

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Social Justice Committee held in the Court Room, Municipal Buildings, Station Road, Dumbarton on Wednesday, 11 May 2005 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Denis Agnew, Jim Bollan, Dennis Brogan, James Flynn, Linda McColl, Martin Rooney and Andy White.

Attending: David McMillan, Director of Housing and Technical Services; Bill Clark, Acting Director of Social Work Services; Stephen Brown, Head of Legal & Administrative Services; John McKerracher, Head of Technical Services; Stephen West, Manager of Resources, Social Work Services; Tom Jackson, Joint Manager, Addiction Services; Margaret Caldwell, Section Head (Arrears, Benefits and Cash Control); Janice Lockhart, Section Team Leader, Tenancy Services; Maureen Hastings, Solicitor and Craig Stewart, Administrative Assistant.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Douglas McAllister, Craig McLaughlin and Marie McNair.

Councillor Martin Rooney in the Chair

WELCOME

5847 Before commencing with the business of the meeting the Convener, Councillor Rooney, congratulated Bill Clark and Tom Jackson on their appointments.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

5848 The Minutes of Meeting of the Social Justice Committee held on 9 March 2005 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

ADDITIONAL REPORT ON CONVERSION OF LOFT SPACE IN TENEMENTAL AND FOUR-IN-A-BLOCK PROPERTIES

5849 With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Social Justice Committee held on 9 March 2005 (Page 1502, paragraph 5353 refers), a report was submitted by the Director of Corporate Services providing information on the feasibility of loft/attic conversions of tenemental or four-in-a-block properties where the Council has or formerly had an ownership interest in the roof space.

- 5850 Having heard the Convener, Councillor Rooney, it was agreed to refer the matter to the next meeting of Council for further consideration.

INTEGRATED ADDICTION SERVICE FOR WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

- 5851 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services:-

- (a) providing an overview of addiction services within West Dunbartonshire and highlighting new resources and benefits achieved through partnership working; and
- (b) seeking approval to utilise new funds to invest in Social Work Addiction Services.

- 5852 After discussion and having heard the Acting Director of Social Work Services in explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Convener, Councillor Rooney, seconded by Councillor McColl, moved:-

- 5853 That the Committee note the contents of the report and approve the use of new resources to appoint a Senior Social Worker and a Homemaker for Addiction Services.

- 5854 As an amendment, Councillor Bollan, seconded by Councillor Brogan, moved:-

- 5855 That no action be taken with regard to appointing a Senior Social Worker and a Homemaker for Addiction Services and, instead, that an out-of-hours outreach service be provided to combat drug/alcohol misuse, together with establishing a local crisis centre.

- 5856 On a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the amendment and 5 Members voted for the motion. The motion was accordingly declared carried.

- 5857 In relation to a point raised by Councillor White, it was noted that the structure of the addiction service would be kept under review and that a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for Members' consideration in due course.

SOCIAL WORK GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

- 5858 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services providing information on the 2005/06 applications for Social Work Grants to voluntary organisations and making recommendations thereon.

- 5859 After discussion and having heard the Manager of Resources, Social Work Services, Councillor Rooney, seconded by Councillor Agnew, moved:-
- 5860 That the Committee agrees to approve the recommendations in relation to the various applications detailed in the Appendix to the report, a copy of which is appended hereto.
- 5861 As an amendment, Councillor Bollan, seconded by Councillor Brogan, moved:-
- 5862 That the Committee should approve the amounts requested and not the officer recommendations in respect of the grant applications.
- 5863 On a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the amendment and 5 Members voted for the motion. The motion was accordingly declared carried.
- 5864 In relation to a point raised by Councillor White concerning the grant application by the Scottish Refugee Council, it was noted that this application would be kept under review.

14-20 GOLFHILL DRIVE, DALMONACH

- 5865 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services seeking approval to dispose of the 4-in-a-block house at 14-20 Golfhill Drive, Dalmonach, to Dunbritton Housing Association Ltd., for the purpose of constructing housing for people with physical disabilities.
- 5866 After discussion and having heard Councillor Flynn, Service Spokesperson for Housing Services, the Committee agreed to dispose of the houses and land at 14-20 Golfhill Drive, Dalmonach to Dunbritton Housing Association subject to the following:-
- (1) The price to be agreed between the Estates Section of the Department of Development and Environmental Services and the District Valuer acting for the purchaser;
 - (2) Estates fees and VAT to be paid by the purchaser;
 - (3) The purchaser shall pay the Council's Legal Fees, expenses, outlays, VAT, together with Stamp Duty and Registration Duty;
 - (4) The Property Enquiry Certificate to be paid by the purchaser; and
 - (5) The disposal to be subject to any necessary consents by Scottish Ministers.

VOIDS AND LETTINGS

- 5867 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing:-
- (a) details of void houses and their status as at 1 April 2005;
 - (b) an analysis of void houses by type and by area as at 1 April 2005;
 - (c) details of the number of void houses by Ward and by area as at 1 April 2005; and
 - (d) an analysis of houses let on a quarterly basis between April 2004 and March 2005 together with comparative figures for 2003/04.
- 5868 After discussion and having heard the Director of Housing and Technical Services in further explanation, Councillor Flynn, seconded by Councillor Agnew, moved:-
- 5869 That the Committee notes the contents of the report.
- 5870 As an amendment, Councillor Bollan, seconded by Councillor Brogan, moved:-
- 5871 That the Director of Housing and Technical Services be requested to prepare a further report for consideration at the meeting of the Social Justice Committee to be held on 12 October 2005 providing proposed solutions and measures to tackle the range of problems associated with void housing in West Dunbartonshire.
- 5872 On a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the amendment and 5 Members voted for the motion. The motion was accordingly declared carried.
- 5873 Having heard Councillor White, it was also agreed that the Director of Housing and Technical Services would be requested to prepare a further report for consideration at the meeting of the Social Justice Committee to be held on 12 October 2005 giving information on the measures being taken to reduce the problem of void housing by the current Administration and comparing the level of investment that has been put in with the two years of the previous Administration.

WAITING LIST FOR WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL HOUSES

- 5874 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing a breakdown of the number of applicants on the waiting list for West Dunbartonshire Council houses and their present circumstances. In this respect, the information indicated the position as at 31 March 2005 and figures for the same period in 2004 were also provided for comparison.
- 5875 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

HOUSE SALES

- 5876 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 2004 and 31 March 2005.
- 5877 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

HOMELESSNESS

- 5878 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing information on the number of persons who applied to West Dunbartonshire Council as being homeless, or threatened with homelessness, between 1 April 2004 and 31 March 2005.
- 5879 After discussion and having heard the Section Team Leader, Tenancy Services in explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

PROGRESS UPDATE ON HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2003-2006

- 5880 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing information on progress on the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy 2003-2006 to April 2005.
- 5881 Having heard Councillor Flynn, Service Spokesperson for Housing Services, the Committee agreed:-
- (1) to note the progress update on the Homelessness Strategy 2003-2006 appended to the report; and
 - (2) to commend the excellent work undertaken by the Council's Homelessness Section which was reflected in the 'B' grade given by Communities Scotland in its Inspection Report for the housing service.

The meeting closed at 11.28 a.m.