

**THE MORAY COUNCIL**  
**MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 19 AUGUST 2008**

**COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN**

**PRESENT**

Councillor E. McGillivray (Chairman), F. Murdoch (Deputy Chairman), J.S. Cree,  
J. Hogg, B. Jarvis, M. McConnachie, J. Mackay, I. Ogilvie, J. Russell, J. Sharp and D. Stewart

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Chief Housing Officer, Mrs Scott, Principal Solicitor (Commercial & Conveyancing), Head of Financial Services, Housing Programmes Manager, Community Planning & Development Manager, Housing Needs Manager, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator (in respect of Item 5, 6 and 7), Equal Opportunities Officer (in respect of Item 5), PPR & Communication Officer (in respect of Item 5), Corporate Policy Unit Manager (in respect of Item 5, 6 and 7) and Mrs Carswell, Committee Services Officer.

**ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor A. Wright (Ex-Officio) and Mr C. Oswald, Equality and Human Rights Commission

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors G. Leadbitter and R. Shepherd

**1. PRESENTATION BY EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

Mr Chris Oswald, Head of Policy & Parliamentary Affairs gave a presentation on the role and vision of the Commission following which members took the opportunity to put forward questions to Mr Oswald. The Chair thanked Mr Oswald for his presentation.

**2. DECLARATION OF GROUP DECISIONS**

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct the meeting noted that there were no declarations from group leaders or spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how members will vote on any item on the Agenda nor any declarations of Members Interest in respect of any Item on the Agenda.

### **3. EXEMPT INFORMATION**

The Meeting agreed, in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, that the public and media representatives be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of the Items of Business appearing at the relevant paragraphs of this Minute as specified below so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the appropriate paragraph of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Act.

<u>Para No. of Minute</u>	<u>Para No. of Schedule 7A</u>
8	17

### **4. WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

There were no written questions submitted.

### **5. RESEARCH ON POLISH MIGRANTS**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive asking the Committee to support a research project on Polish migrants.

Following a question from Councillor Hogg, the Corporate Policy Unit Manager advised that there were no financial implications, as existing staff would be used to undertake elements of the research project.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to support the research project on Polish migrants.

### **6. GRAFFITI POLICY**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive asking the Committee to approve the Graffiti Policy to administer the free graffiti removal service offered by the Antisocial Behaviour Operational Group.

Following questions from Councillors, the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator advised that the Police be ask to include reclaiming costs for removal of graffiti as part of the offence for consideration by the Sheriff but that the graffiti would be removed whether the cost could be reclaimed or not. He further advised that the detection rate was low but undertook to come back to Members with a more accurate detection/conviction rate.

Councillor Wright expressed concern that should the monies run out halfway through the year then the budget could be looked at and Councillor McGillivray asked that a contingency plan be adopted and a report be taken to the Community Planning Board.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed: -

- (i) to approve the Graffiti Policy to administer the free graffiti removal service offered by the Antisocial Behaviour Operational Group;
- (ii) that a report be taken to the Community Planning Board if the funds become low during the course of the financial year, to request further funding; and
- (iii) that the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator will get information on percentage rate of convictions and advise Councillors.

## **7. SAFER STRATEGY**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive asking the Committee to approve the extension of the deadline for the development of the Safer Strategy 2008-2011, which was due in May 2008.

Following consideration, the Committee approved the new deadline of 31 October 2008 for completion of the Safer Strategy 2008-2011.

## **8. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVIEW OF ACTIONS 2007/08 AND PROPOSED ACTIONS 2008/09**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services informing Members of the progress that has been made in implementing the actions arising from the Moray Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008 and also proposed actions to be progressed in 2008/09.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to: -

- (i) note the submission of the Local Outcome Agreement to the Scottish Government;
- (ii) note the progress achieved in 2007/08 in implementing the actions arising from the Moray Homelessness Strategy;
- (iii) the proposed actions to be progressed in 2008/09;
- (iv) the development of a new Homelessness Strategy for 2009-2012; and
- (v) note that further reports would be presented as actions were progressed.

## **9. LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE 2008**

There was submitted and noted a report by the Director of Community Services summarising the 2008 Local Housing Strategy update and reviewing the actions for 2007/08 and setting out the actions for 2008/09.

## **10. ALLOCATIONS POLICY ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2007/08**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services presenting the annual performance in relation to the operation of the Council's Allocations Policy in 2007/08.

Further to concerns raised by Councillor Cree, the Chief Housing Officer advised that in order to meet the Council's homelessness duties, there was a need to increase the percentage of homelessness applicants being housed and to some extent the change in policy enables the Council to also house those who are not classed as homeless. The change in the policy has been driven by the Government's move to abolish homelessness by 2012. The Council welcomed this move but responded by advising that there was a need for more affordable houses and continued investment. The Chief Housing Officer further advised that 48% of allocations in 2007/08 were to homeless applicants and other authorities are nearer 60-70% but all authorities are facing similar issues.

Councillor Wright commended the department for managing the targets, which the Council have no control over and still managing to house other applicants.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to: -

- (i) note the report; and
- (ii) note that further reports on the progress of the Allocation Policy Review and developing a Common Housing Register would be presented to the Committee

## **11. HOUSING SERVICES TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services to present the Housing Services Training and Development Strategy 2009-2012.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed the Training and Development Strategy 2009-12.

## **12. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND OTHER HOUSING BUDGET MONITORING 2008/09**

There was submitted and noted a report by the Director of Community Services presenting budget monitoring information for the period to 30 June 2008 in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Other Housing.

## **13. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2008/09**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services informing the Committee of the position to 30 June 2008 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2008/09.

Following a question from Councillor Ogilvie, the Chief Housing Officer advised that there had been a reduction in the Council houses sold. Part of this may be due to the impact of Pressured Area Status although this has a limited impact as this only applies to tenants whose tenancies began after September 2002. In terms of the income received from house sales, the reduction in the number of house sales has been offset by increases in property values.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the position with regard to the Housing Investment Programme for 2008/09.

#### **14. HOUSING QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2008/09**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services outlining to the Committee the performance of the Housing Service for the period 1 April to 30 June 2008.

Following discussion, the Housing Needs Manager advised that all applicants, including homeless applicants, receive two reasonable offers of accommodation before suspension applies. To address homelessness, the Council often needs to widen the areas of choice of location for homeless applicants. In some instances, this results in refusal of the first offer of housing. In response to a request from Councillor Cree, the Chief Housing Officer advised that an analysis of homelessness in Moray would be presented to a future Committee. This was welcomed by the Committee.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:

- (i) the performance outlined in the report;
- (ii) note the actions being taken to seek improvements where required;
- (iii) a report on homeless issues including profile of homeless applicants, coming to a future Committee.

#### **15. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – HOUSING 2008/09**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services presenting the progress on the achievement of priorities identified within the Community Services Improvement Plan as it relates to the Council's Housing Service.

Councillor McGillivray reminded Members of the briefing session being held on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> August on the Housing Inspection and encouraged all members to attend.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the report.

## **16. FAIRER SCOTLAND FUND**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive asking the Committee to agree to the establishment of three posts to develop the Fairer Scotland Fund.

Further to discussion and concerns raised by Members, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of this item until a further report was produced covering detailed financial and personnel issues including job descriptions, breakdown in costs of staffing, justification for appointing three members of staff and issues around employment rights.

## **17. QUESTION TIME**

Following a question from Councillor Jarvis regarding the possibility of removing 10% of the MOD houses in Kinloss, the Chief Housing Officer advised that she had no details at this stage and that a meeting which had been planned for this week had been postponed at the Defence Estates request.

## **18. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2008/09 – BUDGET MONITORING**

There was submitted and noted a report by the Director of Community Services presenting budget monitoring information for the period to 30 June 2008 for the Building Services Trading Operation.