

THE MORAY COUNCIL
MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2013
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 and M. McConachie.

Mr S. Christie and Mr B. Taylor (Tenant representatives).

Apologies

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillor A Wright (Ex-officio) and Mr D Wood (Tenant representative).

In Attendance

The Head of Housing and Property, the Housing Services Manager, the Housing Needs Manager, the Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, the Building Services Manager and Mrs Lissa Rowan, 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.

<u>Para No. of Minute</u>	<u>Para No. of Schedule 7A</u>
17	9

3. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The meeting noted the following written question submitted by Councillor B Jarvis and the Council's response thereto.

QUESTION

To ask if it would be possible to provide figures as to how many current applicants on the council house waiting list are owner occupiers living in former Council properties sold under Right to Buy Legislation.

THE RESPONSE

There are 292 owner occupiers on the Council's Housing List. Officers can identify that 34 applicants are occupying former Council houses which were sold through Right to Buy. However, these 34 owner occupiers are not necessarily the former tenants who exercised their right to buy.

It is possible that some of the remaining 258 owner occupiers on the list are occupying a former council property. Officers cannot check this definitively as records of council house sales prior to 1995 were not transferred to the Council's housing management system. A considerable amount of work would be required to investigate specific addresses to identify whether these were former council houses. Each individual house sale file would need to be examined to ascertain whether the applicant had exercised right to buy.

Councillor Jarvis then sought clarification via a supplementary question, regarding the situation where owner/occupiers are trying to move into a council property for a disability need or some form of adaptation and asked if it is more difficult for those clients to get into a property than for clients in a council house who are already on the council waiting list eg if a council tenant wants to use a mutual exchange or a transfer.

In response, the Housing Needs Manager advised that, in terms of the allocations policy, someone who is residing in owner occupied accommodation, irrespective of whether they have been a council tenant or formal council tenant or not, they can

apply for housing and their housing need would be assessed. Any offer of housing would be dependent on where they were positioned on the list. However any applicant can apply for housing and they would be considered just the same as any other waiting list applicant as tenure is not a driver to prevent applicants from applying for council housing.

4. REVISED EVICTION POLICY

Under reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of this Committee dated 16 October 2012 where a revised draft Evictions Policy was presented to this Committee for comment and approval prior to wider consultation with tenants, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting the revised Evictions Policy for approval.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) noted the feedback received;
- (ii) approved the changes to the Evictions Policy, as set out in Appendix I of the report;
- (iii) noted that a revised procedure will be developed for all staff involved in implementing the policy; and
- (iv) agreed that the implementation date for the changes will be 1 March 2013.

5. GAS SAFETY MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Under reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of this Committee dated 21 June 2012 where the Council's Gas Safety Management Policy was revised, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting proposals arising from a review of the Council's Gas Safety Management processes.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) agreed the proposed improvement actions to be implemented from 1 April 2013, as set out in Section 5 of the report; and
- (ii) noted that performance will be reported during 2013/14.

6. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION APPRAISAL

Under reference to paragraph 9 of the Minute of this Committee dated 25 October 2011 where the Committee considered the impact that the reduction in

homelessness was having on the Council's stock of temporary accommodation, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting the Committee with progress on the ongoing appraisal of the Council's current temporary accommodation provision.

During discussion, the Committee sought assurance that representation was being made on behalf of Moray Council to the Government, regarding concerns that, under the new bedroom tax, people in temporary accommodation were at risk of being penalised for occupying a property with more bedrooms than needed, through no fault of their own.

In response, the meeting noted that this matter had been discussed at a recent COSLA Leaders meeting and that the Council Leader was going to issue a briefing on this matter in the near future.

During further discussion clarification was sought, in light of changes to the Hostel Deficit Grant being granted to all Council's regardless of need, as to what provision is being made to ensure that there is adequate funding in future years for hostels given that this grant is being issued to to the general services fund.

In response, the Head of Housing and Property advised that future funding with regard to hostels would be looked at over the next year as the impact of the reductions become significant toward 2017.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed :-

- (i) to note the progress made to date in the reconfiguration of the temporary accommodation housing stock used for homelessness, as detailed in Section 4 of the report;
- (ii) to continue to allow Officers discretion to further progress the reconfiguration of properties used for temporary homeless accommodation;
- (iii) to note the factors that will impact on the future provision of temporary accommodation; and
- (iv) that a further report will be presented to Committee in early 2014.

7. TENANT SURVEY 2012 – IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Under reference to paragraph 14 of the Minute of this Committee dated 11 December 2012 where results of the Tenant Survey 2012 were presented to this Committee, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting proposed improvement actions in light of the findings of the Tenant Survey 2012. The report also presented the draft leaflet to tenants for approval.

During discussion, clarification was sought regarding mechanisms in place for updating the Committee on the progress of the improvement actions proposed in the leaflet to tenants.

In response the Head of Housing and Property advised that actions identified in the improvement plan would be reflected in the Housing and Property Service Plan for 2013/14 and progress on specific actions reported back to this Committee as and when completed.

During discussion reference was made to comments made by the Council Leader at the meeting of the Audit and Performance Review Committee dated 31 October 2012 (paragraph 6 of the minutes refers) and clarification was sought regarding the status of the One Stop Shop that was discussed at that meeting.

In response the Head of Housing and Property advised that this query did not fall under the remit of this Committee however it was her understanding that the Corporate Welfare Reform Working Group would be reporting to the Policy and Resources Committee in March 2013.

Thereafter the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) agreed the improvement actions proposed, as set out in Section 4 of the report;
- (ii) note that these will be reflected in the Housing and Property Service Plan 2013/14 to be considered by the Committee later this year;
- (iii) the content of the leaflet informing tenants of the results of the survey and planned actions; and
- (iv) note that specific actions identified in the improvement actions would be reported back to this Committee as and when completed.

8. HOUSING AND PROPERTY BUDGET MONITORING – 31 DECEMBER 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 December 2012.

In response to a query regarding the under spend in the Property budget, the Head of Housing and Property advised that this was due to the timing of payments and that she would circulate to this Committee, an explanation of the accounting within Property budget in relation to fee income.

Following consideration, the Committee noted:-

- (i) the budget monitoring report for the period to 31 December 2012; and

- (ii) that the Head of Housing and Property would circulate to this Committee, an explanation of the accounting within the Property budget in relation to fee income.

9. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2012/13

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

10. HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 3 – 2012/13

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) outlining the performance of the Housing Service for the period 1 October to 31 December 2012.

Following consideration, the Committee noted:-

- (i) the good performance outlined in Para 4.2 of the report; and
- (ii) actions being taken to seek improvements where required.

11. HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICE PLAN – PROGRESS QUARTER 3

Under reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of this Committee dated 7 June 2012 in which the Housing and Property Service Plan was agreed, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) setting out the progress achieved in the implementation of the actions agreed within the Housing and Property Service Plan 2012/13.

Following consideration, the Committee noted:-

- (i) the progress achieved, as set out in Appendix I of the report; and
- (ii) that a further report will be presented to Committee in April 2013.

12. COUNCIL NEW BUILDINGS LETTINGS PLAN

Under reference to paragraph 12 of the Minute of this Committee dated 25 October 2011 where a Lettings Plan for Council new build housing was agreed, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with details of allocations carried out under the new build Lettings Plan between 1 October and 31 December 2012.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) noted the detail of the allocations to new build properties between 1 October 2012 and 31 December 2012; and
- (ii) agreed that further reports on the Lettings Plan will be presented quarterly to the Committee.

13. COMMUNITY SAFETY PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 3 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 October to December 2012 and providing an update on activity undertaken by the four Community Safety Groups in relation to tackling Community Safety priorities.

The Committee joined the Chair in commending the Press in their ongoing campaign for the prevention of dog fouling.

During discussion clarification was sought regarding the status of a policy to promote responsible dog ownership in Moray which was agreed at a Meeting of the Moray Council on 4 July 2012.

In response, the Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator advised that he would seek an update from the Head of Development Services regarding this matter.

During further discussion clarification was sought regarding initiatives that were to be undertaken by Grampian Police regarding Road Safety in Moray.

In response, the Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator advised that he would seek an update from Grampian Police regarding this matter.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- (i) welcomed the performance against Community Safety indicators noted as performing well, as detailed in Section 5 of the report;
- (ii) noted the measures and activity being undertaken in relation to those requiring action, as set out in Section 6 of the report;
- (iii) commended the Press for their ongoing campaign regarding the prevention of dog fouling;
- (iv) noted that the Anti-social Behaviour Co-ordinator would seek an update from the Head of Development Services regarding a policy to promote responsible dog ownership in Moray, as agreed at a Meeting of the Moray Council on 4 July 2012 (paragraph 7 of the minute refers); and
- (v) noted that the Anti-social Behaviour Co-ordinator would seek an update from the Road Safety Inspector, Grampian Police regarding initiatives that were to be undertaken with regard to Road Safety in Moray.

14. ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR SERVICE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) asking Committee to consider the customer satisfaction levels within the Antisocial Behaviour and Community Warden Service as provided from within Community Safety.

Following consideration, the Committee noted the outcomes in terms of customers' satisfaction in using the Antisocial Behaviour and Community Warden Service, as detailed in Appendix I of the report.

15. CONSULTATION PAPER – DISPUTE RESOLUTION

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing details of a consultation on Better Dispute Resolution in Housing from the Scottish Government which invites views on the introduction of a new Housing Panel for Scotland.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) note the issues arising from the Introduction of a New Housing Panel for Scotland Consultation Paper;

- (ii) pass any comments on the consultation to the Head of Housing and Property by 12 March 2013; and
- (iii) grant delegated authority to the Head of Housing and Property, in consultation with the Chairman of the Communities Committee, to submit a response to the Scottish Government by 9 April 2013.

16. QUESTION TIME

Councillor Alexander queried as to how many people, currently on the Council House waiting list, live out with Moray.

In response, the Head of Housing and Property advised that she would provide the Committee with this information following the meeting.

17. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2012/13 – BUDGET [PARA 9]

Under reference to paragraph 18 of the Minute to this Committee dated 26 February 2013 where the Building Services Trading Operation Budget for 2012/13 was agreed, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting the budget monitoring information for the period to 31 December 2012 for the Building Services Trading Operation.

Following consideration, the Committee noted:-

- (i) the financial information as at 31 December 2012, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (ii) the revised year end forecast to 31 March 2013.