

HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee held in the Council Chambers, Clydebank Town Hall, Dumbarton Road, Clydebank on Wednesday, 8 April 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Jim Brown, Geoff Calvert, Gail Casey, William Hendrie, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Craig McLaughlin and Willie McLaughlin.

Attending: Elaine Melrose, Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development; Jim McAloon, Head of Housing and Regeneration Services; John McKerracher, Head of Property and Technical Services; Alasdair Gregor, Planning Services Manager; Kevin Neeson, Manager of Development Services; Jeff Stobo, Manager of Strategy; Jim Pow, Manager of Finance, Housing, Environment and Economic Development; Margaret Caldwell, Manager of Housing Operations; Rodney Thornton, Section Head, Waste and Transport Services; William Gibson, Section Head (Estates); Stephen McGonagle, Manager of Repairs and Maintenance; David Webster, Manager of Improvement & Performance; Gillian Telfer, Biodiversity Officer; Sally Michael, Principal Solicitor and Craig Stewart, Committee Officer, Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Jim Bollan and Jim Finn.

Councillor William Hendrie in the Chair

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of Meetings of the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee held on 4 February 2009 (Ordinary) and 11 February 2009 (Special) were submitted and approved as a correct record.

SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENTS

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive presenting the latest draft of the new Single Outcome Agreement (SOA).

After discussion and having heard the Manager of Improvement & Performance in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed that Members would provide any comments on the SOA by the end of April 2009.

DUNBARTONSHIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive presenting a draft of the new Dunbartonshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (DLBAP).

After discussion and having heard the Biodiversity Officer and relevant officers in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) that the draft Plan be sent out for public consultation; and
- (2) to note that the outcome of the public consultation exercise would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

COUNCIL HOUSE SALES

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services seeking review of the Council's policy on housing improvements affecting tenants who have concluded a contract to purchase their Council house under 'Right to Buy' legislation.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed that the policy, which prevented the Council agreeing that 'Right to Buy' concluded contracts be withdrawn where any improvements to the Council house being purchased are contemplated within 2 years at a cost of £1,000 or more, be brought to an end.

HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN: PROGRESS UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development informing of the progress being made relating to the Housing Improvement Plan.

The Committee agreed to note the progress to date.

RE-LET STANDARD

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development seeking approval of the proposed re-let standard for void properties that has been developed in consultation with Tenants and Residents Groups and other stakeholders.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development and the Manager of Housing Operations in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to approve the new Re-Let Standard as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the following additions/amendments to Appendices 1 and 3 therein:-

Appendix 1 – Re-Let Standard

External Condition of the Property

Second bullet point – After “unsafe condition”, insert “before entry”

Fourth bullet point – After “chimneys etc.”, insert “and repair lines raised for all identified faults that require to be repaired and these repairs will be completed within policy timescales.”

Internal Condition of the Property

First bullet point – After “wind and watertight”, insert “and free of dampness.”

Appendix 3 – Re-Let Standard Termination Visits

Condition of Council Property

Statement to be amended to read, “When you terminate your tenancy, your property will be inspected and action will be taken to ensure that it meets the required Re-Let Standard before you leave.”; and

- (2) that the re-let standard would be introduced with effect from Monday, 4 May 2009.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS - STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - HOUSING RESPONSE REPAIRS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development informing of the performance improvement actions taken to ensure that targets for second, third and fourth priority housing response repairs Statutory Performance Indicators are met.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development and the Head of Property and Technical Services in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the report; and
- (2) that information on the category/type of repairs in respect of second, third and fourth priority housing repairs would be sent to all Members of the Committee for their information.

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANT

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development providing an update on some important changes being introduced to Private Sector Housing Grant (PSHG), intimating the offer of grant from the Scottish Government for PSHG for 2009/10 and recommending how this funding should be allocated and prioritised.

After discussion and having heard the Planning Services Manager in answer to Members' questions, Councillor Calvert, seconded by Councillor McBride, moved:-

This Committee notes with grave concern that, as outlined in paragraph 7 of the report, the allocation of private sector housing grant from the Scottish Government will not meet the demand for grant assisted work, within West Dunbartonshire. Between 2004/05 and 2007/08, this Council grant allocation averaged £1.296 million. The allocation from this Scottish Government for 2008/09 was £818,000 and has been reduced even further in 2009/10 to £808,000.

Given that the vast proportion of grant is allocated for disabled adaptations, it is clear that the most vulnerable residents of West Dunbartonshire are going to suffer from this massive 38% cut in funding. This situation cannot be defended by this Committee.

Whilst being in the impossible position that this Committee can hardly fail to agree the recommendations in paragraph 8 of the report, this Committee does so with the utmost reluctance and regret. Support for these recommendations does not imply support for this flawed Government policy that will impact so severely on the disabled residents of West Dunbartonshire.

As an amendment, Councillor Craig McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor McColl, moved:-

That the Committee agrees

- (1) to note the requirement to prepare a Scheme of Assistance by 31 March 2010;

- (2) to note that changes have been introduced relating to grants for disabled adaptations; and
- (3) to agree the content of this report, including the allocations indicated in the table in paragraph 3.4 of the report.

On a vote being taken, 5 Members voted for the amendment and 3 for the motion. The amendment was accordingly declared carried.

FORTNIGHTLY COLLECTION OF DRY RECYCLATE PILOT SCHEME

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development on the outcome of the 6 month fortnightly collection pilot scheme for dry recyclate (blue bin) which commenced in August 2008, and identifying options for delivering an increased frequency of recyclate collections across the Council area and identifying how effective the Council's recycling programme is in terms of real impact.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development and the Section Head, Waste and Transport in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that the blue bin fortnightly collection pilot scheme generated good participation levels but failed to significantly increase recycling rates;
- (2) to note that materials collected for recycling are predominantly reprocessed. These figures are audited by SEPA;
- (3) to note that the Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development would be organising a facilitated Members' briefing in August 2009 to debate a way forward to increase recycling levels in West Dunbartonshire; and
- (4) to note that a report would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration of policy proposals to meet waste management targets.

ADJOURNMENT

After hearing the Chair, Councillor Hendrie, the Committee agreed to adjourn for a short period.

The meeting reconvened at 11.55 a.m. with all Members listed in the Sederunt in attendance.

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL'S TOURISM STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN (2009-12)

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development seeking approval of the West Dunbartonshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan (2009 – 12), of which an Executive summary and Action Plan was presented as an Appendix to the report.

After discussion and having heard the Head of Housing and Regeneration in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to continue consideration of the report to the next meeting of the Committee in order to enable further information to be obtained.

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN – 2009 UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development introducing the draft Asset Management Plan – 2009 Update and seeking approval of its content.

After hearing the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development, the Committee agreed to continue consideration of the report to a future meeting of the Committee in order to enable further information to be obtained.

SALE OF SURPLUS PREMISES AT 1 MILL ROAD, CLYDEBANK

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development seeking approval to sell the former care home known as "Mill Haven", 1 Mill Road, Clydebank on the open market for residential purposes.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to authorise the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development to sell the surplus premises at "Mill Haven", 1 Mill Road, Clydebank on the open market subject to a closing date for residential purposes;
- (2) that in the event that the estimated capital receipt of £250,000 was not achieved, then this would be brought back to the Committee for decision; and
- (3) that the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services be authorised to conclude the transaction subject to such legal conditions that are considered appropriate.

**PURCHASE OF LAND EXTENDING TO 630 SQUARE METRES OR THEREBY AT
HELENSLEE ROAD, DUMBARTON IN RELATION TO THE SALE OF
LEVENFORD HOUSE, HELENSLEE ROAD, DUMBARTON**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development seeking approval to acquire the land extending to 630 square metres or thereby at Helenslee Road, Dumbarton from the current owners, as shown hatched on the plan appended to the report.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) that the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development be authorised to acquire the land extending to 630 square metres or thereby at Helenslee Road, Dumbarton for £100,000 plus payment of legal fees and expenses up to a maximum of £500 plus VAT and transfer the same to the owner of Levenford House at no cost;
- (2) to request that the claim for damages submitted by the agent for the owner of Levenford House be negotiated and agreed with a view to financial recovery of the Council's losses, if any, in terms of paragraph 8.3 below;
- (3) that the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services be authorised to conclude the transaction subject to such legal conditions that are considered appropriate. In addition a fully quantified claim for reimbursement of the Council's losses, if any, arising from the circumstances detailed in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.5 of the report would be prepared and submitted to the Keeper; and
- (4) that the Committee be kept advised on future progress of the Council's claim against the Registers of Scotland.

The meeting closed at 12.15 p.m.