

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**HOUSING COMMITTEE****MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26 FEBRUARY 1997 AT 1400 HOURS IN THE MEETING ROOM, COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, LONDON ROAD, KILMARNOCK**

PRESENT: Councillors David Macrae, Gordon McCredie, Gordon Cree, Douglas Reid, Wilma Doyle, Jane Darnbrough, John Knapp, David Fulton, Kim Nicoll, David Sneller, George Smith, Jim Carmichael and Robert Taylor.

ATTENDING: David Montgomery, Chief Executive; John Hillis, Director of Housing; Chris McAleavey, Senior Depute Director of Housing; Jim Maitland, Depute Director of Housing; Ian Arnott, Chief Accountant; Campbell Johnston, Principal Officer, Design Services (Contracting and Technical Services) Joan Kendall, Principal Solicitor; Julie Armstrong, Senior Administrative Officer; Tom Matthew, Contract Compliance Officer (Contracting and Technical Services); David Morgan, Public Relations Officer; and Stuart Nelson, Administrative Officer.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Jim Kelly, Drew McIntyre, Provost Robert Stirling, Councillors Alan Campbell, Robert McDill, John Smith and Tommy Farrell.

CHAIR: Councillor David Macrae, Vice-Chair.

SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

1. There were submitted the undernoted Sub-Committee Minutes (circulated) as contained in Appendices I to III of these Minutes.
 - 1.1 **CHAIR'S SUB-COMMITTEE OF 21 JANUARY 1997** - Appendix I.
 - 1.2 **HOUSING CAPITAL SUB-COMMITTEE OF 6 FEBRUARY 1997** - Appendix II.
 - 1.3 **HOUSING CAPITAL SUB-COMMITTEE OF 11 FEBRUARY 1997** - Appendix III.

Councillor G Smith joined the Meeting at this point.

Housing Capital Sub-Committee of 6 February 1997

Councillor Macrae, seconded by Councillor Sneller, moved that the Sub-Committee Minutes referred to above be approved in respect of the recommendations contained therein.

Councillor McCredie, seconded by Councillor Nicoll, moved as an amendment that with reference to paragraph 3.1(b)(i) of the Minute, the sum of £50,000 included in the proposed Housing Capital Programme for 1997/98 for the selective demolition of long-term vacant housing stock be used to carry out such works at Finlayson Drive, Kilmarnock and that a proportion of the proposed expenditure of £100,000 included in the proposed programme for Information Technology development within the Housing Department be delayed until financial year 1998/99 with the resultant available balance for 1997/98 to also be used for the selective demolition of properties in Finlayson Drive.

On a division by a show of hands, the motion was carried by 10 votes to 3.

The Sub-Committee minutes were otherwise approved as a correct record and where appropriate in respect of recommendations contained therein.

It was also agreed that the Director of Housing would:-

- (a) circulate to Members of the Council a list of the addresses of the houses to be included within the various schemes in the programme.
- (b) make arrangements for Members of the Housing Capital Sub-Committee to visit Finlayson Drive, Kilmarnock in order to view first hand the housing and related problems in that area.

DRAFT ESTIMATES 1997/98 - GENERAL SERVICES

2.1 FINANCIAL REPORT

There was submitted and noted a report dated 21 February 1997 (circulated with the agenda for the Special Policy and Resources Committee of 25 February 1997) by the Director of Finance which advised of the latest position, now that finalised figures had been obtained in terms of the 1997/98 budget and which recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee determine final allocations for each of the Service Committees and request those Committees to finalise new savings and growth packages to align service delivery plans with the final allocations for 1997/98 taking into account the views and comments made during the Council's public consultation exercise.

2.2 REMIT FROM SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING OF 25 FEBRUARY 1997

There was submitted and noted a remit (Minute extract circulated) from the Special Policy and Resources Committee of 25 February 1997 requesting that this Committee finalise savings and growth packages for the Housing Service to align service delivery plans with the final financial allocations for 1997/98 as determined by the Policy and Resources Committee at its Special Meeting held on 25 February 1997.

2.3 GENERAL FUND HOUSING 1997/98

There was submitted a report dated 25 February 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing detailing a package of measures to align the service delivery plans with the final financial allocations for 1997/98 taking into account the views and comments made during the Council's public consultation exercise.

Councillor Macrae, seconded by Councillor Sneller, moved:-

- (i) to approve a revised savings and growth package, as detailed in the report, to align the General Fund Housing budget to the final allocation remitted by the Policy and Resources Committee from its Special Meeting of 25 February 1997; and
- (ii) to recommend adoption of the savings and growth proposals to the Policy and Resources Committee at its Special Meeting to be held on 5 March 1997.

Councillor Reid, seconded by Councillor McCredie moved as an amendment that the Committee note the revised savings and growth proposals detailed in the report to align the General Fund Housing budget to the final allocation remitted by the Policy and Resources Committee from its Special Meeting of 25 February 1997.

On a division by a show of hands, the motion was carried by 10 votes to 3.

HOUSING DEPARTMENT: SERVICE PLAN 1996-1999 (Item 17, Page 1415)

3. There was submitted a report dated 19 December 1996 (circulated) by the Director of Housing outlining the Housing Department's proposed Service Plan for the period 1996-99 and seeking approval of the Plan.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to endorse the Housing Department Service Plan 1996-1999 as appended to the report, subject to inclusion of an appropriate performance indicator in respect of the time taken to provide a meaningful response to letters of enquiry which are not so dealt with within 7 working days, as referred to in Strategic Objective 8.1 within the Appendix to the report.
- (ii) that the Service Plan be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration; and
- (iii) to note that the Director of Housing would report to a future Meeting of the Housing Capital Sub-Committee on the possibility of the Housing Department undertaking an arbitration role between tenants and contractors and, where appropriate, other Departments of the Authority in respect of work instructed by the Council which affected Council houses.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT: VOID CONTROL (Item 1, Page 1655)

4. There was submitted a report dated 18 February 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing advising of the Housing Department's performance in managing void properties since 1 April 1996 and of the steps which were being taken to improve performance during 1997/98.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note:-
 - (a) in line 4 of paragraph 2.1 of the report, the substitution of "1996/99" by "1996/97", as indicated by the Senior Depute Director of Housing;
 - (b) the information provided in the report on expenditure in respect of void houses, and on the Housing Department's operational performance in respect of void control, since 1 April 1996;
 - (c) the steps which were being taken by the Housing Department to improve operational performance on void control during 1997/98, including the following measures, namely:-
 - (i) releasing Riccarton modernisation decant stock for general re-let;

- (ii) instigating wide-ranging discussions with the Commercial Operations Department with a view to identifying and overcoming any obstacles to improving performance;
 - (iii) prioritising efforts to address the problems of difficult to let areas;
 - (iv) progressing the acquisition and implementation of an integrated housing management system to achieve increased efficiencies in service monitoring, control and performance over an extensive range of housing services, including voids control; and
 - (v) ensuring that provision was made within the new Measured Term Maintenance Contract to improve repair performance in vacant properties;
- (ii) that, in future, the Director of Housing submit void monitoring reports to this Committee at quarterly intervals; and
 - (iii) that the Director of Housing submit a report to a future Meeting to enable the Committee to consider the issue of difficult to let housing stock, the report to include amongst other things, identification of the houses concerned and analysis of the causes of the problem in the areas affected.

Councillor Knapp left the Meeting following determination of the above item.

**EAST AYRSHIRE GARDEN MAINTENANCE SCHEME:
PROPOSALS FOR OPERATION 1997/98**

5. There was submitted a report dated 24 February 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing on the proposed operation of the Garden Maintenance Scheme throughout East Ayrshire in 1997/98, taking cognisance of information gained from the expansion of the Scheme in 1996/97.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note:-
 - (a) that the service to be provided to participating householders under the Scheme would include the cutting of all grassed garden areas to the rear, side and front of houses eight times per season and the trimming of hedges twice per season; and
 - (b) that it was anticipated that by the end of the 1997 growing season 3975 householders would be participating in the Scheme and that the total cost of operating the Scheme during 1997/98 would be £250,000 of which £15,000 would be met from contributions from householders.
- (ii) that the Garden Maintenance Scheme 1997 would be open to all residents of East Ayrshire, irrespective of the tenure of housing which they occupied, who were over 60 years of age (South) and over 65 years of age (North), or who were registered disabled persons or were in receipt of Incapacity Benefit and/or Disability Premium;
- (iii) that an individual's eligibility would not be affected should a person under 16 years of age or who was a specific carer, be resident in the same household;

- (iv) that no charge would be made for inclusion in the Scheme where the individual concerned was in receipt of Housing or Council Tax Benefit, but that in all other cases a charge of £30 would be made; and
- (v) that the Head of Contracting and Technical Services would negotiate a contract with the Commercial Operations Department to carry out the work involved in the Scheme for 1997/98 on the basis of the costings referred to in (i)(b) above.

Councillor McCredie left the Meeting following determination of the preceding item.

WRITE OFF OF HOUSING RELATED BALANCES

6. There was submitted a report (circulated) by the Director of Housing advising of, and seeking approval to, the writing off of former tenant arrears, rent allowance overpayments and rent rebate overpayments prior to 31 March 1996.

It was agreed, without prejudice to possible future recovery of debt in individual cases:-

- (i) to approve the write off of £106,798.51 in former tenant rent arrears, as bad debt; and
- (ii) to approve the write off of £24,723.56 in Housing Benefit overpayments, as bad debt.

PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF GARDEN GROUND AT 41 BOSWELL CRESCENT, LOGAN

7. There was submitted a report dated 10 February 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing on the proposed sale of an area of garden ground at 41 Boswell Crescent, Logan.

It was agreed that the area of garden ground in question be disposed of to the owner of 43 Boswell Crescent, Logan, and that the Head of Property be authorised to negotiate the sale on suitable terms.

PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF HOUSES AT 4 AND 6 PEATLAND ROAD, KILMARNOCK

8. There was submitted a report dated 13 January 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing on the proposed demolition of the two 4 apartment semi-detached properties at Nos 4 and 6 Peatland Road, Kilmarnock, where structural defects had been identified.

It was agreed:-

- (i) that the properties at 4 and 6 Peatland Road, Kilmarnock, be demolished at an estimated cost of £3,500;
- (ii) that the remaining site be reinstated as open space; and
- (iii) that the Director of Housing make the necessary arrangements for the appropriate work to be carried out.

THE SCOTTISH OFFICE: CONSULTATION: "INITIATIVE ON ROUGH SLEEPING: GUIDELINES FOR SCHEMES"

9. There was submitted a report (circulated) by the Director of Housing updating the Members on the joint reply by the Directors of Housing and of Social Work to the request by the Scottish Office to comment on the Consultation Paper, "Initiative on Rough Sleeping: Guidelines for Schemes".

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note the terms of the report and of the joint reply made to the Scottish Office on the Consultation Paper;
- (ii) that the Director of Housing submit reports to future Meetings of this Committee from time to time, as required, on further developments in relation to this matter; and
- (iii) that the Director of Housing submit a report to a future Meeting of this Committee on the operation of the Short Term Accommodation unit at St Andrews Street, Kilmarnock.

HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION ACT 1995: SCOTTISH OFFICE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR NO 40/1996

10. There was submitted a report dated February 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Housing outlining the details and implications for the Council of Scottish Office Development Department Circular 40/1996, which provided advice and guidance on the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 which came into force in Scotland on 1 December 1996.

It was agreed to note the terms of the report, which, amongst other things, explained that under the provisions of the Act, Local Authorities were to become Energy Conservation Authorities which imposed certain requirements on authorities including those undernoted but without the availability of additional resources namely:-

- (i) the preparation of a baseline detailing the condition of both public and private sector housing stock, by 1 April 1997;
- (ii) the publication of reports detailing energy efficiency improvement measures, by 1 September 1997;
- (iii) outlining investment proposals to significantly improve the energy efficiency of, and reduce environmental emissions from, residential accommodation in their respective areas. (The Secretary of State had required savings of 30% in the energy efficiency of the housing stock over a 10 year period).

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT: EXPENDITURE POSITION AS AT 31 JANUARY 1997

11. There was submitted and noted a report dated 19 February 1997 (circulated) by the Director of Finance advising of the current budgetary control position in respect of the Housing Revenue Account for the period ended 31 January 1997 (period 11).

The meeting terminated at 1505 hours.