

HOUSING AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of special meeting held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 21 February 2018

Chair:

Councillor Josh Wilson

Councillors Present:

Robert Brown, Archie Buchanan (Depute), Graeme Campbell, Andy Carmichael, Maureen Chalmers, Gerry Convery, Poppy Corbett, Maureen Devlin, Isobel Dorman (*substitute for Councillor Stevenson*), Alistair Fulton, Eric Holford, Mark Horsham (*substitute for Councillor Calikes*), Martin Lennon, Eileen Logan, Catherine McClymont (*substitute for Councillor Falconer*), Colin McGavigan, Carol Nugent, Mo Razzaq, John Ross (ex officio), David Shearer, Jared Wark (*substitute for Councillor Nelson*)

Councillors' Apologies:

Jackie Burns, Janine Calikes, Mary Donnelly, Allan Falconer, Geri Gray, Graeme Horne, Richard Nelson, Collette Stevenson

Attending:

Finance and Corporate Resources

G Bow, Administration Manager; J Burke, Administration Assistant; H Goodwin, Finance Manager (Resources); C Lyon, Administration Officer; G McCann, Head of Administration and Legal Services

Housing and Technical Resources

D Lowe, Executive Director; A Finnan, Head of Housing Services; F McCafferty, Head of Property Services

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Housing Revenue and Capital Account Budget 2018/2019

A joint report dated 6 February 2018 by the Executive Directors (Housing and Technical Resources) and (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ the Revenue Estimate proposals for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2018/2019 which had been prepared in line with the 30 year Business Plan
- ◆ the Housing Capital Programme totalling £44.935 million

In order to achieve the level of investment to reflect the priorities of increasing the supply of Council houses, maintaining the Council's housing stock to meet the requirements of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and to work towards the new Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) and other necessary works, a rent increase of 3.95% required to be applied to all Council houses, travelling persons' sites, garage sites and lockups.

These proposals also took account of a requirement to increase the provision for bad debts to £5.658 million to meet the anticipated increased arrears caused by the rollout of Universal Credit "Full Service" from 4 October 2017.

In line with the Council's commitment to rent harmonisation, it was proposed that all tenants paying below the harmonised level would pay up to an additional maximum of £2.00 per week.

In line with the Housing Business Plan, efficiency savings of £0.288 million had been included in the proposed budget. This included a reduction in the following areas:-

Administration Savings	£0.116 million
Enhanced Leave Income	£0.025 million
Strategy and Support Service	£0.023 million
Rationalisation of Services in Tower Blocks	£0.124 million

Details of the budget reductions were provided in an appendix to the report.

The revised budget also proposed an increase in the charge for the Council's factoring service from £28.08 to £28.78 per quarter, which would meet the increased costs of providing the service.

Details of the proposed Housing Capital Programme totalling £44.935 million were provided in an appendix to the report and details of how the programme would be funded were summarised in the report. The programme would ensure that a key priority within the Housing Investment Programme to increase the supply of Council housing would be progressed.

A wide-ranging consultation had been carried out with tenants and other stakeholders and details of the consultation process and associated outcomes were provided. During the consultation process, tenants had expressed their support for setting the rent increases over a longer period than the current single year. In response, it was proposed that an indicative rent increase baseline of 3.95%, in line with the business plan and subject to annual review, be implemented for financial years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.

Feedback from the consultation was also positive in respect of simplifying and standardising the payment process for lock up and garages site customers from fortnightly to quarterly, and for the move away from the provision of annual rent statements, both of which would now be taken forward.

Councillor Wilson, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, moved that the recommendations be approved as detailed in the report. Councillor Convery, seconded by Councillor Lennon, moved as an amendment that the following items be removed from the Housing Revenue Account savings proposals for 2018/2019 in relation to the rationalisation of services in tower blocks:-

♦ removal of Greenhill Court night shift cover	£0.087 million
♦ reduction in communal cleaning	£0.021 million
♦ rationalisation of the laundry service	£0.010 million

On a vote being taken by a show of hands, 13 members voted for the amendment and 9 for the motion. The amendment was declared carried.

The Committee recommended to the Executive Committee:

(1) that the Revenue Estimate proposals for the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2018/2019, as detailed in the report, be endorsed subject to the removal of the following items from the Housing Revenue Account savings proposals for 2018/2019 in relation to the rationalisation of services in tower blocks:-

♦ removal of Greenhill Court night shift cover	£0.087 million
♦ reduction in communal cleaning	£0.021 million
♦ rationalisation of the laundry service	£0.010 million

(2) that the weekly rent increase of 3.95% for Council houses be endorsed;

- (3) that the 3.95% increase also be applied to the rent of lockups, garage sites and travelling persons' sites;
- (4) that the Council's factoring fee be increased from £28.08 to £28.78 per quarter;
- (5) that the next stage of rent harmonisation be progressed as detailed in the report;
- (6) that, based on the proposed rent increase, the 2018/2019 Housing Capital Programme of £44.935 million, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report, be endorsed; and
- (7) that an indicative rent increase baseline of 3.95% for Council houses in 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 be endorsed.

Councillor Brown, as the mover of an amendment which failed to find a seconder, asked that his dissent be recorded

3 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.