

HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Housing, Environment & Economic Development Committee held in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road on Wednesday, 4 February 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Jim Bollan, Jim Brown, Geoff Calvert, Gail Casey, *Jim Finn, William Hendrie, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Craig McLaughlin and Marie McNair.

*Arrived later in the meeting.

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; Angus Bodie, Manager of Roads, Waste and Transport; Jim Pow, Manager of Finance, Housing, Environment and Economic Development; Margaret Caldwell, Manager of Housing Operations; William Gibson, Section Head (Estates); Sally Michael, Principal Solicitor and George Hawthorn, Senior Administrative Officer, Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services.

Councillor William Hendrie in the Chair

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee held on 3 December 2008 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

CLYDEBANK LEISURE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT AND SALE OF PLAY DROME SITE

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee held on 3 December 2008 (Page 1556 refers), resubmit report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development informing of the progress being made in relation to the marketing of the existing Play Drome site and progress made towards obtaining a further option on the site for the proposed new Leisure Centre at Queens' Quay.

Having heard the Head of Housing and Regeneration provide an update on progress being made in preparing a development brief and the further progress made towards obtaining a further option on the site at Queens' Quay and the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the current position and steps being taken to agree an option for the land at Queens' Quay for the proposed new Leisure Centre;
- (2) to note the progress made in preparing a development brief for the existing Play Drome site; and
- (3) that the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development should prepare a report on the continuing progress being made in relation to the marketing of the existing Play Drome site and the progress made towards obtaining a further option on the site for the proposed new Leisure Centre at Queens' Quay, for consideration at a Special Meeting of the Committee (date to be set by the Convener).

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2008/2009 BUDGETARY CONTROL STATEMENT TO 15 DECEMBER 2008 (PERIOD 8)

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development providing an update on the financial performance of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to the period ended 15 December 2008.

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

- (1) that a further report on the lack of progress in establishing the three estate caretaking pilot schemes should be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee; and
- (2) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

Note: Councillor Finn entered the meeting at this point in the proceedings.

HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2008/2009 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 15 DECEMBER 2008 (PERIOD 8)

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development advising of the progress of the HRA Capital Programme 2008/2009.

After discussion and having heard officers in answer to Members' questions on various elements of the Capital Programme, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the there was a need for financial reports to be more transparent and explicit to assist elected members to keep track of changes made to the budgets throughout the year particularly in respect of probable outturn comparators; and
- (2) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2008/2009 TO 15 DECEMBER 2008 (PERIOD 8)

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development providing an update on the financial performance of the Housing, Environmental and Economic Development Department to 15 December 2008 (Period 8).

After discussion and having heard officers in answer to Members' questions on various elements of the Financial Report, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development intended to carry out a review of the commercial uplift service; and
- (2) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

HOUSING, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT - PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development providing information on the performance of services within the Housing, Environmental and Economic Development Department.

The Committee noted that the information contained within the report was out of date (Quarter 2, 2008) and that some information had not been collected. The Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development informed the Committee that the Corporate Management Team shared these concerns and were aware of the limitations of the Covalent System which produced the performance reports. However, it was hoped that the situation could be improved by the production of regular briefing notes for Members which would be issued outwith the formal committee timetable.

The Committee agreed to note the position and the terms of the report.

INVESTING IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING: A CONSULTATION

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development seeking approval to submit the response to the Scottish Government's consultation paper "Investing in Affordable Housing".

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

- (1) to note that individual elected members and political groups could respond separately to the above consultation paper; and
- (2) that the responses to those questions detailed in the Appendix to these Minutes should replace the proposed responses by officers, which were shown in the Appendix to the report, and be sent to the Scottish Government as this Council's response to the consultation.

DISPOSAL OF SMALL AREAS OF LAND TO ADJACENT INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLDERS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development advising of the progress to date on selling small areas of land to adjacent householders.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the current level of requests and work to date in progressing these applications;
- (2) to adopt the policy as outlined in paragraph 3.11 of the report in respect of disposals of small plots of land to adjacent householders;
- (3) to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development in consultation with the Convener of this Committee to declare surplus and approve disposals of current and future small plots of land adjacent to individual householders subject to (2) above;
- (4) to instruct the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development to write to all applicants and inform them of the new policy to be applied to the disposal of current and future small plots of land adjacent to individual householders as detailed within the report; and
- (5) that, in future, the Committee should receive an annual report on disposals of small plots of land to adjacent householders.

The meeting closed at 10.50 a.m.

Question 5:

- a) In principle, we agree with the proposed treatment of island authorities due to their geographical issues. Nevertheless, the issue regarding local authority size and opportunities for combined investment programmes is not limited to island authorities and we believe due consideration should also be given to small mainland authorities where a partnership approach across local authority and other providers is in place, improving public service delivery.
- b) In principle, we agree that the circumstances around the large cities merits this approach. However, it is suggested that where consortia of neighbouring local authorities can come together to show collaborative gain and maximise public spend in a similar way, these arrangements are also considered for responsibility for awarding subsidy.

Question 6:

Yes

Question 7:

- a) Yes, we agree that the scope of the prospectus is in line with requirements and would seek in discussions with the Scottish Government to ensure the rightful place of the LHS within the development frameworks.
- b) This can be achieved by placing a responsibility on each local authority to ensure that these requirements are included within the detail of each prospectus via LHS

Question 8:

As guidance on acceptable rent levels already exists, an extension of this within the new regionally based Prospectuses would be welcome. The discretion highlighted within the statement is welcomed to ensure that the Local Housing Strategy remains the local driver ensuring maximum public benefit.

Question 10:

- a) Given the 3 key features proposed, we welcome this approach due to its flexibility to meet local/regional need, its recognition of the role of all housing providers in the area and the need for better joined up strategic planning in the future. There is however a degree of concern regarding the need to properly engage thematic and larger regional RSLs with the smaller, but tried and tested, local providers.
- b) Yes, as the statements highlight the key role of RSLs within a consortia not only as developers but also as managers – thus allowing RSLs to maintain a degree of autonomy within their wider role. The retention of local 'ownership' is vital to developing a strong social housing base in any local authority area.

Question 11:

The process of appointment of the lead developer appears straightforward, allowing the skills and talents of all providers to be retained for the benefit of communities, regardless of their future developer status.

Question 13c:

The National Standards for Community Engagement, shared across all possible consortia partners would seem an appropriate starting point. Sharing of best practice in community engagement across a range of providers would also be helpful.

Question 14b:

Existing structure such as the Strategic Housing Forum and the Voluntary Sector Housing Forum would afford suitable platforms for this.