

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**HOUSING COMMITTEE****MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 1998 AT 1003 HOURS IN THE MEETING ROOM, COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, LONDON ROAD, KILMARNOCK**

PRESENT: Councillors David Macrae, Drew McIntyre, Irene Reeves, Gordon Cree, Douglas Reid, Wilma Doyle, Jane Darnbrough, Kathleen Hall, John Knapp, Kim Nicoll, George Smith, and Jim Carmichael.

ATTENDING: Fiona Lees, Depute Chief Executive; John Hillis, Director of Housing; Tom Wilkie, Head of Contracting and Technical Services; Chris McAleavey, Senior Depute Director of Housing; Jim Maitland and Alan McKnight, Depute Directors of Housing; Bill Walkinshaw, Principal Administrative Officer; Trish McLean, Benefits Manager; Alistair Gardiner, Senior Accountant; Anna Gallagher, Solicitor/Team Leader; David Morgan, Public Relations Officer; and Stuart Nelson, Administrative Officer.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Jim Kelly and Gordon McCredie, Provost Robert Stirling and Councillors Alan Campbell, David Fulton, Robert McDill, David Sneller and Tommy Farrell.

CHAIR: Councillor David Macrae, Vice-Chair.

HOUSING APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE OF 8 JUNE 1998

1. There were submitted and approved as a correct record, the Minutes of the Housing Appeals Sub-Committee of 8 June 1998 (circulated) as shown in the Appendix to these minutes.

BUDGETARY CONTROL SUMMARY STATEMENTS FOR PERIOD ENDED 9 OCTOBER 1998 (PERIOD 7)**2.1 GENERAL FUND HOUSING**

There was submitted and noted a joint report dated 5 November 1998 (circulated) by the Acting Director of Finance and the Director of Housing on the current budgetary control position and the projected out-turn for the financial year 1998/99 for the General Fund Housing Account for the period ended 9 October 1998 (Period 7).

2.2 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

There was submitted and noted a joint report dated 5 November 1998 (circulated) by the Acting Director of Finance and the Director of Housing on the current budgetary control position and the projected out-turn for the financial year 1998/99 for the Housing Revenue Account for the period ended 9 October 1998 (Period 7).

HOUSING DEPARTMENT: PERFORMANCE PLAN 1999-2000 (Item 1, Page 3309)

3. There was submitted a report dated 30 October 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which (a) outlined the Housing Department's Performance Plan for 1999-2000 as part of the process of delivering Best Value; and (b) recommended approval of the Plan.

It was agreed to approve the Housing Department's Performance Plan for 1999-2000, as appended to the report.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRESS REPORT (Item 7, Page 877)

4. There was submitted and noted a report dated 4 November 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which advised of progress which was being made in the field of Health and Safety across the Housing Department.

MANAGING ABSENCE

5. There was submitted and noted a report dated 26 October 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which analysed the incidents of absence within the Housing Department during the quarter ended 2 October 1998 and indicated the action which was being taken by the Department in relation to the management of absence.

SINGLE PERSONS FLATS: BARSHARE ROAD, CUMNOCK (Item 3, Page 3780)

6. Having heard comments by the Director of Housing, it was agreed that this item be withdrawn from the Agenda and would be considered at the next meeting.

BENEFITS SECTION BACKLOG: PROGRESS REPORT (Item 6, Page 3782)

7. There was submitted a report dated 4 November 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which advised of progress in dealing with the backlog of work within the Benefits Section of the Housing Department.

In this connection the Depute Director of Housing (Support and Technical) intimated that since preparation of the report, the backlog of work relative to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit items had been completely cleared.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note (a) the progress made in clearing the backlog of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit items as outlined in the report and intimated by the Depute Director of Housing (Support and Technical); and (b) the arrangements which had been put in place to increase the service to claimants and to avoid a further backlog developing, as detailed in the report; and
- (ii) that the Director of Housing would prepare and submit to the next meeting, reports on (a) progress relative to the arrangements to increase the service to claimants; and (b) on arrangements for dealing with a backlog of work relative to rent allowance items.

BENEFIT ADMINISTRATION: REMOTE ACCESS TERMINALS

8. There was submitted and noted a report dated 5 November 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which advised on the use and availability of remote access terminals from the Department of Social Security and on the successful outcome of an application which had been submitted in respect of the installation of a terminal within the Benefits Section.

WRITE-OFF OF HOUSING RELATED BALANCES

9. There was submitted a report dated 4 November 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which advised of, and sought approval to, the writing-off of former tenant arrears prior to 31 March 1997.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to approve the write-off of debts greater than £250 in respect of former tenant arrears which amounted, in total, to £56,770.13; and
- (ii) to note that the write-off of debts less than £250, in respect of former tenant arrears, amounted, in total, to £31,013.42.

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL AND SCOTTISH HOMES STRATEGIC AGREEMENT
1998-2001**

10. There was submitted a report dated 30 June 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which advised of the contents of the proposed Strategic Agreement 1998-2001 with Scottish Homes.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to approve the "East Ayrshire Council and Scottish Homes Strategic Agreement and Joint Implementation Plan 1998-2001" as appended to the report;
- (ii) that the approved document be signed at a ceremony to be held on 26 November 1998, the necessary arrangements in this connection to be made by the Director of Housing in consultation with the Chair; and
- (iii) otherwise, to note the terms of the report.

**NEW HOUSING PARTNERSHIPS: THE NEXT PHASE - BID TO SCOTTISH
OFFICE FOR FUNDING FOR 1999-2002**

11. There was submitted a report dated 16 November 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which asked the Committee to agree to the terms of the Council's response to the Scottish Office invitation to bid for a share of further New Housing Partnership Funding to be made available during the period 1999-2002.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to approve the arrangements made with consultants RPS Cairns to prepare a bid on behalf of the Council as a negotiated extension to their existing contract at a cost of £11,700 including expenses but excluding VAT;
- (ii) to approve, in general terms, the bid which was being prepared, as set out in the report and, in view of the limited time available, to remit to the Director of Housing to ensure that the bid was completed and submitted to the Scottish Office no later than 15 December 1998, being the due date; and
- (iii) otherwise, to note the terms of the report.

NEW SOCIAL RENTED AND LOW COST HOME OWNERSHIP HOUSING

12. There was submitted a report dated 29 October 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which provided an update on the New Social Housing Programme and Low Cost Home Ownership Schemes in terms of completions to date during this financial year and gave an indication of planned housing development.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note the terms of the report; and

- (ii) that the Director of Housing make arrangements for the Members of the Committee to visit a house provided to "barrier free" standards in order to view first hand the specification of the work carried out.

DEVELOPMENT OF GROUND AT WITCH ROAD, KILMARNOCK

13. There was submitted a report dated 6 November 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which requested agreement, in principle, to provide grant to the West of Scotland Housing Association in respect of a development of very sheltered housing at Witch Road, Kilmarnock.

It was agreed:-

- (i) that a further grant of up to £42,000 be made to the West of Scotland Housing Association in respect of this development, should the development costs exceed Scottish Homes' cost approval limit of £608,000; and
- (ii) otherwise, to note the terms of the report.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Item 7, Page 3782)

14. There was submitted a report dated 28 October 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which advised of the performance of the Housing Department in relation to Statutory Key Performance Indicators for the Period 1 April to 9 October 1998.

It was agreed:-

- (i) that the Director of Housing would submit a further report on this matter to the next meeting of the Committee; and
- (ii) otherwise, to note the terms of the report.

Councillor Nicoll left the meeting during discussion of the above item.

HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME (HRA) 1998/99: COMFORT PLUS CENTRAL HEATING CONTRACT: REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING (Item 2.3, Page 3785)

15. There was submitted a report dated 5 November 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which sought approval to a revised contract sum of £212,723.09 in respect of the project for the installation of Comfort Plus Central Heating under the current year's Housing Capital Programme (HRA).

It was agreed:-

- (i) to approve a revised budget of £212,723.09, including fees, for this Scheme, being an additional approval of £39,723 which was necessary in order to enable additional unforeseen works to be carried out at the houses included in the Scheme; and
- (ii) that the Director of Housing, in consultation with the other Officers concerned, would prepare and submit to the next meeting a report providing detailed information on the background to the contract and including a further explanation for the additional expenditure on this Scheme.

DEMOLITIONS: MUIRKIRK (Item 4, Page 3357)

16. There was submitted a report dated 5 November 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which provided an update on progress on the demolition of housing in Muirkirk and requested a minor amendment to the original proposals for demolitions in the village.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to approve the demolition of the block of four flats at Pagan Walk as referred to in the report;
- (ii) that the block of four flats at Burns Avenue, previously earmarked for demolition would be deleted from the current programme and would be substituted by the block of four flats at Pagan Walk referred to in (i) above; and
- (iii) that the appropriate home loss and disturbance payments would be made to the remaining tenant of the block of flats at Pagan Walk which was to be demolished.

FUEL CHARGES

17. Having heard the comments of the Director of Housing, it was agreed that this item be withdrawn from the Agenda.

REVIEW OF EMERGENCY REPAIRS PROTOCOL: HELPLINE (Item 3, Page 3571)

18. There was submitted a report dated 16 November 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which asked the Committee to approve an amendment to the response time for repairs to central heating systems.

It was agreed:-

- (i) that the Emergency Repairs Protocol would be amended to the effect that in future, central heating repairs would be dealt with within a 24 hour period, with provision to upgrade such repairs to be dealt with within a 2 hour period (repair category "A"), depending upon the degree of vulnerability of the residents of the house concerned and in which case arrangements would be made either for the repair to be carried out or for temporary heating to be provided within the 2 hour period;
- (ii) that the Director of Housing would prepare and submit to the next meeting a report on the likely cost implications of operating the amended Protocol as set out in (i) above;
- (iii) that the Director of Housing would undertake an analysis of requests made to the Helpline since August of this year for central heating repairs together with the responses given and, in the light of this, would review the questions asked and information given by the Helpline operators, in order to ensure that the most appropriate response was provided to all enquiries and that tenants were given a clear understanding of how their particular case would be dealt with; and
- (iv) otherwise, to note the terms of the report.

Councillor Hall left the meeting during discussion of the preceding item.

MUIRKIRK: LEASE OF GROUND AT GARPEL AVENUE AND STITT PLACE

19. There was submitted a report dated 12 November 1998 (circulated) by the Director of Housing which asked the Committee to consider leasing two areas of ground at Garpel Avenue and Stitt Place, Muirkirk, to the Muirkirk Enterprise Group for the provision of a range of safe, adventurous and challenging Play Equipment for Children.

It was agreed:-

- (i) in principle, to lease the two areas of ground in question to the Muirkirk Enterprise Group; and
- (ii) to remit to the Personnel and Property Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee to consider the terms of the lease.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

20. Prior to the close of the meeting the Chair reported that Mr Alan McKnight, Depute Director of Housing, would shortly be leaving the employment of the Council to take up the post of Head of Housing and Community Development with East Dunbartonshire Council and, on behalf of the Committee, acknowledged the contribution made by Mr McKnight to the work of the Committee and extended congratulations and best wishes on his new appointment.

The meeting terminated at 1142 hours.