



FAREHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

CIVIC OFFICES CIVIC WAY FAREHAM HAMPSHIRE

Minutes of the Housing Overview Panel

*Minutes of a meeting held on 17 July 2003
at the Civic Offices, Fareham*

PRESENT:

Councillor M F Godrich
(Chairman)

Councillor Mrs M R Nadolski
(Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs D R Harrison (deputising for DCS Swanbrow), Miss C S Hester, D J Norris and Mrs K K Trott

**Co-opted
Member:** M A Prior

Also present: Councillors E A Crouch (minutes 6, 8 and 9) and H W L Pritchard (minutes 6, 8 and 10)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs M E Ellerton and D C S Swanbrow.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Overview Panel held on 22 May 2003 be confirmed and signed as a correct record. ([ho-030522-m](#)).

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made announcements concerning a proposed tour of the Borough, the Home Energy Conservation Act programme solar car challenge and the Housing Strategy Officer.

4. REVIEW OF TENANT CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS INCLUDING COMPACT ACTION PLANS

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Housing on the Council's performance for 2002/03 against the annual targets set out in the tenant consultation arrangements (copy of report [ho-030717-r03-jsh](#) circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes).

It was AGREED:-

- (a) that the Panel notes and approves the following:-

the Tenant Consultation Arrangements, as detailed in Appendix A to the report;
the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Participation Compacts, as detailed in Appendix B to the report;
the Summary of Action Plans for the Borough Panel and the Tenants' Area Panels as detailed in Appendix C to the report;
the Action Plans for Fareham Leaseholders' Group as detailed in Appendix D to the report;

- (b) that the Executive be requested to approve the following:-

- (i) that the report be received and that it be distributed to all the Tenant Area Panels and Fareham Leaseholders' group for consultation purposes;
- (ii) that the Tenant Area Panels and Fareham Leaseholders' Group be made aware of the availability of a £50 annual grant to help cover minor expenses;
- (iii) that the Tenant Area Panels and Fareham Leaseholders' Group be made aware of the availability of child care allowances for members attending their meetings; and agree that a report to the Executive be made regarding the allowance payable, following enquiries with Social Services;
- (iv) that the Tenant Area Panels and Fareham Leaseholders' Group be made aware of the availability of attendance allowances for tenants and leaseholders attending 'South Coast Training' events and the Chartered Institute of Housing South East Conference equivalent to £30.39 per day;

4. Contd.

- (v) that the Tenant Area Panels and Fareham Leaseholders' Group be made aware that they may claim travelling allowances for attending Borough Panel, Leaseholders' Group and other tenant and leaseholder meetings, and Housing Overview Panel training sessions; and
- (vi) that the Tenant Area Panels and Fareham Leaseholders' Group be requested to consider the Government's Decent Homes Standard Programme and regularly consider and review the Council's progress.

5. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Housing containing the information relating to performance monitoring requested by the Panel (copy of report [ho-030717-r01-scl](#) circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes).

It was AGREED:-

- (a) that the Director of Housing be requested to thank the members of his department on behalf of the Panel for their hard work under difficult circumstances and for trying hard in innovative ways to address the different challenges facing them; and
- (b) that the need to look at the situation with regard to former tenant arrears be reaffirmed.

6. HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Housing on the progress being made in preparing a new Housing Strategy Statement for Fareham and the timetable for submitting the new strategy to the Government Office for the South East (copy of report [ho-030717-r04 -mge](#) circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes).

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillors Pritchard and Crouch addressed the Panel during the consideration of this item.

It was AGREED:-

- (a) that the progress made in preparing a new housing strategy and the timetable for submission to the Government Office for the South East be noted;
- (b) that it be recommended to the Executive that the key priorities to be addressed by the new housing strategy be:-

6. (b) Contd.

- To prevent and reduce homelessness
 - To facilitate the provision of additional affordable housing (to rent and or buy)
 - To support vulnerable people to access and maintain a tenancy and or homeownership
 - To improve housing standards
 - To maintain a good quality environment;
- (c) that it be recommended to the Executive that the Balanced Housing Markets Working Group be requested to consider possible renegotiation with developers over quotas and thresholds; and
- (d) that the Director of Housing be requested to send a letter to the Government (with copies to the Government Office for the South East and the Member of Parliament for Fareham) expressing the Panel's concern at the abolition of Local Authority Social Housing Grant in conjunction with other demands being made upon the Council and that a speedy reply be requested.

7. HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME – CONSULTATION RESULTS

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Housing on the Housing Allocation Scheme consultation results (copy of report [ho-030717-r05-ata](#) circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes).

Members were informed of the consideration given to the matter by the Housing Allocation Scheme Working Party at its meeting on 10 July 2003.

It was AGREED that it be recommended to the Executive that:-

- (a) the proposed allocation scheme be not implemented;
- (b) the officers be requested to develop a simplified allocation scheme with a 'banding' system of priorities for rehousing; and
- (c) in the interim the transitional 'points' based scheme continues to operate subject to the following minor amendments:
 - (i) that points are given for time spent in temporary accommodation by homeless people accepted as statutorily homeless by the Council:

20 points to be given on re-registration for each 12 months in the temporary accommodation:

7. (c) (i) Contd.

Licensees in bed and breakfast accommodation, and lodgings with non-relatives.

People in temporary accommodation secured by Fareham Borough Council, including bed and breakfast; leased and Fareham Borough Council short-life properties.

to take effect for housing waiting list re-registrations due on or after Monday 1st September 2003.

- (ii) the transfer incentive scheme be administered outside of the usual points scheme to facilitate the best use of the social housing stock;
- (iii) 6 overcrowding points are given for each person on the application who exceeds the bedroom standard (instead of 6 points for each person on the application).

8. HOUSING BENEFIT SANCTIONS AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Head of Housing Strategy and Review gave a presentation and conducted a 'brainstorming session' on a Government consultation concerning proposed Housing Benefit Sanctions relating to Antisocial Behaviour.

Everyone present was invited to contribute during the consideration of this item.

A copy of the consultation paper was circulated at the meeting.

It was AGREED that the Head of Housing Strategy and Review be requested to respond to the consultation questions as follows

1. Do you agree with the principles for the operation of benefit sanctions outlined in this paper, including making receipt of Housing Benefit dependent on acceptable behaviour?

The Council does not agree with the principle for the operation of benefit sanctions as outlined in the consultation paper. Anti-social behaviour should be dealt with as a criminal offence that must be addressed through the courts. The courts already have power to make Benefit Attachment Orders when convicting offenders.

2. If so, which of the two options outlined in this paper is most consistent with those principles and would best act as a preventative deterrent to anti-social behaviour?

Neither option would act as an effective preventative deterrent to anti social behaviour.

3. Which option could be administered most fairly, efficiently and effectively?

8. Contd.

Neither option could be administered fairly, efficiently or effectively. Option 1 is an administratively burdensome process which relies on efficient and effective communication between the courts, the Department of Work & Pensions and Housing Benefit Authorities and other agencies (Social Services, Health etc). Such systems are not currently in place and without significant investment by the Government are thought unlikely to improve, thus making this option ineffective.

Option 2 places the responsibility entirely on Local Authorities without offering any additional resources to fund a post of Anti-social behaviour officer, parenting classes, counselling etc. It would require improved funding of Community Safety Partnerships by the Government to be implemented, and even then it is considered it would still be an ineffective deterrent.

4. Do you agree with the Government's preference for the second, administrative option?

No, this option places responsibility entirely on local authorities without providing adequate resources to implement effectively.

5. How might housing benefit sanctions be triggered?

Housing benefit sanctions are not considered to be an effective deterrent for tackling anti-social behaviour – It would only apply to a small number of perpetrators and appears to single out those in greatest need for additional punitive measures whilst leaving those not in receipt of housing benefit unaffected.

9. MEASURES TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS FAMILIES IN BED & BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATION

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Housing on reducing the number of homeless families in Bed & Breakfast (copy of report [ho-030717-r07-mge](#) circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes).

At the invitation of the Chairman Councillor Crouch addressed the Panel during the consideration of this item.

It was AGREED:-

- (a) that it be noted that an additional 58 units of temporary accommodation for homeless families will be needed by 31 March 2004 and that the predicted shortfall as detailed in paragraphs 16 and 17 of the report be also noted;
- (b) that the measures in place to meet the corporate priority for ending the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation by homeless families by 31 March 2004 (as detailed in paragraphs 22 – 26 of the report) be noted;

9. Contd.

- (c) that the implications of the target not being met be noted and that the Panel's approval of the actions listed in paragraphs 24, 25 and 26 of the report be noted;
- (d) that the Registered Social Landlords' response to the measures be awaited and that it be noted that a further report will be submitted to the Housing Overview Panel on 11 September 2003 with detailed proposals for providing additional temporary accommodation for homeless families in the most cost effective way.

10. DRAFT RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION PAPER – 'IMPROVING STANDARDS OF ACCOMMODATION FOR HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION'

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Housing on a consultation paper about standards for temporary accommodation (copy of report [ho-030717-r08-mge](#) circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes).

At the invitation of the Chairman Councillor Pritchard addressed the Panel during the consideration of this item.

It was AGREED that the Executive be requested to note and approve the draft response to the consultation as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report and amended at the meeting, with the inclusion of a summary page at the beginning of the response to stress the most important points discussed.

11. OVERVIEW PANEL – WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Finance and Resources on the Work Programme for 2003/04 (copy of report [ho-030717-r02-cbe](#) circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes).

It was AGREED:-

- (a) that Housing Investment Programme 2003 be deleted from the Programme for 17 July 2003 as this item was incorporated in the Housing Strategy item on the same Programme;
- (b) that Housing Benefit Sanctions and Antisocial Behaviour be added to the Programme for 17 July 2003;
- (c) that Reducing the Number of Homeless Families in Bed & Breakfast be added to the Programme for 17 July 2003;
- (d) that Consultation Paper – Standards for Temporary Accommodation be added to the Programme for 17 July 2003;

11. Contd.

- (e) that the Training Sessions for 17 July and 6 November 2003 be changed round so that Homelessness Issues is on 17 July and Strategic Issues is on 6 November;
- (f) that Temporary Accommodation for the Homeless be added to the Programme for 11 September 2003;
- (g) that Housing Allocation Scheme be added to the Programme for 11 September 2003;
- (h) that Review of Sheltered Housing – Garden Court be added to the Programme for 11 September 2003;
- (i) that Review of Lettings Policy – Frosthole Close be added to the Programme for 11 September 2003;
- (j) that Allocation Scheme and Tenant Consultation Arrangements be deleted from the Other Possible Reports list as these have been included in the Programme for particular meetings;
- (k) that a Tour of the Borough be included in the Programme, to take place on Tuesday 7 October 2003, commencing at 4.30pm;
- (l) that Tenant Area Panels' Inspection Schemes be added to the Other Possible Reports list.

(The meeting started at 6:00pm
and ended at 9:26pm)