

HOUSING AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 16 September 2009

Chair:

Councillor Alex McInnes

Councillors Present:

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

Councillors' Apologies:

Barry Douglas, Douglas Edwards, Beith Forrest, 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; P Murphy, Head of Support Services; S Short, Customer/Administration Manager

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 17 June 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 2009/2010 - Housing and Technical Resources (HRA)

A joint report dated 17 August 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 to 7 August 2009.

The Committee decided: that the Housing and Technical Resources' capital programme of £40.441 million and expenditure to date of £11.005 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of Executive Committee of 8 July 2009 (Paragraph 5)]

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

4 Capital Budget Monitoring 2009/2010 - Housing and Technical Resources (Excl HRA)

A joint report dated 17 August 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 to 7 August 2009.

The Committee decided: that the Housing and Technical Resources' capital programme (excl HRA) of £7.990 million and expenditure to date of £1.436 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of Executive Committee of 8 July 2009 (Paragraph 5)]

5 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2009/2010 - Housing and Technical Resources (HRA)

A joint report dated 24 August 2009 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Information Technology Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure at 7 August 2009 against budgeted expenditure for Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (HRA), together with a forecast for the year to 31 March 2010.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the overspend on the Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (HRA) of £0.004 million, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) that the forecast to 31 March 2010 of a breakeven position be noted; and
- (3) that the budget virements, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of Executive Committee of 12 February 2009 (Paragraph 5)]

6 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2009/2010 - Housing and Technical Resources (Excl HRA)

A joint report dated 18 August 2009 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Information Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure at 7 August 2009 against budgeted expenditure for Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (excl HRA), together with a forecast for the year to 31 March 2010.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the overspend on the Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (excl HRA) of £0.001 million, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) that the forecast to 31 March 2010 of a breakeven position be noted; and
- (3) that the budget virements, as detailed in Appendices B to E to the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of Executive Committee of 12 February 2009 (Paragraph 5)]

7 Property Services Performance Review

A report dated 21 August 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 £1.279 million at 10 July 2009
- ◆ personnel issues including maximising attendance and health and safety statistics
- ◆ contract/statutory performance indicators at 10 July 2009
- ◆ the Housing Investment Programme
- ◆ customer complaints and enquiries recorded during the period 15 June to 10 July 2009
- ◆ customer satisfaction levels

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 17 June 2009 (Paragraph 3)]

8 Housing and Technical Resources - Workforce Monitoring - May to July 2009

A joint report dated 19 August 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 May to July 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 June 2009

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 17 June 2009 (Paragraph 4)]

9 Housing Rent Direct Debit

A report dated 20 August 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on an initiative to increase the number of people paying their Housing Rent by Direct Debit.

The initiative would involve a promotional campaign through letters and leaflets and would include giving 2 new or existing Direct Debit customers the opportunity to win £250 in supermarket vouchers in a prize draw to be held on 1 November 2009.

Payment by Direct Debit would reduce rent arrears and would reduce costs as transaction charges relating to Direct Debit payments were significantly lower than traditional payment methods.

The cost of the promotional campaign had been estimated at £3,500 and a target increase of 10% in Direct Debit customers had been set.

The Committee decided: that the proposed promotional campaign to increase the number of people paying their Housing Rent by Direct Debit be approved.

10 Update on Homelessness in South Lanarkshire

A report dated 31 August 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ an update on homelessness in South Lanarkshire which highlighted the pressures on the Resource in trying to meet its statutory duties under the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003
- ◆ a reconfiguration of the Homelessness Service carried out during 2009 to improve the delivery and management of the service and to ensure that a staffing structure was put in place that could respond to increasing demands on the service
- ◆ developments progressed with partner services to ensure that they fulfilled their role in preventing and alleviating homelessness in South Lanarkshire
- ◆ action taken to increase the number of units to be used for temporary homeless accommodation including proposals to conclude the lease of additional units from Registered Social Landlords
- ◆ proposals to conclude an agreement with the Salvation Army to establish a First Stop accommodation facility at Eva Burrow House in Cambuslang at a cost to the Council of approximately £0.25 million per annum plus a one off-cost of £80,000 from the capital budget to cover alterations to comply with health and safety legislation

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the update on homelessness in South Lanarkshire and the likely implications of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 be noted;
- (2) that further units of temporary accommodation be leased from the Registered Social Landlord sector to allow the Council to meet its temporary accommodation duties to homeless households;
- (3) that the Executive Director (Enterprise Resources), in consultation with the Head of Legal Services where appropriate, be authorised to conclude all matters and enter into the necessary lease agreements; and
- (4) that the Council conclude an agreement with the Salvation Army to set up a First Stop accommodation facility at Eva Burrow House in Cambuslang.

[Reference: Minutes of 4 June 2008 (Paragraph 9) and 24 August 2005 (Paragraph 15)]

Councillor Lawson left the meeting during consideration of the above item of business

11 Outcome of Inspection of Sheltered and Homelessness Services by the Care Commission

A report dated 20 August 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the outcome of the 2008/2009 annual inspection of the Sheltered Housing and Homelessness Support Services.

A new self-assessment and grading system had been introduced in April 2008 which had changed the way in which care services were inspected. Under the revised arrangement, the Care Commission awarded grades between 1 (unsatisfactory) and 6 (excellent) across the following 3 quality themes:-

- ◆ quality of care and support
- ◆ quality of staff
- ◆ quality of management and leadership

The Care Commission had completed its 2008/2009 inspection in May 2009 and the overall assessment had been extremely positive, with grades of good and very good across the 3 quality themes.

Separate inspections had been carried out for the Council's Sheltered Housing Service in each local area and the grades awarded were consistent across all 4 areas. A number of key strengths together with recommendations for service developments had been identified and those were summarised.

The Committee decided: that the outcome of the 2008/2009 annual inspection of Sheltered Housing and Homelessness Support Services by the Care Commission be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 20 September 2006 (Paragraph 14)]

12 Inspection of South Lanarkshire Council's Housing and Homelessness Services by the Scottish Housing Regulator

A report dated 18 August 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the forthcoming inspection of the Council's Housing and Homelessness Service by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) which it was anticipated would take place in November 2009.

The SHR regulated Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and the landlord and homelessness functions of local authorities under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The main purpose of the Regulator was to ensure that the interests of tenants and other service users were protected and that housing stock and services were of good quality and provided value for money.

The Council had been one of the first local authorities to pilot local authority inspections in 2001 and, following that inspection, had been advised that it would be re-inspected at the end of the cycle. Notification had now been received that a full baseline inspection would be carried out with a provisional date of November 2009.

The SHR had set out a number of standards in relation to key housing and homelessness targets against which it was able to judge the extent to which services met those standards and the expectations of service users.

The inspection would assess:-

- ◆ how good the organisation, services or areas were
- ◆ how well the organisation, the services or areas were being managed for improvement

Following the inspection, the SHR would prepare a draft inspection report to be finalised 4 weeks from the date of inspection to allow time for discussion on any issues raised by the Council. The finalised report would set out a grade for the 3 services inspected and would include any recommendations for improvement along with the requirement for an improvement plan.

As part of the inspection, the Regulator would meet with staff at all levels, elected members, tenants and partner organisations.

A further report on the outcome of the Inspection, including any recommendations for improvements, would be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

The Committee decided: that the forthcoming Inspection of the Council's Housing and Homelessness Service by the Scottish Housing Regulator, anticipated to take place in November 2009, be noted.

Councillor Lawson re-entered the meeting during consideration of the above item of business

13 Regeneration and Improvement of Properties at Midfield Road, Coalburn

A report dated 20 August 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on proposals for the regeneration and improvement of properties at Midfield Road, Coalburn.

Following consultation with local residents, it was proposed that 28 houses at 2 to 28 Midfield Road, and 1 to 27 Midfield Road, Coalburn be demolished. The demolition of the properties would assist the Council in tackling the over supply of Council housing in the area and would consolidate the retained Council housing. Once cleared, the site would be landscaped for inclusion in the current open space contract maintenance programme for Coalburn. 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.

The remaining stock would be upgraded to improve its quality and to ensure the future long-term sustainability of the estate. It was proposed that those works would commence in 2010/2011 and that the 24 tenanted properties would be improved with similar properties in the rest of the estate as part of the Housing Investment Programme. Advice and assistance would be offered to the 12 existing owners to improve their own properties through the Council's Scheme of Assistance. The wider objective of this investment was to ensure that all Council rented property in Coalburn achieved the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015.

Consultation would continue with tenants and owners of the affected properties regarding their rehousing options.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the 28 houses at 2 to 28 and 1 to 27 Midfield Road, Coalburn be demolished and that the cleared site be landscaped for inclusion in the current open space contract maintenance programme for Coalburn;
- (2) that existing tenants be offered alternative housing and compensated in accordance with the Statutory Homeloss and Disturbance Scheme;
- (3) 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 Midfield Road, Coalburn in instances where reasonable offers of suitable alternative accommodation under the terms of the Act had been refused;
- (4) that the Executive Director (Enterprise Resources), in consultation with the Head of Legal Services as required, be authorised to negotiate the voluntary purchase by the Council of the 2 owner occupied properties affected by the demolition proposals;
- (5) that current and future void housing at 2 to 28 and 1 to 27 Midfield Road, Coalburn be designated as initiative voids and that the Council's Allocation Policy be suspended; and

- (6) that the remaining core Council housing stock within Coalburn be improved through the HomeHappening Programme and associated works.

[Reference: Minutes of 31 October 2007 (Paragraph 12)]

14 South Lanarkshire Council's Response to Consultation on the Draft Housing (Scotland) Bill

A report dated 18 August 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the Council's response to the draft Housing (Scotland) Bill which had been issued by the Scottish Government for consultation in April 2009 with a closing date for comments of Friday 14 August 2009.

The draft Housing (Scotland) Bill was more limited in its scope than the previous more extensive consultation paper "Firm Foundations" and covered the following 2 key areas:-

- ◆ proposals to reform the right to buy
- ◆ the future role and remit of the Scottish Housing Regulator

The Council's response, which was attached as an appendix to the report, had been submitted by the due date subject to the approval of this Committee.

The outcome of the consultation on the Bill and the implications for the Council of any reforms to legislation would be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

The Committee decided: that the Council's response to the consultation on the draft Housing (Scotland) Bill be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 9 April 2008 (Paragraph 13)]

Councillor Docherty left the meeting during consideration of the above item of business

15 The Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

A report dated 31 August 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ the Council's responsibility for housing sex offenders under the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
- ◆ the implications of a future extension of those duties as set out in the Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Act 2005

There were 3 categories of offender that were or, in the future, would be subject to MAPPA:-

- ◆ Category 1 – registered sex offenders
- ◆ Category 2 – violent offenders
- ◆ Category 3 – other offenders

At present, only Category 1 (registered sex offenders) were subject to the MAPPA process, with Category 2 (violent offenders) identified as the next category to be included. No clear timescale for the extension to include violent offenders had been set but the Act required the duty to be extended at some point.

The number of MAPPA cases was already increasing year on year, even without the inclusion of new categories. The revised arrangements would increase the workload of the Housing Resettlement Team and it was anticipated that there would be insufficient capacity to carry out the required duties in this area. A review of the additional workload, including an assessment of how the service would be delivered in terms of staffing, would be undertaken as the full impact of the changes became clearer.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

16 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.