

THE MORAY COUNCIL
MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 18 JUNE 2013
COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN

Present

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

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

Apologies

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillors G. Coull S. Morton and Mr D. Wood (tenant representative)

In Attendance

The Head of Housing and Property, the Housing Services Manager, the Housing Needs Manager, the Housing Strategy & Development Manager, the Building Services Manager, Area Housing Manager (East), Mr J MacDonald, Asset Manager, Ms A Gregory, Senior Policy Officer, the Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, and Mrs L 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>
19	9
20	1

3. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

There were no written questions submitted.

4. HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICE PLAN 2013/14

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee for approval the draft Housing and Property Service Plan for 2013/14 for agreement.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed the Housing and Property Service Plan for 2013/14 as detailed in Appendix I of the report.

5. STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN 2013-18

Under reference to Paragraph 7 of the Minute of this Committee dated 7 June 2012, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with details of the Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) for the period 2013-18 prior to submission to the Scottish Government by 28 June 2013.

During discussion, it was noted that the Audit and Performance Review Committee had agreed to refer to the Communities Committee, a request made by Councillor Jarvis that the Council write to the Housing Minister:-

- (a) highlighting the issue that RSL development in Moray had declined due to the level of grant allocated;
- (b) requesting a review of how subsidy levels are set out; and
- (c) requesting advice on how the Council can address the housing needs problem in Moray.

It was further noted that a Scottish Government working party comprising representatives from COSLA, the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers and the Chartered Institute of Housing and RSL representative bodies, is currently looking at the issues surrounding the sustainability of the current funding arrangements for the affordable housing programme and that recommendations from this working party would be provided to the Scottish Government during the summer months.

Following discussion it was agreed that representation would be made to the Scottish Housing Minister highlighting the effect that increased subsidy levels were having on Registered Social Landlords as well as the Council and that, whilst Members of the Committee noted that a Scottish Government working party was addressing this issue, Members also wanted to highlight this matter to the Scottish Housing Minister.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- (i) discussed the details of the draft SHIP submission as set out in paragraph 4 of the report;

- (ii) agreed that delegated authority be given to the Head of Housing and Property, in consultation with the Chair of the Communities Committee, to submit the SHIP to the Scottish Government by 28 June 2013;
- (iii) agreed that further reports detailing progress with the SHIP be presented to the Communities Committee as required; and
- (iv) agreed that representation is made to the Scottish Housing Minister in relation to the matters detailed in Section 7.1 of the report including reference that increased subsidy levels are having an effect on the Council as well as Registered Social Landlords (RSL), whilst acknowledging that a Scottish Government working party had been formed to address these issues.

6. ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW

Under reference to Paragraph 6 of the Minute of this Committee dated 11 December 2012, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) setting out the areas of the Allocations Policy that have been subject to review. The report further proposed that consultation is carried out on proposed changes to the current Allocations Policy and set out the proposed changes to the current policy.

During discussion, concern was raised that tenants affected by the under occupancy criteria were not being awarded additional points in order to assist their transfer to a smaller property. Subsequently, Councillor Jarvis moved that additional points be allocated to tenants wishing to transfer to a smaller property as a result of conditions imposed by welfare reform. This motion was seconded by Councillor McConachie.

As an amendment, Councillor McGillivray moved that the issue regarding awarding additional points to tenants adversely affected by the welfare reform be considered when the revised Allocations Policy is issued for consultation. This was seconded by Councillor Cree.

On a division there voted:

For the Motion (4) Councillors Jarvis, McConachie, Mr B Taylor and Mr S Christie

For the Amendment (9) Councillors Alexander, Allan, Cree, Creswell, Gowans, Howe, J Mackay, McGillivray and Shepherd.

Accordingly the amendment became the finding of the meeting and the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the proposals for changes to the current Allocations Policy as detailed in Appendix I of the report;
- (ii) that a consultative process be instigated to seek the views of tenants and service users on the proposed changes;

- (iii) to note that a briefing session for Members will be arranged for August 2013; and
- (iv) that the Committee will consider the consultation responses by December 2013

7. COUNCIL NEW BUILD LETTINGS PLAN

Under reference to Paragraph 26 of the Minute of this Committee dated 26 February 2013, 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 January and 31 March 2013. The report also proposed a revised Lettings Plan for Phase 4 Council new build for consultation.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the detail of the allocations to new build properties between 1 January and 31 March 2013 as set out in Paragraph 4 of the report;
- (ii) to commence consultation on the revised lettings plan for phase 4 of the Council's new build programme, as set out in Appendix I of the report; and
- (iii) that the next report on allocations made under the Lettings Plan will be presented to the Committee in early 2014/15.

8. REVIEW OF RENT ARREARS POLICY

Under reference to Paragraph 10 of the Minute of the Community Services Committee dated 6 October 2004, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee for approval the revised draft Rent Arrears Policy prior to a limited consultation with tenants and tenants' groups.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) the proposed revisions to the Rent Arrears Policy as set out in Appendix I of the report;
- (ii) that a limited consultation on the revisions to the Rent Arrears Policy is carried out with tenants; and
- (iii) that a further report will be presented to the Communities Committee in October 2013, following the consultation exercise.

9. CONSULTATIVE DRAFT GUIDANCE ON THE OPERATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNTS (HRAS)

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee details of a consultation being carried out by the

Scottish Government on the operation of local authority housing revenue accounts in Scotland and providing a proposed response for the Committee's consideration.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) that further work is carried out to assess the implications of the draft guidance for this Council in further detail; and
- (ii) the proposed response as set out in Appendix II of the report.

10. HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES – BUDGET MONITORING 2011/12

Under reference to Paragraph 6 of the Minute of the Moray Council dated 13 February 2013, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee the unaudited near actual outturns for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Services Other Housing Budget for the period to 31 March 2013.

Following consideration, the Committee noted the provisional budget monitoring report for the period to 31 March 2013 as set out in Appendix I of the report.

11. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2012/13

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) informing the Committee of the unaudited position to 31 March 2013 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2012/13.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the position as at 31 March 2013 with regards to the Housing Investment Programme for 2012/13 as set out in Appendix I of the report; and
- (ii) that any revisions to individual budgets within the Housing Investment Strategy for 2013/14 will be submitted to Committee for consideration following the analysis of the position at the end of Quarter 1.

12. HOUSING SUPPORT ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

Under reference to Paragraph 15 of the Minute of this Committee dated 7 June 2012, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with the second annual report on the Council's housing support services.

During discussion, Councillor Gowans sought clarification as to whether a 3 year contract is sufficient in terms of evidencing the success of housing support provided by external services such as Moray Women's Aid and SACRO.

In response, the Housing Needs Manager advised that he would refer this question to the Council's Procurement Department and feed back a response to Councillor Gowans following the meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the second annual report of the housing support services;
- (ii) the proposed actions for 2013/14 as set out in Paragraph 9 of the report;
- (iii) that a further annual report is presented in June 2014; and
- (iv) to note that the Housing Needs Manager would provide Councillor Gowans with clarification as to whether a 3 year contract is sufficient in terms of housing support provided by external services.

13. ALLOCATIONS POLICY ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2012/13

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee the annual performance in relation to the operation of the Council's Allocations Policy in 2012/13.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the report; and
- (ii) the allocations quotas for 2013/14 as set out in Paragraph 10.2 of the report).

14. HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 4 AND ANNUAL 2012/13

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) outlining to the Committee the performance of the Housing Service for the period 1 January to 31 March 2013 and for the year 2012/13.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to welcome the areas of good performance outlined in Paragraph 5 of the report relating to building services, property management, allocations and homelessness, housing management, planning and development, gypsy travellers and complaints;
- (ii) to note the actions being taken to seek improvements where required, outlined in Paragraph 6 of the report; and
- (iii) the targets proposed for 2013/14 as set out in Paragraph 10 of the report.

15. TENANT FEEDBACK – PLANNED MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS

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

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) note the results of the feedback as set out in Paragraph 4 of the report;
- (ii) welcome the continuing level of satisfaction with delivery of the Housing Investment Programme; and
- (iii) note the proposals to provide any updates within the regular Housing Investment Report as and when required.

16. DOWNSIZING INCENTIVE SCHEME – ANNUAL REPORT

Under reference to Paragraph 6 of the Minute of this Committee dated 9 February 2102, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee the first annual report on the Council's downsizing incentive scheme.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress achieved in implementing the downsizing incentive scheme during 2012/13;
- (ii) to note an annual budget of £50k to operate the downsizing incentive scheme has already been agreed for 2013/14; and
- (iii) that officers carry out a half yearly review of the operation of the scheme in October 2013 to inform the HRA budget process for 2014/15.

17. COMMUNITY SAFETY PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 2012/13

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with an update on performance against Community Safety performance indicators for the period from January to March 2013 and providing an update on activity undertaken by the four Community Safety Groups in relation to tackling Community Safety priorities.

During discussion concern was raised with regard to fly tipping targets not being met with particular concern being raised in relation to the Dallacy area and whether this may be due in part to the opening times of the Dallacy civic amenity site.

In response, the Anti-social Behaviour Co-ordinator agreed to find out the opening times of the Dallacy site and provide Members of the Committee with this information following the meeting.

During further discussion, clarification was sought as to the target number of under 5 year olds presenting to Dr Grays Hospital with a head injury being set at 26, as this was considered to be high. In response it was agreed

the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator would provide Members of the Committee with a breakdown of this statistic to reflect head injuries sustained as a result of an accident and those sustained as a result of child abuse.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to welcome the performance against Community Safety indicators noted as performing well as set out in Paragraph 5 of the report relating to Anti social behaviour, fire and home safety, road safety and violence reduction;
- (ii) to note the measures and activity being undertaken in relation to those requiring action as set out in Paragraph 6 of the report;
- (iii) to note that the Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator would provide the Committee with clarification as to the opening hours of the Dallachy civic amenity site; and
- (iv) that the Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator would provide a breakdown in the statistic detailing the number of under 5 year olds presenting to Dr Grays Hospital with a head injury to reflect head injuries sustained as a result of an accident and those sustained as a result of child abuse.

18. QUESTION TIME

There were no questions submitted.

19. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2012/13 – BUDGET MONITORING AND REVIEW OF CRAFT AND MANUAL STAFFING (PARA 9)

Under reference to Paragraph 18 of the Minute of this Committee dated 6 March 2012, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee the provisional budget monitoring information for the period to 31 March 2013 and the outcome of a review of craft and manual staffing arrangements for the Building Services Trading Operation.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the provisional financial information as at 31 March 2013 as detailed in Appendix I of the report; and
- (ii) the recommendation to phased and incremental increase of directly employed craft posts, to alleviate workload pressures, subject to savings being achieved.

20. HOUSING NEEDS REVIEW (PARA 1)

Under reference to Paragraph 26 of the Minute of this Committee dated 23 April 2013, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee the outcome of the consultation process on the draft Housing Needs review proposals, agreed by the Committee on 23 April 2013. The report further proposed the implementation of the review proposals with only minor amendments.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed :-

- (i) the implementation of the Housing Needs Review as set out in Appendix I of the report;
- (ii) to note the consultation comments and the management response to these as set out in Paragraph 5 of the report; and
- (iii) to note that Officers will continue to monitor workloads etc and will report further to Committee, should the need arise.