

HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee held in Committee Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton on Wednesday, 5 February 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Jim Bollan, Gail Casey, David McBride, Michelle McGinty, Marie McNair, John Mooney, Tommy Rainey, Gail Robertson, Martin Rooney and Kath Ryall.

Attending: Richard Cairns, Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration; Ronnie Dinnie, Head of Neighbourhood Services; Jim McAloon, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development; Kenny Simpson, Interim Head of Housing and Community Safety; John Kerr, Housing Strategy Manager; Joe Reilly, Business Unit Finance Partner (HEED); Alan Young, Housing Capital Investment and Services to Owners Co-ordinator; Sally Michael, Principal Solicitor; and Nuala Quinn-Ross, Committee Officer, Legal, Democratic and Regulatory Services.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors William Hendrie and Lawrence O'Neill.

Councillor David McBride in the Chair

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda at this point in the meeting.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(a) Ordinary Meeting held on 6 November 2013

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee held on 6 November 2013 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

(b) Special Meeting held on 11 December 2013

The Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee held on 11 December 2013 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES LEGACY PLAN

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration seeking approval of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Plan, as detailed within Appendix 1 of the report.

After discussion and having heard the Head of Neighbourhood Services in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to approve the Commonwealth Games Legacy Plan, as detailed within Appendix 1 to the report.

REVIEW OF COMMERCIAL WASTE CHARGES

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration:-

- (1) advising of the outcome of a review of the commercial waste charges that the Council applies to its commercial waste customers; and
- (2) seeking approval for the introduction of charges for the collection and processing of dry recycle waste and food waste from commercial waste customers.

After discussion and having heard the Head of Neighbourhood Services in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed the introduction of charges from 1 April 2014 for the collection and processing of dry recyclable waste and food waste from commercial waste customers, as detailed within appendix 2 to the report.

CEMETERIES UPGRADE PLAN

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration seeking approval to proceed with the development of a new Dumbarton Cemetery and upgrade of Vale of Leven, Kilmaronock and North Dalnottar cemeteries.

After discussion and having heard the Head of Neighbourhood Services in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed that authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration to proceed with the procurement and appointment of a main contractor to deliver the development of a new Dumbarton Cemetery and to delivery cemetery improvements at Vale of Leven, Kilmaronock and North Dalnottar Cemeteries, utilising the capital budget current provided within the 10 year capital plan.

SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR INQUIRY REPORT UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration providing an update of the progress made in terms of implementing improvements which were identified both prior to, and as a result of, the Scottish Housing Regulator Inquiry Report which was published on 2 July 2013.

After discussion and having heard the Interim Head of Housing and Community Safety and Housing Strategy Manager in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the positive progress that has been made in response to the recommendations of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Inquiry Report published in July 2013;
- (2) to note that progress against meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) is ahead of target with the 2013/14 of 75% being achieved and reported at the end of Quarter 3;
- (3) to note that the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration will ensure that those areas for improvement action are progressed to inform the next Assurance and Improvement Plan for West Dunbartonshire Council; and
- (4) to note that a further progress report will be submitted to the August 2014 meeting of the Committee which will provide a full annual update detailing progress.

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2011 – 2016: ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2014

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration:-

- (1) providing an update on the progress made with the West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy 2011 -2016; and
- (2) highlighting new legislative and policy developments which may impact upon the delivery of the strategy.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration, the Interim Head of Housing and Community Safety and the Housing Strategy Manager in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) that a briefing note be issued to Members providing details of the information being gathered on fuel poverty and ways to target advice and assistance;
- (2) to acknowledge the progress made in meeting the aims and objectives of the West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy;

- (3) to note the contents of the West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy Annual Progress Report 2013; and
- (4) to note that a further annual progress report will be submitted to Committee in February 2015.

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL OWNER ENGAGEMENT CHARTER

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration seeking approval to establish an Owner Engagement Charter in West Dunbartonshire.

After discussion and having heard the Housing Capital Investment and Services to Owners Co-ordinator in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to the introduction of an Owner Engagement Charter, as detailed within Appendix 1 to the report, subject to an amendment to bullet point 10, which will read:-

"a guarantee that the final cost of work will be no more than 10% higher than the estimated cost in 2013/14, with a further reduction in this variance to 5% from April 2014."; and
- (2) to the amendments to the Housing Property Payment Plan, as detailed within the report.

INTERIM HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY REVIEW

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration:-

- (1) providing an update on the Allocation Policy Review in relation to forthcoming new legislation contained in the Housing (Scotland) Bill 2014; and
- (2) seeking approval for interim changes to West Dunbartonshire's Housing Allocation Policy pending a full review.

After discussion and having heard the Interim Head of Housing and Community Safety and the Housing Strategy Manager in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) that the Allocation Policy Review take place within the timetable, as detailed within the report;
- (2) that the interim changes to the Allocations Policy outlined in section 4.5 of the report be implemented; and

- (3) that authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration to progress actions associated with the review of the allocation policy with a view to reporting back to Committee in February 2015;
- (4) that regular briefings on the progress of actions associated with the review of the application policy be provided to Members;
- (5) that a briefing note be issued to Members providing further details on the consultation which will be undertaken from September 2014;
- (6) that a briefing session, providing Members with further information on the Allocations Policy, be arranged; and
- (7) otherwise, to note the contents of this report

Councillor Bollan, having failed to obtain a seconder for a proposed amendment, asked that his dissent be recorded in respect of this item.

COUNCIL HOUSE NEW BUILD PROGRESS REPORT

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration:

- (1) providing an update of the progress of the Council's new build house programme; and
- (2) seeking approval to proceed with the Hill Street development.

After discussion and having heard the Housing Strategy Manager in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the progress made to date with the Council's current new build programme;
- (2) that authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration to award the Hill Street contract to the successful contractor provided the contract amount falls within the approved capital expenditure for the project; and
- (3) otherwise, to note the content of the report.

HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME - PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration providing details of the department's progress in delivering the Housing Capital Programme for 2013/14. The Convenor passed on congratulations to all those involved in the delivery of the Programme.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANT FUNDING 2014/15

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration seeking approval for the distribution of the Private Sector Housing Grant for 2014/15 as detailed in the table to paragraph 4.4 of the Report.

After discussion, the Committee agreed the following:-

The Committee notes the report at 7 August 2013 meeting of Housing, Environment and Economic Development on "Urgent and Unforeseeable Work Required – Flat Roofed Properties in the Silverton Area of Dumbarton". At this meeting the Committee noted the potential structural issues identified in up to 90 properties in Dumbarton and also detailed what financial support it could offer owners occupiers whose properties were affected.

The Council's Scheme of Assistance rules mean that any applicant with a household income in excess of £30,000 per annum is ineligible for grant assistance. Given the exceptional circumstances, the Committee agreed at the meeting on 7 August 2013 that this be waived and the Council could offer up to 50% of the total cost of the work (up to a maximum of £20,000).

Since the Committee decision, there has been limited progress on rectifying the known defects in Council and Owner Occupier properties. This has been for a number of reasons including delays to the tender process for the first phase of the work and further delays in receiving structural reports from external providers. Committee recognises that it has been difficult for owners to apply for funds from financial institutions as there is no clear indication of what the total cost of the repairs may be. Additionally, the worry of applying for loans for the entire cost (where known) may affect an individual's credit rating. This could be counterproductive and actually prevent them obtaining funding as part of their contribution if they were to receive assistance from the Council's Scheme of Assistance as agreed in August 2013.

Furthermore, the delays in the structural surveys make the Scheme's requirement for applicants to submit three written quotations very difficult.

Therefore, given the exceptional circumstances already noted in August 2013, Committee agreed, for this specific set of circumstances, to amend the Scheme of Assistance for:-

- (1) *The requirement to produce two loan refusals from financial institutions for the full amount of the work.* Committee instructs the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration to devise an in-house financial assessment to satisfy the Councils requirement to ensure the integrity of the scheme is not compromised, but will limit the scope for damage the individual's ability to

raise the necessary loans

- (2) *The requirement to produce three written quotations for the required work.* Given the Council's involvement with our own housing stock and the fact we intend to appoint a tender for phase 1 of the work, the Committee is fully aware of the scale of the work required and would not want to place unnecessary obstacles to the process. Committee further instructs the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration to devise an internal process to assess whether or not one quote from a contractor to the affected owner occupier is sufficient to access the Scheme of Assistance.
- (3) otherwise, to agree the contents of the report including the proposed distribution of the Private Sector Housing Grant as detailed in the table to paragraph 4.4 of the report and to note the contents of the report.

Councillor Bollan, having failed to obtain a seconder for a proposed amendment, asked that his dissent be recorded in respect of this item.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGETARY POSITION 2013/14 AS AT PERIOD 9 (31 DECEMBER 2013)

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration advising of the financial performance of the Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets for the period to 31 December 2013.

After discussion and having heard the Business Unit Finance Partner (HEED) and the Housing Capital Investment and Services to Owners Co-ordinator in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2013/14 AS AT PERIOD 9 (31 DECEMBER 2013)

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration providing and update on the financial performance of the Housing, Environmental and Economic Development Department to 31 December 2013 (Period 9).

After discussion and having heard the Business Unit Finance Partner (HEED) in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 11.28 a.m.