

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

**TUESDAY 21 JUNE 2011**

**COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN**

**PRESENT**

Councillor E. McGillivray, J.S. Cree, J. Hogg, B. Jarvis, G. Leadbitter, M. McConachie, J. Mackay, F. Murdoch, I. Ogilvie, J. Russell, J. Sharp, R. Shepherd and D. Stewart.

**APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence intimated to the Committee.

**ALSO PRESENT**

Councillors J. Divers, G. McDonald and A. Wright (ex-officio).

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Head of Housing and Property, Housing Needs Manager, Housing Strategy & Development Manager, Home Improvements Service Manager, Mrs D O'Shea, Principal Accountant, Asset Manager, Service Manager (Social Work), Mrs A Scott, Principal Solicitor (Commercial & Conveyancing) and Mr D Westmacott, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the meeting.

**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

16

Para No. of Schedule 7A

9

### **3. WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

There were no written questions submitted to the Committee.

### **4. SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW – PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee joined the Chair in welcoming residents of Larch Court to the meeting.

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property Services providing Committee with an update on progress relating to the key recommendations arising from the review of sheltered housing.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:

- (i) to note progress achieved to date;
- (ii) that in the light of the consultation responses from residents in Larch Court, no further action should be taken to relocate the provision of day care facilities to Larch Court;
- (iii) that discussions continue with residents in Larch Court on the 'extra care approach' as described in paragraphs 4.10.5 of the report; and
- (iv) agree that a further report be presented to the Committee in due course in respect of recommendation (iii).

The Committee joined the Chair in thanking the residents of Larch Court for their attendance at the meeting.

### **5. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2010-2015 – PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN 2010/11**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property Services advising the Committee of progress made in implementing the actions identified in the Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2015 during 2010/11 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Committee joined the Chair in commending the work of staff in regard to progress made towards achieving the aims of the Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015.

Following a query from Committee, the Housing Needs Manager advised that analysis of the number and reasons for refusal of temporary accommodation would be reported in the annual Homelessness report.

In response to a situation regarding early intervention that was brought to the Committee's attention, the Head of Housing and Property advised that she would discuss the Anti-Social Behaviour and Neighbour Dispute Policies and Procedures with the Housing Services Manager and submit a report to the Housing Sub Committee for discussion

Following consideration, the Committee:

- (i) noted the work of staff and progress made in 2010/11 in implementing the actions identified in the Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015;
- (ii) noted that analysis of the number and reasons for refusal of temporary accommodation would be reported in the annual Homelessness report;
- (iii) noted that the Head of Housing and Property would discuss the Anti-Social Behaviour and Neighbour Dispute Policies and Procedures with the Housing Services Manager and submit a report to the Housing Sub Committee for discussion; and
- (iv) agreed the revised Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for 2011/12.

## **6. COUNCIL HOUSE NEW BUILD BID – MAY 2011**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property Services providing the Committee with detail on the Council's bid for funding to the Scottish Government for a further phase of the Council's new build programme.

Following consideration, the Committee noted:

- (i) the details of the Council's bid to the Scottish Government's Innovation and Investment Fund for funding for Phase 3 of the new build programme;
- (ii) the progress made on other bids to the Innovation and Investment Fund for funding for affordable housing provision in Moray;
- (iii) that further reports on the outcome of the bid and on the Housing Business Plan Review will be presented to the Committee in future; and
- (iv) that a further report will be presented to Committee later in the year setting out options for increasing the affordable housing supply in Moray.

## **7. COUNCIL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

Under reference to a question raised by Councillor Divers at the meeting of the Council on 25 May 2011 (paragraph 12 of the Minute refers), there was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property Services providing information in regard to a review of the Council's housing allocations policy and sets out how this could be approached.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- (i) agreed the approach outlined in the report;
- (ii) noted that the annual review of allocations activity will be presented to the Communities Committee in either August or October 2011; and
- (iii) agreed that a seminar be held for all Elected Members and Tenant Representatives from the Housing Sub Committee on the Allocations Policy following the report as per recommendation (ii).

## **8. REVIEW OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING SCHEME OF ASSISTANCE**

Councillor Wright joined the meeting at the beginning of this item.

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property Services providing details of the review of the Council's "Private Sector Housing Scheme of Assistance" which proposes revisions to the Scheme following reduced budget levels of Private Sector Housing Grant (PSHG) funding.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- (i) noted the findings of the review and;
- (ii) approved the amended 'Scheme of Assistance' as detailed in Appendix I of the report.

## **9. HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES 2011/12**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property Services informing Committee of proposed Service Improvement priorities for the Housing and Property Service in 2011/12. Details of the priorities for 2011/12 were set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

In response to a request from the Committee to publicly release a list of properties in Elgin that will be left vacant from staff moving to the HQ Annexe, the Head of Housing and Property advised that this would be a matter for the Designing Better Services team, and she would raise the issue with the Corporate Director (Corporate Services).

Following consideration, the Committee:

- (i) noted that the Head of Housing and Property will raise the issue of releasing publicly a list of properties in Elgin left vacant from staff moving to the HQ Annexe with the Corporate Director (Corporate Services);
- (ii) approved the Service Improvement priorities for the Housing and Property Service in 2011/12; and
- (iii) noted that performance will be reported to Committee on a quarterly basis during 2011/12.

## **10. HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES - BUDGET MONITORING 2010/11**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property Services presenting the unaudited near actual outturns for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Services Other Housing Budget for the period to 31 March 2011.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- (i) noted the budget monitoring report for the period to 31 March 2011; and
- (ii) agreed that slippage of £270K is carried forward to the 2011/12 HRA budget.

## **11. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2010/11**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property informing Committee of the unaudited position to 31 March 2011 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2010/11.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- (i) noted the unaudited position as at 31 March 2011 with regards to the Investment Programme for 2010/11; and
- (ii) agreed the revisions to individual budgets within the Housing Investment Programme for 2011/12.

## **12. HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 4 2010/11 AND ANNUAL 2011/12**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property Services outlining the performance of the Housing Service for the period 1 January to 31 March 2011 and for the year 2010/11.

The Committee joined the Chair in commending the hard work of staff within the Housing Service.

In response to a query from Councillor Leadbitter, the Head of Housing and Property advised that she would provide Councillor Leadbitter with a note on unfilled craft vacancies within the DLO.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- (i) noted the work of staff within the Housing Service;
- (ii) noted that the Head of Housing and Property would provide Councillor Leadbitter with a note on unfilled craft vacancies within the DLO;
- (iii) noted performance outlined in the report;
- (iv) noted the actions being taken to seek improvements where required; and
- (v) agreed targets proposed for 2011/12.

## **13. FEEDBACK FROM SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR ON IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property Services providing the Committee with the feedback received from the Scottish Housing Regulator following submission of the Council's Improvement Plan progress report. The feedback received was detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

Following consideration, the Committee noted:

- (i) the work of staff within the Housing and Homelessness services;
- (ii) the feedback received from the Scottish Housing Regulator; and
- (iii) that any further scrutiny work will be agreed through the Shared Risk Assessment process, as part of the Best Value 2 regime.

#### **14. QUESTION TIME**

Councillor Jarvis enquired as to what effect the new procurement procedures had in cleaning Council properties following fire damage. The Head of Housing of Property advised that she would consult Councillor Jarvis directly to get further information on the matter, investigate and respond to him.

Councillor Murdoch queried as to whether the Rural Housing Enabler Project had been completed. The Housing Strategy and Development Manager advised that they were moving forward to complete two of the three outstanding tasks over the coming months.

#### **15. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2010/11– BUDGET MONITORING [Para 9]**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property Services presenting the budget monitoring information for the Building Services Trading Operation for the period to 31 March 2011.

Following consideration the Committee noted the:

- (i) financial information as at 31 March 2011; and
- (ii) budget monitoring enhancements that are now in place.