

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND
ENTERPRISE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE****13 JUNE 2007**

Chairman: * Councillor Stanley Sheinwald

Councillors: * Ms Nana Asante * Jerry Miles
* Graham Henson * Anthony Seymour (3)
* Ashok Kulkarni * Yogesh Teli (1)* Denotes Member present
(1) and (3) Denote category of Reserve Member**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL****PART II - MINUTES**56. **Appointment of Chairman:****RESOLVED:** To note the appointment at the Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 May 2007 of Councillor Stanley Sheinwald as Chairman of the Sub-Committee for the Municipal Year 2007/08.57. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman:****RESOLVED:** To note the appointment at the Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 May 2007 of Councillor Jerry Miles as Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee for the Municipal Year 2007/08.58. **Attendance by Reserve Members:****RESOLVED:** To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-Ordinary MemberReserve MemberCouncillor Mrs Vina Mithani
Councillor Dinesh SolankiCouncillor Yogesh Teli
Councillor Anthony Seymour59. **Declarations of Interest:****RESOLVED:** To note that the following interests were declared:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
11. Draft Housing Strategy	Councillor Graham Henson	Councillor Graham Henson declared a personal interest in that he was a delegate to the Rayners Lane Home Group. He would remain in the room whilst this matter was considered.

60. **Arrangement of Agenda:****RESOLVED:** That all items be considered with the press and public present.61. **Minutes:****RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2007 be deferred until printed in the Council Bound Minute Volume.62. **Public Questions:****RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8.63. **Petitions:****RESOLVED:** To note that no petitions were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 9.

64. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10.

65. **References from Council and Other Committees/Panels:**

RESOLVED: To note that no reports were received.

66. **Draft Housing Strategy:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Adults and Housing, which set out a draft of the Council's new Housing Strategy and a draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan. An officer explained that the Council's previous Housing Strategy, when submitted to the Government Office for London (GOL) in 2002, was deemed 'not fit for purpose' in line with GOL's criteria. The new Strategy was intended to meet the GOL's fit for purpose criteria, and Members were asked to comment on the new draft Strategy before it went to Cabinet in July 2007.

Officers gave a presentation which highlighted the key issues raised in the new Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan, and asked the Sub-Committee for their feedback on the documents. In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised:

- GOL had set 'fit for purpose' criteria. Officers had met with GOL representatives to ensure their criteria were being met. Housing Service staff had been working with Tribal Consulting (housing professionals) with a view to ensuring that GOL's criteria were met.
- The Strategy was for the whole Borough regardless of whether the housing was privately owned or social. The HRA Business Plan was directed solely at the maintenance of Council housing.
- The Housing Strategy document was linked to the Council's corporate priorities and the final version would include statistical data.
- With regards to how the Strategy responded to demographic change in Harrow, separate work was being undertaken which would look at the provision of housing for the elderly. A preliminary report on this work had made direct recommendations about sheltered housing, as it was understood that the provision made for sheltered housing did not meet the diverse needs of the community in Harrow.
- The issue of under-occupancy should be addressed as elderly people needed to be encouraged to move out of larger properties. The longest waiting time for social housing was for larger properties and that the Housing Service was working towards providing five, six and seven bedroom properties in Harrow.
- With regards to community involvement, Harrow Council had lost a lot of housing stock when the 'Right to Buy' Scheme was introduced. Tenants had the right to self-manage and, as a landlord, Harrow Council needed to explore the possibility of giving people the right to self-manage.
- Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs), which gave management of estates to tenant groups, included leaseholders.
- Members would need to look at existing policies to ensure that they delivered affordable housing.
- Social landlords were funded to produce new housing, and the Strategy would look to work with social landlords as partners.
- Schemes which the Housing Service offered such as the Finders Fee Scheme, needed to make business sense for landlords. The Chairman suggested that more support should be given to landlords to encourage them to house more people.
- The Housing Service relocated people to other London Boroughs where requested/necessary.
- A licensing scheme had raised the standard of HMOs (Homes in Multiple Occupancy).

- Schemes were needed to support people who suffered from the effects of anti-social behaviour.
- As much support as possible needed to be given to vulnerable tenants.
- The Local Area Agreement (LAA) did not mention housing.
- The Housing Service in Harrow provided a good service to one of the most diverse communities in London.
- The Housing Service worked with tenants to prevent anti-social behaviour and that it was the responsibility of the Housing Management department to address issues of anti-social behaviour on Council estates.
- The Housing Service needed to improve communications with Housing Associations in order to prevent anti-social behaviour, as it was understood that anti-social behaviour was a priority for Council tenants.
- The Housing Service had introduced a new tenancy agreement for Council tenants, with a view to tackling the problem of anti-social behaviour.
- The relationship between Housing Associations and Harrow Council was complex and an officer had been working with the Portfolio Holder for Housing with a view to improving the relationship between the organisations and regular meetings were held to resolve issues of mutual concern.
- London had unique housing problems when compared with the rest of the country and therefore the 'London context' was an important part of the Strategy.
- Members expressed concerns that the Strategy did not look for solutions to tackle the problem of anti-social behaviour; rather it just stated what the problems were.
- Offices in the energy team were currently working on an initiative to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from Council houses.
- Homelessness forums dealt with the problem of homelessness in the Borough.
- The issue of adaptations needed to be addressed and that a more efficient adaptations service was necessary.

A Member queried whether an attempt had been made to meet with 'hard to reach' tenants who did not have access to a Tenant and Resident Association. In response, an officer explained that the Housing Strategy consultation document would have a feedback form which would be posted to every Council tenant and leaseholder and would be published on the Council's website. The officer confirmed that during the summer, Housing staff planned to target estates that did not have strong TRAs in order to encourage people to get involved.

In response to a concern raised by the Chairman, an officer stated that they were under enormous pressure to 'turnaround' void properties. The officer agreed to look at the problems of anti-social behaviour on an estate in Harrow Weald.

RESOLVED: That (1) the above be noted;

(2) officers circulate copies of the updated Housing Strategy to all Members of the Sub-Committee for further comment before it was submitted to the July 2007 Cabinet meeting;

(3) the scrutiny officer provide housing officers with detailed findings on this matter to supplement the minutes, including guidance on the preparation of further drafts of the Housing Strategy and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.40 pm, closed at 9.09 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR STANLEY SHEINWALD
Chairman