

**THE MORAY COUNCIL**

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 17 JANUARY 2012**

**COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN**

**PRESENT**

Councillors E. McGillivray (Chair), S. Cree, J. Hogg, B. Jarvis, G. Leadbitter, M. McConachie, J. Mackay, F. Murdoch, I. Ogilvie, and J. Sharp.

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were intimated by Councillors J. Russell, R. Shepherd and D. Stewart.

**ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor A. Wright (ex-officio).

**IN ATTENDANCE**

The Head of Housing and Property, the Housing Services Manager, the Housing Needs Manager, the Housing Strategy & Development Manager, the Anti Social Behaviour Coordinator, Mrs L. Paisey, Principal Accountant, Mrs A. Scott, Legal Services Manager (Property & Contracts) and Mr D. Westmacott, Committee Services Manager 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**

The Committee noted that there were no written questions submitted.

#### **4. SECTION 26 OF THE HOUSING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1987, AS AMENDED – INTENTIONALLY HOMELESS**

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Communities Committee with details of Section 26 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended and setting out the criteria that must be considered before a local authority can determine that a homeless household can be found intentionally homeless.

The report also provided the Committee with an overview of the households in Moray who were found intentionally homeless by the Council in 2010/11.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) the criteria that must be applied in terms of determining whether an applicant is found to be intentionally homeless, namely:
  - (a) Is the applicant homeless or threatened with homelessness;
  - (b) Does the applicant have a priority need;
  - (c) Is the applicant intentionally homeless, and
  - (d) Does the applicant have a local connection  
; and
- (ii) to note the positive and pro active work that has been undertaken by the homelessness service in 2010/11 to assist those households who were found to be intentionally homeless.

#### **5. NEIGHBOUR DISPUTES AND ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

Under reference to paragraph 3 of the Minute of the Meeting of this Committee dated 25 October 2011, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting the Committee, as requested, with potential areas for review within the Council's Neighbourhood Disputes and Anti Social Behaviour Policy.

During discussions, concerns were raised in regard to the clarity of referrals to Grampian Police and the lack of clarity in the Policy on this issue. In response the Head of Housing and Property agreed that this could be an aspect of the policy to be reviewed.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the aspects of the policy which could be reviewed as set out in Section 8 of the report, including clarity of referrals to Grampian Police;
- (ii) that should any Members have particular views or comments on further aspects of the policy which should be reviewed that these be communicated to the Housing Services Manager; and

- (iii) that a further report on the outcome is presented to a future meeting of the Communities Committee.

## **6. ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR RURAL HOUSING SERVICE IN MORAY**

Under reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of the Meeting of this Committee dated 26 April 2011, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing an assessment of the need for a rural housing service in Moray, in light of national housing policy and funding changes.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the current policy and funding climate, as detailed in Section 4 of the report, within which the need for a rural housing service is to be considered;
- (ii) that the provision of a rural housing service in Moray would not be pursued at the present time; and
- (iii) to note that the Council's future actions to address rural housing need in Moray will be set out in its Strategic Housing Investment Plan and Local Housing Strategy.

## **7. COUNCIL NEW BUILD PHASE 1 – POST OCCUPATION SURVEY**

Under reference to paragraph 9 of the Minute of the Meeting of this Committee dated 1 March 2011, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) advising the Committee of the results of a survey of tenants occupying Council New Build properties let in March 2011 and providing details of follow up actions carried out by officers and how this feedback has influenced the design of future Council New Build properties.

During discussions, the Head of Housing and Property advised that a report on the changes to the Scottish Social Housing Charter would be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee.

Following consideration, the Committee noted:-

- (i) the results of the post occupation survey of tenants occupying Council New Build properties let in March 2011, as detailed in Section 4 of the report;
- (ii) that a report on the changes to the Scottish Social Housing Charter would be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee; and
- (iii) that similar feedback will be sought from tenants occupying future Council New Build properties.

## **8. IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON HOUSING REGISTER**

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing details of progress achieved in the implementation of a Common Housing Register (CHR) for Moray and also providing a detailed implementation plan, as set out in Section 4 of the report, for the remaining actions to be completed.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note that the online application is now complete and that the CHR will go live on 7 May 2012;
- (ii) that a demonstration of the new CHR be arranged for a future meeting of the Housing Sub-Committee prior to the system going live to which all Members of this Committee would be invited to attend; and
- (iii) to note that a further progress and review report on the CHR will be presented to this Committee near the end of the 2012/13 financial year which would include lessons learned from the implementation regarding timescales and cost.

## **9. DOWNSIZING INCENTIVE SCHEME**

Under reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of the Meeting of the Housing Sub Committee dated 23 June 2011, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting recommendations from the Housing Sub Committee for the implementation of a Downsizing Incentive Scheme to encourage Council tenants to move to smaller properties where they no longer require the number of bedrooms in their current home, in order to enable the Council to achieve a better use of the housing stock whilst addressing the pressure from applicants who require larger housing. The proposed scheme was detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to implement the proposed downsizing scheme, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, subject to agreement on budgetary provision;
- (ii) that budgetary provision to support such a scheme is considered as part of the Housing Revenue Account budget process for 2012/13; and
- (iii) that a further report detailing the implementation arrangements is presented to both the Communities Committee and the Housing Sub Committee early in 2012, with a view to implementation from April 2012.

## **10. MEDICAL PRIORITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing Committee with details relating to proposals that seek to change the way that the Council currently assesses medical priority for those applying for housing and for tenants who are requesting a change of heating system on medical grounds.

Following consideration the Committee:-

- (i) agreed to pilot a new medical assessment process, as set out in Section 4 of the report, for a period of 6 to 9 months;
- (ii) noted that a further report on progress will be presented at the end of 2012.

## **11. HOUSING AND PROPERTY BUDGET MONITORING TO 31 OCTOBER 2011**

There was submitted and agreed a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting budget monitoring for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Services Other Housing Budget for the period to 31 October 2011.

## **12. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2011/12**

There was submitted and noted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) informing the Committee of the position to 31 October 2011 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2011/12.

## **13. HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 2 – 2011/12**

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) outlining the performance of the Housing Service for the period 1 July to 30 September 2011.

Following consideration the Committee:-

- (i) noted performance outlined within the report;
- (ii) welcomed areas of good performance; and
- (iii) noted the actions being taken to seek improvements, where required.

## **14. COMMUNITY SAFETY PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2011/12**

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing Committee with an update of performance against Community Safety performance indicators for the period July to September 2011, and of activity undertaken by the four Community Safety Groups in relation to tackling Community Safety priorities.

In response to a query from Committee, the Anti Social Behaviour Coordinator confirmed that detection figures would be included in future reports where possible.

During discussions, concerns were raised about figures for “Drinking in Public Places” including under-age drinking. It was agreed that these concerns would be communicated to Grampian Police.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to welcome the areas of performance against Community Safety Indicators noted as performing well;
- (ii) to note the measures and activity being undertaken in relation to those requiring action;
- (iii) to include detection figures in future reports where possible; and
- (iv) that concerns would be reiterated to Grampian Police about figures for “Drinking in Public Places” including under-age drinking.

## **15. QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions raised.

## **16. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2011/12 – BUDGET MONITORING [Para 9]**

There was submitted and noted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting the budget monitoring information for the period to 31 October 2011 for the Building Services Trading Operation.