

THE MORAY COUNCIL
MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2008

COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN

PRESENT

Councillors E. McGillivray (Chair), F. Murdoch (Deputy) J. Hogg, B. Jarvis, G. Leadbitter, M. McConachie, J. Mackay, , I. Ogilvie, J. Russell, J. Sharp, R. Shepherd and D. Stewart.

IN ATTENDANCE

The Chief Executive, Head of Financial Services, Chief Housing Officer, A. Scott, Principal Solicitor (Commercial & Conveyancing), Community Planning and Development Manager, Homelessness Projects Officer, Housing Needs Manager, Head of Estates Service and C. Carswell, Committee Services Officer.

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor A. Wright

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor J.S. Cree.

The Chair welcomed Mr Jenkins, Housing Inspections Manager to the meeting.

1. 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. Councillors G. Leadbitter, D. Stewart and B. Jarvis declared an interest in Item 13 as Council appointed representatives on the Moray Housing Partnership. There were no further declarations of Members Interests in respect of any Item on the Agenda.

2. 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.

Para No. of Minute

Para No. of Schedule 7A

12

8

13

8 & 9

14

8 & 9

3. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Committee were advised that no written questions had been received.

4. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services asking the Communities Committee to note the progress made in the development of a Temporary Accommodation Strategy for Moray.

Councillor Leadbitter queried whether it was preferable to use other types of accommodation rather than the general housing stock and whether after use, any properties used as temporary accommodation could then be returned to mainstream housing stock at a future date, Councillor McGillivray advised that the proposals in the report were an attempt to try to balance the waiting lists and increasing the homeless stock as it was not acceptable for young families to be in bed and breakfast accommodation for a long period of time. Councillor Leadbitter also queried whether discussions had taken place with education regarding high turnover of families if temporary accommodation was allocated in specific areas and Councillor McGillivray advised that this would be addressed.

Further to questions from Councillor Hogg, the Chief Housing Officer advised that within Moray there are currently 40 households in bed & breakfast accommodation. In cases where children are accommodated, this could mean that the Council could be considered to be in breach of suitable accommodation orders. There is a £200,000 overspend in the temporary accommodation budget which was mainly due to bed & breakfast usage. She also advised that a guarantee cannot be given that accommodation in pressured areas would not be used and there would be an initial cost of furnishing the properties but if using the Council's own stock the costs would have a neutral impact and there would be a saving by not using bed & breakfast accommodation.

Following consideration the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress in the development of a Temporary Accommodation Strategy for Moray;
- (ii) that officers working to identify an additional fifteen suitable Council properties by March 2009 for use as temporary accommodation;
- (iii) that a further report on progress be presented to the Communities Committee in March 2009;

- (iv) that the draft Temporary Accommodation Strategy would be presented to the Committee for comment in March 2009; and
- (v) that the issues highlighted in the report should be treated as high priority.

5. FEASIBILITY OF A COUNCIL NEW BUILD HOUSING PROGRAMME

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services asking the Committee to consider the feasibility of a Moray Council new build housing programme and identifying that further work would be required to enable the Council to bid for resources from the Scottish Government to assist new build housing.

The Chief Housing Officer gave a brief outline of the areas which would require to be looked at in more detail by the Council before a bid could be made for the monies which the Scottish Government are currently offering with regard to housing needs, financial feasibility, new build programme and any potential risk factors.

Further to a question from Councillor Hogg, the Chief Housing Officer confirmed that all costs would be contained within the housing revenue account and external fundings received.

Following questions from Councillors, the Chief Housing Officer advised that information from the tenant surveys confirmed that investment in new building in Moray was a high priority for the tenants. She also advised that if Registered Social Landlords were used then this would not increase the housing stock or take in extra revenue and there was an option to purchase already built properties but this could be in competition with people trying to get on to the property ladder and these purchases would not be financed by the Scottish Government.

Following consideration the Committee:-

- (i) agreed that officers develop proposals for a Council housing new build programme; and
- (ii) requested that interim reports be presented to each Committee meeting.

6. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON REGULATIONS MADE UNDER SECTION 32A OF THE HOUSING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1987

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services asking the Communities Committee to homologate the action taken to respond to the Scottish Government consultation paper on Regulations made under Section 32A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and to note the response submitted to the Scottish Government.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) homologate the action of the Chief Housing Officer in seeking the Chairman's and Vice-Chairman's agreement to the Council response being submitted to the Scottish Government; and
- (ii) note the content of the response to the Scottish Government Consultation Paper on Regulations made under Section 32A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.

7. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON SECONDARY LEGISLATION UNDER THE ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ETC (SCOTLAND) ACT 2004

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services asking the Committee to comment on and agree the draft response to the Scottish Government consultation paper on proposed amendment of Secondary Legislation under the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:

- (i) the content of the draft response to the Scottish Government Consultation Paper on proposed amendment of Secondary Legislation under the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (ii) note the progress in terms of the implementation of the Registration of Private Landlords Scheme; and
- (iii) note the areas for further development.

8. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND OTHER HOUSING BUDGET MONITORING 2008/09

There was submitted and noted a report by the Director of Community Services which presented the Committee with budget monitoring information for the period to 31 August 2008 in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and other Housing.

9. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2008/09

There was submitted and noted a report by the Director of Community Services informing the Committee of the position to 31 August 2008 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2008/09 .

10. FAIRER SCOTLAND FUND STAFFING

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 project.

Further to questions from Councillors, the Community Learning & Development Manager confirmed that there may be a possibility for joint working with other authorities in some instances but not for the main project and that all costs would be

included within the external funding and that the underspend in Year 1 would be retained for any redundancy costs. The Chief Executive confirmed that he was happy to advertise the posts internally first.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to approve the establishment of the following posts to support the Community Planning Partnership utilising the Fairer Scotland Fund:-

Fairer Scotland Manager, Fairer Scotland Administrator and Partner Analyst.

11. QUESTION TIME

There were no questions raised at the Committee.

12. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2008/09 BUDGET MONITORING (PARA 8)

There was submitted and noted a report by the Director of Community Services which presented budget monitoring information for the period to 31 August 2008 for the Building Services Trading Operation.

13. GRANT TO MORAY HOUSING PARTNERSHIP (PARA 8 & 9)

Councillors Leadbitter, Stewart and Jarvis declared an interest in this item as Council appointed representatives to the Moray Housing Partnership and left the meeting.

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services which homologated the actions of the Chief Housing Officer in approving a grant to Moray Housing Partnership (MHP) to enable the adaptation of a property to meet the needs of an applicant with disabilities.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to homologate the actions of the Chief Housing Officer in approving a grant for expenditure for adaptations on a Moray Housing Partnership house.

On conclusion of this item Councillors Leadbitter, Stewart & Jarvis rejoined the meeting.

14. SITE AT LAND STREET, ROTHES (PARA 8 & 9)

There was submitted a report by the Head of Estates Services asking the Committee to declare surplus and available for sale a building plot extending to 412m² or thereby at Land Street, Rothes.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) note and approve the works required to deal with contamination issued at the 0.1 hectare site at Land Street, Rothes;

- (ii) note that Mr Innes no longer wishes to proceed with the acquisition of Plot 1 at Land Street; and
- (iii) defer consideration of the remainder of the report until officers were able to address new information received after the report had been prepared and that the matter would be brought to the first available Committee.