

HOUSING AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 25 November 2009

Chair:

Councillor Alex McInnes

Councillors Present:

John Anderson, Jackie Burns, Andy Carmichael, Maureen Devlin, Jim Docherty, Douglas Edwards, Beith Forrest, Ian Gray, Anne Higgins, Graeme Home, Bobby Lawson, Brian McCaig, Brian McKenna, Jean McKeown, John Murray, Patrick Ross-Taylor, David Shearer, Richard Tullett

Councillors' Apologies:

David Baillie (Depute), Walter Brogan, Barry Douglas, Edward McAvoy, Bert Thomson

Attending:

Corporate Resources

G Cochran, Administration Assistant; 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; 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 16 September 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 12 October 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 2 October 2009.

The Committee decided: that the Housing and Technical Resources' capital programme of £40.441 million and expenditure to date of £17.835 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 16 September 2009 (Paragraph 3)]

Councillor McKeown 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 12 October 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 2 October 2009.

The Committee decided: that the Housing and Technical Resources' capital programme (excl HRA) of £7.020 million and expenditure to date of £2.223 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 16 September 2009 (Paragraph 4)]

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

A joint report dated 12 October 2009 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Information Technology Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure at 2 October 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 breakeven position on the Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (HRA), 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 16 September 2009 (Paragraph 5)]

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

A joint report dated 13 October 2009 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Information Technology Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure at 2 October 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 £0.004 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 Appendices B and E to the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 16 September 2009 (Paragraph 6)]

7 Housing and Technical Resources - Statutory Performance Indicators - 5 Year Comparison 2004/2005 to 2008/2009

A joint report dated 24 September 2009 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Information Technology Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on Housing and Technical Resources' Statutory Performance Indicators for the financial year 2008/2009. Comparisons and explanations, where appropriate, were provided for the 5 year period covering 2004/2005 to 2008/2009.

Any areas for performance improvement would be set out in the 2010/2011 Resource and Service Plans.

The Committee decided: that the Housing and Technical Resources' Statutory Performance Indicators for 2008/2009 be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 12 November 2008 (Paragraph 9) and Executive Committee of 7 October 2009 (Paragraph 7)]

8 Property Services Performance Review

A report dated 27 October 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 £2.130 million at 2 October 2009
- ♦ personnel issues including maximising attendance and health and safety statistics
- ♦ contract/statutory performance indicators at 2 October 2009
- ♦ the Housing Investment Programme
- ♦ customer complaints and enquiries recorded during the period 7 September to 2 October 2009
- ♦ customer satisfaction levels

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 16 September 2009 (Paragraph 7)]

9 Housing and Technical Resources - Workforce Monitoring - August and September 2009

A joint report dated 3 November 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 August and September 2009:-

- ♦ attendance statistics
- ♦ occupational health statistics
- ♦ accident/incident statistics
- ♦ disciplinary hearings, grievances and Dignity at Work cases
- ♦ analysis of leavers

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 16 September 2009 (Paragraph 8)]

10 Housing and Technical Resources - Resource Plan 2009/2010 - Quarter 2 Progress Report

A report dated 5 November 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the Housing and Technical Resources' Resource Plan 2009/2010. Details were provided on progress made at the end of quarter 2, covering the period 1 April to 30 September 2009, in implementing the priority projects identified in the Resource Plan.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 17 June 2009 (Paragraph 9) and Executive Committee of 8 July 2009 (Paragraph 13)]

11 Housing and Technical Resources' Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2009/2010

A report dated 30 October 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on progress made in implementing the actions contained within the Housing and Technical Resources' Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2009/2010.

The Action Plan set out objectives and priority actions in relation to mainstreaming equalities within Housing and Technical Resources. Key actions and progress to date were detailed in relation to the Plan's 4 key themes of:-

- ◆ Organisational culture and governance
- ◆ Planning, monitoring and review
- ◆ Consultation and participation
- ◆ Access to services, service delivery and customer care

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

12 Demolition of Properties at Lyonside Street, Rigside and Hillview Crescent, Glespin

A report dated 28 October 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on proposals to demolish 5 vacant amenity bungalows at 16-24 Lyonside Street, Rigside and 4 cottage flats at 10-16 Hillview Crescent, Glespin.

The demolition of the properties would assist in tackling the over supply of Council housing in the areas and would consolidate the retained Council housing. The Council would retain the option to consider the cleared sites for marketing for private development in more favourable economic conditions. 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.

In view of the fact that all properties were vacant, there was no requirement for consultation with tenants. However, tenants in the surrounding area had been informed of the proposals.

The overall demolition costs, which included landscaping and boundary treatment of the cleared sites, were £40,310.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that current and future void housing at 16-24 Lyonside Street, Rigside and 10-16 Hillview Street, Glespin be designated as initiative voids and the Council's Allocation Policy be suspended; and

- (2) that the 5 amenity bungalows at 16-24 Lyonside Street, Rigside and the 4 cottage flats at 10-16 Hillview Crescent, Glespin be demolished.

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

13 Update on Housing Regeneration Action in Key Neighbourhood Management Areas

A report dated 28 October 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted advising of progress on the Council's housing regeneration strategies in the Neighbourhood Management Areas within Rutherglen and Cambuslang. Details were provided on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Projects in Fernhill, Cairns and Cathkin.

Good progress had been made across each of the areas with 70% of the flats approved for demolition now demolished. Over the past 2 years, 262 new homes had been built, generating over £40 million investment in new affordable housing in the areas.

Due to the anticipated constraints on future Housing Association Grant funding for new build, a bid for funding had been submitted as part of the second round of the Scottish Government's Council New Build Programme. The bid, if successful, would support new development and complete planned new build within the Fernhill area. The bid was for £0.5 million to support the delivery of a further 20 homes for rent in the central area.

The 20 new homes would be delivered through a 'design and build' contract with West of Scotland Housing Association. It was anticipated that cost benefits for the delivery of the 20 new homes would be derived through an extension of their planned competitive tender for 97 new homes. In parallel with this, the Council was progressing plans for the new community facility and associated all weather sports pitch. The preferred location for this new facility at Fernhill Road formed an integral part of the Fernhill Masterplan and the vision to create a vibrant new centre for Fernhill. It was anticipated that work would commence on this project late summer/early autumn 2010.

It would be of benefit to progress the development of the new shops at the same time as the housing and the community facilities to improve the overall amenity and cost of the programme. Feasibility work to establish costs of building new retail units and potential funding sources was ongoing and would be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Council's bid for £0.5 million Scottish Government Grant funding to support the provision of 20 new Council homes as part of the Fernhill Masterplan be approved and the outcome reported to a future meeting of this Committee;
- (2) that the proposal to procure 20 new build Council homes through a negotiated 'design and build' contract with West of Scotland Housing Association be approved;
- (3) that the outcome of the feasibility work on the cost of construction and sources of funding for the 5 new shops as part of the Fernhill Masterplan be reported to a future meeting of this Committee; and
- (4) that the continued progress across the Neighbourhood Management Areas be noted and further progress reports be submitted to future meetings of this Committee.

[Reference: Minutes of 17 June 2009 (Paragraph 7)]

14 Pitch Allocation Policy and Occupancy Agreement for Travelling Persons' Sites in South Lanarkshire

A report dated 15 October 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the introduction of a new Pitch Allocation Policy and Occupancy Agreement for the 2 Travelling Persons' sites at Swinhill in Larkhall and Springbank in East Kilbride.

Those 2 sites were currently allocated on a "first come, first served" basis. However, the Occupancy Agreement had been revised to align it with the style and layout of the Tenancy Agreement used in the allocation of housing and set out the rights and responsibilities of both the Council and the occupant in relation to occupancy of the site.

The key features of the new Policy aimed to:-

- ◆ ensure that those in most need received priority
- ◆ be fair and consistent in allocating pitches across the Council's 2 Travelling Persons' sites in South Lanarkshire
- ◆ ensure equality of opportunity

The Committee recommended to the Executive Committee: that the Pitch Allocation Policy and Occupancy Agreement for Travelling Persons' sites in South Lanarkshire be approved and implemented from 1 April 2010.

15 Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 - Scheme of Assistance

A joint report dated 29 October 2009 by the Executive Directors (Housing and Technical Resources) and (Corporate Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ progress in implementing Part 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006
- ◆ proposals for the final Section 72 Statement on the Council's Scheme of Assistance
- ◆ the employee implications of delivering the Scheme of Assistance

The interim Scheme had been approved on 1 April 2009 and a consultative draft Section 72 Statement on the Scheme of Assistance had been developed by a cross-Resource Private Sector Housing Steering Group. As part of the development process, a public consultation exercise had been carried out between 22 June and 16 August 2009.

The Scheme reflected the national agenda and took account of the Council's legislative requirements as well as local needs and demands. Proposals for the final Scheme were detailed in an appendix to the report and it was proposed that it be implemented from 1 April 2010.

To enable the Scheme of Assistance to be delivered effectively and successfully, the current structure of the HomeImprove Service required to be amended. The proposed changes involved the same overall number of employees as before but with a revision to job positions. The new structure was as follows:-

- ◆ 1 post of Team Leader, Grade 3, Level 2 (£25,001 to £29,052)
- ◆ 3 posts of HomeImprove Assistant (Technical), Grade 2, Level 1-4 (£16,497 to £25,768)
- ◆ 1 post of HomeImprove Assistant (Generic), Grade 2, Level 1-3 (£16,497 to £22,556)
- ◆ 3 posts of Administration Assistant, Grade 2, Level 1 (£16,497 to £18,048)
- ◆ 2 posts of Clerical Assistant, Grade 1, Level 1-3 (£11,187 to £16,004)
- ◆ 2 posts of Surveyor, Grade 3, Level 2 (£25,001 to £29,052)
- ◆ 1 post of Private Sector Strategy Officer, Grade 3, Level 2 (£25,001 to £29,052)
- ◆ 1 post of Call Centre Staff, Grade 2, Level 1-2 (£16,497 to £20,019)

Funding for the proposed changes would be met from existing budgets.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that progress in developing the Council's Scheme of Assistance be noted;
- (2) that the proposed organisational and establishment changes within the HomeImprove Service be approved; and
- (3) that the final Scheme of Assistance be approved for publication in the Council's Section 72 Statement.

[Reference: Minutes of 1 April 2009 (Paragraph 11)]

16 Benefits and Revenue Service Best Value Review

A joint report dated 5 November 2009 by the Executive Directors (Corporate Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the Best Value Review of the Benefits and Revenue Service.

The key elements highlighted in the report included:-

- ◆ the methodology used during the review
- ◆ details of the current service delivery model and performance information
- ◆ factors identified as barriers to service improvement
- ◆ the development of an Improvement Plan which was attached as an appendix to the report
- ◆ revised service improvement targets following the implementation of the proposals
- ◆ staff efficiencies arising from a review of the staffing structure

During the course of the review, a number of issues had been raised by both Internal and External Audit in relation to the way the service was currently delivered. Those issues would be addressed by the review proposals.

The review proposals and implementation timescales had been adapted to reflect the impact of the recession, the resultant increase in Benefits' caseload and the fact that the DWP was providing the Council with additional one-off funding to assist with the increased workload.

Arising from the review, a revised structure was proposed for the Benefits and Revenue Service which would result in the following efficiencies:-

- ◆ a net reduction of 3 Principal Officer/Team Leader posts
- ◆ a reduction of 20 Benefit and Revenue Assistant posts

It was proposed that the re-structure of the management posts be progressed in the short-term with the reduction in the number of Benefit and Revenue Assistants posts being implemented when the impact of the recession and the associated increase in benefit claims began to reduce.

It was anticipated that savings totalling £0.920 million could be realised over the next 3 financial years as a result of the proposals.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the findings of the Best Value Review of the Benefits and Revenue Service be noted;
- (2) that the improvement proposals outlined in Section 8 of the report be approved; and

- (3) that the revised structure for the Benefits and Revenue Service as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum held on 29 September 2009 (Paragraph 3)]

17 Anti-social Behaviour Annual Report 2009

A report dated 25 November by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the publication of the Anti-social Behaviour Annual Report 2009.

As part of the Anti-social Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004, there was a requirement on both the Council and the Police to submit an annual report on the Anti-social Behaviour Strategy.

The sixth Anti-social Behaviour Annual Report provided information on how the Council, the Police and other partners were tackling anti-social behaviour within local communities and highlighted key actions to ensure that anti-social behaviour was dealt with in an effective manner. The Report also highlighted the new Community Policing Initiative which had been rolled out across Strathclyde Police, South Lanarkshire Division and provided a key element to the Council's approach in tackling anti-social behaviour.

The Report set out a number of key achievements for the year across South Lanarkshire including details on the following initiatives:-

- ◆ Safer South Lanarkshire
- ◆ Move the Goal Posts
- ◆ One Community
- ◆ No Messin
- ◆ Operation Wipeout
- ◆ Positive Communities
- ◆ Personal Digital Assistant System

The Committee decided: that the Anti-social Behaviour Annual Report 2009 be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 3 September 2009 (Paragraph 11)]

18 Notification of Contracts Awarded - 15 May to 28 October 2009

A report dated 28 October 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ contracts awarded by Housing and Technical Resources in the period 15 May to 28 October 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 17 June 2009 (Paragraph 10)]

19 Update on Statutory Inspection of Council Housing Management, Asset Management and Repairs and Homelessness Services by the Scottish Housing Regulator

A report dated 9 November 2009 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the forthcoming statutory inspection of housing management, asset management and repairs and homelessness services by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).

The Scottish Housing Regulator Inspection Manager had indicated that they expected to be on site by mid to late January 2010 for approximately 2 to 3 weeks. There would be a team of 4 to 5 staff and also 4 tenant inspectors from other local authorities and Registered Social Landlords, for example housing associations.

The inspection submission document had been completed and returned to the Scottish Housing Regulator along with other relevant documents by the due date of 20 November 2009.

Tenants who had been involved in the inspection planning arrangements through the Central Liaison Group had expressed a wish to be fully involved in the inspection and this request had been communicated to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

A briefing session would be arranged for all elected members prior to the commencement of the inspection outlining the arrangements.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 16 September 2009 (Paragraph 12)]

20 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.