

THE MORAY COUNCIL

MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER 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, J MacKay, M McConachie and S Morton

Mr S Christie (Tenant Representative)

Apologies

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor B Jarvis, Mr D Wood and Mr B Taylor (Tenant Representatives)

In Attendance

The Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services), the Acting Head of Housing and Property, the Building Services Manager, the Asset Manager, Ms F Geddes, Housing Strategy Officer and Mrs L Rowan, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the meeting.

1. CONGRATULATIONS

The Committee joined the Chair in congratulating Mrs Jill Stewart on her recent appointment as Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) and Mr Richard Anderson on his appointment as Acting Head of Housing and Property with effect from 3 January 2014.

2. 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.

3. 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>
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4. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

There were no written questions.

5. PRESSURED AREA STATUS DESIGNATION

Under reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of this Committee dated 27 August 2013, there was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting a proposal to the Committee for a Pressured Area Status designation covering all of Moray, following a period of consultation with tenants and partners, and consideration of core supporting evidence.

During discussion surrounding the increase of housing applicants since 2005, clarification was sought as to whether this was due to an increased number of adults having low income or temporary contract employment. In response the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) advised that a report regarding allocations activity is submitted annually to this Committee, with the next report due on June 2014, and that this report would be most appropriate to identify statistics such as adults who are in shared tenancies as a result of having low income or temporary contract.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the results of research into the potential for further Pressured Area Status (PAS) designations as set out in Section 5 of the report;
- (ii) a PAS designation to cover all of Moray;
- (iii) that a new PAS designation will last for 10 years;
- (iv) that officers take the necessary steps to implement the designation as set out in Section 8 of the report; and
- (v) that statistics identifying adults who are in shared tenancies as a result of having low income or temporary contract employment, be provided in the report due to this Committee in June 2014 regarding allocations activity.

6. ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW

Under reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of this Committee dated 18 June 2013, there was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee a revised Allocations Policy for approval by the Committee following the consultation on the earlier draft policy.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the results of the public consultation on the revised draft allocations policy as set out in Appendix I of the report;

- (ii) that no additional points should be awarded to tenants affected by the removal of the Spare Room Subsidy (referred to in the consultation document as the bedroom tax); and
- (iii) to approve the revised draft allocations policy for implementation in April 2014 as set out in Appendix II of the report.

7. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTIES, COMPLIANCE REPORT

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive asking the Committee to note that the Moray Council is compliant with the public sector equality duties and to approve the policy on adults who are vulnerable to bullying as set out in Appendix I of the report. The policy aims to raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour, ensure a unified approach to dealing with bullying behaviour towards vulnerable adults is practiced across the Council and furthermore, protect and support the victims of bullying.

During discussion, Councillor Howe raised concern regarding whether staff who were approached by a vulnerable adult claiming to being bullied or harassed were adequately trained to ascertain the full facts of the allegation and moved that Section 11 of the policy entitled "Guidelines to dealing with incidents", be amended to include that, should a member of staff be approached by a vulnerable adult claiming to being bullied or harassed, that the incident should be reported to a professional trained to handle these matters. Councillor Gowans seconded the motion.

Councillor McGillivray stated that he was of the opinion that staff members required to establish a general nature of the allegation prior to taking it forward and therefore moved as an amendment that Section 11 of the policy entitled "Guidelines to dealing with incidents", be amended to include that, should a member of staff be approached by a vulnerable adult claiming to being bullied or harassed, that the staff member establish the general detail regarding the allegation prior to determining how to proceed. This was seconded by Councillor Cree.

On a division there voted:-

For the motion (5): Councillors Coull, Gowans, Howe, McConachie and Mr Christie, Tenant Representative

For the amendment (8): Councillors Alexander, Allan, Cree, Creswell, Mackay, McGillivray, Morton and Shepherd

Accordingly, the amendment became the finding of the Meeting and the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) note that the Moray Council, its Education and Social Care Services and the Moray Licensing Board have been found to be compliant with the public sector equality duties; and
- (ii) approve the policy on adults who are vulnerable to bullying subject to Section 11 entitled "Guidelines to dealing with incidents", being amended to include that, should a member of staff be approached by a vulnerable adult claiming to being bullied or harassed, that the staff member establish

the general detail regarding the allegation prior to determining how to proceed.

8. APPRAISAL OF DECORATION PACK SCHEME

Under reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of this Committee dated 23 April 2013, there was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee the findings following an appraisal of the pilot scheme to use 'decoration packs' as a replacement for the previous decoration voucher scheme operated by the Housing and Property Service.

Following consideration, the Committee welcomed the positive customer feedback received to date and agreed:-

- (i) to note the findings of appraisals of the pilot scheme to use 'decoration packs' as set out in Appendix I of the report; and
- (ii) to implement the 'decoration pack' scheme on a permanent basis from 1 April 2014.

9. HOUSING AND PROPERTY BUDGET MONITORING – 31 OCTOBER 2013

There was submitted and noted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee the budget monitoring report for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Services Other Housing Budget for the period to 31 October 2013. The report further commented on the variances on budgets as at 31 October 2013 and provided projected outturns for the financial year 2013/14, as set out in Appendix I of the report.

10. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2013/14

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

11. HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICE PLAN 2013/14 – PROGRESS QUARTER 1 AND 2

Under reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of this Committee dated 18 June 2013, there was submitted and noted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) setting out the progress achieved in the implementation of the actions agreed within the Housing and Property Service Plan 2013/14, as set out in Appendix I of the report. The agreed actions were to increase the supply of affordable housing, tackle homelessness, manage our assets effectively and improve service quality.

12. HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTERS 1 AND 2 2013/14

There was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) outlining to the Committee the performance of the Housing Service for the period 1 April to 30 September 2013. The report provided a comprehensive picture of performance in Housing Services for the first and second quarter of 2013/14 and

also provided an analysis of performance during 2012/13 recorded by Audit Scotland and Scottish Housing Best Value Network.

Following consideration, the Committee scrutinised and welcomed the good performance outlined in the report and agreed to note:-

- (i) the actions being taken to seek improvements where required as set out in Section 4.4 of the report; and
- (ii) that officers would begin work to implement start/end dates for tenancies on any day of the working week and agreed that the implementation date for changes will be from April 2014 as set out in Section 6.1.6 of the report.

13. QUESTION TIME

There were no questions.

14. TRIBUTE

The Committee joined the Chair in paying tribute to all Staff for their continued hard work and improvement over the year and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

15. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2013/14 – BUDGET MONITORING

There was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee the budget monitoring information for the period to 31 October 2013 for the Building Services Trading Operation.

During discussion, clarification was sought as to the reason for the £9k overspend in administrative costs relating to unbudgeted legal expenses and mobile phone costs. In response the Building Services Manager advised that the Council was currently in dispute regarding the mobile phone costs and that he would provide details regarding the outcome of the dispute to the Committee following the meeting. With regard to the legal expenses, these were due to an unexpected health and safety issue and an employee tribunal.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note:-

- (i) the financial information as at 31 October 2013 as set out in Appendix I of the report;
- (ii) the revised year end forecast to 31 March 2014; and
- (iii) that the Building Services Manager would provide details of the outcome of a dispute over mobile phone costs which has resulted in an overspend in this area, to members of the Committee following the Meeting.