

HOUSING AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 30 June 2010

Chair:

Councillor Alex McInnes

Councillors Present:

John Anderson, David Baillie (Depute), Andy Carmichael, Maureen Devlin, Jim Docherty, Barry Douglas, Beith Forrest, Anne Higgins, Graeme Horne, Brian McCaig, Jean McKeown, John Murray, Patrick Ross-Taylor, David Shearer, Bert Thomson, Richard Tullett

Councillors' Apologies:

Walter Brogan, Jackie Burns, Douglas Edwards, Ian Gray, Bobby Lawson, Edward McAvoy, Brian McKenna

Attending:**Corporate Resources**

G Cochran, Administration Assistant; C Lyon, Administration Officer

Finance and Information Technology Resources

L Crosby, Accountant (Research)

Housing and Technical Resources

L Freeland, Executive Director; A Finnan, Head of Area Services; P Murphy, Head of Support Services; 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 5 May 2010 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

3 Capital Budget Monitoring 2010/2011 - Housing and Technical Resources (HRA)

A joint report dated 2 June 2010 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 14 May 2010.

The Committee decided: that the Housing and Technical Resources' capital programme (HRA) of £40.508 million and expenditure to date of £1.292 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of Executive Committee of 11 February 2010 (Paragraph 3)]

4 Capital Budget Monitoring 2010/2011 - Housing and Technical Resources (Excl HRA)

A joint report dated 2 June 2010 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 14 May 2010.

The Committee decided: that the Housing and Technical Resources' capital programme (excl HRA) of £1.499 million and expenditure to date of £0.048 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of Executive Committee of 11 February 2010 (Paragraph 3)]

5 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2010/2011 - Housing and Technical Resources (HRA)

A joint report dated 1 June 2010 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Information Technology Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure at 14 May 2010 against budgeted expenditure for Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (HRA), together with a forecast for the year to 31 March 2011.

Details were provided on proposed budget virements to realign budgets.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the underspend on the Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (HRA) of £0.013 million, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) that the forecast to 31 March 2011 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 11 February 2010 (Paragraph 3)]

6 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2010/2011 - Housing and Technical Resources (Excl HRA)

A joint report dated 1 June 2010 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Information Technology Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure at 14 May 2010 against budgeted expenditure for Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (excl HRA), together with a forecast to 31 March 2011.

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 2011 of a breakeven position be noted; and
- (3) that the budget virements, as detailed in Appendices B and D to the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of Executive Committee of 11 February 2010 (Paragraph 4)]

7 Property Services Performance Review

A report dated 3 June 2010 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 £0.615 million at 16 May 2010
- ◆ personnel issues including maximising attendance
- ◆ contract/statutory performance indicators at 16 May 2010
- ◆ the Housing Investment Programme
- ◆ customer complaints and enquiries at 16 May 2010
- ◆ customer satisfaction levels

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 5 May 2010 (Paragraph 7)]

8 Housing and Technical Resources - Workforce Monitoring - April 2010

A joint report dated 7 June 2010 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 April 2010:-

- ◆ 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 March 2010

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 5 May 2010 (Paragraph 8)]

9 Housing and Technical Resources' Resource Plan 2010/2011

A report dated 6 May 2010 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the Housing and Technical Resources' Resource Plan for 2010/2011. Details were provided on:-

- ◆ Resource achievements and service performance during 2009/2010
- ◆ Resource objectives and actions for 2010/2011
- ◆ capital and revenue resources for 2010/2011
- ◆ the organisational structure of the Resource

In line with the Council's performance management arrangements, a mid year progress report on actions identified in the 2010/2011 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 2010/2011 be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 25 November 2009 (Paragraph 10)]

10 Demolition of 4 Properties at Hawkhead Terrace, Forth

A report dated 5 June 2010 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on proposals to demolish a vacant block of 4 flats at Hawkhead Terrace, Forth.

The demolition of the properties at 38, 40, 42 and 44 Hawkhead Terrace, Forth would assist the Council in tackling the over supply of Council housing in the Forth area and improve the sustainability of the remaining housing stock in the area. Once cleared, the site would be landscaped and future consideration given to marketing the site for private development subject to more favourable economic conditions. The properties, which were currently long-term void, would be treated as initiative voids and the Council's Allocation Policy would be suspended.

The total cost for demolition of the 4 flats and associated landscaping and boundary treatments was estimated to be £14,800 and would be met from the existing Regeneration Capital Programme.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the flats at 38, 40, 42 and 44 Hawkhead Terrace, Forth, comprising 1 block of 4 flats, be demolished and treated as part of the existing term demolition programme 2010/2011; and
- (2) that the current and future void housing at 38, 40, 42 and 44 Hawkhead Terrace, Forth be designated as initiative voids and the Council's Allocation Policy be suspended.

11 Housing Allocation Policy – Her Majesty's Forces Applicants

A report dated 4 June 2010 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on proposed amendments to the Housing Allocation Policy to ensure that the policy objective of meeting the priority needs of Her Majesty's (HM) Forces applicants was met.

It was proposed that, from 2 August 2010, HM Forces applicants no longer be queued with an award of points within the Waiting List but that they be queued on the Urgent Housing Need List in date order when the HM Forces priority was awarded. The South Lanarkshire Local Letting Plan target of 55% to 65% of lets to the Urgent Housing Need List would ensure that there was a sufficient volume of lets allocated to meet the needs of HM Forces applicants and other applicants queued within this list.

The criteria for the award of HM Forces priority would remain unchanged from the current Policy position and all HM Forces applicants would continue to be subject to the same "reasonable offer" requirements as other applicants queued within the Urgent Housing Need list.

Prior to the Policy change being implemented, all HM Forces applicants would be advised of the change and provided with a revised personal housing statement confirming the list that they were now queued within and their application preferences.

The proposed amendments to the Housing Allocation Policy were detailed in the appendix to the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Housing Allocation Policy be amended in relation to HM Forces applicants, as detailed in the appendix to the report, and implemented with effect from 2 August 2010; and
- (2) that, in view of the requirement to progress this matter as soon as possible and in terms of Standing Order No 37(b), appropriate action be taken immediately.

[Reference: Minutes of 17 February 2010 (Paragraph 10)]

12 Repairs and Maintenance Service Policy Review

A report dated 1 June 2010 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on a review of the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

The aim of the review had been to ensure that the Repairs Service was delivered in a consistent manner that demonstrated good practice and made the most efficient use of resources available.

To ensure that the service met the aspirations of tenants, a consultation had been carried out with the Central Liaison Sub-group. Following extensive work with the Tenants' Sub-group, a draft Policy had been issued to a wide range of consultees for consideration in June 2009. The consultation had concluded in December 2009 and feedback from the process had been positive with tenants, tenant's groups/forums and elected members expressing their overall support for the draft Policy.

The new Policy reflected the Council's need to ensure that some elements of the Repairs Service moved to a more planned rather than responsive basis so that investment made to bring the housing stock up to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard could be maintained in the long-term.

It was proposed that the revised Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy be implemented with effect from 1 October 2010. As part of the implementation process, new information on the service and service standards would be made available to all tenants. A new performance monitoring and review framework was currently under development in consultation with tenant representatives.

In response to consultation feedback, the Sub-group would continue to meet to identify and implement improvements to the processes and procedures in place to deliver the service and the range of information and advice provided to tenants.

The Committee recommended to the Executive Committee: that the revised Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy, attached as an appendix to the report, be approved and implemented with effect from 1 October 2010.

13 Scottish Government Discussion Paper – "Housing: Fresh Thinking, New Ideas"

A report dated 21 May 2010 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ a discussion paper published by the Scottish Government on future housing policy, entitled "Housing: Fresh Thinking, New Ideas", which had been launched on 24 May 2010
- ◆ consultation arrangements to inform the Council's response

The key purpose of the discussion paper was to provoke discussion and innovation in light of unprecedented challenges facing the Scottish housing system. Key challenges highlighted in the paper included the:-

- ◆ impact of the recession on the housing market
- ◆ severe limitations which existed on the availability of mortgage funding
- ◆ high cost of private finance
- ◆ continued high levels of housing need (including meeting responsibilities towards homeless households)

The discussion paper was structured around the 5 themes of:-

- ◆ Scottish housing need
- ◆ increasing the supply of affordable housing
- ◆ choice, fairness and making better use of housing
- ◆ sustainable quality houses and places
- ◆ excellence across the housing system

To ensure as broad an input as possible to the Council's response, it was proposed to undertake wide ranging consultation with relevant Council Resources, partner agencies, tenants and service users over the next 3 months. As part of this, it was also proposed that a Members' seminar be arranged in August to allow views expressed to be reflected in the Council's response which would be submitted to the Scottish Government in early September 2010.

The final response and any update on the discussion paper on future housing policy would be reported to this Committee on 29 September 2010.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the proposals for local consultation on the issues set out in the discussion paper be noted; and
- (2) that a Members' seminar be held in August to consider the content of the discussion paper.

14 Annual Report on the Housing and Technical Resources' Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2009/2010

A report dated 28 May 2010 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on progress made against the Housing and Technical Resources' Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2009/2010 along with priorities for 2010/11.

The Action Plan set out the objectives and priority actions in relation to mainstreaming equalities within Housing and Technical Resources. The key achievements of the 2009/2010 Plan were detailed in the report.

The 2010/2011 Equality and Diversity Action Plan had recently been developed and would continue to drive progress in relation to mainstreaming equality and placing an emphasis on access to services. Key areas for action in 2010/2011 included:-

- ◆ improving engagement with tenants from a minority ethnic background
- ◆ continuing work to further improve data collection and monitoring systems
- ◆ a continued focus on customer needs and ensuring that services were accessible to everyone
- ◆ addressing any recommendations arising from the Scottish Housing Regulator's inspection
- ◆ continuing to mainstream equalities into the review and development of policies and procedures, supported by consultation and impact assessment
- ◆ responding to and taking account of the new legislative duties relating to the Single Equality Act

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 25 November 2009 (Paragraph 11)]

15 Scottish Housing Quality Standard - Stock Condition Survey 2010 Findings

A report dated 21 May 2010 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ the key findings of the stock condition survey which had concluded in February 2010
- ◆ progress made by the Council in meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) for its housing stock by 2015

In February 2004, the Scottish Executive had set a new Housing Quality Standard to encourage housing improvement across all tenures. In broad terms, to meet the SHQS, homes had to be:-

- ◆ compliant with the basic Tolerable Standard
- ◆ free from serious disrepair
- ◆ energy efficient
- ◆ fitted with modern facilities and services
- ◆ healthy, safe and secure

All local authorities and registered social landlords (RSLs) were required to ensure that their stock met the standard by 2015 and to set out how the standard would be achieved. In line with this requirement, the Council had prepared its Standard Delivery Plan (SDP) in 2005 and this set out the Council's investment plans and how those would help meet the standard over the 10 years to 2015.

The Council had previously conducted sample stock condition surveys in 2001 and 2005. A further survey had been commissioned in early 2009 to inform and update the SDP. The survey was representative of all stock and provided a reliable and accurate assessment of the condition of the Council stock against the SHQS and the extent and cost of future expenditure required to bring it up to standard and, beyond this, the repairs and maintenance required to keep the stock in good condition. Details were provided on the areas covered by and the key findings of the stock condition survey.

A planned investment programme would be developed through to 2015 to achieve the SHQS. Further work was underway to assess the findings of the stock condition survey to inform the development of the works programme. Consultation events would be arranged at appropriate points with tenants and elected members to discuss and agree the options available.

A progress report on the development of the future programme would be submitted to this Committee in December 2010.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the findings of the stock condition survey and the current position with regard to achieving the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 be noted; and
- (2) that the next steps in developing the forward investment programme and associated consultation arrangements be noted.

16 Notification of Contracts Awarded - 7 April to 31 May 2010

A report dated 21 May 2010 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on contracts awarded by Housing and Technical Resources in the period 7 April to 31 May 2010.

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

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 5 May 2010 (Paragraph 11)]

17 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.