club of Chertsey for the provision of one Council garage, for the storage of sundry equipment for its Christmas street collection; and**
- ii) the period of grant aid will end should the garage no longer be required for this purpose**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None

15. IMPROVEMENTS TO ROAKES AVENUE AND BOWES ROAD/WAPSHOTT ROAD ESTATES - PROGRESS REPORT (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the progress made to date in respect of the proposed improvements to PRC properties on the Roakes Avenue and Bowes Road/Wapshott Road Estates in conjunction with the Council's Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Partners, the Apex Housing Group.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The Housing and Community Services Committee has received a number of reports regarding the Council's proposals in respect of these estates, most recently in June 2002 when the decision was made to seek the approval of the Economic Development Committee to utilise surplus allotment land at Painesfield to enable the Roakes Avenue Estate to be decanted.
- 2.2 A copy of the report to the Economic Development Committee for its meeting of 12 September 2002 is attached at Exempt Appendix '1' (to follow).
- 2.3 The Apex Housing Group has been selected to work in partnership with the Council to enable the Council to take advantage of the RSL's borrowing powers to enable essential improvement work to be undertaken. Members will recall from the Business Plan, presented to the July Committee, that the achievement of the 'Decent Home' Standard for the remainder of the stock relies on the RSL Partner undertaking the improvement works to the 200 properties on the two estates.

3. Progress To Date

- 3.1 Originally, the proposal was that the two estates be transferred to the Apex Housing Group by way of a Small Scale Voluntary Transfer (SSVT) which could take place only after a positive ballot of tenants involved.
- 3.2 The possibility of using part of the Painesfield Allotment Site provides a solution that did not require a formal transfer of properties to the Association. Instead, Apex would develop the site and the Council, using its nomination rights to the new development, would transfer tenants from Roakes Avenue into the new development. In this way, tenants would have the individual choice as to whether or not they wished to become tenants of Apex rather than have to adhere to the outcome of the ballot where the majority view would prevail.
- 3.3 Whilst the opportunity to achieve a wholesale redevelopment of the Bowes Road/Wapshott Road Estate does not present itself, the principle of giving residents an individual choice rather than having to adhere to a majority ballot result could still be applied to this estate. The suggestion is that Apex could develop the estate on a block by block basis with tenants given the option of moving into newly built properties and becoming Apex tenants or remaining with the Council and moving into Council stock elsewhere in the Borough.

4. Roakes Avenue

- 4.1 Progress on the Roakes Avenue Estate is dependent on the Economic Development Committee's decision in respect of part of the Allotment Site. If the decanting option is approved, a planning application would be made in October/November with work starting on site once the allotments were vacated in the Spring 2003.
- 4.2 A new residents' group has been formed, the Roakes Avenue Group, and consultation with residents will continue over the coming months.

5. Bowes Road/Wapshott Road

- 5.1 The Consultant Architects appointed by the Council and the Apex Housing Group have developed an Options Appraisal of the estate. This appraisal was based upon the Stock Condition Survey and the Structural Condition Appraisal undertaken by Michael Dyson Associates on behalf of the Borough Council. The Options Appraisal considered the following criteria:-
- Minimum disruption to residents.
 - Highest quality achievable of the finished product.
 - The cost of running and maintaining the properties.
 - Financial viability and value for money.
- 5.2 The Options Appraisal concludes that demolition and rebuilding is to be preferred to refurbishment.

5.3 In the light of a large number of right to buy sales on the estate the Options Appraisal concentrated on the blocks of flats, although four properties at the centre of the estate were considered for demolition as they enabled better utilisation of the existing central area. The architects have produced a draft proposal which, subject to planning consent and approval by the Environment Agency, could provide a significant number of additional properties which would enable the re-provision of social housing demolished and also allow for a certain number of properties to be sold on the private market which would assist in making the scheme viable. A copy of the Options Appraisal has been placed in the Members' Room.

6. Tenant Consultation

6.1 As required by Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985, Officers have undertaken consultation with residents. A Working Group consisting of Officers from Apex and the Borough Council together with five residents from both estates has been formed and has been meeting regularly. More recently, an open meeting has been held for the residents of Bowes Road/Wapshott Road where the proposals contained within the Options Appraisal were presented to residents. Further consultation is proposed, including a "Planning for Real" type exercise to involve residents further.

6.2 Subject to the outcome of the Economic Development Committee meeting scheduled for 12 September 2002, further consultation with residents from the Roakes Avenue Estate will take place. Whilst different architects have been appointed for the Painesfield site, it is expected that the consultation exercise will be very similar to that proposed for Bowes Road / Wapshott Road.

6.3 In addition, residents on both estates receive regular bulletins from the Council to advise them of progress.

6.4 Further reports will be brought to this Committee as the process develops.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

i) subject to the decision of the Economic Development Committee of 12 September 2002, the Committee approves, if appropriate, the principle of not pursuing a Small Scale Stock Transfer to the Apex Housing Group, and that instead the Council considers offering tenants the individual choice of accepting tenancies with Apex Housing Group, utilising the Council's nomination rights for any new properties developed; and

ii) progress be noted and Officers be authorised to draw up planning applications and carry out consultations as necessary.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Relevant and non-exempt documents on BHCSM's Project files

16. NHS SCRUTINY IN SURREY – CONSULTATION PAPER (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. **To seek Members' views on the consultation paper produced by Surrey County Council on NHS Scrutiny in Surrey.**

2. Background Information

2.1 The Committee considered a report on the Government's consultation document 'Local Authority Health Overview and Scrutiny' at its meeting in March 2002. The Health and Social Care Act 2001 gives local authorities with the responsibility for social services, the power to scrutinise the NHS. This is a permissive role and not a requirement. Borough/District Councillors can be co-opted onto the County Scrutiny Committee.

- 2.2 Members' views on the Government's Health Scrutiny consultation were reported to the Department of Health and copied to the Local Government Association (LGA) (see Appendix 'K'). In addition, representation was made to Surrey County Council (see Appendix 'L') for a Scrutiny Committee of 22 Councillors (11 County Councillors and 11 Councillors to represent the Borough and District Councils), which could be sub-divided into smaller groups to carry out reviews on health services.
- 2.3 The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has been approached regarding co-opting a Runnymede Borough Councillor onto its NHS Scrutiny Committee (as Englefield Green is in the Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead Primary Care Trust area). The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead are, like most Unitary and County Authorities, awaiting the Government guidance on NHS Scrutiny before setting up a Committee.
3. NHS Scrutiny in Surrey – Consultation Paper
- 3.1 The County Council has set up a NHS Select Committee on a shadow basis, pending the new responsibility for NHS Scrutiny, which commences from the 1 January 2003. The County Committee is seeking views on the best way to carry out this scrutiny role, and has prepared a consultation paper (see Appendix 'M'). The deadline for responses is noon on Monday 7 October 2002. The County NHS Select Committee will consider the response on the consultation on 23 October 2002.
- 3.2 The consultation asks for views on the following:
- i) Purpose of NHS Scrutiny
- This is set out in the Government's consultation document and has already been considered by this Committee.
- ii) The Operation of the Surrey NHS Scrutiny
- Surrey County Council is proposing a very ambitious programme of scrutiny and review which will have considerable resource implications. The complexity of health related issues is being underestimated, as is the availability of senior managers within the health family to provide information, explanation and appear before the NHS Select Committee.
- The programme of reviews and scrutinies will take into account the recent changes and potential service reconfiguration.
- The County have access to Department of Health and other documentation (e.g. community strategies, best value reviews, Director of Public Health reports), to develop a programme of reviews.
- iii) The Approach to Scrutiny and Membership
- A dedicated NHS Select Committee (a Shadow Committee) has been set up on the basis of other select committees. No Executive member of a Council can be a member of a NHS Scrutiny Committee and it is comprised of 11 Councillors politically proportional to the County Council as a whole.
- The Shadow Committee's view is that it should co-opt 3 or 4 borough/district non-Executive Members (or members not on the Policy Committee, or its equivalent for those Councils with alternative arrangements). The Borough/District Members could be nominated through the Surrey Local Government Association (SLGA), drawing on those members with health related experience. In addition local County/Borough/District Members could be invited to join the Committee, if and when it were looking at health matters relating to one particular part of the County.
- The NHS Select Committee does not propose permanent representation from other organisations (eg Community Health Councils, client groups, voluntary organisations, Patients Forums, The Commission for Patients and Public Involvement, NHS Bodies), but representatives could be invited to join the Committee or act as advisers for particular reviews.

iv) Support and Funding

The NHS Select Committee will need a Professional Adviser and a Committee Manager to do research for reviews, to prepare the revised programme, to undertake consultation with other organisations, and to take minutes and draft reports.

No funding has been identified for this function. The County Council expects that part of the existing Government funding for Community Health Councils, or equivalent should be provided. However, if this funding is not provided the County Council will need to consider to what extent, if at all, it wishes to take on this power (given that it will involve the diversion of funding from elsewhere). If the Borough/District Councils do wish to have co-opted Members on the Committee, it would be open to them to consider contributing to the funding of support, perhaps via the budget of the SLGA.

v) Relationships with the Public and Patients

Working relationships will be established between the NHS Select Committee and the Strategic Health Authority, Primary Care Trusts, NHS Trusts, the Commission of Patient and Public Involvement in Health (in view of its overseeing role for Patient Forums, Independent Complaints Advocacy Service and Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) in each of the Trusts).

The NHS Select Committee is keen to build up knowledge, mutual understanding and relationships. This will include informal opportunities for Members to meet representatives from health and other organisations, to attend briefings, presentations, various events and joint training.

vi) National Timetable and Surrey Programme

The consultation document also invites views on the national timetable and the outline programme for Surrey, including timing and location of meetings (see Appendix 'M'):

vii) Critical Success Factors

Views on the critical success factors are also sought (see Appendix 'M').

4. Government Guidance and Regulations on NHS Scrutiny

- 4.1 The Government Guidance is due to be published in the Autumn and should clarify the situation on whether Borough/District Councillors will have the same voting powers as County Councillors on the NHS Select Committee. It would appear to be appropriate for Surrey County Council to await the guidance before setting up a scrutiny process.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

- i) Members reinforce their original views to the Department of Health as applying to the consultation on NHS Scrutiny in Surrey;**
- ii) the County Council is asked to:**
- a) recognise that the NHS Scrutiny is a permissive role and not a requirement;**
 - b) clarify the extent of the Scrutiny;**
 - c) recognise that Surrey residents also use out of County health services which cannot be subject to the Surrey Scrutiny process;**
 - d) ensure that there is a separate process for the scrutiny of reconfigurations of health services;**

- e) **ensure that there is permanent representation from health and patient bodies and the voluntary sector;**
 - f) **agree that Councillor representation not be limited to those Councillors with a health background/experience, as training on the NHS should be provided to all Councillors; and**
 - g) **wait for Government guidance before setting up the NHS Select Committee process;**
- iii) **Members give consideration to a contribution to funding the administrative costs of the County NHS Scrutiny Select Committee, if they wish a Councillor to be co-opted on to the Committee (and no additional funds are provided to the County Council from the Government for this new function).**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

NHS Scrutiny Report HCS Committee 13/3/02
 Minutes of the Community Services Review Board, March 2001, page 1505, para 747 and Executive Committee, 18 April 2001, page 1,619, para 816

17. REFERENCE FROM THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (BSLSO)

At its meeting of 6 June 2002 the Economic Development Committee considered a report in respect of the potential development of the Fernlands Open Space Chertsey shown on plan VAL.434, attached at Appendix 'N'.

The site comprises approximately 2.2 acres (0.89 hectares) of which approximately 1.6 acres (0.64 hectares) are potentially developable for a limited high quality residential development.

The land was originally acquired for housing purposes but has been maintained and managed for many years as a leisure facility and is predominantly used as a dog walking area.

There are a number of planning issues which would need to be overcome and any proposals would need to be advertised and any objections considered.

The Economic Development Committee authorised Officers to investigate the potential for disposal and report back in detail in respect of any objections to the proposal and to determine whether or not to proceed.

The Committee also requested that the views of the Housing and Community Services Committee and Leisure and Environment Committee be sought as to whether to declare the land surplus.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

the land identified on Plan VAL.434, attached at Appendix 'N' be declared surplus to the requirements of the Housing and Community Services Committee.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None

18. STANDING ORDER NO. 42 - URGENT ACTION (BSLSO)

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>
Borough Housing and Community Services Manager	Approval to increase the element within the Capital Programme for the DIYSO Scheme by £100,000 to assist a current occupant of a shared ownership property to move to alternative accommodation and for any other transfer cases that may arise during the year.	487

(FOR INFORMATION)

Background Papers

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

19. 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.)