

THE MORAY COUNCIL
MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 27 AUGUST 2013
COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN

Present

Councillors E McGillivray (Chair), R Shepherd (Depute Chair), G Alexander, J Allan, G Coull, L Creswell, P Gowans, M Howe, B Jarvis, J MacKay, M McConachie and Councillor A Wright (Ex-officio) (from item 6 on the Agenda).

Mr S Christie and Mr B Taylor Tenant Representatives.

Apologies

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillors S Cree, S Morton and Mr D Wood, Tenant Representative.

In Attendance

The Head of Housing and Property, the Housing Needs Manager, the Housing Strategy & Development Manager, the Building Services Manager, Mr J MacDonald, Asset Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer 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>
17	9
18	9

3. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

There were no written questions.

4. COUNCIL NEW BUILD – LETTINGS PLAN

Under reference to Paragraph 7 of the Minute of this Committee dated 18 June 2013, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee the draft Lettings Plan for council new build housing for approval, following completion of the agreed consultation process.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note:-

- (i) the Lettings Plan for Council new build developments in Buckie, Forres and Keith as set out in Appendix I of the report; and
- (ii) that further reports will be presented to the Committee as set out in the Lettings Plan.

5. FORTHCOMING HOUSING BILL

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with information on Scottish Government proposals to introduce a new Housing Bill during the Autumn of 2013.

Councillor Wright joined the Meeting at this juncture.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note:-

- (i) the report regarding the Forthcoming Housing Bill; and
- (ii) that further reports will be presented to this Committee as the Bill progresses.

6. THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME IN MORAY

Under reference to Paragraph 5 of the Minute of this Committee dated 18 June 2013, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) considering the implications for Moray with regard to changes in Scottish Government subsidy arrangements for funding of new affordable housing. The report presented the Committee with progress on the affordable housing supply programme in Moray for 2012-15 and further presented proposals relating to the forward planning of the 2015-18 programme.

Following consideration, the Committee welcomed the Scottish Government's announcement on funding for new affordable housing as set out in paragraph 4 of the report and agreed to:-

- (i) note the implications of the Government's announcement for the Moray affordable housing programme as set out in paragraphs 4.1 - 4.3 of the report;
- (ii) note the progress on the delivery of the Strategic Local Programme for 2012-15 as set out in paragraphs 5.1 – 5.5 of the report;
- (iii) progress the project at Linkwood East, Elgin as a Council house development as part of the Strategic Local Programme for 2015-18 as set out in paragraph 6.3 of the report; and
- (iv) note that accommodation for looked-after children could form part of the development of the site at Linkwood East as set out in paragraph 6.5 of the report.

7. MORAY HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME

Under reference to Paragraph 10 of the Minute of this Committee dated 26 April 2013, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) updating the Committee with progress on the Moray Home Energy Efficiency Programme.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note:-

- (i) the level of Scottish Government funding for the Moray Home Energy Efficiency Programme during 2013/14 of £689k which was almost £100k lower than the £787k.
- (ii) the arrangements being put in place to deliver the programme as set out in paragraphs 4.1 – 4.15 of the report; and
- (iii) that further reports on programme progress will be presented to this Committee.

8. PRESSURED AREA STATUS

Under reference to Paragraph 7 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 details of activities associated with the potential renewal and extension of Pressured Area Status designations.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note:-

- (i) the actions set out in paragraphs 4.1 – 4.3 and Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (i) that a further report will be presented to the Committee in December 2013.

9. PROGRESS REPORT ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive asking the Committee to consider the progress made in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duties and to approve the recommendations in 2 (ii) and (iii) of the report which will assist in further promoting equal opportunities within the Moray Council.

During discussion, Councillor Creswell sought clarification as to the number of equal pay claims that were outstanding within the Council. In response, the Equal Opportunities Officer advised that he would contact Human Resources and provide Councillor Creswell with that information following the Meeting.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the update on progress against the Moray Council's Public Sector Equality Duties as set out in the report;
- (ii) to extend an invitation to local faith groups to join the Moray Equalities Forum in order to ensure a better representation of all groups protected under the Equalities Act 2010;
- (iii) that the Equal Opportunities Officer liaises with Legal and Democratic Services to ensure that further training is to be made available to elected members and managers within the Moray Council on how to balance equality considerations arising from equality impact assessments against other priorities; and
- (iv) that the Equal Opportunities Officer would respond to a query raised by Councillor Creswell with regard to outstanding equal pay claims following the meeting.

10. HOUSING AND PROPERTY BUDGET MONITORING – 30 JUNE 2013

Under reference to Paragraphs 2 and 6 of the Minute of The Moray Council dated 13 February 2013, there was submitted and noted, a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting the Committee with budget monitoring for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Services Other Housing Budget for the period to 30 June 2013.

11. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2013/14

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) informing the Committee of the position to 30 June 2013 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2013/14.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note:-

- (i) the position as at 30 June 2013 with regards to the Housing Investment Programme for 2012/13 as set out in Appendix I of the report; and

- (ii) that following the analysis of the budget position at the end of Quarter 1, there are no proposed revisions to the agreed budgets for 2013/14.

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

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee details of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) inspection of the Council's Homeless Hostels.

During discussion, the Committee joined the Council Leader in congratulating the Housing and Property Service with regard to the improved grade that the council had achieved in relation to the quality of its care and support within its homeless hostels.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- (i) agreed to note the SCSWIS report; and
- (ii) congratulated the Housing and Property Service with regard to the improved grade that the Council has achieved in relation to the quality of its care and support within its homeless hostels.

13. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING SCHEME OF ASSISTANCE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK 2012/13

Under reference to Paragraph 20 of the Minute of this committee dated 7 June 2012, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee the results of feedback from clients provided with services under the Council's Private Sector Scheme of Assistance (SofA) during 2012/13. These services are delivered by the Private Sector Home Improvement Team.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note:-

- (i) the results of customer feedback received on the Scheme of Assistance during 2012/13 as set out in paragraph 4 of the report; and
- (ii) that the customer feedback results for 2013/14 will be presented to the Committee during 2014.

14. HOUSING IN SCOTLAND – AUDIT SCOTLAND REPORT

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) advising the Committee of the findings from the Audit Scotland national report 'Housing in Scotland', published in mid July 2013. The report commented on the recommendations from the Audit Scotland report.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) note the Audit Scotland report 'Housing in Scotland' which is available from www.audit-scotland.gov.uk;
- (ii) accept the key recommendations in the report as set out in Appendix I of the report; and
- (iii) note the actions already taken in Moray in relation to key recommendations as set out in paragraph 6 of the report.

15. QUESTION TIME

Councillor Alexander sought clarification as to the procedure that should be adhered to should a tenant wish to downsize their property.

In response, the Housing Needs Manager advised that downsizing should be discussed with the tenant's Area Housing Officer in the first instance and that the tenant should also submit a transfer application form.

Councillor Alexander further queried that, should a tenant be offered a property, how long do they have to accept or refuse the property.

In response, the Housing Needs Manager advised that the tenant would have 3 days following the viewing to either accept or refuse the property.

16. HOUSING MAINTENANCE PARTNERSHIP (PARA 9)

Under reference to Paragraph 13 of the Minute of this Committee dated 27 January 2009, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) seeking approval from the Committee to extend the existing Maintenance Partnership Agreement (incorporating Planned Maintenance & Response Repairs, Disabled Adaptions and Gas & Solid Fuel Servicing) for a further 5 Year period and to implement an associated Improvement Plan.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the review as set out in paragraph 5 of the report;
- (ii) to approve a further 5 year extension to the Maintenance Partnership Agreement; and
- (iii) that the proposed Improvement Plan be implemented.

17. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2013/14 – BUDGET MONITORING (PARA 9)

Under reference to Paragraph 25 of the Minute of this Committee dated 23 April 2013, there was submitted and noted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee the budget monitoring information for the period to 30 June 2013 for the Building Services Trading Operation as set out in Appendix I of the report.