

THE MORAY COUNCIL
MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 4 MARCH 2014
COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN

Present

Councillors E McGillivray (Chairman), R Shepherd (Deputy Chairman), G Alexander, J Allan, G Coull, G Cowie, S Cree, P Gowans, M Howe, B Jarvis, J MacKay, and S Morton.

Mr S Christie, Tenant Representative.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor M McConachie and Mr D Wood, Tenant Representative.

In Attendance

The Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services), the Acting Head of Housing and Property, the Acting Housing Needs Manager, the Housing Strategy and Development Manager, the Housing Services Manager, the Building Services Manager, the Asset Manager, the Equal Opportunities 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>
18	9
19	9

3. WELCOME

The Meeting joined the Chairman in welcoming Councillor Gordon Cowie to his first meeting of the Communities Committee following his recent success in the by election for Buckie Ward 3.

4. MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE

The Committee joined the Chair in expressing their condolences to the family of the late Robert Taylor, former Tenant Representative, who sadly died following a short illness.

5. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Meeting noted that no written questions had been submitted.

6. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REVISED ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Under reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of this Committee dated 4 March 2014, there was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with details of the final arrangements for implementing the Council's revised allocations policy which will incorporate 10 key changes which aim to increase applicant choice, make best use of housing stock, improve accountability and transparency and make the policy fairer for those applying for Council housing.

During the introduction of the report, the Acting Housing Needs Manager advised that a briefing would be issued to Elected Members prior to implementation of the policy and sought clarification as to whether Members would prefer an oral briefing or a written briefing. The Chair, sought the opinion of the Committee and it was agreed that a written briefing would be the preferred option.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the arrangements for implementation of the Council's revised allocations policy as set out in Section 4 of the report;
- (ii) to note that the revised allocations policy will go live from 7 April 2014;
- (iii) that a further report on the implementation will be presented to the Communities Committee on 29 April 2014; and

- (iv) that a written brief will be issued to Elected Members prior to the implementation of the Council's revised allocations policy.

7. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR HOMELESS PERSONS

Under reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of this Committee dated 26 February 2013, there was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with a progress update on the reduction and reconfiguration of the Council's temporary accommodation during 2013/14. The report further proposed that Officers be allowed to continue to reduce and reconfigure existing provision during 2014/15 and also highlighted the need to implement a revised charging policy for temporary accommodation.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) note the progress made to date in relation to the reduction and reconfiguration of the Council's temporary accommodation as set out in Section 4 of the report;
- (ii) note the financial implications arising from the reduction of hostel deficit grant and the onset of Universal Credit as set out in Section 6.2 of the report;
- (iii) grant Officers discretion to continue to reduce and reconfigure the properties used for temporary homeless accommodation; and
- (iv) note that a further report on a revised charging policy for temporary accommodation will be presented to this Committee in September 2014.

8. MORAY HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME 2013/14

Under reference to paragraph 10 of the Minute of this Committee dated 27 August 2013, there was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) updating the Committee with regard to progress on the Moray Home Energy Efficiency Programme. The report also provided details of the funding that has been secured for the Mar Court/Mar Place, Keith external wall insulation project.

During discussion, concern was raised that Elected Members for Ward 2 Keith and Cullen had not been invited to attend the community engagement event which had taken place on 3 February 2014 for residents of Mar Court and Mar Place, where they were provided with information on the external wall insulation project, and requested that local Ward Members be invited to attend any future community engagement events. In response, the Chair apologised on behalf of Officers for this oversight and assured the Committee that Ward Members will be invited to attend any future community engagement events.

Thereafter, the Committee commended Officers for their excellent work in relation to home energy efficiency and agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress made in the delivery of the Moray Home Energy Efficiency Programme during 2013/14 as set out in Section 4 of the report;

- (ii) to note that funding has been secured for the Mar Court/Mar Place, Keith external wall insulation project as part of the 2013/14 programme;
- (iii) that further reports on programme progress will be presented to this Committee; and
- (iv) that Ward Members will be invited to attend any future community engagement events.

9. HOUSING (SCOTLAND) BILL 2013

There was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) informing the Committee of the contents of the Housing (Scotland) Bill 2013 introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 21 November 2013 and outlining the main objectives of the draft Bill which are to:-

- make better use of existing stock of social rented homes
- provide additional protection for tenants in the private rented sector and for permanent residents of mobile home sites; and
- support improvements in the quality of housing in the private rented and privately owned sectors.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the main points of the Housing (Scotland) Bill (2013) as summarised in the report;
- (ii) to note the proposed implementation dates for the new Bill; and
- (iii) that further reports on the Bill will be presented to this Committee as and when necessary.

10. HOUSING AND PROPERTY BUDGET MONITORING – DECEMBER 2013

There was submitted and noted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) presenting to the Committee budget monitoring for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Services Other Housing Budget for the period to 31 December 2013 and the projected outturns for the financial year 2013/14.

11. SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER COMPLIANCE

Under reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of this Committee dated 11 December 2012, there was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) providing the Committee with a progress update on the actions taken by officers to ensure compliance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter which came into force on 1 April 2012 with the aim to help improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide and support the Scottish Government's long term aim of creating a safer and stronger Scotland.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress in relation to the completion of the Council's annual return to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) as set out in Section 4.1 of the report;
- (ii) to note the progress to date in terms of developing the Annual Charter Performance Report to tenants and other customers as set out in Section 4.2 of the report;
- (iii) that a draft Annual Charter Performance Report to tenants and other customers be presented to this Committee in April 2014; and
- (iv) that a draft Landlord Scrutiny Framework be presented to this Committee by June 2014.

12. 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 December 2013 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2013/14.

13. PROGRESS REPORT ON EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive informing the Committee of progress made during 2013 on carrying out equality impact assessments following implementation of new guidance and procedures in August 2012 where committee reports were to be monitored for compliance with public sector equality duties prior to being submitted to Committee.

Following consideration the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to commend the work of the Equalities Officer in his role of maintaining a high level of compliance with regard to public sector equality duties;
- (ii) to note the report on equality impact assessments carried out during 2013;
- (iii) that reports on equality impact assessments be made available on the Moray Council website.

14. ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR SERVICE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION RESULTS

There was submitted and noted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) asking the Committee to consider the customer satisfaction levels within the Antisocial Behaviour and Community Warden services as provided from within Community Safety, where there continues to be a very high satisfaction level by respondents.

15. COUNCIL NEW BUILD LETTINGS PLAN

Under reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of this Committee dated 27 August 2013, there was submitted a report by the Acting 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 2013. The main objectives of the Lettings Plan are to make the best use of stock for households with mobility needs, address overcrowding issues, help existing tenants to downsize and create sustainable communities.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note:-

- (i) the detail of the allocations to new build properties between 1 October and 31 December 2013 as set out in Section 2 of the report; and
- (ii) that reports relating to allocations made under phase 4 of the Council's new build programme will be reported on a quarterly basis to this Committee.

16. PROPOSED INCREASE IN FIXED PENALTY FINES FOR LITTERING AND FLY TIPPING BY SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

There was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) informing the Committee of Scottish Government's proposal to increase the statutory level of fines for fixed penalties issued in respect of litter and fly tipping as from 1 April 2014 to £80 and £200 respectively.

During discussion, clarification was sought as to the cost to the Council for cleaning up as a result of fly tipping and littering compared against the revenue received from fines issued for fly tipping and littering. In response, the Anti-social Behaviour Co-ordinator agreed to source this information and circulate to Members of the Committee.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the Scottish Government's proposal to increase the level of fines for littering and fly tipping to £80 and £200 respectively;
- (ii) that the approach taken by Community Wardens in enforcing litter and fly tipping legislation continue, as detailed in paragraph 3.4 of the report; and
- (iii) that the cost to the Council for cleaning up as a result of fly tipping and littering be compared with the revenue received from fines issued for fly tipping and littering be circulated to Members of the Committee.

17. QUESTION TIME

Councillor Alexander sought clarification as to the current situation with regard to the building at Hanover Court in Forres, as the building has been boarded up for some time with no sign of it being demolished with a view to starting a rebuild.

In response, the Housing Strategy and Development Manager advised that Hanover Housing had asked to have a meeting with the Housing Department and Community Care to discuss the development of the site for extra care housing. He further advised that Hanover Housing are pursuing a demolition at the moment and anticipate commencing the new build development in June/July 2014. He further advised that planning consent is in place as is the funding for the project however more information would be available once the meeting with Hanover Housing has taken place.

18. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2013/14 – BUDGET MONITORING [PARA 9]

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

19. ACQUISITION OF LAND IN KEITH FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING [PARA 9]

There was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Environmental Services) seeking the Committee's approval to purchase land in Keith to facilitate the future delivery of affordable housing in Moray.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:-

- (i) the purchase of land at Alexandra Road, Keith for the future provision of affordable housing; and
- (ii) seek agreement from the Policy and Resources Committee to complete the purchase of the land.