

THE MORAY COUNCIL

MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2014

COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN

PRESENT

Councillors E McGillivray (Chair), R Shepherd (Deputy Chair), G Alexander, G Coull, G Cowie, S Cree, P Gowans, M Howe, J Mackay, M McConachie and A Wright (ex-officio).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors J Allan and S Morton.

IN ATTENDANCE

The Head of Housing and Property, the Housing Services Manager, the Housing Strategy and Development Manager, the Asset Manager, the Acting Housing Needs Manager, the Building Services Manager, the Design Manager, the Housing Strategy Officer and Mrs Lissa Rowan, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the Meeting.

1. DECLARATION OF GROUP DECISIONS AND MEMBER'S INTERESTS

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 or any declarations of Members' interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

2. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The meeting resolved that in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, 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 paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

<u>Paragraph No. of Minute</u>	<u>Paragraph No. of Schedule 7A</u>
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3. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Committee noted that no written questions had been submitted.

4. HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICE PLAN 2014/15 – PROGRESS QUARTER 1 AND 2

Under reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of this Committee dated 29 April 2014, there was submitted and noted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure) setting out the progress achieved in the implementation of the actions agreed within the Housing and Property Service Plan 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

5. STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN 2015-20

Under reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of this Committee dated 18 June 2013, there was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure) asking the Committee to consider the Council's draft Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2015-20 prior to submission to the Scottish Government.

During discussion, Councillor Wright stated that he had been advised of several households within his own Ward who had reported a significant reduction in their energy bills as a result of recent works being carried out to improve insulation and asked if a report could be provided which would evidence the savings made as a result of this work.

In response, the Housing Strategy and Development Manager advised that this was most likely as a result of the cavity wall insulation carried out through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme and agreed to provide a report detailing savings achieved by tenants in their energy bills as a result of improved insulation through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme to a future meeting of this Committee.

The Committee joined the Chair in commending the Housing Strategy and Development Manager for completing such a comprehensive report and thereafter agreed:

- (i) to note the draft SHIP submission;
- (ii) that the SHIP would be submitted to the Scottish Government by 28 November 2014;
- (iii) that further reports detailing progress with the SHIP would be presented to the Communities Committee as required; and
- (iv) that a report detailing savings achieved by tenants in their energy bills as a result of improved insulation through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme, be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

6. COUNCIL NEW BUILD LETTINGS PLAN

Under reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of this Committee dated 23 September 2014, there was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure) providing details of allocations carried out under the new build Lettings Plan between 1 July and 30 September 2014. The

report further proposed a revised Lettings Plan for the Council's new build programmes.

During discussion surrounding the design of housing with design features intended to benefit households with disability or mobility needs, clarification was sought as to whether the Lettings Plan could include relevant wording to reflect that consultation should take place with both the client and their carer/support worker as they would know exactly what their requirements would be.

In response, the Head of Housing and Property advised that consultation does take place with the client and their carer/support worker when agreeing the design of houses requiring disability or mobility needs and agreed that the section of the Lettings Plan relating to the best use of stock suitable for households with mobility/disability needs include wording to reflect that both the client and carer/support worker are consulted in relation to the design features intended to benefit such households.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed:

- (i) to note the allocations to new build properties between 1 July and 30 September 2014 as detailed in Section 4 of the report;
- (ii) to note that reports on allocations made under the Lettings Plan will continue to be presented to this Committee on a quarterly basis;
- (iii) the proposed changes to the revised Lettings Plan for new build Council housing as set out in Section 5 of the report;
- (iv) that the revised Lettings Plan should be the subject of public consultation during 19 November – 18 December 2014;
- (v) to note that a further report on the revised Lettings Plan will be presented to Communities Committee on 3 February 2015; and
- (vi) that the section of the Lettings Plan relating to the best use of stock suitable for households with mobility/disability needs include wording to reflect that both the client and carer/support worker are consulted in relation to the design features intended to benefit such households.

7. MORAY HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME

Under reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of this Committee dated 29 April 2014, there was submitted a report by the Head of Housing and Property advising the Communities Committee on outturns achieved on the Moray Home Energy Efficiency Programme 2013/14.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:

- (i) to note the final outturns on the Moray Home Energy Efficiency Programme during 2013/14 as set out in Section 4 of the report; and
- (ii) that further reports on programme progress will be presented to this Committee.

8. REVISED CHARGING POLICY FOR TEMPORARY HOMELESS ACCOMMODATION

There was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure) presenting Communities Committee with a revised charging policy for temporary homeless accommodation.

The Committee welcomed the revised charging policy which included a proposal that the Council only seek to recover those costs that it could reasonably expect to collect, and that in doing so, 84 households would see their costs reduce as a result of this revision.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed:

- i) to note the current inequalities within the existing charging policy and agreed in principle with the revised policy which only seeks to recover costs from homeless people based on their ability to pay as set out in Appendix I of the report;
- ii) to a period of public consultation on the revised policy;
- iii) to note the new financial pressures that will impact on the temporary accommodation budget from 2015/16 and the measures proposed to reduce the impact as set out in Section 6 of the report; and
- iv) that further reports will be presented to this Committee dealing with the outcome of public consultation (February 2015); the reconfiguration of temporary accommodation (May 2015); and a review of the revised policy (June 2016).

9. CONSULTATIVE DRAFT EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2015 – 2018

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 (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure) informing the Committee of progress made in the development of the Empty Homes Strategy 2015-2018. The Strategy will set out the help and support available to owners of long term vacant properties, to encourage them to bring their properties back into occupation.

During his introduction of the report, the Housing Strategy and Development Manager advised that he had recently received an email from the Scottish Government praising the Empty Homes Strategy and indicating that the Council's application for funding for the Empty Homes Loan Fund would most likely be successful and that confirmation of this was hoped to be received by the end of November 2014. This was noted.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to:

- (i) note the consultative draft Empty Homes Strategy available at APPENDIX I;

- (ii) a period of public consultation on the consultative draft from 19 November to 18 December 2014;
- (iii) note that the final Empty Homes Strategy will be presented to the Committee on 3 February 2015, for agreement, prior to publication; and
- (iv) note that an update on the application for funding to the Scottish Government will also be provided to the Committee on 3 February 2015.

10. THE HOUSING (SCOTLAND) ACT 2014

Under reference to paragraph 9 of the Minute of this Committee dated 4 March 2014, there was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure) presenting an update on the implementation of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 which had received Royal Assent on 1 August 2014.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed:

- (i) to note the main points arising from the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 as set out in Section 3.5 of the report;
- (ii) the proposals to comply with the legislative requirements; and
- (iii) that further reports will be reported on implementing the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, as and when required.

11. HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES BUDGET MONITORING – 30 SEPTEMBER 2014

There was submitted and noted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure) presenting budget monitoring for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Services Other Housing Budget for the period to 30 September 2014.

12. HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTERS 1 AND 2 OF 2014/15

There was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure) outlining the performance of the Housing Service for the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014.

During discussion, concern was raised regarding the performance indicator which measured the satisfaction of tenants in relation to the condition of their property when moving in, as the Council had failed to meet this target on 2 consecutive years and clarification was sought as to whether this was as a result of the Council pursuing a quick turnaround in re-letting void properties.

In response, the Head of Housing and Property agreed that the performance indicator in question was disappointing however he intended to look into this area of performance in more detail and bring a further report back to this Committee in

February 2015 which would provide further clarification as to why this target had not been met over the last 2 years.

Thereafter, the Committee welcomed the good performance identified within the report and thereafter agreed:

- (i) to note the performance outlined in the report;
- (ii) the actions being taken to improve performances where required as detailed in Section 4.3 of the report; and
- (iii) that a further report would be brought back to this Committee in February 2015 providing further clarification as to why the performance indicator that measured the percentage of tenants being satisfied with the standard of their home when moving in had not been met over the last 2 years.

13. HOUSING INVESTMENT 2014/15

There was submitted and noted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure) informing the Communities Committee of the position to 30 September 2014 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2014/15.

14. SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER PERFORMANCE

There was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure) providing a comparison of The Moray Council's performance under the Scottish Social Housing Charter with the Scottish average performance at a national level.

Following consideration the Committee welcomed the good performance outlined in the report and thereafter agreed to note the actions being taken to examine or improve performance where indicated.

15. QUESTION TIME

Councillor Gowans asked whether the Committee could consider raising awareness in relation to the integration of health and social care via in-house newsletters to Moray tenants.

In response, the Head of Housing and Property advised that an item on the Integration of Health and Social Care could be included in the next edition of the Tenants Voice newsletter which was due to be distributed in December 2014. This was noted.

In response to a query from Councillor Alexander in relation to promoting the good performance report received from the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Chair assured the Committee that this would be carried out.

16. BUILDING SERVICES TRADING OPERATION BUDGET 2014/15 – BUDGET MONITORING [PARA 9]

There was submitted a report by the Acting Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure) presenting the budget monitoring information for the period to 30 September 2014 for the Building Services Trading Operation.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note the:

- (i) financial information as at 30 September 2014 as set out in Appendix I of the report; and
- (ii) revised year end forecast to 31 March 2015.