

**THE MORAY COUNCIL**

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 27 JANUARY 2009**

**COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN**

**PRESENT**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Chief Housing Officer, A. Scott, Principal Solicitor (Commercial & Conveyancing), Mrs D Bosworth, Principal Accountant, Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator (in respect of Item 5), Community Planning & Development Manager (in respect of Item 5), Capital Programmes Manager, Housing Programmes Manager, General Manager Building Services, Housing Needs Manager, Senior Area Housing Manager and Mrs C. Carswell, Committee Services Officer.

**1. DECLARATION OF GROUP DECISIONS**

In terms of Standing Order 20 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.

**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

16

8

### **3. WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

There were no written questions submitted to the Committee.

### **5, DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY – REVISED TIMETABLE**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive asking the Communities Committee to approve an extension to the deadline for the development of a Domestic Abuse Strategy for Moray

Following consideration the Committee agreed to approve the new deadline of September 2009, for completion of the Domestic Abuse Strategy and also to note that the Strategic Assessment for Domestic Abuse would be reported back to Committee.

### **6. CONSULTATIVE DRAFT REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services and Director of Environmental Services seeking permission to consult on draft revised Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to approve the draft guidance for consultation; and
- (ii) that a further report would be presented in May 2009 following the consultation.

### **7. COMMON HOUSING REGISTER**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services presenting the Committee with progress on developing a Common Housing Register (CHR) for Moray.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress report;
- (ii) to note the revised costs detailed in 5.1 to 5.3 of the report;
- (iii) to note the implementation issues that have led to delays; and
- (iv) that further reports would be presented to the Communities Committee as the project progresses.

## **8. COUNCIL HOUSE NEW BUILD**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services informing the Committee of the Bid for resources to assist in building new Council housing in Moray submitted to the Scottish Government in January 2009.

In response to Councillor's questions regarding the implications of the current housing market and when the feasibility study was carried out, the Chief Housing Officer advised that there was an evident willingness from developers to work with the Council which may reflect the change in the housing market. The feasibility study was carried out last year but the bid was based on more recently concluded negotiations carried out on another project. The costs have been considered by the consultants and they are still feasible partly due to the proposed use of council tax discount money which was now possible but which was not the case when the feasibility work was originally done.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the bid submitted;
- (ii) to note further work required to be done in respect of procurement issues and that if no funding is available, the Council will need to revisit the feasibility and viability of new build; and
- (iii) that further progress reports would be presented to the Committee.

## **9. SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR – INSPECTION OF THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING SERVICES**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services presenting the outcome of the Scottish Housing Regulator's inspection of the Council's housing services.

The Committee unanimously thanked and congratulated all staff and tenants for their hard work. The Chief Housing Officer advised that she was extremely pleased with the Housing Regulatory inspection which shows the commitment of the Council to the tenants and the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff to deliver a quality service.

In response to Councillors questions and comments in respect of homelessness, the Chief Housing Officer advised that the lack of temporary accommodation, over reliance on bed and breakfast and consequently, the breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order had an impact on the grading received. There are more people looking for housing than there was accommodation available and this would create more pressures across the service but the Council does require more houses to deal with these issues. She further advised that managers and officers routinely look at inspection reports from other authorities to see if there was anything which could be learnt.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the outcome of the inspection of the Council's housing services;
- (ii) that the Inspection Grades and Overview are made available on the Council's website and published in the next edition of the Tenants Voice newsletter;
- (iii) to note that the Housing Sub-Committee would receive a presentation on the Inspection Report's findings and would be asked to agree a draft Improvement Plan relating to housing management and asset management;
- (iv) to note that all members of the Communities Committee are invited to attend the presentation to the Housing Sub-Committee on 13 February 2009 at 9.30am; and
- (v) that the Homelessness Improvement Plan would be presented to the Communities Committee on 24 March 2009.

#### **10. 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 November 2008 in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Other Housing Budget.

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

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

#### **12. HOUSING SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – PROGRESS IN QUARTER 3 2008 / 09**

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

#### **13. MAINTENANCE PARTNERSHIP – BEST VALUE REVIEW**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services presenting the outcome of the Best Value Review of the Maintenance Partnership.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the outcome of the best value review;
- (ii) the continuation of the Maintenance Partnership for the next five years from 2009;
- (iii) the improvement plan detailed in Appendix II of the report;and
- (iv) that the outcome of rates for 2009/10 be reported to the Communities Committee in March 2009.

#### **14. REVIEW OF OPERATION OF THE HOUSING SUB COMMITTEE**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services presenting the outcome of the review of the operation of the Housing Sub Committee and making proposals for its future.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) the continuation of the Housing Sub-Committee; and
- (ii) the proposed dates for Housing Sub-Committee meetings in 2009.

#### **15. QUESTION TIME.**

There were no questions raised at this Committee.

#### **16. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2008 / 09 – BUDGET MONITORING [PARA 8]**

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