

**REPORT OF HOUSING
PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND REVIEW PANEL**

(Meeting held 7 February 2001)

1. OUTLINE WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 14)

The Panel has considered its proposed Work Programme, for the municipal year 2001/02. It was noted that Best Value reviews are likely to impinge more on the work of the Panel over the forthcoming year.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Work Programme attached at Appendix 1 to this report be adopted as the basis for the work for the Panel for the year 2001/02.

2. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OF PARTNER REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORDS (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 15)

Members have considered the performance of registered social landlords (RSL's) as monitored by the Housing Corporation against a range of performance indicators. The most up to date report for the New Forest was attached as an Appendix to Report B.

The Housing Corporation's performance indicators related only to those Housing Associations which had over 250 dwellings within their total stock. Members also referred to the work of smaller Housing Associations which operated in the District.

Members felt that as part of the Panel's review of housing associations, discussions with partner RSL's should take place.

It was suggested that two representatives of Housing Associations should be invited to a future meeting and that each Association should be invited to make a short presentation (up to 10 minutes) about their work within the District.

Tenants of each of the Associations will also be invited to attend to give their views on their landlords.

It was agreed that the Swaythling and Hyde Housing Associations be invited to attend the next meeting of the Panel to answer questions from members on their operation within the District; with both Associations being invited to make a short presentation of their work; that tenants of each also be invited to discuss the services provided; and the Associations be provided with an advance list of likely topics to enable them to discuss their activities.

3. HOMELESSNESS TRENDS IN THE NEW FOREST (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO. 16)

The Panel considered a report on homelessness trends in the New Forest. The report outlined the background to the increase in homelessness over recent years and the action taken by the Council to limit the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, as well as other issues for consideration. Some 75 households had been accepted as homeless or threatened with homelessness and were staying temporarily with relatives or were waiting for Warrant of Possession to evict them from private sector tenancies. 23 households were currently in bed and breakfast

accommodation. Reference was also made to the Homes Bill which had recently been introduced in Parliament and which proposed significant changes to existing homelessness legislation.

It was noted that resources within the Council's housing service remained adequate to support the Housing Advice Service which continued to be provided in six major population centres across the District. Provision of housing advice would be considered as part of a Best Value review.

The possible conversion of some warden-assisted bedsit accommodation into hostel provision was being investigated. The warden-assisted accommodation was currently in need of refurbishment and sometimes proved hard to let.

A member referred to the Housing Association Leased Property Scheme (which provided the bulk of the Council's portfolio of temporary housing, about 190 homes). Such properties were difficult to obtain when there was a buoyant housing market and the Council was enabled to pay "top up" rents to owners. Thus far, 8 families had avoided going into bed and breakfast by use of the scheme. It was noted that the top up figure was to be reviewed in April this year in any event.

Members generally felt that the option for a stronger "gatekeeping approach", which might reduce the number of accepted homeless would be more likely to lead to greater conflict with the public, dispute with Citizen's Advice Bureaux and other advice agencies and a possible increase in legal challenges, with the increased possibility that generally vulnerable people could be excluded from the system.

Reference was also made to the Empty Homes Strategy which provided a further opportunity to combat homelessness levels. The Strategy continued to work well.

The Panel has endorsed the current approach to homelessness issues, and has also requested that:

- Further research be done on the possibility of increasing the "top up" maximum for the Housing Association Leased Property Scheme;
- When the Advisory Cabinet considers homelessness issues, it be advised that it is this Panel's view that the "strong gatekeeping" approach to homelessness be not adopted; and
- Further information be provided on the possibility of adapting existing bedsit letting accommodation to use by homeless families.

Cllr B Rule
CHAIRMAN

Attachment : Appendix 1

(democratic/hs070201)hsreport

**HOUSING PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND REVIEW PANEL
PROGRAMME OF REVIEWS**

FEBRUARY

Review showing the programme for the review panel
Housing performance indicators
Homelessness trends and availability of homes and reasons for refusals
Rural white paper (maybe)
Performance of housing associations including one attending

APRIL

Health issues (training if asked for)
Meals on wheels
Performance of housing associations including two attending
Housing strategy a look back and forward
Removing vehicles from estates and condition and standards on estates
Review of initiative to provide temporary housing
The planned maintenance programme

JUNE

Performance housing associations including one attending
Care in the Community, level of care in sheltered housing, care and repair, supporting people
Housing for people in non-priority groups and provision of refuges for women and young men
End of last year's finances
The potential for a further reduction in void turn-round

SEPTEMBER

Housing performance indicators
Review of the Tenant compact
The way mutual exchanges are handled
Performance on rent arrears
Budget review

NOVEMBER

The results of the Housing Needs Survey

OTHER ITEMS FOR INSERTION (or what may become important next year)

Best value review of development
Best value review of housing needs
Choice based lettings
LSVT and other initiatives
Revision of homelessness legislation by Government
Home energy efficiency
Cross cutting issues e.g. Health Review