

THE MORAY COUNCIL
MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 30 AUGUST 2011

COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN

PRESENT

Councillor E. McGillivray (Chairman), J.S. Cree, B. Jarvis, G. Leadbitter, M. McConachie, J. Mackay, I. Ogilvie, J. Russell, R. Shepherd and D. Stewart.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were intimated by Councillors J. Hogg, F. Murdoch and J. Sharp.

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor A. Wright (ex-officio).

IN ATTENDANCE

Corporate Director (Education and Social Care), Head of Housing and Property, Head of Children and Families and Criminal Justice, Housing Services Manager, Housing Needs Manager, Housing Strategy Officer, Mrs D O'Shea, Principal Accountant, 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 and the Councillor's Code of Conduct, the meeting noted that Councillors Leadbitter and Wright declared an interest in Item 16 "Housing Support – External Residential Services" on the agenda, as Directors of one of the providers as appointed by the Council.

Thereafter 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

15

9

16

8 & 9

3. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

There were no written questions submitted to the Committee.

4. MORAY LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2013 - 2018

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property advising the Committee of the details relating to the production of the Council's next Local Housing Strategy (LHS) covering the period 2013 – 2018 and asking the Committee to agree timescales relating to the production of the Strategy.

The Committee joined the Chairman in commending the high calibre of work that the Housing Strategy Officer had produced in the Housing Need and Demand Assessment.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) agreed timescales relating to the production of the Council's next LHS;
- (ii) noted that early consultation on draft LHS themes, outcomes and indicators will take place with stakeholders during September and October 2011;
- (iii) noted that further reports on progress with the preparation of the LHS will be presented to the Committee.

5. THE SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER: A CONSULTATION

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property advising the Committee of the Scottish Social Housing Charter consultation launched by the Scottish Government on 4 August 2011. The report also informed the Committee of a consultation event to be held in Elgin by the Scottish Government.

During discussion and in response to a query raised, the meeting noted that details of the consultation event in Elgin on 27 September 2011 would be circulated to all Members.

Following further discussion, the meeting further noted that the final response to the Scottish Social Housing Charter consultation would be circulated to all Members of the Committee for their information.

Thereafter the Committee agreed:-

- (i) that Elected Members pass comments on the Scottish Social Housing Charter consultation to the Head of Housing & Property by 10 October 2011;
- (ii) that the submission of a response be delegated to the Head of Housing and Property, in consultation with the Chairman of the Communities Committee;

- (iii) that a copy of the final response is presented to the Housing Sub Committee at its meeting on 11 November 2011 and that a copy is circulated to all Members of the Communities Committee; and
- (iv) that Members be encouraged to attend the consultation event in Elgin on 27 September 2011, further details of which would be circulated to all Members.

6. NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST INITIATIVE

Under reference to paragraph 7 of the Minute of the Policy and Resources Committee dated 15 February 2011, there was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property providing details of the Council's participation in the second phase of the National Housing Trust Initiative (NHT) currently being promoted by the Scottish Government and asking the Committee to confirm the Council's participation in the current round on the same basis of the provision of 20 housing units, as previously approved by the Policy and Resources Committee.

Following consideration the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the details of the National Housing Trust (NHT) provided; and
- (ii) that the Council confirms its participation and enters into an agreement with the Scottish Government to participate in the procurement of the second phase of the NHT on the basis of the provision of 20 housing units, as previously approved by the Policy and Resources Committee.

7. ALLOCATIONS POLICY ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2010/11

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property presenting annual performance in relation to the operation of the Council's Allocations Policy in 2010/11. The report also asked the Committee to consider potential areas of the policy for review as detailed in the report.

Following consideration the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the report;
- (ii) the allocations quotas for 2011/12 as set out in Para 11.5.3 of the report
- (iii) the areas of the Allocations Policy identified for review as set out in Section 11 of the report;
- (iv) the draft Lettings Plan proposed for the new build properties under construction in Elgin, Buckie and Keith as set out in Appendix IV of the report;
- (v) the review process as set out in Paras 12.2 and 12.3 of the report; and
- (vi) that consultation on the draft Lettings Plan, as detailed in Appendix IV of the report, be carried out in September 2011, with a revised Plan to be submitted to this Committee on 25 October 2011.

8. CHILD PROTECTION DEVELOPMENTS JULY 2011

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Education and Social Care) advising Committee on the multi agency governance structure for child protection

services in Moray, on the progress achieved over the past year and on preparation for the next inspection of joint services for child protection due in January 2012.

Following consideration, the Committee noted the developments and progress made in relation to child protection in Moray.

9. HOUSING AND PROPERTY BUDGET MONITORING – 30 JUNE 2011

Under reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of this Committee dated 10 February 2011, there was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property presenting budget monitoring for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Services Other Housing Budget for the period to 30 June 2011.

The Committee joined the Chairman in commending the work of the Housing Needs Manager and his team on the continuing reduction in use of bed and breakfast accommodation and the savings being made.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed the budget monitoring report for the period to 30 June 2011.

10. HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 1 – 2011/12

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property outlining the performance of the Housing Service for the period 1 April to 30 June 2011.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note:-

- (i) performance outlined in the report; and
- (ii) the actions being taken to seek improvements where required.

11. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2011/12

There was submitted and noted a report by the Head of Housing and Property informing the Communities Committee of the position to 30 June 2011 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2011/12.

12. SOCIAL CARE AND SOCIAL WORK IMPROVEMENT SCOTLAND (SCSWIS) INSPECTION OF HOMELESS HOSTELS

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property providing the Committee with details of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) Inspection of the Council's Homeless Hostels.

The Committee joined the Chairman in commending the Housing Support Services staff on improving quality of care and support within the service.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the SCSWIS report and the improved grade that the Council has achieved in relation to the quality of its care and support within its homeless hostels.

13. QUESTION TIME

Councillor Leadbitter requested an update on the Common Housing Register Project to which the Housing Needs Manager advised that the project was on track for implementation in February 2012.

Councillor McConachie queried the position on under-occupancy and what incentives were on offer for tenants to move to a new property. In response, the Head of Housing and Property advised that a report was submitted to the Housing Sub Committee in June 2011 which agreed to consult with tenants in 3 and 4 bedroom properties. She advised the Committee that the consultation would end in September and a further report would be submitted to the Housing Sub Committee in November 2011. She further advised that of the 1,800 letters sent to tenants, 150 responses had been received to date.

14. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2011/12 – BUDGET MONITORING [Para 9]

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property presenting the budget monitoring information for the period to 30 June 2011 for the Building Services Trading Operation.

During discussions, clarification was sought by the Committee on what figures were deemed as deficit and surplus of the budget. In response the Head of Housing and Property advised that a note would be included in the next report to Committee clarifying the deficit and surplus figures of the budget.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) the financial information as at 30 June 2011; and
- (ii) to note that clarification would be included in the next report regarding the deficit and surplus figures of the budget.

15. HOUSING SUPPORT – EXTERNAL RESIDENTIAL SERVICES [Paras 8 & 9]

Councillors Leadbitter and Wright declared an interest in this item due to being Directors of one of the providers as appointed by the Council and following legal advice, remained in the meeting.

There was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property providing the Committee with a progress report on the tender progress for the residential support services at Covesea Road and Guildry House, Elgin and the separate contract discussions that have been taken place with Moray Women's Aid.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) note the outcome of the tenders for Covesea Road and Guildry House, Elgin and the budget savings that these have achieved;
- (ii) note that contract discussions with Moray Women's Aid (MWA) have identified some budget pressures;

- (iii) increase the Moray Women's Aid budget by £33K per annum; and
- (iv) note that further reports on the new housing support services will be provided annually to this Committee.