

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**HOUSING COMMITTEE****MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21 MAY 1997 AT 1000 HOURS
IN THE MEETING ROOM, COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, LONDON ROAD,
KILMARNOCK**

PRESENT: Councillors Jim Kelly, Gordon McCredie, Gordon Cree, Wilma Doyle, Provost Robert Stirling, Councillors John Knapp, David Fulton, David Macrae, Kim Nicoll, Robert McDill, George Smith, Jimmy Carmichael, Robert Taylor and Tommy Farrell.

ATTENDING: John Hillis, Director of Housing; Chris McAleavey, Senior Depute Director of Housing; Jim Maitland, Depute Director of Housing; Alan McKnight, Depute Director of Housing; Bill Walkinshaw, Principal Administrative Officer; Joan Kendall, Principal Solicitor; Martin Clark, Service Officer (Social Work - Community Care); David Morgan, Public Relations Officer; and Stuart Nelson, Administrative Officer.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Drew McIntyre, Douglas Reid, Jane Darnbrough, Alan Campbell, David Sneller and John Smith.

CHAIR: Councillor Jim Kelly, Chair.

HOUSING CAPITAL SUB-COMMITTEE

1. There was submitted (circulated) and approved both as a correct record and in respect of the recommendations contained therein, the Minutes of the Housing Capital Sub-Committee of 16 April 1997, shown in the Appendix to these Minutes.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

2. The Chair agreed to alter the order of business of the Agenda and that the undernoted item be considered as the next item.

SITE PROVISION FOR TRAVELLING PEOPLE IN EAST AYRSHIRE

3. There was submitted a report dated 1 May 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing advising of progress made to date in providing a site for travelling people within East Ayrshire, referring particularly to the recent visit by members of the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Travelling People; and recommending a course of action to maximise grant funding in the provision of such sites.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note the terms of the report which, amongst other things, explained:-
 - (a) that the Advisory Committee had set caravan pitch targets of six pitches for the former Cumnock and Doon Valley and twelve for the former Kilmarnock and Loudoun District, although one site of eighteen pitches within East Ayrshire would be acceptable;
 - (b) the current position in respect of the three sites identified by the former District Councils at the former Barony Colliery site, near Auchinleck;

Mauchline Bing, near Mauchline; and Moorfield Roundabout, Kilmarnock; and

- (c) that Authorities are required to notify the Scottish Office by 30 May 1997 of their intention to apply for a Capital Grant for the provision and upgrading of sites for travelling people, with the latest date for the submission of grant application being 31 December 1998;
- (ii) to note that in respect of the site at Barony Colliery, this location may require to be re-considered due to factors relating to industrial development rather than "on amenity grounds" as indicated in paragraph 6.2 of the report; and
- (iii) that the Director of Housing would:-
 - (a) identify possible sites for travelling people within East Ayrshire through a systematic survey of the Council's area on the basis that the sites concerned should meet the following criteria, namely:-
 - located within one mile of the A77/A76/A71/A70 transport corridors;
 - located within two miles of a settlement with a sufficient range of services and facilities (eg school and shops);
 - could accommodate a minimum of 18 pitches;
 - located ideally on under-utilised/brown field land; and
 - ideally well screened from neighbouring developments and main roads.
 - (b) submit identified sites including those referred to in sub paragraph (i)(b) above to the appropriate Local Committees for consultation; and
 - (c) notify the Scottish Office, prior to 30 May 1997 of the Council's intention to apply for a grant for the provision of a permanent site for travelling people.

ANNUAL POLICY STATEMENT 1997/98: HOUSING PLAN CHECKLIST

4. There was submitted and noted a report dated 30 April 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing advising that the Council's Annual Policy Statement for 1997/98, which had been prepared on the basis of, amongst other things, decisions taken by the Council in respect of the current Housing Capital Programme, had been submitted to the Scottish Office.

REVIEW OF HOUSING PLAN SYSTEM - GUIDANCE ON ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED

5. There was submitted a report dated 1 May 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing providing an update on the Scottish Office review of the Housing Plan system in Scotland.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note the terms of the report which amongst other things explained:-
 - (a) that as a first step in the review of the Housing Plan system in Scotland, the Scottish Office had commissioned the preparation of guidance on the assessment of housing need and had requested comments on the resulting guidance manual which dealt with a number

of key issues including housing need and demand; a framework of needs assessment; approaches to the measurement of general needs; measuring special needs and assessing stock condition;

- (b) that the response submitted by the Director of Housing to the Scottish Office on this matter had expressed the view that the draft guidance, amongst other things:-
 - provided balanced advice on options available for the preparation and implementation of the assessment process;
 - promoted and strengthened the view that the Housing Plan system needed to be reviewed to reflect the growing strategic importance of local authorities in the overall corporate Housing Planning system;
 - recognised the importance of promoting a more strategic enabling role for local authorities; and
- (c) that prior to the preparation of the Council's first Housing Plan a vigorous assessment of housing needs would require to be carried out, which was likely to have significant financial implications; and
- (ii) that the Director of Housing would prepare, for submission to a future meeting of this Committee a report detailing the options for carrying out housing needs assessment within East Ayrshire, the report to include details of the likely financial implications.

SCOTTISH HOMES STRATEGIC PLAN 1997/2000: CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

- 6. There was submitted and noted a report dated 2 May 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing (a) outlining Scottish Homes' Strategic Plan for 1997/2000 Consultation Document which set out the Agency's proposed "Strategy for Progress"; and (b) commenting on the terms of the Document.

INITIATIVE ON ROUGH SLEEPING (Item 9, Page 1837)

- 7. There was submitted a report dated 2 May 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing on the Scottish Office proposals for an Initiative on Rough Sleeping and putting forward proposals in this connection.

It was agreed that the Director of Housing would:-

- (i) submit projects for Challenge Fund financing to the Scottish Office for the purpose of researching the extent of rough sleeping and hidden homelessness within East Ayrshire;
- (ii) undertake a review of homeless persons accommodation provision within East Ayrshire, in the light of the opening of the development at St Andrew's Street, Kilmarnock later this year, in order to ascertain if there are any suitable properties for this client group;
- (iii) in conjunction with the Director of Social Work, undertake a study to identify a strategy to assist people of all ages currently sleeping rough in East Ayrshire, and incorporate "safety net" proposals into the plan to assist in the prevention of rough sleeping; and

- (iv) submit reports on the outcome of (i), (ii) and (iii) above to a future meeting or meetings of this Committee for consideration.

Provost Stirling and Councillor McCredie left the meeting during consideration of this item.

LOCAL OFFICE ACCESS/CASH COLLECTION

8. There was submitted a report dated 1 May 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing advising of the results of the Muirkirk pilot scheme of office based cash collection; recommending the transfer of rent collection from outdoor collectors to collections at Local Offices; and seeking approval to a pilot scheme for automated cash collection.

It was agreed:-

- (i) that the current outdoor rent collection arrangements which were being operated in the South of East Ayrshire be changed to office based collection;
- (ii) that the outdoor rent collection arrangements be retained for currently identified vulnerable people;
- (iii) that, in view of the absence of a local secure cash collection point, the current outdoor rent collection arrangements be retained in the communities of Sorn, Logan, Lugar, Rankinston, Dalrymple and Ochiltree in the meantime, and that the Director of Housing submit a report to a future meeting of this Committee to enable further consideration to be given to phasing out outdoor rent collections within these communities in the future;
- (iv) that the transition to rent collection at Local Offices be on a phased basis as indicated in paragraph 5.3 of the report, in order to allow for necessary staff training and support to be put in place, the transition to be completed by 30 June 1997; and
- (v) that a pilot scheme for automated rent collection, through the purchase and installation of two "Handitills" at the rent collection office at John Dickie Street, Kilmarnock, be undertaken, a further report by the Director of Housing on the outcome of the pilot scheme to be submitted to an appropriate future meeting of this Committee for consideration.

EAST AYRSHIRE GARDEN COMPETITION (Item 3, Page 875)

9. There was submitted a report dated 7 May 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing advising of the calendar for the annual East Ayrshire Garden Competition and seeking approval to minor amendments to the Award presentations.

It was agreed that commencing this year, the following amendments be made to the arrangements for the Garden Competition:-

- (i) that an overall winner be selected from the seven winners from the respective Local Committee areas, the winner to be determined by a judging panel comprising a representative from each of the seven Local Committees and the award to be presented at the first appropriate meeting of this Committee following the outcome of the judging;
- (ii) that a small reception for the overall winner and the winners from each of the Local Committee areas be held following the presentation to the overall prize winner; and
- (iii) that the Director of Housing advise the Local Committees of the above mentioned amendments to the Competition and request each Local Committee to make arrangements for judging of entries for the Garden Competition within their respective areas.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR SINGLE HOMELESS

- 10.** There was submitted a report dated 30 April 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing to consider a request for financial assistance from the Scottish Council for Single Homeless to enable them to fund forthcoming work within their core programme of activities.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note that the Scottish Council for Single Homeless provided services complementary to those provided by the Council's Housing and Social Work Departments, the purpose being to promote awareness of the causes, nature and extent of single homeless and to identify ways of preventing and alleviating the situation; and
- (ii) to make a financial contribution of £500 to this organisation.

HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS

11.1 THE VERIFICATION OF BENEFIT ADMINISTRATION FRAMEWORK (VBAF) - HB/CTB CIRCULAR F4/97

There was submitted a report dated 25 April 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing providing background information on the Verification and Benefit Administration Framework initiative which was to be implemented in October 1997, as set out in HB/CTB Circular F4/97, and advising of the progress to date.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note the terms of the report which, amongst other things:-
 - (a) explained that the Verification and Benefit Administration Framework formed part of the Department of Social Security's Housing and Council Tax Benefit Anti-Fraud Strategy and would mark a change of emphasis on Benefit anti-fraud activity from detection to prevention; and
 - (b) outlined the current position in respect of the development of the Framework which was due to be implemented with effect from October 1997; and
- (ii) that the Director of Housing would submit a further report to this Committee on the final Framework when this was received by the Council.

11.2 AMENDMENT REGULATIONS: EXTENSION OF THE SINGLE ROOM RENT DETERMINATION TO SINGLE CLAIMANTS UNDER 60 YEARS OF AGE - HB/CTB CIRCULAR A13/97

There was submitted a report dated 24 April 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing advising of a change to the Housing Benefit Regulations with effect from 6 October 1997 as contained within HB/CTB Circular A13/97 which limits housing benefit for single people.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note the terms of Circular A13/97 as detailed in the report; and
- (ii) to adopt SHELTER'S proposals as detailed below and to authorise the Director of Housing:-
 - (a) with immediate effect, in respect of any fresh or renewed claim for Housing Benefit made by any single person under the age of 60, to set the claimant's next Benefit period to expire in the last week of September 1997; and
 - (b) upon review of such claims in the last week of September, to set the subsequent Benefit period to the maximum permitted period of 60 weeks.

AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS SERVICE (Item 8, Page 1668)

12. There was submitted a joint report dated 13 May 1997 (circulated) by the Directors of Housing and Social Work advising of progress made to date on the operation of approved assessment and service provision arrangements for the housing adaptations service; and reporting on the outcome of a recent operational review carried out by Officers from the Housing and Social Work Departments.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note the terms of the report which, amongst other things, explained:-
 - (a) that during the period from 1 April 1996 to 31 March 1997, the Housing Department had registered a total of 1669 referrals for housing adaptations, comprising Category A (extremely urgent) - 904; Category B (high priority) - 652; and Category C (recommended) - 113;
 - (b) that in terms of the adopted procedures, all Category A referrals had been dealt with in strict chronological order and upon receipt had been passed to the Council's contractor for immediate action, while Category B and C referrals had been dealt with in chronological order as resources allowed and through a process of regular review of demand and available funding it had been possible to instruct all Category B and C referrals received during the year;
 - (c) that during the year the following types and numbers of adaptations had been provided:- showers 384; ramps 55; stairlifts 90; internal banisters 422; and external handrails 685;
 - (d) that expenditure on adaptations during the year had amounted to £700,000;

- (e) that an emergency response protocol had been established with the Council's contractor to address the needs of people at immediate risk; and
 - (f) that joint funding arrangements and protocols had been established with Ayrshire & Arran Community Health Care Trust to address the needs of people who were at risk of admission to hospital or were awaiting discharge;
- (ii) that the Directors of Housing and Social Work arrange to implement improved operational arrangements to ensure the highest quality of service for people with disabilities, involving the following measures, namely:-
- (a) delegation of responsibility to housing area managers;
 - (b) review of specifications for adaptations works;
 - (c) development of performance measurement and reporting;
 - (d) development of procedure manuals for staff;
 - (e) improved information for clients; and
 - (f) improved liaison between departments; and
- (iii) that the Directors of Housing and Social Work would submit regular reports on the operation of the adopted arrangements for housing adaptations to future meetings of this Committee.

**SCOTTISH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE SECOND REPORT:
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY CARE IN SCOTLAND VOLUME 1**

13. There was submitted and noted a joint report dated 2 April 1997 (circulated) by the Directors of Housing and Social Work advising of the main conclusions and recommendations arising from the Scottish Affairs Committee Report: "The Implementation of Community Care in Scotland", which reviewed the experience of the Community Care reforms over the initial three year period.

Councillors Fulton and McDill left the meeting during consideration of this item.

**REVISED ELDERLY PERSONS DISABILITY SCALE (REPDS) SURVEY IN
SHELTERED HOUSING ACCOMMODATION IN EAST AYRSHIRE**

14. There was submitted a joint report dated 7 May 1997 (circulated) by the Directors of Housing and Social Work providing an initial report on the recent survey of sheltered housing tenants in East Ayrshire using the Revised Elderly Persons Disability Scale, the purpose of which was, amongst other things, to assist in gaining an understanding of the dependency levels of tenants living in sheltered housing and to facilitate planning for future social care, housing and health services based on an analysis of the information gained from the research.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note the information provided in the report;
- (ii) that the Directors of Housing and Social Work would prepare a detailed analysis of the findings of the Study with a view to identifying a Very Sheltered Housing Unit, within an existing Unit in East Ayrshire; and

- (iii) that the Director of Housing would review the service provided to each Sheltered Housing Unit operated by East Ayrshire Council in the light of the outcome of the analysis of the findings of the Study.

**PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF GROUND ADJACENT TO 44 HENRIETTA STREET,
GALSTON**

- 15.** There was submitted a report dated 28 April 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing requesting agreement to the sale of an area of ground adjacent to 44 Henrietta Street, Galston.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to declare the ground in question surplus to the requirements of the Council;
- (ii) to dispose of the ground to the owner of Nos. 42/44 Henrietta Street, Galston;
and
- (iii) to authorise the Head of Property to negotiate the sale on suitable terms.

The meeting terminated at 1130 hours.