

Runnymede Borough Council
SPECIAL HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Monday, 22 July 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

A G E N D A

Notes:

- i) Any report on the Agenda involving confidential information (as defined by section 100A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972) must be discussed in private. Any report involving exempt information (as defined by Section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972), whether it appears in Part 1 or Part 2 below, may be discussed in private but only if the Committee so resolves.
- ii) The relevant 'background papers' are listed after each report in Part 1. Enquiries about any of the Agenda reports and background papers should be directed in the first instance to **Miss 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

	<u>Page</u>
1. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP	3
2. MINUTES	3
3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	3
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	3
5. BEST VALUE HOUSING INSPECTOR'S REPORT	3
6. HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2002	4
7. KEY WORKER HOUSING STRATEGY	6
8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC	6

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)

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 13 June 2002.

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. BEST VALUE HOUSING INSPECTOR'S REPORT (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **To notify Members of the outcome of the recent Housing Inspection undertaken by the Audit Commission.**

2. Background Information

2.1 During 2000/01 the Council completed five Best Value Reviews for Housing Services. These were as follows:-

- Housing Strategy and Policy
- Enabling
- Provision of Housing Advice Services and the Council's Housing Register
- Homelessness
- The Transfer Scheme and Voids

2.2 For each service area a comprehensive Improvement Plan was prepared with a range of targets.

2.3 As part of the Best Value Review regime the Audit Commission has established an Inspection Service. The aim of the Inspection Service is to review the current services delivered by local authorities and to consider whether or not the Best Value Improvement Plans that have been prepared are sufficient to ensure continuous improvement.

3. Report

3.1 In April 2002, all of the services listed above were inspected by three Inspectors from the Audit Commission. The Inspectors spoke to users of the service (including homeless people, tenants and housing register applicants), Members, partner organisations (such as Registered Social Landlords), voluntary organisations (such as the Citizens Advice Bureau) and staff.

3.2 In addition to consulting with interested parties the Inspectors scrutinised files to ensure that systems were being followed and considered a range of documents including the Housing Strategy Statement, Budget Book, Leader's Position Statement, Local Plan, Allocations Policy, Business Plan and Best Value Review Information.

- 3.3 Reality checks were also undertaken to ensure that the Council's claims about its services were accurate. These included:-
- Visits to the temporary accommodation on the mobile home site and at Englefield Green to check the condition of the properties.
 - Visits to some of the larger council estates to check the condition of stock.
 - Checks on the extent of information provided about housing services within Libraries, Day Centres and Health Centres.
 - Inspection of void properties.
 - Inspection of interviewing arrangements within the Civic Offices.
- 3.4 A copy of the Inspectors' report is attached at Appendix 'A'. The Inspectors have concluded from their research that the Council's services are "good with promising prospects of improvement". The service is given a star rating by the Commission and can receive between 0 and 3 stars. They ranked the Council's service as a 2 star service because:-
- i) the Council has clear aims for what it wants the service to achieve;
 - ii) the Housing Strategy is clear and comprehensive; and
 - iii) the Council's performance on housing is at or close to the performance of the best 25% of all district councils.
- 3.5 The Audit Commission has now completed 245 housing inspections and the results are given in the table below.

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
36 (15%)	150 (61%)	54 (22%)	5 (2%)	245 (100%)

- 3.6 This result is particularly pleasing as it is based upon a wide range of housing services and because Runnymede is the first Housing Authority in Surrey to obtain a 2 star assessment.
- 3.7 The Housing Inspectors have made a number of recommendations to improve services further and these have been taken into account when drawing up the Service Plan that supports the Housing Strategy Statement and Business Plan. Progress against these targets will be monitored along with the other targets within the Plan.

(FOR INFORMATION)

Background Papers

None.

6. HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2002 (BHCSM)

1. **Purpose of Report**

1.1 **To approve the submission of the 2002 Housing Investment Programme including the Housing Strategy Statement, Business Plan and Service Plan for Housing.**

2. **Background Information**

2.1 The Council is required annually to submit a copy of its Housing Strategy and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, together with supporting statistical information, to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE). This information, along with the Council's Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy, is used by the Government to form an assessment of the Council's performance and to decide on the allocation of housing and other capital resources.

2.2 It was not possible for the necessary documents to be compiled in time for the June meeting of this Committee and it was therefore agreed that a Special Housing and Community Services Committee would be held to approve the Housing Investment Programme submission.

2.3 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (previously the DTLR) has sent the Guidance at Appendix 'B' for compiling Housing Strategies and Business Plans. When compiling this Council's submission Officers have followed these requirements as closely as possible, whilst having regard to local circumstances and priorities.

3. Report

3.1 Attached to Appendix 'C' is the proposed Housing Strategy Statement for 2002. The proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan is at Appendix 'D' (to follow). The Statistical Appendix referred to in the Housing Strategy (Strategy Appendix B) will be available in the Members' Room prior to the meeting.

3.2 As part of the revision for the Housing Strategy Statement arrangements have been made to update the Housing Capital Programme. Appendix F of the Housing Strategy contains the revised Capital Programme. Members will note that a larger provision has been made within the programme for the Do It Yourself Shared Ownership (DIYSO) Scheme. This is to accommodate the growing demand for this scheme.

3.3 A Service Plan for Housing has also been compiled. This brings together the different targets that have been set for the Housing Service. A copy of the plan is attached at Appendix 'E'.

3.4 Members will note from the Housing Strategy that good progress is being made towards the Affordable Housing target and a number of potential opportunities and resources have been identified.

3.5 The full Housing Investment Programme submission must be made to GOSE by 30 July 2002. Accordingly, the Chairman is asked to treat this matter as urgent and therefore a delegated function under paragraph 1.3 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution. However, there may be a number of minor alterations that need to be made to the final documents before their submission. Therefore it is asked that the Borough Housing and Community Services Manager be given delegated authority to make these minor amendments in consultation with the Chairman.

3.6 The Services Review Board and the Tenants Services Group have been given the opportunity to comment on the Housing Strategy Statement and their views will be made known at the meeting. Because of the timescale for submission of the documents, this issue has been identified as one where delay in implementation will prejudice the interests of the Council, and therefore the Review Board has been asked to waive its right to use call-in powers with regard to this item.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 The Strategy and HRA Business Plan presents the financial implications in some detail. In summary, resources commensurate with the Council's overall financial strategy are available to meet the Housing Strategy needs and targets. The HRA Business Plan shows that the proposals to maintain and improve the Council's housing stock in the medium to long term can be financed from rental and other HRA income.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

- i) the Housing Strategy and Business Plan be approved for submission to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE);**

- ii) **the amendments to the Capital Programme be noted and approved; and**
- iii) **the Borough Housing and Community Services Manager be authorised to make minor amendments to the documents in consultation with the Chairman prior to their submission to GOSE.**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None.

7. KEY WORKER HOUSING STRATEGY (BHCSM)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **To obtain approval for the proposed Key Worker Housing Strategy.**

2. Background Information

2.1 During the Best Value Review of Housing Strategy a target was set to establish the housing needs of key workers and those on low/moderate incomes.

2.2 A great deal of research has been undertaken regarding key worker issues and the attached report at Appendix 'F' sets out the findings.

3. Report

3.1 Appendix 'F' also sets out an action plan and strategy for tackling the problems with recruitment and retention of essential staff working within Runnymede. It is proposed that this strategy should be reviewed annually along with the Housing Strategy and any amendments or additions made.

3.2 The strategy also proposes that for the coming year (2002/2003) the following workers will be accepted as key workers for the purposes of the Allocations Policy for social housing: health workers, teachers, social workers, Police, fire fighters and care workers. Initiatives to help employers in other work areas are also outlined within the strategy.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

the Council approves the proposed Key Worker Housing Strategy attached at Appendix 'F' and the key worker definition to be used within the Allocations Scheme for affordable housing.

(TO RECOMMEND)

Background Papers

None.

8. 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)