

THE MORAY COUNCIL
MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2013
COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN

Present

Councillors E. McGillivray (Chairman), R. Shepherd (Deputy Chairman), 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 S. Morton and Mr D. Wood (Tenant Representative).

In Attendance

The Head of Housing and Property, the Head of Financial Services, the Housing Services Manager, the Housing Needs Manager, the Housing Strategy & Development Manager, the Building Services Manager, the Asset Manager, the Building Services Manager, the Senior Policy Officer, Mr G. Hamilton, Housing Policy Officer, Ms F. Geddes, Housing Strategy Officer, Mr A. Milne, Accountant 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 the meeting noted that the Council's SNP Group had discussed Item 16 – Housing Business Plan Review 2013 and Preparation for the HRA Budget Setting 2014/15.

There were no other declarations from group leaders or spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of member 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>
20	8 & 9
21	11

3. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

There were no written questions.

4. CONGRATULATIONS

The Committee joined the Chairman in congratulating Joanne Dunn and Gary George, apprentices with Building Services, on receiving awards for Best Theoretical Joiner (Year 1) and All Round Progress in Joinery (Year 2) respectively at the Moray College Annual Construction Prize Giving Ceremony.

5. THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME IN MORAY

Under reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of this Committee dated 27 August 2013, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with details of additional resources made available by the Scottish Government to fund new affordable housing in Moray and presenting progress on the delivery of Moray affordable housing supply programme for 2012-15.

During discussions, the Committee joined Councillor McConachie in commending the work of the Housing Strategy and Development Manager and his team in the work carried out on the programme to date.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to commend the work of the Housing Strategy and Development Manager and his team in the work carried out on the programme to date;
- (ii) to welcome the additional resources made available by the Scottish Government to fund the affordable housing supply programme in Moray for 2012-15;
- (iii) to note the implications of this new funding for the delivery of the programme, as detailed in Section 4 of the report; and
- (iv) that a further 5 houses at Barhill Road, Buckie be added to the 2012-15 programme.

6. REVIEW OF RENT SETTING POLICY

Under reference to paragraph 10 of the Minute of this Committee dated 16 February 2010, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting the Committee with a review of the Council's rent setting policy for approval by the Committee. A copy of the amended policy was provided as Appendix 1 to the report.

In response to a query from the Committee, the Head of Housing and Property agreed to circulate a note clarifying the theory behind the level on points awarded based on the location of a property.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) note that the Head of Housing and Property would circulate a note clarifying the theory behind the level on points awarded based on the location of a property;
- (ii) approve the revisions to the Rent Setting Policy, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (iii) note that the policy is to be further reviewed in 2017.

7. WELFARE REFORM – UPDATE

Under reference to paragraph 12 of the Minute of this Committee dated 23 April 2013, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with an update on the housing impacts of welfare reform, information on the impact of the under occupancy charge and considering future actions in relation to the roll out of Universal Credit.

During discussions, Councillor Coull moved that, in addition to agreeing the recommendations, the Chairman write to the Minister of State for Housing, expressing the Council's concerns regarding measures to pass increased charges to homeless households under-occupying temporary accommodation and seeking to be re-compensated the indicative figure of £23k identified that the Council has undertaken by not passing on the increased charges. This was seconded by Councillor Howe.

In response to a query from the Chairman, Councillor Coull, and Councillor Howe as seconder, agreed to amend the motion to include that a copy of the letter be sent to Margaret Burgess MSP, Minister for Housing and Welfare.

There being no one otherwise minded, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress report;
- (ii) to note that future reports will be provided to the Committee; and
- (iii) that the Chairman write to the Minister of State for Housing, copied to Margaret Burgess MSP, Minister for Housing and Welfare, expressing the Council's concerns regarding measures to pass increased charges to homeless households under-occupying temporary accommodation and seeking to be re-compensated the indicative figure of £23k identified that the Council has undertaken by not passing on the increased charges.

8. REVIEW OF TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2013-2016

Under reference to paragraph 16 of the Minute of the Housing Sub Committee dated 11 November 2011, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee a draft Tenant Participation

Strategy 2013-2016 for approval. A copy of the strategy was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

During discussions, the Committee joined Councillor Jarvis in commending the work that the Tenants Core Group do to enable tenant participation in Moray.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) commend the work that the Tenants Core Group do to enable tenant participation in Moray;
- (ii) approve the draft Tenant Participation Strategy 2013-2016, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (iii) noted that annual reviews of the Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan will be presented to Committee.

9. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK – NEW TENANT’S SURVEY RESULTS ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

Under reference to paragraph 10 of the Minute of this Committee dated 21 June 2012, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with details of the results of the New Tenant’s Survey for 2012/13.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to welcome the high levels of customer satisfaction as detailed in the report;
- (ii) to note the results of the survey, as summarised in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (iii) the actions in response to the feedback provided, as detailed in Section 6 of the report.

10. REVIEW OF ENERGY ADVICE IN MORAY

Under reference to paragraph 7 of the Minute of this Committee dated 27 August 2013, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) which reviewed the current provision of energy advice in Moray and presented proposals for the further development of locally-based services.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) note the details of the review of energy advice in Moray; and
- (ii) the further development of locally-based energy advice services in accordance with the proposals set out in Section 7 of the report.

11. REVISED RENT ARREARS POLICY

Under reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of this Committee date 18 June 2013, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee a revised Rent Arrears Policy for approval. A copy of the revised policy was provided as Appendix 1 to the report.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the feedback received on the Rent Arrears Policy following consultation, as detailed in Section 4 of the report;
- (ii) to approve the revised Rent Arrears Policy, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (iii) to note that a revised procedure will be developed for all staff involved in implementing the policy; and
- (iv) that the implementation date for the amended policy would be 28 October 2013.

12. HOMELESSNESS IN MORAY – ANNUAL REVIEW 2012/13

Under reference to paragraph 7 of the Minute of this Committee dated 16 October 2012, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee an analysis of homelessness in Moray during 2012/13, comparing with that of previous years and setting out future actions to address aspects of homelessness.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the analysis of homelessness, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (ii) the future actions to address aspects of homelessness, as detailed in Section 7 of the report.

13. NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST INITIATIVE COUNCIL VARIANT

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) presenting the Committee with an outline of the National Housing Trust Initiative (NHT) Council Variant, its operation and management and the extent to which it could be used to meet housing need in Moray and seeking agreement in principle to the Council's participation in this scheme and support for Officers' expression of interest to the Scottish Government.

In response to a query from the Committee, the Head of Housing and Property agreed to arrange a briefing session on the NHT Council Variant once more information had been provided.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to approve the Council's participation in the National Housing Trust Initiative (NHT) Council Variant in principle;
- (ii) to note that a briefing session would be arranged once more information on the NHT Council Variant had been made available; and
- (iii) that further reports on any NHT proposals will be presented to the Communities Committee as required.

14. HOUSING AND PROPERTY BUDGET MONITORING – 31 AUGUST 2013

Under reference to paragraphs 2 and 6 of the Minute of the special meeting of The Moray Council dated 13 February 2013, there was submitted and noted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee a budget monitoring report for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Services Other Housing Budget for the period to 31 August 2013, as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

15. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2013/14

There was submitted and noted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) informing the Committee of the position to 31 August 2013 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2013/14.

16. HOUSING BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW 2013 AND PREPARATION FOR THE HRA BUDGET SETTING 2014/15

Under reference to paragraph 13 of the Minute of this Committee dated 16 October 2013, there was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee a summary of the findings of the Housing Business Plan Review which has recently been completed and considering the implications of this review for the budget preparation work to be carried out prior to presentation of the draft HRA Budget 2014/15 for Council's consideration in February 2014.

During discussions, the Chairman moved that consultation be held with tenants on rent increases of 4.5% for two years followed by 5% for eight years thereafter as part of the preparation of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) proposals for 2014/15 and beyond. There being no one other wise minded, this was unanimously agreed.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the summary of the Housing Business Plan Review, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (ii) to consult tenants on rent increases of 4.5% for two years followed by 5% for eight years thereafter as part of the preparation of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) proposals for 2014/15 and beyond;

- (iii) in principle, the Housing Investment Programme 2014/15 proposals to be reflected in the draft HRA budget presented to The Moray Council in February 2014, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- (iv) to remit the request that Officers submit an application to the Scottish Government to transfer Council hostels currently held on the HRA to General Services to the Policy and Resources Committee.

17. COUNCIL NEW BUILD PHASE 2 AND 3 – POST OCCUPATION SURVEY

Under reference to paragraph s 7 and 8 of the Minutes of this Committee dated 17 January and 11 December 2011 respectively, 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 September 2012 to March 2013.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note:-

- (i) the results of the post occupation survey of tenants occupying Council new build properties let during September 2012 to March 2013, as detailed in Section 4 of the report; and
- (ii) that similar feedback will be sought from tenants occupying future Council New Build properties and future reports presented to this Committee.

18. ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR SERVICE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) requesting that the Committee consider the customer satisfaction levels within the Antisocial Behaviour and Community Warden services, as provided from within Community Safety. A breakdown of the survey was provided as Appendix 1 to the report.

During discussions, the Committee joined Councillor Howe in commending the Antisocial Behaviour and Community Warden services for their continued work.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) commend the Antisocial Behaviour and Community Warden services for their continued work;
- (ii) note the outcomes in terms of the customers' satisfaction in using the Antisocial Behaviour and Community Warden services, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (iii) actions taken to improve the service as a result of the survey findings.

19. QUESTION TIME

Councillor Jarvis queried what work was currently underway to identify suitable locations for potential halting sites for travelling communities.

In response, the Head of Housing and Property advised that no instructions had been issued to continue investigations following the last investigation that concluded in 2010. She advised that, in her opinion, the Council had exhausted examination of land that it currently owns and that any further investigation would need, by necessity, liaison with other land owners.

Mr Christie and Mr Taylor left the meeting at this juncture.

20. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2013/14 – BUDGET MONITORING (PARAS 8 & 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 31 August 2013 for the Building Services Trading Operation.

21. BUILDING SERVICES DLO – REVIEW OF CRAFT AND MANUAL WORKING PRACTICES AND SHIFT PATTERS (PARA 11)

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting the Committee with the outcome after a review of current Building Services DLO craft and manual staff shift patterns and working practices.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) consult with Craft and Manual staff and Trade Unions on proposed changes to core hours and shift patterns during normal and outwith normal working hours for a 5 month pilot period, as detailed out in Section 6 of the report;
- (ii) note the enhanced service that will thereby be offered to tenants;
- (iii) note that the proposed changes, as detailed at (i) above, will generate efficiency savings as well as ensuring compliance with UK and EU legislation on Working Time; and
- (iv) note that a further report on out of hours shift patterns would be presented to this Committee in due course.