

## **HOUSING COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of the Housing Committee held within the Council Chambers, Council Offices, Rosebery Place, Clydebank on Wednesday, 3 May 2000 at 11.05 a.m.

**Present:** Councillors James Flynn (LAB), James McElhill (SNP), John Syme (LAB), Anthony Devine (LAB), Mary Collins (LAB), Linda McColl (LAB - substituting for Andrew White), Geoffrey Calvert (LAB & CO-OP), John Trainer (LAB), James Bolland (SSP), Craig McLaughlin (SNP - substituting for Ronald McColl), Margaret McGregor (SNP) and Connie O'Sullivan (LAB).

**Attending:** Alexis Jay, Director of Social Work and Housing; Cy Neil, Head of Housing; Bill Clark, Head of Strategy; Jeff Stobo, Strategy Manager; Willie Croft, Property Services Manager; Joe Reilly, Principal Officer (Resources); Tim Holmes, Capital Programme Officer; Don Findlay, Manager, Building Services and Audrey Ritchie, Principal Solicitor.

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Andrew White (LAB) and Ronald McColl (SNP).

**Councillor James Flynn in the Chair**

## **VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Having heard the Convener, the Committee agreed to vary the order of business as hereinafter minuted.

## **GAS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

With reference to the minutes of the Housing Committee held on 8 March 2000 (**Volume page 5613 refers**), the Convener informed the Committee that representatives from McLean & Nuttall had been invited to attend the meeting to address concerns expressed by members regarding the operation of the Gas Maintenance Contract.

Mr Derek Clifford (West of Scotland Unit Operations Manager, McLean & Nuttall, in attendance for this item only) gave a detailed explanation of the problems which his company had experienced with the implementation of the Gas Maintenance Contract and outlined the actions taken to resolve the problems which tenants had been experiencing. He gave an assurance that his company would make every effort to fulfil the requirements of the contract and that if there were any further problems, the Council should bring them directly to his attention.

Following discussion and having heard Mr Clifford in answer to members' questions, the Committee agreed that officers should continue to monitor the situation and report any further problems to the Committee.

Councillor Flynn, Convener, thanked Mr Clifford and his colleagues for their attendance and thereafter they left the meeting.

### **RECHARGEABLE REPAIRS TO COUNCIL TENANTS**

With reference to the minutes of meeting of the Housing Committee held on 24 November 1999 (**Volume page 5280 refers**), there was submitted a report by the Director of Social Work and Housing providing details of the operation of the rechargeable repairs policy for the period 1 December 1999 to 29 February 2000.

Following discussion and having heard the Head of Housing and the Principal Solicitor in answer to members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) that a further report on the matter be produced once the policy had been in operation for one full year;
- (2) that, in the meantime, officers should investigate:-
  - (a) the feasibility of safety checks being made by Council staff on appliances which had been installed by former tenants thus preventing removal and a charge being made for any repair; and
  - (b) the legal implications of such appliances being retained;
- (3) to note that the Head of Housing would ensure that all letters issued in respect of rechargeable repairs would contain a paragraph providing advice to tenants who find it difficult to pay; and
- (4) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

### **VOID HOUSES MONITORING GROUP**

With reference to the minutes of meeting of the Housing Committee held on 8 March 2000 (**Volume page 5610 refers**), there was submitted a report by the Director of Social Work and Housing recommending the establishment of a Void Houses Monitoring Group.

Having heard the Convener, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to the re-formation of a new Void Houses Monitoring Group now consisting of four members of the Labour Group and three from other parties (names to be provided at a later date);
- (2) that the Group's remit should be to monitor progress in dealing with voids, consider methods of decreasing the number of empty houses and submit recommendations as necessary to the Housing Committee; and
- (3) that the Group should meet on an eight weekly cycle and that the first meeting would be held on Wednesday, 14th June 2000.

### **PARTICIPATION AUDIT**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Social Work and Housing advising of a participation audit which will be undertaken by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) during this financial year.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

### **ROUGH SLEEPERS INITIATIVE (RSI)**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Social Work and Housing advising of the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) Grant awarded to the Council by the Scottish Executive for the period 2000/2002.

Following discussion the Committee agreed:-

- (1) that minutes of meetings of the Homeless Forum would be circulated to all members of the Council; and
- (2) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

### **EMPTY HOMES INITIATIVE**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Social Work and Housing providing an update on the expenditure of the Empty Homes Initiative Grant awarded to the Council by the Scottish Executive for the period 1999/2002.

Having heard the Strategy Manager in answer to members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) that members be provided with a breakdown of the properties which would be brought back into use with the grant monies; and
- (2) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

### **INVESTIGATION OF STOCK TRANSFERS IN RENTON**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Social Work and Housing seeking approval to investigate further stock transfers in Renton to a housing association, and in particular, to agree the appointment of consultants to provide independent advice to the tenants affected.

Councillor Flynn, seconded by Councillor Trainer, moved that the recommendations of the report be approved as follows:-

- (1) that funding from the Housing Revenue Account 2000/2001 be approved for the appointment of a consultant to provide independent advice at an approximate cost of £2,500 to the Council;
- (2) that the appointment of a consultant be remitted to the Back Street Tenants Group in consultation with the Director of Social Work and Housing and Scottish Homes as co-funders;
- (3) that, in accordance with normal practice, allocations to the properties identified in the Appendix to these minutes be suspended. This decision to be revised depending on the outcome of the transfer consideration; and
- (4) to dispose of 3/5 Stirling Street, Renton to the Cordale Housing Association:-
  - (a) at a price to be agreed between the District Valuer and the Council's Estates Section;
  - (b) on terms and conditions considered appropriate by the parties;
  - (c) disposals to be subject to the existing tenant being satisfactorily rehoused and any home loss/disturbance payments being met by the purchaser; and
  - (d) subject to the consent of Scottish Ministers.

Councillor Bollan recorded his dissent.

By way of an amendment, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor McElhill, moved as follows:-

That a meeting be arranged with the Convener of the Housing Committee, members of the Labour and SNP Groups, Councillor Bollan, local tenants and relevant officers to clarify the situation concerning the 50 properties which Councillor Bollan referred to in his amendment.

On a vote being taken, 4 members voted for the amendment and 8 for the motion which was accordingly carried.

## **REVIEW OF MEASURED TERM CONTRACT - HOUSING REPAIRS**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Social Work and Housing:-

- (a) describing progress made with the implementation of the Council's Measured Term Contract (MTC);
- (b) providing information on a range of improvements being introduced in the short, medium and long term;
- (c) providing an assessment of current and projected housing repairs expenditure; and
- (d) providing information on current "active" work in progress and performance details.

The Convener informed the Committee that the first meeting of the Working Group on Housing Repairs would be held on Wednesday 7 June 2000 at 10.00 a.m.

Thereafter, Councillor Flynn, seconded by Councillor Trainer, moved that the recommendations of the report be approved as follows:-

The Committee agrees to note the content of the report and the action being taken to develop and improve the application of the Measured Term Contract.

The Director of Social Work and Housing and the Property Services Manager were heard in answer to members' questions.

By way of an amendment, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor McGregor, moved as follows:-

That the Committee notes the terms of the report with concern. In particular, the Committee notes with concern the high level of void housing in West Dunbartonshire and the Administration's inability to address the problems.

On a vote being taken, 4 members voted for the amendment and 8 for the motion which was accordingly carried.

### **FIRST SOFTWARE HOUSING BENEFIT & COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT SYSTEM**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Social Work and Housing:-

- (a) describing progress made on the implementation of the Council's combined benefit system; and
- (b) identifying information on a range of outstanding issues relating to the First Software Benefits System.

The Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that action had been taken to resolve the current problems with the Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit System; and
- (2) that a further report be provided to a future meeting of the Housing Committee outlining progress on these matters.

### **NOMINATIONS TO HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Social Work and Housing seeking approval to agree variations to nomination agreements with certain housing associations, which may entail the suspension of nominations to some associations for particular house types.

Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor McElhill, moved as follows:-

That the decision to vary nomination agreements be continued pending a further report which clarifies the implications of a diminution in nomination rights for new build tenancies.

By way of an amendment, Councillor Flynn, seconded by Councillor Trainer, moved that the recommendations of the report be approved as follows:-

The Committee agreed that delegated authority be given to the Director of Social Work and Housing to consult with Housing Associations and implement any appropriate suspensions to nomination agreements.

On a vote being taken, 8 members voted for the amendment and 4 for the motion. The amendment was accordingly carried.

### **BUDGETARY POSITION 1999/2000**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Social Work and Housing informing of how key elements within the HRA and non-HRA are performing against the revenue budgets for the period ending 29 February 2000.

Having heard the Principal Officer (Resources) in answer to members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the terms of the report.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Councillor Trainer, seconded by Councillor McColl, moved that the meeting be adjourned to a date, time and venue as determined by the Convener.

On a vote being taken, 8 members voted for the adjournment and 4 for the meeting to continue. The motion to adjourn was accordingly carried.

The meeting adjourned at 1.15 p.m.

**Renton****Back Street Group**

	Units
Back Street	
2	8
4	8
14	11
7	6
9	6
11	6
15	6
23	11
Grant Crescent	
7	11
Hillfoot	
58	6
	79