

## SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Social Justice Committee held in the Council Chambers, Municipal Buildings, Station Road, Dumbarton on Wednesday, 14 December 2005 at 2.00 p.m.

**Present:** Councillors Denis Agnew, Dennis Brogan, James Flynn, Douglas McAllister, Linda McColl, Marie McNair and Martin Rooney.

**Attending:** David McMillan, Director of Housing and Technical Services; Bill Clark, Acting Director of Social Work Services; John McKerracher, Head of Technical Services; Margaret Caldwell, Manager of Housing Operations; Jeff Stobo, Strategy Manager; Valerie Smith, Section Head (Strategy); James Pow, Manager of Finance; Martin McKerracher, Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, Housing & Technical Services; Stephen West, Manager of Resources, Social Work Services; Moira Swanson, Research and Information Manager; Liz Cochrane, Principal Policy Officer and Craig Stewart, Administrative Assistant.

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Jim Bollan, Craig McLaughlin and Andy White.

**Councillor Denis Agnew in the Chair**

### MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

7737 The Minutes of Meeting of the Social Justice Committee held on 12 October 2005 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

### THE EQUALITIES REVIEW CALL FOR EVIDENCE

7738 A report was submitted by the Chief Executive presenting the Council's response to the Equalities Review Call for Evidence. In this respect, the Committee was requested to give retrospective approval for the response which had been sent, prior to the deadline submission date of 26 November 2005.

7739 Having heard Councillor McNair, Service Spokesperson for Equal Opportunities, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the report; and
- (2) to give retrospective approval for the response which had been sent on the Equalities Review.

**ADVANCING EQUALITY FOR MEN AND WOMEN: GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS TO INTRODUCE A PUBLIC SECTOR DUTY TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY**

7740 A report was submitted by the Chief Executive presenting a draft response to the Women and Equality Unit of the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) consultation on Government proposals to introduce a public sector duty to promote gender equality.

7741 Having heard Councillor McNair, Service Spokesperson for Equal Opportunities, the Committee agreed that the response, attached to the report, be submitted to the DTI on this issue.

**SOCIAL WORK BUDGETARY POSITION 2005/06 AS AT PERIOD 7 TO 15 NOVEMBER 2005**

7742 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services advising of the performance of the Social Work Services budget for the period to 15 November 2005.

7743 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

**SOCIAL WORK GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS**

7744 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services advising of grant applications received by Social Work Services from voluntary organisations seeking funding and making recommendations on the level of funding to be provided.

7745 The Committee agreed to approve the recommendations in relation to the various applications detailed in the Appendix to the report, a copy of which is appended hereto.

**REPORT ON STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2004/05 &  
QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2005  
FOR COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES**

- 7746 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services providing a progress report on Social Work Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs), Local Improvement Targets (LITs) and actions in support of Corporate Priorities and Objectives for the period 1 July to 30 September 2005.
- 7747 The Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

**WELFARE RIGHTS SERVICE**

- 7748 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services providing an update on the activity of the Welfare Rights Service.
- 7749 After discussion and having heard the Acting Director of Social Work Services in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the report.

**BRUCEHILL ACTION GROUP**

- 7750 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services requesting consideration of a free let to the Brucehill Action Group in respect of the premises located to the rear of 37 – 43 Napier Crescent, Brucehill, Dumbarton.
- 7751 After discussion and having heard the Acting Director of Social Work Services in explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-
- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
  - (2) to approve the free let of the modular buildings to the rear of 37 – 43 Napier Crescent, Brucehill, to the Brucehill Action Group on such terms and conditions, and for such duration as the Acting Director of Social Work Services shall determine, taking into account advice from the Director of Development and Environmental Services.

**HOUSING AND TECHNICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT –  
PERFORMANCE REPORT**

- 7752 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing information on the Statutory Performance Indicators for the Department of Housing and Technical Services in respect of the second quarter of 2005/2006 and the Department's programme of Best Value Reviews.
- 7753 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

**ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: CLYDEBANK CCTV TRUST AND  
STRATHCLYDE POLICE**

- 7754 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services seeking approval to provide Scottish Executive anti social behaviour funding to Clydebank CCTV Trust and Strathclyde Police in order to support initiatives to tackle anti social behaviour.
- 7755 After discussion and having heard the Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator in explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-
- (1) that Scottish Executive grant funding be used for tackling anti social behaviour;
  - (2) that a payment of £40,000 be made to the Clydebank CCTV Trust; and
  - (3) that a Temporary Senior Analyst post be funded for one year at a cost of £33,000.

**ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (SCOTLAND) ACT 2004: REPORTING  
FRAMEWORK**

- 7756 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing details of an anti social behaviour statistical update issued to the Scottish Executive in compliance with reporting requirements set out under the Anti Social Behaviour Etc. (Scotland) Act 2004.
- 7757 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

**FIRE PRECAUTIONS INSPECTION IN MULTI-STOREY FLATS WITHIN  
WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE**

- 7758 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising on progress with actions in response to the recommendations made by Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service following their inspection of all multi-storey flats within West Dunbartonshire in 2004.
- 7759 The Committee agreed:-
- (1) to note that the programme of removal works had been completed; and
  - (2) to note that further discussions were planned with Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service regarding training issues.

### **HRA CAPITAL PLAN GRANT IMPLICATIONS**

- 7760 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising on the current position with regard to the proposed reduction in Private Sector Housing Grant (PSHG), the implications on the 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 HRA Capital Programmes, and seeking approval for the deferment of new 2005/2006 projects involving owner occupiers until January/February 2006 when 2006/2007 PSHG are known.
- 7761 Having heard Councillor Flynn, Service Spokesperson for Housing & Technical Services, the Committee agreed:-
- (1) to note the report in conjunction with the report noted in paragraph 3.7 of the report; and
  - (2) that work be allowed to proceed on fully tenanted blocks with a decision to proceed with multi-tenure blocks being deferred until the grant position was confirmed.

### **HOUSING MAINTENANCE TRADING OPERATION 2005/2006 – FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO 15 NOVEMBER 2005 (PERIOD 7)**

- 7762 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services presenting the interim cumulative financial information for the period ending 15 November 2005.
- 7763 After discussion and having heard the Director of Housing and Technical Services in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

### **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2005/2006 – BUDGETARY CONTROL STATEMENT TO 15 NOVEMBER 2005 (PERIOD 7)**

- 7764 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing an update on the financial performance of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the period ended 15 November 2005.
- 7765 After discussion, the Committee agreed:-
- (1) to note the report;
  - (2) to congratulate the Director and his staff for the significant improvement that had been achieved on the HRA budgetary position.

### **HOUSING NON-HRA REVENUE ACCOUNT – BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 15 NOVEMBER 2005 (PERIOD 7)**

- 7766 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising on the financial performance of the Housing – Non HRA Revenue Account for the period ended 15 November 2005.
- 7767 The Committee agreed to note the report.

### **HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2005/2006 – BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 15 NOVEMBER 2005 (PERIOD 7)**

- 7768 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising on the progress of the HRA Capital Programme 2005/2006.
- 7769 The Committee agreed:-
- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
  - (2) to approve the budget virement as referred to in paragraph 3.10 of the report and as detailed in Appendix C to the report.

### **BENEFIT FRAUD INSPECTORATE (BFI) INSPECTION AND ACTION PLAN**

- 7770 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising on the outcome of a recent Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) inspection of security within the Council's benefit administration and informing of the action plan which had been produced to progress the recommendations highlighted within the report.
- 7771 It was noted that 2 pages had been omitted from Appendix 2 to the report and a copy of the revised Appendix was circulated at the meeting.
- 7772 Having heard the Manager of Housing Operations in elaboration the Committee agreed to note the report and the action being taken to address the BFI recommendations.

### **HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT FRAUD STRATEGY**

- 7773 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services seeking approval to implement a Housing and Council Tax Benefit Fraud Strategy for West Dunbartonshire Council.
- 7774 The Committee agreed to approve the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Fraud Strategy for West Dunbartonshire Council on the basis outlined in the report.

### **BENEFIT INVESTIGATION TEAM FRAUD RESULTS 2004/2005 AND ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2005/2006**

- 7775 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising on the performance of the investigation team in 2004/2005 and seeking approval for the team's Business Plan for 2005/2006.
- 7776 Having heard the Manager of Housing Operations, the Committee agreed:-
- (1) to note the Benefit Investigation Team Fraud Results Report 2004/2005; and
  - (2) to approve the Benefit Investigation Team Business Plan for 2005/2006.

### **HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

- 7777 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing an update on Housing and Council Tax Benefit performance to the end of September 2005.
- 7778 The Committee agreed to note the continuing improvement in Housing and Council Tax Benefit performance.

### **STATISTICAL INFORMATION: WAITING LIST, VOIDS, LETS & HOMELESS**

- 7779 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing statistical information in relation to the waiting list for West Dunbartonshire Council houses, the reasons for termination of tenancies and the void and lets position as at 31 October 2005.
- 7780 After discussion and having heard the Manager of Housing Operations in explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

### **HOUSE SALES**

- 7781 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing information on West Dunbartonshire Council houses sold under the Right to Buy scheme between 1 April and 31 October 2005.
- 7782 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

**COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON**

- 7783 As this would be the last meeting of the Committee of 2005 the Convener, Councillor Agnew, took the opportunity to extend his best wishes to everyone for the forthcoming Festive Season.

The meeting closed at 2.22 p.m.