

HOUSING AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 12 October 2011

Chair:

Councillor Alex McInnes

Councillors Present:

John Anderson, 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, David Shearer, Richard Tullett

Councillors' Apologies:

David Baillie (Depute), Barry Douglas, Douglas Edwards, Beith Forrest, Edward McAvoy, Patrick Ross-Taylor, Bert Thomson

Attending:**Finance and Corporate Resources**

G Cochran, Administration Assistant; S McLeod; Administration Officer; L Murray, Accountant

Housing and Technical Resources

L Freeland, Executive Director; D Lowe, Head of Property Services; P Murphy, Head of Support 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 13 July 2011 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

3 Capital Budget Monitoring 2011/2012 - Housing and Technical Resources (HRA)

A joint report dated 7 September 2011 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Corporate 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 September 2011.

The Committee decided: that the Housing and Technical Resources' capital programme (HRA) of £41.928 million and expenditure to date of £9.780 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 13 July 2011 (Paragraph 3)]

4 Capital Budget Monitoring 2011/2012 - Housing and Technical Resources (excl HRA)

A joint report dated 7 September 2011 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Corporate 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 September 2011.

The Committee decided: that the Housing and Technical Resources' capital programme (excl HRA) of £3.771 million and expenditure to date of £0.656 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 13 July 2011 (Paragraph 4)]

5 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2011/2012 - Housing and Technical Resources (HRA)

A joint report dated 13 September 2011 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Corporate Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure at 2 September 2011 against budgeted expenditure for Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (HRA), together with a forecast for the year to 31 March 2012.

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 £0.043 million, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) that the forecast to 31 March 2012 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 13 July 2011 (Paragraph 5)]

6 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2011/2012 - Housing and Technical Resources (excl HRA)

A joint report dated 12 September 2011 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Corporate Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure at 2 September 2011 against budgeted expenditure for Housing and Technical Resources' revenue budget (excl HRA), together with a forecast for the year to 31 March 2012.

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 (excl HRA) of £0.048 million, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) that the forecast to 31 March 2012 of a breakeven position be noted; and
- (3) that the budget virements, as detailed in Appendices B, C and D to the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 13 July 2011 (Paragraph 6)]

7 Housing and Technical Resources - Control of Resource Risks

A report dated 14 September 2011 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the:-

- ◆ systems and controls in place within the Resource to control risks
- ◆ top 10 risks faced by the Resource for 2011/2012

The Resource had followed the Council guidance in developing, monitoring and updating its Risk Control Register on an ongoing basis. The Register had been developed to ensure that the Resource was fully aware of the main risks that it had, was able to prioritise those risks and had controls in place to eliminate or minimise the impact of the risk.

The risks were scored in accordance with the Council's scoring mechanism which scored risks based on likelihood and impact of risk. This resulted in risks being scored between 1 to 9 (low to high). Risks were scored on their inherent risk (risk if nothing was done) and their residual risk (risk after applying controls).

The Risk Register had been developed and was monitored on a quarterly basis to add new risks and to review the scores of existing risks. The Register was maintained within Internal Audit's Figtree computer system and updated by designated officers within Housing and Technical Resources.

Details of all risks which had scored 7 to 9 were detailed in the appendix to the report.

The Committee decided: that the system and controls in place to monitor risks within Housing and Technical Resources be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 29 September 2010 (Paragraph 14)]

8 Property Services Performance Review

A report dated 9 September 2011 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 £1.502 million at 7 August 2011
- ◆ personnel issues including maximising attendance
- ◆ contract/statutory performance indicators at 7 August 2011
- ◆ the Housing Investment Programme
- ◆ customer complaints and enquiries at 7 August 2011

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 13 July 2011 (Paragraph 7)]

9 Housing and Technical Resources - Workforce Monitoring - June to August 2011

A joint report dated 15 September 2011 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Corporate Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the following employee information for Housing and Technical Resources for the period June to August 2011:-

- ◆ attendance statistics
- ◆ occupational health statistics
- ◆ accident/incident statistics

- ◆ disciplinary hearings, grievances and Dignity at Work cases
- ◆ analysis of leavers
- ◆ Joint Staffing Watch as at 11 June 2011

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 13 July 2011 (Paragraph 8)]

10 Home Insulation Grant Progress Report

A report dated 1 October 2011 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the:-

- ◆ outcomes achieved as a result of the award of Universal Home Insulation Scheme (UHS) grant in 2010/2011
- ◆ outcome and implications of the bid by the Council for grant funding from the Scottish Government in relation to the UHS 2011/2012 initiative

The UHS initiative was to provide assistance in improving energy efficiency, principally in private housing in Scotland. At its meeting on 8 December 2010, the Committee was advised that the Council had been successful in securing an award of £800,000 in relation to the UHS initiative. This funding had been increased to £1 million in March 2011 arising from slippage in spend in other councils.

Outcomes from the 2010/2011 programme were as follows:-

- ◆ 1,717 flats installed with cavity wall insulation
- ◆ 204 lofts installed with insulation for the first time
- ◆ 349 loft insulation top-ups
- ◆ £237,200 estimated fuel bill savings/year

In August 2011, the Scottish Government advised that a further £12.5 million had been made available for 2011/2012 and bids were invited for a second round of UHS funding using the same criteria as that adopted in 2010/2011. Accordingly, the Council had submitted a bid for £1.88 million and notification had recently been received that funding of £740,000 had been allocated.

The bid submitted for 2011/2012 proposed the continuation of the works prioritised during 2010/2011, namely the installation of cavity wall insulation in blocks of mixed tenure flats, predominantly in East Kilbride, where the previous insulation had deteriorated and was, in many cases, causing dampness within the houses.

Work would be programmed in parallel with the Housing Investment Programme (HIP) External Fabric projects to take advantage of scaffolding in place. For installations outwith the HIP, a financial contribution towards the removal of old insulation and scaffolding costs relating to the proportion of tenants to owners within the specific blocks would be required. This was currently estimated at £195,000.

In line with the Standing Orders on Contracts, a tender for the surveying, installation and management of the contract had been advertised and the successful contractor was due to be appointed in November 2011.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the grant award of £740,000 from the Scottish Government for the installation of cavity wall insulation be noted; and

- (2) that the proposed actions required to deliver the programme of works, as detailed in the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 8 December 2010 (Paragraph 11)]

Councillor Docherty left and re-entered the meeting during this item of business

11 Council Cash Collection Services

A report dated 1 October 2011 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the outcome of the consultation exercise and risk assessment undertaken in relation to proposals to discontinue the collection of cash at the Council's Cash Halls.

As part of the Council's 2010/2011 annual savings exercise, it had been agreed that a review of the cash collection service provision be undertaken with a view to making cost reductions of £0.250 million per annum.

However, following feedback from various tenants' groups on the proposals, an extensive consultation exercise was undertaken to gain a better understanding of customers' reasons for using Cash Halls as opposed to other channels of payment. In addition, consideration was given to the potential impact of Welfare Reform, in particular Universal Credit, and the planned changes to the way in which benefits were administered.

Based on the findings of the consultation exercise and an assessment of the risks associated with Universal Credit, it was proposed that:-

- ◆ cash payments continue to be accepted at all 8 local Council offices
- ◆ Housing and Technical Resources continue to promote more effective payment methods and undertake a further review of payment facilities at some future point in time

Additional areas of saving had been identified to replace the £0.250 million initially identified.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the outcomes of the consultation exercise and risk assessment undertaken in relation to the proposal to discontinue the collection of cash at the Council's Cash Halls be noted;
- (2) that cash payments continue to be accepted at local Council offices; and
- (3) that efforts be made to promote alternative payment methods with a view to undertaking a further review of the service at some appropriate point in the future.

[Reference: Minutes of Executive Committee (Special) of 1 February 2010 (Paragraph 2)]

12 Surplus Property at 6 to 10 New Trows Road, Lesmahagow

A report dated 4 October 2011 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on a proposal to declare 2 flats at Nos 8 and 10 New Trows Road, Lesmahagow surplus to requirements with a view to market disposal of the properties together with the surplus vacant ground floor property at No 6.

Based on the current condition of the overall fabric of the properties, the lack of demand, the persistent problems of vandalism and the expenditure required to achieve the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, it was considered uneconomical to undertake the necessary repairs and improvements.

It was proposed, therefore, that the 2 flats be declared surplus to operational requirements to enable the whole property, including the commercial property at No 6 New Trows Road, to be disposed of in accordance with the approved surplus asset process.

The costs associated with re-housing and compensating the tenant at No 8 New Trows Road through the Statutory Homelessness and Disturbance Scheme would be met from existing Area Service budgets.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the properties at Nos 6, 8 and 10 New Trows Road, Lesmahagow be declared surplus to requirements to enable the market disposal of the subjects as a whole in accordance with the Council's approved asset management process for surplus property; and
- (2) that the tenant at 8 New Trows Road, Lesmahagow be re-housed and compensated through the statutory Homelessness and Disturbance Scheme.

13 Policy/Strategy Review Schedule

A report dated 16 September 2011 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on a revised Policy/Strategy Review Schedule.

A formal Policy Review Schedule had been approved by the Committee in June 2008 together with the commitment to keep the Schedule under review. It was proposed, therefore, that the revised Policy/Strategy Review Schedule, attached as an appendix to the report, be approved. The revised Schedule had been developed to reflect changes at a local and national level in policy development and also reflected the implementation of other legislative changes and recommendations stemming from the regulatory inspection by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the revised Policy/Strategy Review Schedule, attached as an appendix to the report, be approved; and
- (2) that an update report be presented to this Committee on an annual basis advising of progress and requesting approval for any revisions to the Review Schedule.

[Reference: Minutes of 4 June 2008 (Paragraph 6)]

14 Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme

A report dated 9 September 2011 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on proposals to implement a Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme within South Lanarkshire.

In terms of the Anti-social Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004, private landlords were required to register with the local authority for the area in which they were or would be renting out a property. Following on from the implementation of the Act, private landlord accreditation schemes had been developed to help improve quality and raise standards in the private rented sector beyond the minimum legal requirements of registration.

The accreditation schemes were able to be administered locally by an individual authority or nationally by Landlord Accreditation Scotland (LAS). On the basis that it was considered to be the most cost effective option, it was proposed that the Council establish a Private Landlord

Accreditation Scheme, in conjunction with LAS, with effect from January 2012. To co-ordinate the development and implementation of the Scheme, it was also proposed that a short-term working group be established. Part of the group's remit would be to develop an initial target for the number of landlords/properties to be accredited during 2012/2013 and it was anticipated that this would be set at 5% (480 private landlords).

Details were provided on the key actions required to publicise the launch of the South Lanarkshire Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme and on the specific target groups of private landlords which had been identified.

The estimated cost of implementing the South Lanarkshire Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme was £7,000. If further incentives were required to achieve the target of 5% set for 2012/2013, those would be the subject of a further report to a future meeting of this Committee. All costs associated with the Scheme would be funded from existing Private Landlord Registration income.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that a Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme be established, in conjunction with Landlord Accreditation Scotland (LAS), with effect from January 2012; and
- (2) that a short-term working group be established comprising appropriate staff and representatives of Landlord Accreditation Scotland (LAS) to co-ordinate the development and implementation of the Scheme.

15 Upgrade Programme for Amenity Housing

A report dated 16 September 2011 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on proposals to improve the quality and supply of housing suitable for older people in South Lanarkshire through an upgrading and expansion programme for amenity housing.

A bid had been submitted by the Council to the Change Fund established by the Scottish Government as part of its "Reshaping Care for Older People Programme". This had resulted in an award of £300,000 for 2011/2012 to support an upgrade and expansion programme for amenity housing. The introduction of additional amenity housing would play a key role in ensuring that the housing stock met the needs of older people in the community both now and in the future.

Details on the Scottish Government's full design standards for amenity housing were provided in Appendix 1 to the report. It was proposed that the Council's existing amenity stock of 278 properties be upgraded to ensure that all of the properties met the full Scottish Government specification. Most of the work involved would be of a minor nature with minimal disruption to tenants. Work would be undertaken with the agreement of tenants and a decoration allowance would be paid where appropriate. The work in Phase 1 had been estimated at £307,566 and would be carried out between October 2011 and March 2012. Costs would be met from the £300,000 Change Fund allocation with the balance provided from the 2011/2012 Housing Revenue Account.

In addition, it was proposed that the supply of specialist housing be increased by converting some of the general needs stock. Over 600 mainstream properties had been identified across the Council area as being accessible housing. A programme would be developed to convert those properties to amenity housing as they became available. Phase 2 upgrades would be funded from future Capital Programmes and approval would be requested through the normal Capital Programme approval process.

General needs properties converted to amenity standard would no longer be eligible for the 'Right to Buy' in accordance with the exemption criteria set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the successful bid to the Change Fund be noted; and
- (2) that additional works be carried out to the 278 existing properties that were categorised as amenity housing to bring them up to full amenity design standard; and
- (3) that works be carried out to convert the identified general needs housing stock to amenity standard as and when the properties became vacant.

16 Housing and Technical Resources - Homeless Prevention Initiative

A joint report dated 16 September 2011 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Corporate Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ outcomes from the Homeless Prevention Initiative within Housing and Technical Resources' Benefits and Revenue Section which had run from September 2008 to December 2010 and had been funded by the 'Fairer Scotland Fund'
- ◆ the allocation of temporary additional funding of £97,274 from the Tackling Poverty Programme for 2011/2012 which would be used to consolidate the Initiative
- ◆ proposals to complement the existing service through the temporary recruitment of the following posts on a fixed term basis to 31 March 2012 in line with the funding for the project:-
 - ◆ 1 post of Policy Officer on Grade 3, Level 2 (£25,265 to £29,235) to be based within the Area Services Strategy Team
 - ◆ 2 posts of Homeless Prevention Officer on Grade 2, Level 3 (£20,731 to £22,702) to be based within the Area Services Offices at Brandon Gate, Hamilton and Cambuslang Gate, Cambuslang. Those officers would be deployed on a peripatetic basis covering cases throughout South Lanarkshire

The Committee decided: that the existing establishment be increased by 3 temporary Full Time Equivalent posts, as detailed above, for the period up to 31 March 2012.

[Reference: Minutes of 4 June 2008 (Paragraph 9)]

17 Scottish Social Housing Charter and the Future of Regulation

A report dated 19 September 2011 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ progress with the development and implementation of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the future regulation of housing
- ◆ details to be included in the Council's responses to the 2 national consultations being undertaken on the above

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 detailed the legislative provisions relating to the establishment of the:-

- ◆ Scottish Social Housing Charter
- ◆ Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) as an independent body to monitor, assess and report on the performance of social landlords

Currently, 2 major national consultations were underway. The first of those was being undertaken by the Scottish Government and invited views on the draft Charter with the second being undertaken by the SHR on the future regulatory framework

Key issues to be included in the Council's responses to each of the consultations were detailed. Formal responses to the consultations on the draft Charter and the future regulatory framework were being developed and it was proposed that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) be authorised to finalise the responses and submit them by the respective deadlines of 1 November and 25 November 2011.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the progress with the development of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the framework for the future regulation of housing in Scotland be noted; and
- (2) that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) be authorised to respond to the consultations by the specified deadlines based on the information contained in Sections 4 and 5 of the report.

18 Council New Build Housing Projects - Funding from the Scottish Government's Innovation and Investment Fund

A report dated 23 September 2011 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the outcome of bids made by the Council and local Housing Associations in May 2011 to the Scottish Government's Innovation and Investment Fund to support new affordable housing developments in South Lanarkshire.

In March 2011, the Scottish Government had invited bids for funding from the £50 million Innovation and Investment Fund to support affordable housing development. The budget had been divided into the following 3 funding streams:-

- ◆ £20 million - Local Authority Building
- ◆ £29 million - Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Building
- ◆ £10 million - Innovation funding competition open to all providers of housing including private developers and social landlords for all forms of affordable housing

3 bids had been submitted by the Council. 2 of those bids had been successful in attracting funding of £1.23 million in the Council New Build category to support the delivery of 2 sheltered housing developments in the Cambuslang and Rutherglen areas. The balance of funding required would be met from the Housing Capital Programme in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 with final costs being the subject of a future report to this Committee once the outcome of the tender process was known.

The third bid had secured funding of £1.25 million in the Innovation category to support the purchase of 50 former Right to Buy Council properties, acquired by developers through new build part exchange deals, with a view to increasing the supply of Council stock. The total cost of purchase was estimated to be £3.58 million and the balance of £2.33 million would be funded through the Housing Capital Programme in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013. Detailed purchase arrangements would be developed in consultation with the Head of Legal Services and the outcome of the scheme would be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

In addition, 5 of the 8 bids submitted by the local Housing Associations had been successful in securing £3.578 million grant funding for the delivery of 92 new RSL homes for rent across 5 sites as follows:-

Housing Association	Sites
◆ Clyde Valley	16 units, Lindsayfield, East Kilbride 6 units, Pollock Lane, East Kilbride
◆ West of Scotland	28 units, Hamilton Road, Cambuslang
◆ Rutherglen and Cambuslang	29 units, Overton Road, Cambuslang
◆ Hanover	13 units, Chantinghall Road, Hamilton

It was estimated that the total of £6.058 million Innovation and Investment grant funding secured by the Council and RSL partners for projects in South Lanarkshire would help generate over £20 million investment in the construction sector and deliver 183 new affordable homes for rent over the next 2 years.

A report on progress made on the acquisition and development of the new housing would be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of Executive Committee of 8 June 2011 (Paragraph 6) and Housing and Technical Resources Committee of 8 December 2010 (Paragraphs 12 and 13)]

19 Notification of Contracts Awarded - 1 June to 31 August 2011

A report dated 2 September 2011 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on contracts awarded in the period 1 June to 31 August 2011 as follows:-

- ◆ contracts awarded by Housing and Technical Resources
- ◆ 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 13 July 2011 (Paragraph 16)]

20 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.