

HOUSING AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 1 April 2009

Chair:

Councillor Alex McInnes

Councillors Present:

John Anderson, David Baillie (Depute), Walter Brogan, Jackie Burns, Andy Carmichael, Maureen Devlin, Jim Docherty, Barry Douglas, Douglas Edwards, Beith Forrest, Ian Gray, Anne Higgins, Graeme Home, Brian McCaig, Brian McKenna, Jean McKeown, John Murray, Patrick Ross-Taylor, David Shearer, Richard Tullett

Councillors' Apologies:

Bobby Lawson, Edward McAvoy, Bert Thomson

Attending:

Corporate Resources

C Lyon, Administration Officer

Finance and Information Technology Resources

L Crosby, Accountant (Research)

Housing and Technical Resources

J Hayton, Executive Director; L Freeland, Head of Area Services; E Hughes, Finance Manager; P Murphy, Head of Support Services; J Stobie, Head of Property Services

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Technical Resources Committee held on 4 February 2009 and of the special meeting of the Housing and Technical Resources Committee held on 12 February 2009 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Committee decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3 Capital Budget Monitoring 2008/2009 - Housing and Technical Resources (HRA)

A joint report dated 2 March 2009 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Information Technology Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted advising of progress on the capital programme for Housing and Technical Resources (HRA) for the period 1 April 2008 to 20 February 2009.

The Committee decided: that the Housing and Technical Resources' capital programme of £38.543 million and expenditure to date of £30.272 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 4 February 2009 (Paragraph 3)]

4 Capital Budget Monitoring 2008/2009 - Housing and Technical Resources (Excl HRA)

A joint report dated 2 March 2009 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Information Technology Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted advising of progress on the capital programme for Housing and Technical Resources (excl HRA) for the period 1 April 2008 to 20 February 2009.

The Committee decided: that the Housing and Technical Resources' capital programme (excl HRA) of £9.976 million and spend to date of £4.735 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 4 February 2009 (Paragraph 4)]

Councillor Burns entered the meeting during consideration of the above item of business

5 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2008/2009 - Housing and Technical Resources (HRA)

A joint report dated 2 March 2009 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Information Technology Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure at 20 February 2009 against budgeted expenditure for Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (HRA), together with a forecast for the year to 31 March 2009.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the breakeven position on the Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (HRA), as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted; and
- (2) that the forecast to 31 March 2009 of a breakeven position be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 4 February 2009 (Paragraph 5)]

6 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2008/2009 - Housing and Technical Resources (Excl HRA)

A joint report dated 2 March 2009 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Information Technology Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure at 20 February 2009 against budgeted expenditure for Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (excl HRA), together with a forecast for the year to 31 March 2009.

Details were provided on proposed budget virements to realign budgets.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the breakeven position on the Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (excl HRA), as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) that the forecast to 31 March 2009 of a breakeven position be noted; and
- (3) that the budget virements, as detailed in Appendix D to the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 4 February 2009 (Paragraph 6)]

7 Property Services Performance Review

A report dated 9 March 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ the trading position of the Property Services Trading Division which had achieved an operating surplus of £3.201 million at 23 January 2009
- ◆ personnel issues including maximising attendance and health and safety statistics
- ◆ contract/statutory performance indicators at 23 January 2009
- ◆ the Housing Investment Programme
- ◆ customer complaints and enquiries recorded during the period 29 December 2008 to 23 January 2009
- ◆ national awards received by Property Services

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 4 February 2009 (Paragraph 7)]

8 Housing and Technical Resources - Workforce Monitoring - January and February 2009

A joint report dated 11 March 2009 by the Executive Directors (Corporate Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the following employee information for Housing and Technical Resources for the period January and February 2009:-

- ◆ attendance statistics
- ◆ occupational health statistics
- ◆ accident/incident statistics
- ◆ disciplinary hearings, grievances and Dignity at Work cases
- ◆ analysis of leavers
- ◆ Joint Staffing Watch as at 13 December 2008

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 4 February 2009 (Paragraph 8)]

9 Management of Asbestos within Council Houses and Related Common Areas

A report dated 9 March 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted providing an update on the management of asbestos within Council houses and related common areas.

To ensure full implementation of the Council's Asbestos Management Plan, 2 key areas of activity had been undertaken including the:-

- ◆ training of Service repairs operatives and inspection staff
- ◆ electronic integration of the Council's Asbestos Register with the Housing Repairs System

Detailed surveys had indicated that the properties included in the final stages of the Home Happening Programme would not provide as large a challenge in terms of asbestos management as previously experienced. The Council's Asbestos Register would continue to be updated based on the findings from the surveys being undertaken.

Work would now be undertaken to extend the number of surveys of common closes beyond those areas already surveyed as part of the Kitchen and Bathroom installation programme, completing the Council's database and intelligence in this area. It was proposed that the same communication process for residents be adopted in relation to work dealing with asbestos as currently undertaken for Housing Capital projects and that the same arrangements for allocating grant support be implemented.

The key difference to current arrangements was that the Council could no longer act as factor in instances where known asbestos issues remained outstanding. This would not be an issue in blocks where the Council had tenants as, even in cases where the Council tenants were in the minority, powers available through the Deeds of Condition could be enforced to ensure that the necessary works were undertaken. In fully owned blocks where owners refused to have asbestos work carried out, the Council would formally withdraw from the provision of factoring services.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that progress made to date on the management of asbestos within Council houses and related common areas be noted;
- (2) that the current procedures for informing residents of Housing Capital works to blocks of flats be adapted for those occasions where the work required to remove asbestos was extensive;
- (3) that grants of up to a maximum of 25% of the total cost of removing asbestos be made available to owners in cases where the work was deemed to be of a capital nature; and
- (4) that, in blocks where there were no Council tenants and no approval was given for surveys or works to be undertaken, the Council withdraw as factor with immediate effect.

[Reference: Minutes of 12 November 2008 (Paragraph 11)]

10 Mortgage to Rent

A report dated 9 March 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted:-

- ◆ evaluating the Council's Mortgage to Rent Scheme which had been piloted over the last year
- ◆ setting out the key benefits of continuing the Council's participation in the Scheme

During the pilot period:-

- ◆ 1 property had been acquired at a subsidised price of £22,500
- ◆ 2 applications had been progressed to an offer of sale
- ◆ 2 applications had been initiated and were currently progressing

In the event that the Council acquired all 5 properties, the cost would be £119,000 with annual rental income estimated at £11,000. This action would result in the prevention of homelessness for 5 vulnerable families.

The key issues identified following an evaluation of the Pilot Programme were detailed including statistical information on the number and types of applicant who would benefit from the Council's continued participation in the Scheme.

All applications for the Scheme would be dealt with by the Homelessness Manager and, where approved, officers within Enterprise and Corporate Resources would be commissioned to negotiate the sale price and conclude legal agreements.

It was proposed that £0.250 million be allocated from savings made in the Capital Programme to fund the Scheme.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Council continue to participate in the Mortgage to Rent Scheme; and
- (2) that £0.250 million be set aside for property acquisitions.

[Reference: Minutes of 31 October 2007 (Paragraph 13)]

11 Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 - Development of the Scheme of Assistance

A report dated 5 March 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on:-

- ♦ progress in implementing Section 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006
- ♦ the interim Scheme of Assistance effective from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010
- ♦ how the Council would prepare for the legislation being formally implemented on 1 April 2010

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 had been introduced to address issues of housing quality and condition in the private sector. Part 2 of the Act introduced the requirement for local authorities to develop a "Scheme of Assistance" to provide support to owners and private tenants when carrying out work on their house. This was based on the principle that owners should take the main responsibility for maintaining their home but that assistance be made available, where necessary.

Following a detailed consultation process, the Scottish Government had, in November 2008, introduced new duties and powers as part of the original legislation and the implications of those changes were provided. In response to the updated legislation, the Council had taken a number of actions to develop a Scheme of Assistance to ensure systems were in place to deliver effective services on an interim basis from April 2009 in terms of duties and from 2010 in terms of powers.

To assist the cultural changes required in implementing the Act, it was proposed that the Grants Team be rebranded as the "HomeImprove Service".

Prior to 1 April 2010, a number of key actions required to be undertaken and those were detailed in the report including proposals to close the waiting list for current repairs grants with immediate effect.

As the Council had only limited resources to meet requests, financial support would be offered in certain circumstances only from 1 April 2009. Details of the circumstances where assistance could be given were provided.

During the interim year, a report would be submitted to this Committee providing information on progress and detailing amendments to the existing staffing structure required to ensure effective delivery of the Scheme of Assistance.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the implications of the 2006 Act be noted;
- (2) that the proposed approach for the development of the South Lanarkshire Scheme of Assistance be approved;
- (3) that the interim Scheme of Assistance be approved to take effect from 1 April 2009;
- (4) that the waiting list for current repair grants be closed with immediate effect; and
- (5) that the service delivery team be re-named the HomeImprove Service.

[Reference: Minutes of 8 March 2006 (Paragraph 13)]

12 Notification of Contracts Awarded - 10 January to 6 March 2009

A report dated 6 March 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ contracts awarded by Housing and Technical Resources in the period 10 January to 6 March 2009
- ◆ contracts instructed under the General Services Partnership
- ◆ contracts awarded under the Primary School Framework Agreement Phase 2
- ◆ contracts awarded by Procurement Services

Details of the individual contracts and projects were provided in the appendices to the report.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 4 February 2009 (Paragraph 10)]

13 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.