

THE MORAY COUNCIL
MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE HOUSING SUB- COMMITTEE
FRIDAY 28 AUGUST 2009
COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN

PRESENT

Councillors E McGillivray (Chairman), G. Leadbitter, J. Mackay, F. Murdoch and I. Ogilive (substituting for Councillor D. Stewart)

Tenant Reps: - Mr S Christie and Mr D Wood

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors J.S. Cree, B. Jarvis, M. McConachie, R. Shepherd, Ms Anderson, Mr French and Mr Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE

The Chief Housing Officer, Senior Area Housing Manager, Capital Programmes Manager, Housing Strategy & Policy Manager, Area Housing Manager (Forres), Housing Programme Manager, Miss K Macpherson, Senior Solicitor (Commercial & Conveyancing), and Mrs C Carswell, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the Committee.

1. DECLARATION OF GROUP DECISIONS AND MEMBERS INTERESTS

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct the meeting noted that 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. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Sub-Committee noted that no written questions had been submitted.

3. ALLOCATIONS AND HOMELESSNESS

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services outlining the approach to a presentation to the Sub Committee on allocations and homelessness issues.

The Chief Housing Officer and Housing Needs Manager gave a presentation to the Housing Sub-Committee on homelessness and allocations.

The meeting noted the following answers from the Chief Housing Officer and Housing Needs Manager, in response to Members questions:-

- a) there were not enough number of re-lets which reduced the ability to be flexible where tenants are placed although they do try to look at age differences sympathetically;
- b) further work was to be done with Registered Social Landlord's on allocations carried out with recourse to nominations;
- c) when affordable housing was being built by developers, the Council do specify the types of houses were required and also consult with the Registered Social Landlord who would be taking on the development; and
- d) there would be a mix of houses in phase 1 of the council new build with a proportion of them being ground floor housing.

Councillor McGillivray stated that, in his opinion, the report shows that there was a lack of affordable housing and there was concern that targets would not be met by 2012. He also confirmed that a letter had been sent to the Housing Minister to request a meeting.

Following consideration, the Sub Committee agreed to:-

- (i) note the issues raised in the reports and the presentation made by the Chief Housing Officer and Housing Needs Manager; and
- (ii) a presentation on anti social behaviour being delivered to the Sub-Committee on 16 October 2009.

4. AREA HOUSING TEAM REPORT - QUARTER 1 2009/10

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services presenting details of Area Housing Teams' activities over the period 1 April to 30 June 2009.

The meeting noted the following answers from the Senior Area Housing Manager, in response to Members questions:-

- a) the "Well Project" in Buckie focuses on assisting people in obtaining welfare benefit advice, etc and could be rolled out to other areas as information was available; and
- b) when disputes occur between tenants the Council do involve other agencies so that tenants can peaceably enjoy their homes. When the disputes involve private home owners then these are dealt with through anti-social.

Following consideration, the Sub Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

5. HOUSING INVESTEMENT 2008 / 09

There was submitted and noted a report by the Director of Community Services informing the Sub Committee of the unaudited position to 31 March 2009 for the Housing Investment Programme for 2008 / 09, and highlighting minor revisions to the proposed budgets within the Investment Strategy for 2009 / 10.

6. HOUSING BUDGET MONITORING - UNAUDITED OUTTURN 2008 / 09

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services presenting the unaudited Housing Revenue Account (HRA) outturn for 2008 / 09 for the Sub Committee's Interest.

The meeting noted the following answers from the Chief Housing Officer in response to Members questions:-

- a) work would be taking place with finance with regard to the Council's approach to bad debts;
- b) each year a target was set for recovery of bad debts and last year's had been achieved. Arrears work was a high proportion of the work for areas teams and that they work with people in the early stages to offer preventative help.

Following consideration, the Sub Committee agreed to note the unaudited outturn position for 2008/09.

7. TENANT SURVEY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services presenting a progress report on the Tenant Survey Improvement Plan agreed by the Sub Committee in response to the Tenant Survey 2007.

Following consideration, the Sub Committee agreed to:

- (i) note the progress achieved in implementing the Tenant Survey Improvement Plan in 2008/09; and
- (ii) note that outstanding actions would be progressed as indicated in the commentary in Appendix 1 to the report.

8. TENANT PARTICIPATION - QUARTERLY UPDATE

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services updating the Housing Sub Committee on tenant participation activity in Moray from 1 April 30 June 2009.

Mr Christie advised the meeting that the Tenants Conference would begin at 10am and finish around 2.30pm on the 17 September 2009. Councillor McGillivray stated that he hoped all Members would attend the same as a lot of hard work goes into the event.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note the report.

9. DRAFT HOUSING (SCOTLAND) BILL: A CONSULTATION

There was submitted and noted a report by the Director of Community Services advising of the Moray Council response submitted on the draft Housing (Scotland) Bill to Committee.

10. TV AERIAL INSTALLATIONS

There was submitted a report by the Director of Community Services updating the Committee on the progress with works to remaining communal tv aerial installations in advance of the digital switchover scheduled for the Moray area in 2010.

In response to a question from Mr Christie as to whether tenants would be written to regarding the digital switchover, the Housing Programmes Manager advised that tenants would be written to and that Digital UK would also be distributing information, in February, regarding the switch off in August 2010. There would also be freeview boxes being distributed at no charge to those in the passport scheme.

Following consideration, the Sub Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress made to date; and
- (ii) the proposed approach to Digital Switchover programme.

11. QUESTION TIME

In response to a question from Councillor Murdoch regarding the policy on redecoration and whether there could be people, which new tenants could contact to discuss what to expect as a new tenant, the Senior Area Housing Manager advised that they have reviewed the policy on redecoration and the Council could carry out a limited amount of work and it was difficult to try and strike a balance on tenant's expectations. Mr Christie advised that in the new tenant handbook there was a letter

from himself with his telephone number on it and he was happy to be contacted in order to help tenants, if they did not wish to contact Officers within the Council.

Mr Christie advised the meeting that the forthcoming TIGRA conference had been cancelled due to lack of interest.