

THE MORAY COUNCIL
MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2012

COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN

Present

Councillors E. McGillivray (Chair), R. Shepherd (Depute Chair), G. Alexander, J. Allan, G. Coull, S. Cree, L. Creswell, P. Gowans, M. Howe, B. Jarvis, J. MacKay, M. McConachie and A. Wright (Ex-officio).

Mr S. Christie, Mr B. Taylor and Mr D. Wood (Tenant representatives).

Also Present

Councillor Tuke.

Apologies

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillor C. Ralph.

In Attendance

The Head of Housing and Property, the Housing Services Manager, the Housing Needs Manager, the Housing Strategy and Development Manager, the Asset Manager, the Building Services Manager, the Anti Social Behaviour Co-Coordinator, Mr P. Nevin, Senior Solicitor 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 Councillors' Code of Conduct 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, nor any declarations of Members Interest 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.

operation of rural connection points. There being no one otherwise minded, this was agreed.

The Chairman, referring to 'Eligibility for Specific House Sizes', moved that officers further develop proposals for inclusion in the revised draft allocations policy, as set out in Paragraph 4.5 of the report. This was unanimously agreed by the Committee.

Referring to 'Overcrowding and Underoccupancy Points', the Chairman moved that officers do not investigate further changes to allocations policy criteria to align these more closely with DWP criteria, as detailed in Paragraph 4.6 of the report. There being no one otherwise minded, this was agreed.

The Chairman, referring to 'Position of Applicants Leaving the Armed Forces' within the Policy, moved that officers further examine approaches to provide additional priority to Armed Forces personnel and other tied tenants, as set out in Paragraph 4.8 of the report. This was unanimously agreed by the Committee.

With reference to 'Number of Offers to Applicant', the Chairman moved that officers investigate options on the number of offers that can be made to an applicant and further examine how the policy might deal with offers which would result in a reduction in housing benefit, as detailed in Paragraph 4.13 of the report. There being no one otherwise minded, this was agreed by the Committee.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) noted the issues raised in the review and agreed that, in the following policy areas, officers:-
 - (a) Area Choice - further examine option 2, as detailed in Paragraph 4.3 of the report, and review the operation of rural connection points;
 - (b) Eligibility for Specific House Sizes - further develop proposals for inclusion in the revised draft allocations policy, as set out in Paragraph 4.5 of the report;
 - (c) Overcrowding and Underoccupancy Points - do not investigate further changes to allocations policy criteria to align these more closely with DWP criteria, as detailed in Paragraph 4.6 of the report;
 - (d) Position of Applicants Leaving the Armed Forces - further examine approaches to provide additional priority to Armed Forces personnel and other tied tenants, as set out in Paragraph 4.8 of the report; and
 - (e) Number of Offers to Applicant - investigate options on the number of offers that can be made to an applicant and further examine how the policy might deal with offers which would result in a reduction in housing benefit, as detailed in Paragraph 4.13 of the report.
- (ii) agreed that a further discussion session on proposed changes to the Allocations Policy be arranged for February/March 2013; and

- (iii) agreed a revised target date of 23 April 2013 for a draft policy to be considered by the Committee.

7. WELFARE REFORM – HOUSING IMPACTS

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) setting out actions proposed to enable the Council to prepare for, and assist tenants with the impact of forthcoming welfare reform.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) the proposed actions outlined in the report; and
- (ii) that future reports are provided to the Committee on a six monthly basis.

8. SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER – INDICATORS AND CONTEXT INFORMATION

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting details of the final Scottish Social Housing Charter indicators and context information, published by the Scottish Housing Regulator in October 2012. A copy of the Scottish Social Housing Charter indicators and context information was provided as Appendix 1 to the report.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) noted the published indicators and context information to be sought by the Scottish Housing Regulator, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (ii) noted that work is in progress to ensure that the Council records the required information from 1 April 2014;
- (iii) agreed that a further report be presented to this Committee on the revised performance management framework for the Housing and Property Service; and
- (iv) agreed that a further report is presented on the proposed format of the annual report to tenants and other customers.

9. CONSULTATIVE DRAFT LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2013-2018

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) advising Committee on the progress made in the development of the Council's next Local Housing Strategy (LHS) covering the period 2013-2018, and seeking approval for a public consultation exercise on the Strategy. A copy of the LHS was provided as Appendix I to the report.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) noted the consultative draft outline Local Housing Strategy (LHS), as set out in Appendix I of the report;

- (ii) noted the draft LHS Equality Impact Assessment, as detailed in Appendix II of the report;
- (iii) agreed that LHS briefing sessions be arranged for Elected Members;
- (iv) agreed to a period of public consultation on the full consultative draft from January to March 2013; and
- (v) noted that the final LHS will be presented to the Committee on 23 April 2013, for agreement, prior to publication.

10. HOUSING REVENUE BUDGET PREPARATION 2013/14

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) setting out the broad direction of work carried out to date to prepare the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2013/14 and seeking comment from the Committee on the proposed Housing Investment Plan to be reflected in the HRA Budget 2013/14 for presentation to the Moray Council in February 2013.

The Committee joined the Chairman in commending officers for their continued good work.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) commended officers for their continued good work;
- (ii) noted the progress achieved in preparing the Housing Revenue Budget (HRA) for 2013/14;
- (iii) noted the proposed Housing Investment Plan for 2013/14, as set out in Appendix I of the report; and
- (iv) agreed that the staffing proposals, as detailed in Section 6 of the report, are reflected in the HRA Budget for consideration by the Council in February 2013; and
- (v) agreed that the review of temporary accommodation should consider the position of the hostel accommodation.

11. HOUSING AND PROPERTY BUDGET MONITORING – 31 OCTOBER 2012

There was submitted 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 2012.

Following consideration, the Committee noted:-

- (i) the budget monitoring report for the period to 31 October 2012; and
- (ii) the projected outturns for 2012/13, as detailed in Sections 5 and 7 of the report.

12. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2012/13

There was submitted and noted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) informing the Committee of the position to 31 October 2012 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2012/13.

Councillor Allan left the meeting at this juncture.

13. HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2ND QUARTER 2012/13

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 2012.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) welcomed good performance outlined in the report;
- (ii) noted performance outlined in the report;
- (iii) noted the actions being taken to seek improvements where required; and
- (iv) agreed that a further report on void performance be presented to this Committee in February 2013.

14. TENANT SURVEY 2012

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing an overview of the results from the Tenant Survey carried out earlier in 2012, attached as Appendix I to the report, and identifying potential areas for improvement actions as a result of the survey.

The Committee joined the Chairman in commending the Head of Housing and Property and her staff for their continued good performance.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) commended the Head of Housing and Property and her staff for their continued good performance;
- (ii) welcomed the Tenant Survey 2012 results, as set out in Appendix I of the report;
- (iii) noted the areas identified for improvement action, as detailed in Section 5 of the report;
- (iv) agreed that an improvement plan be presented to this Committee in February 2013; and

- (v) agreed that a draft leaflet, outlining the results of the Tenant Survey and proposed improvement actions, be considered by this Committee at its meeting in February 2013.

Councillor Creswell left the meeting at this juncture.

15. TENANT FEEDBACK – PLANNED MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) informing Committee of the results of tenant feedback on Planned Maintenance Contracts for the first two Quarters of 2012/13.

The Committee joined the Chairman in commending the work of the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO).

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) commended the work of the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO);
- (ii) noted the results of the feedback, as detailed in Section 4 and Appendix I of the report;
- (iii) welcomed the continuing level of satisfaction with delivery of the Housing Investment Programme.

16. COUNCIL NEW BUILD PHASE 2 – POST OCCUPATION SURVEY

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 during December 2011 to July 2012.

Following consideration, the Committee noted:-

- (i) the results of the post occupation survey of tenants occupying Council new build properties let during December 2011 to July 2012; and
- (ii) that similar feedback will be sought from tenants occupying future Council New Build properties and future reports presented to this Committee.

17. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK – NEW TENANTS’ SURVEY RESULTS FOR QUARTERS 1 & 2 2012/13

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing Communities Committee with details of the results of the New Tenants’ Survey for Quarter 1 and 2 of 2012/13.

The Committee joined the Chairman in commending the work of the Housing Support team with new tenants.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) commended the work of the Housing Support team with new tenants;
- (ii) noted the results of the survey and welcomed the high levels of customer satisfaction, as detailed in Section 4 and Appendix I of the report; and
- (iii) agreed the actions in response to the feedback provided, as set out in Section 6 of the report.

18. SOCIAL CARE AND SOCIAL WORK IMPROVEMENT SCOTLAND (SCSWIS) INSPECTION OF HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICE

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with details of the inspection of the Council's housing support service by the Care Inspectorate.

The Committee joined the Chairman in commending the good performance of the Housing Support team.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) commended the good performance of the Housing Support team;
- (ii) noted the report from the Care Inspectorate;
- (iii) welcomed the grades that the Council has achieved in relation to its housing support service, as detailed in paragraph 5.1 of the report; and
- (iv) agreed that the training needs of housing support staff be updated and incorporated into the Housing and Property training plan for 2013/14.

19. COMMUNITY SAFETY PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTE 2 2012/13

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 from July to September 2012 and providing an update on activity undertaken by the four Community Safety Groups in relation to tackling Community Safety priorities.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) welcomed performance against Community Safety indicators noted as performing well, as detailed in Section 5 of the report; and
- (ii) noted the measures and activity being undertaken in relation to those requiring action, as set out in Section 6 of the report.

20. QUESTION TIME

There were no questions raised.

21. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2012/13 – BUDGET MONITORING [Para 9]

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting the budget monitoring information for the period to 31 October 2012 for the Building Services Trading Operation.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) noted the financial information for the Building Services Trading Operation Budget 2012/13 as at 31 October 2012, detailed in Appendix I of the report; and
- (ii) noted the revised year end forecast to 31 March 2013, as set out in Section 6 of the report.

22. NATIONAL RETROFIT PROGRAMME PILOTS [Para 6]

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with details of the Council's application to the Scottish Government for funding under the National Retrofit Programme Pilots to carry out energy efficiency measures to properties in Keith.

During discussions, the Committee noted that the Chairman, in consultation with the Head of Housing and Property, would publish a press release on the status of the application.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) noted the details of the application for funding under the National Retrofit Programme pilot;
- (ii) noted that the Chairman, in consultation with the Head of Housing and Property, would publish a press release on the status of the application; and
- (iii) agreed that further reports on progress with the application will be presented to the Committee.