

HOUSING AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 17 June 2009

Chair:

Councillor David Baillie (Depute)

Councillors Present:

John Anderson, Walter Brogan, Jackie Burns, Andy Carmichael, Maureen Devlin, Barry Douglas, Douglas Edwards, Ian Gray, Graeme Horne, Bobby Lawson, Brian McCaig, Jean McKeown, John Murray, Patrick Ross-Taylor, David Shearer, Bert Thomson, Richard Tullett

Councillors' Apologies:

Jim Docherty, Beith Forrest, Anne Higgins, Edward McAvoy, Alex McInnes (Chair), Brian McKenna

Attending:

Corporate Resources

C Lyon, Administration Officer

Finance and Information Technology Resources

C Adams, Assistant Finance Manager (Accounting and Budgeting)

Housing and Technical Resources

J Hayton, Executive Director; M Flynn, Policy Coordinator; P Murphy, Head of Support Services; S Short, Customer/Administration Manager; J Stobie, Head of Property Services

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Technical Resources Committee held on 1 April 2009 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

3 Property Services Performance Review

A report dated 22 May 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 £4.693 million at 27 March 2009
- ♦ personnel issues including maximising attendance and health and safety statistics
- ♦ contract/statutory performance indicators at 27 March 2009
- ♦ the Housing Investment Programme
- ♦ customer complaints and enquiries recorded during the period 23 February to 27 March 2009

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 1 April 2009 (Paragraph 7)]

4 Housing and Technical Resources - Workforce Monitoring - March and April 2009

A joint report dated 24 May 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 March and April 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 8 March 2009

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 1 April 2009 (Paragraph 8)]

5 Allocation of the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) Fund and Fairer Scotland Fund

A joint report dated 26 May 2009 by the Executive Directors (Housing and Technical Resources) and (Corporate Resources) was submitted on proposals to utilise funding allocated to Housing and Technical Resources from the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) and Enterprise Resources as part of the "Fairer Scotland Fund" Initiative to increase the staffing establishment in Support/Area Services to meet the increased demand on the Benefits Section as a result of the current economic position.

In order to meet the increased demand on the Service, it was proposed that 15 new posts of Clerical Assistant be established on Grade 1, Level 1-3, SCP 1-25 (£11,187 to £16,004) within the Housing Area Offices and the Benefit Support Section at Brandon Gate. 12 of the Clerical Assistants would report to the Team Leader (Benefits and Revenue) and 3 to the Principal Officer (Accounts Management).

There had also been an increase in the number of residents wishing to return to work requesting assistance through the Money Matters Advice Service and, following discussion with officers in Enterprise Resources, funds had been made available to provide additional assistance through the Fairer Scotland Fund.

It was proposed that, for the period of 1 year, 1 post of Money Adviser on Grade 2, Level 3, SCP 38-48 (£19,453 to £22,556) and 1 post of Clerical Assistant on Grade 1, Level 1-3, SCP 1-25 (£11,187 to £16,004) be established to assist with the additional enquiries.

The Committee decided: that the additional funds made available from the Department of Works and Pensions and the Fairer Scotland Fund be utilised to increase the establishment within Support/Area Services by 17 posts for the period of 1 year as follows:-

- ◆ 1 post of Money Adviser on Grade 2, Level 3, SCP 38-48 (£19,453 to £22,556)
- ◆ 16 posts of Clerical Assistant on Grade 1, Level 1-3, SCP 1-25 (£11,187 to £16,004)

6 Housing Allocation Policy - Local Letting Plans

A report dated 26 May 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the development of Local Letting Plans as part of the Housing Allocation Policy.

The new Housing Allocation Policy, approved on 3 September 2008, included a commitment to introduce Local Letting Plans to ensure that a more strategic and flexible approach was taken to the allocation of Council housing within South Lanarkshire. Based on an analysis of supply and demand for housing, Plans had been prepared for each of the 8 housing management areas of the authority. The Plans contained the following information:-

- ◆ information relating to housing need, supply and demand
- ◆ letting targets set for each of the 4 housing lists
- ◆ letting targets set for each sheltered housing development
- ◆ letting initiatives (where appropriate) detailing where and how the Allocation Policy would be varied to take account of local issues, needs and circumstances

The Plans would be closely monitored and reviewed before the end of each financial year.

The letting targets for 2009/2010 for each of the 8 housing management areas were detailed in Appendix 1, the sheltered housing targets in Appendix 2 and the letting initiatives in Appendix 3 to the report.

Work had commenced to ensure that the terms of the new Policy could be effectively and consistently implemented across South Lanarkshire in relation to medical assessment. The current medical assessment process would be reviewed with any proposals arising being the subject of a further report to this Committee. The current arrangements would remain in place during the review period.

The new Housing Allocation Policy and associated letting targets and initiatives for 2009/2010 would be implemented from 29 June 2009.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the letting targets, as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report, be approved;
- (2) that the letting initiatives, as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report, be approved; and
- (3) that the process for implementing new medical assessment arrangements be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 3 September 2008 (Paragraph 9)]

7 Update on Housing Regeneration Action in Key Neighbourhood Management Areas

A report dated 26 June 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted advising of progress on the Council's regeneration strategies in the Neighbourhood Management Areas within Rutherglen and Cambuslang and the Rural Areas. Details were provided giving the updated position on the following Neighbourhood Regeneration Projects:-

- ◆ Cathkin
- ◆ Fernhill
- ◆ Cairns
- ◆ Whitlawburn
- ◆ Clydesdale

Across the areas of Cathkin, Fernhill and Cairns, a total of 1046 tenement and “deck across” flats had been approved for demolition, clearing and redevelopment providing approximately 700 new low rise homes for sale and rent over the next 5 years in partnership with housing associations and private developers.

Over the past 2 years, 740 flats had been demolished and over 180 families rehoused into new high quality homes. A further 237 flats were scheduled for demolition over the coming year. The remaining properties would be cleared over the next 2 years as the new build homes were completed.

30 low demand flats in Cathkin had been approved for demolition in October 2007. The intention had been to demolish the flats in phases. However, detailed site investigations had confirmed that the area was too small to accommodate construction in stages and that all 3 blocks required to be demolished before construction could start. Following consideration of a number of options, it had been identified that the most cost effective solution was to build 8 shared equity homes on part of the site which had previously been identified for 5 private sale homes. To allow this proposal to be progressed, it would be necessary to:-

- ◆ vary the Cathkin Regeneration Development Agreement to reflect the reduction in private housing units from 120 to 115 units
- ◆ adjust the funding package to reflect increased costs for the redesign, planning amendment and service diversion to provide 8 shared equity units

In view of the current economic climate, it had been necessary to reassess the potential for land receipts as a source of funding for the new private housing. The Council had worked closely with its partners and adjustments had been made to phasing and timescales and steady progress had been made towards achieving the long-term key objectives of providing new housing for rent, along with new community facilities and schools.

In terms of the Fernhill Masterplan, it had become necessary to adjust the preferred Masterplan to take account of the impact of the current economic climate on planned private housing development and land sale values. The revised layout was detailed in Appendix 2 to the report and would enable the phased completion of key parts of the Masterplan while allowing timescales for private housing to be extended.

The regeneration activity within the rural area of South Lanarkshire was primarily aimed at addressing the issues of the oversupply of rented housing in some of the villages, along with a mismatch in housing type and tenure and the requirement to improve housing quality. It was proposed to demolish a number of properties in the Coalburn and Carstairs Junction area and this would be the subject of reports to this and future meetings of the Housing and Technical Resources Committee.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the progress made across all of the housing regeneration projects in Cathkin, Fernhill, Cairns, Whitlawburn and Clydesdale be noted;
- (2) that the Cathkin Regeneration Development Agreement be varied to reduce the number of private sale units from 120 to 115;
- (3) that the Head of Legal Services be authorised to vary the terms of the Cathkin Regeneration Development Agreement; and
- (4) that the Fernhill Masterplan be progressed on the revised layout as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report and that costed proposals for the shops in Fernhill be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

8 Demolition of Properties at Monteith Street, Carstairs Junction

A report dated 27 May 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on proposals to demolish flats at 1-39 and 2-28 Monteith Street, Carstairs Junction and 27 and 29 Pettinain Road adjoining 2 and 4 Monteith Street.

The demolition of the properties would assist the Council in tackling the over supply of Council housing in that area and consolidate the retained Council housing. Once cleared, the site would be offered for sale to private developers. Any current and future void housing within the properties would be treated as initiative voids and the Council's Allocation Policy would not be implemented.

Consultation would continue with tenants and owners of the affected flats regarding the demolition proposals and their rehousing options. The tenants would be rehoused within the Clydesdale area.

Clarification on the position regarding the costs associated with the demolition proposals, as detailed in paragraph 5 of the report, would be provided to members of the Committee.

A report detailing proposals for the redevelopment of the site would be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the proposed demolition of 36 flats at 1-39 and 2-28 Monteith Street and 27 and 29 Pettinain Road (adjoining 2 and 4 Monteith Street), Carstairs Junction be approved;
- (2) that the Executive Director (Enterprise Resources), in consultation with the Head of Legal Services as required, be authorised to negotiate the voluntary purchase of the 2 owner occupied properties at 8 and 16 Monteith Street, Carstairs Junction;
- (3) that, in the event that agreement could not be reached with any owner to acquire their property on a voluntary basis, the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) request approval from the Scottish Government to promote compulsory purchase as required under Section 10 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987;
- (4) that, on receipt of approval from the Scottish Government, the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources), in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, be authorised to promote Compulsory Purchase Orders under Section 10 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 to acquire owner occupied properties within the area designated for demolition where agreement could not be reached with the owners to acquire the properties on a voluntary basis;
- (5) that the Executive Director (Enterprise Resources) be instructed to negotiate and settle compensation claims in connection with the Compulsory Purchase Orders;
- (6) that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources), in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, be authorised to exercise powers under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to obtain vacant possession of the tenanted properties approved for demolition within Monteith Street where reasonable offers of suitable accommodation had been made; and
- (7) that current and future void housing at 1-39 and 2-28 Monteith Street and 27 and 29 Pettinain Road be designated as initiative voids and the Council's Allocation Policy be suspended.

9 Housing and Technical Resources' Resource Plan 2009/2010

A report dated 27 May 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on Housing and Technical Resources' Resource Plan for 2009/2010. Details were provided on:-

- ◆ Resource achievements and performance during 2008/2009
- ◆ Resource objectives and actions for 2009/2010
- ◆ capital and revenue resources for 2009/2010
- ◆ the organisational structure of the Resource

In line with the Council's revised performance management arrangements, a mid year progress report on actions identified in the 2009/2010 Resource Plan would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee recommended that the Housing and Technical Resources' Resource Plan
to the Executive Committee: for 2009/2010 be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 12 November 2008 (Paragraph 10)]

10 Notification of Contracts Awarded

A report dated 15 May 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ contracts awarded by Housing and Technical Resources in the period 7 March to 14 May 2009
- ◆ 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 1 April 2009 (Paragraph 12)]

11 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.