

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Social Justice Committee held in the Council Chambers, Municipal Buildings, Station Road, Dumbarton on Wednesday, 12 October 2005 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Denis Agnew, *Dennis Brogan, James Flynn, Linda McColl, Craig McLaughlin, Marie McNair and Martin Rooney.

Attending: David McMillan, Director of Housing and Technical Services; Bill Clark, Acting Director of Social Work Services; John McKerracher, Head of Technical Services; Margaret Caldwell, Manager of Housing Operations; Jeff Stobo, Strategy Manager; Valerie Smith, Section Head (Strategy); James Pow, Manager of Finance; Janice Lockhart, Section Team Leader, Tenancy Services; Stephen West, Manager of Resources, Social Work Services; Mike Foley, Strategy Officer - Mental Health, Moira Swanson, Research and Information Manager; Colin Meehan, Manager, Learning Disability Services; Miriam McKenna, Policy and Development Officer - Diversity and David Rooney, Senior Administrative Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Jim Bolla, Douglas McAllister and Andy White.

* Attended later in the meeting.

Councillor Denis Agnew in the Chair

CONVENER'S REMARKS

7190 Before commencing with the business of the meeting, the Convener, Councillor Agnew, thanked Councillor Rooney for his contribution to the work of the Committee as former Convener.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

7191 The Minutes of Meeting of the Social Justice Committee held on 10 August 2005 were submitted and approved as a correct record, subject as undernoted:-

- 7192 In relation to a point raised by Councillor McLaughlin concerning the item entitled “Housing & Technical Services – Performance Report” (Page 1799, paragraph 6588 refers), it was agreed that the minute be amended to read “(2) that the Director of Housing and Technical Services be requested to prepare a further report which details how performance can be improved in Housing Benefit Recoverable Overpayments; Managing Tenancy Changes – Annual Rent Loss; Managing Tenancy Changes – Re-let Times; Rent Arrears and Homelessness.”

DRAFT EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY

- 7193 A report was submitted by the Chief Executive presenting the draft Equality and Diversity Strategy for consideration by the Committee.
- 7194 Having heard Councillor McNair, Service Spokesperson for Equal Opportunities, the Committee agreed to approve the Equality and Diversity Strategy on the basis outlined in the report.

RACE EQUALITY PUBLIC SECTOR DUTY

- 7195 A report was submitted by the Chief Executive presenting the reviewed list of the Council’s functions and policies and seeking approval to publish this list as assessed by the Race Equality Working Group and in line with the Council’s statutory duty.
- 7196 Having heard Councillor McNair, Service Spokesperson for Equal Opportunities, the Committee agreed to publish the list of functions and policies on the basis outlined in the report.

COMMUNITY LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT SECTION BI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

- 7197 A report was submitted by the Director of Education and Cultural Services presenting the second Community Learning and Development (CL&D) Section bi-annual Progress Report produced in the current calendar year and highlighting progress across all CL&D Section sub teams both operationally and strategically.
- 7198 Having heard the Convener, Councillor Agnew, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report and appendix.
- 7199 In relation to a question which was raised by Councillor McLaughlin concerning the Council’s contribution towards the construction of a BMX track in Drumry, Clydebank, the Convener, Councillor Agnew, indicated that he would arrange for the relevant information to be provided to Councillor McLaughlin.

REPRESENTATION OF COSLA – THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL

- 7200 A letter dated 31 August 2005 was submitted from COSLA inviting the Committee to nominate a representative to serve as a Trustee on the Scottish National War Memorial.
- 7201 The Committee agreed that the Convener, Councillor Agnew, be nominated to serve as a Trustee on the Scottish National War Memorial.

HOUSING AND TECHNICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT – PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 7202 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing information on the Statutory Performance Indicators for the Department of Housing and Technical Services.
- 7203 After discussion and having heard the Director of Housing and Technical Services and the Manager of Housing Operations in explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.
- 7204 It was also noted that the Director of Housing and Technical Services would arrange to provide Councillor McLaughlin with further information with respect to the performance indicator on Response Times, referred to in paragraph 3.7 of the report, when available.

HOMELESSNESS AND THE ABOLITION OF PRIORITY NEED BY 2012

- 7205 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising of the Scottish Executive's proposals on homelessness and the abolition of priority need by 2012.
- 7206 After discussion and having heard the relevant officers in explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-
- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
 - (2) that the concerns of the Committee in relation to the major implications for local authorities arising from the full implementation of the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 be expressed to the Scottish Executive in the Council's response to the current consultation exercise.

NOTE: Councillor Brogan entered the meeting during consideration of the above item.

HOMELESSNESS

- 7207 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing information:-
- (a) on the number of households who applied to the Council as being homeless, or threatened with homelessness, between 1 April 2005 and 31 August 2005;
 - (b) on numbers permanently re-housed;
 - (c) on use of temporary accommodation; and
 - (d) on requests for assistance from the Council's Out of Hours Service.
- 7208 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

RENT HARMONISATION

- 7209 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising of the progress made in the introduction of the third stage of the rent harmonisation programme and making recommendations thereon.
- 7210 After discussion, Councillor Flynn, seconded by Councillor Rooney, moved:-
- 7211 That the Committee agrees:-
- (1) to note the implementation of the third stage of the rent harmonisation programme;
 - (2) that the fourth stage of the rent harmonisation programme be introduced in September 2006;
 - (3) that the increase be limited to £1.00 per week; and
 - (4) that the Director of Housing and Technical Services be instructed to prepare regular progress reports on this matter for consideration at future meetings of the Committee.
- 7212 As an amendment, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Brogan, moved:-
- 7213 That the Committee notes the report and that the rent harmonisation programme amounts to a hidden rent increase by the Administration.

- 7214 On a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the amendment and 5 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

RENT ARREARS

- 7215 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing up to date information on the current rent arrears position to the end of July 2005.
- 7216 The Committee agreed to note the progress made in rent arrears performance.

VOIDS AND LETTINGS

- 7217 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing:-
- (a) details of void house and their status (i.e. with repairs, allocations, etc.) as at 26 August 2005;
 - (b) an analysis of all void houses by type and by area (i.e. Clydebank, Dumbarton and Vale of Leven) as at 26 August 2005;
 - (c) details of the number of void houses by Ward in the Clydebank area as at 26 August 2005;
 - (d) details of the number of void houses by Ward in the Dumbarton area as at 26 August 2005;
 - (e) details of the number of void houses by Ward in the Alexandria area as at 26 August 2005; and
 - (f) an analysis of houses let on a quarterly basis between July 2004 and June 2005 together with comparative figures for 2004/2005.
- 7218 After discussion and having heard the Manager of Housing Operations in explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

VOID MANAGEMENT

- 7219 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services informing of the actions being taken to improve void performance and providing details of expenditure on void properties over the last 4 years.

7220 After discussion and having heard the Director of Housing and Technical Services, the Committee agreed to note the report and the actions being taken to improve the Council's void performance together with the increased investment in voids as detailed in the report.

7221 In relation to a point which was raised by Councillor McLaughlin concerning the validity of the decision taken with respect to this matter at the meeting of the Committee on 11 May 2005, it was noted that the Clerk to the Committee would arrange to provide clarification for Councillor McLaughlin.

WAITING LIST FOR WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL HOUSES

7222 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 August 2005 and figures for the same period in 2004 were also provided for comparison.

7223 After discussion, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

HOUSE SALES

7224 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 and 31 August 2005.

7225 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

THE FUTURE OF THE WINDOW FACTORY

7226 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services seeking approval to develop and implement a plan to cease production and close West Dunbartonshire Council's window factory in financial year 2006/2007.

7227 After discussion and having heard the Head of Technical Services in explanation and in answer to Members' questions, Councillor Flynn, seconded by Councillor Rooney, moved:-

7228 That the Committee agrees to approve the development and implementation of a plan to cease production and close the window factory in financial year 2006/2007 and which would cover:-

- (1) the re-utilisation or disposal of plant and property assets;

- (2) the sourcing and securing by way of competitive arrangements of an external supplier for the supply of any PVC-u components required beyond the closure period; and
- (3) suitable retraining/redeployment options for operatives, in consultation with the trades unions.

7229 As an amendment, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Brogan, moved:-

7230 That consideration of the matter be continued to allow the views of the trades unions to be sought on possible alternative uses for the factory and that a further report on this issue be prepared for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

7231 On a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the amendment and 5 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

7232 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising of the outcome of the Best Value Review of Housing Repairs and Maintenance and making recommendations thereon.

7233 After discussion and having heard the Director of Housing and Technical Services in elaboration, Councillor Flynn, seconded by Councillor Rooney, moved:-

7234 That the Committee agrees:-

- (1) to note the outcome of the Best Value Review of Housing Repairs and Maintenance;
- (2) that authority be delegated to the Director of Housing and Technical Services to prepare contract documents and tender the works in accordance with European Procurement Legislation and the Council's Standing Orders;
- (3) that the Director of Housing and Technical Services be instructed to consult and inform the recognised trades unions fully throughout the tendering process; and
- (4) that the Director of Housing & Technical Services be instructed to present a further report to a future meeting of the Committee recommending the most economic advantageous tender for the Council.

7235 As an amendment, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Brogan, moved:-

7236 That the matter be referred to the next meeting of the Council for consideration as it was appropriate that all Members should be afforded an input in relation to this issue.

7237 On a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the amendment and 5 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

**HOUSING MAINTENANCE TRADING OPERATION 2005/2006 –
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO 15 SEPTEMBER 2005 (PERIOD 5)**

7238 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services presenting the interim cumulative financial information for the period ending 15 September 2005.

7239 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2005/2006 – BUDGETARY CONTROL
STATEMENT TO 15 SEPTEMBER 2005 (PERIOD 5)**

7240 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing an update on the financial performance of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the period ended 15 September 2005.

7241 The Committee agreed to note the report.

**HOUSING NON HRA REVENUE ACCOUNT – BUDGETARY CONTROL
STATEMENT TO 15 SEPTEMBER 2005 (PERIOD 5)**

7242 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising on the financial performance of the Housing – Non HRA Revenue Account for the period ended 15 September 2005.

7243 The Committee agreed to note the report.

**HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2005/2006 – BUDGETARY CONTROL
REPORT TO 15 SEPTEMBER 2005 (PERIOD 5)**

7244 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising on the progress of the HRA Capital Programme 2005/2006.

7245 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

DEMOLITION OF LOCK-UPS AT GRANVILLE STREET, CLYDEBANK

- 7246 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services seeking approval to demolish 16 lock-ups in Granville Street, Clydebank as detailed in the Appendix to the report.
- 7247 After discussion and having heard the Director of Housing and Technical Services in explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-
- (1) to approve the demolition of the lock-ups shown in the Appendix to the report;
 - (2) to approve the suspension of allocations to the properties shown in the Appendix to the report;
 - (3) to approve the demolition costs being included in the 2005/2006 HRA Capital Programme; and
 - (4) that authority be delegated to the Director of Development and Environmental Services and the Head of Legal and Administrative Services to sell the land on the open market as part of the Granville Street site.

SOCIAL WORK BUDGETARY POSITION 2005/06 AS AT PERIOD 5 TO 15 SEPTEMBER 2005

- 7248 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services advising of the performance of the Social Work budget for the period to 15 September 2005.
- 7249 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MENTAL HEALTH (CARE AND TREATMENT) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2003

- 7250 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services informing of the progress made towards implementing the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003.
- 7251 After discussion and having heard the Acting Director of Social Work Services and the Strategy Officer - Mental Health in explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-
- (1) to note the progress made towards ensuring that the Council was in a position to meet its statutory duties and responsibilities;

- (2) to note the difficulty in terms of recruiting and retaining approved mental health officers and the consolidation of mental health services designed to minimise the risk of not delivering the requirements of the Act; and
- (3) that the Acting Director of Social Work Services be requested to bring forward progress reports on how the new Act was being implemented.

DECLARATION OF NON-FINANCIAL INTEREST

- 7252 Councillor Rooney declared a non-financial interest in respect of the application from One Plus – One Parent Families referred to in the report on the following item of business and took no part in the Committee's deliberation or decision thereon.

SOCIAL WORK GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

- 7253 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services advising of grant applications received by Social Work Services from voluntary organisations seeking funding and making recommendations on the level of funding to be provided.
- 7254 The Convener, Councillor Agnew, seconded by Councillor Flynn, moved:-
- 7255 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.
- 7256 As an amendment, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Brogan, moved:-
- 7257 That the Committee agrees the recommended payments without the 1.5% reduction in the grants budgets previously agreed by the Administration.
- 7258 On a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the amendment and 4 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

REPORT ON STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2004/05 & QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT APRIL TO JUNE 2005 FOR COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES

- 7259 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services providing information on Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for 2004/2005 and, where appropriate, detailing progress made against the SPIs and Corporate Priorities and Objectives for the period 1 April to 30 June 2005.

7260 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC REPORTING FRAMEWORK POLICY

7261 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services on the development of a new policy being implemented within Social Work Services which provides details on how the department's performance would be monitored and reported internally and reported externally.

7262 Having heard Councillor Rooney, Service Spokesperson for Social Work Services, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL IMPLEMENTATION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS PROCEDURES

7263 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services advising on the implementation of West Dunbartonshire Council Vulnerable Adults Procedures.

7264 The Committee agreed to approve the Vulnerable Adults Procedures on the basis outlined in the report.

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE PLAN 2005-2009

7265 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services informing on the progress in publicising the Social Work Services Departmental Service Plan for the period 2005-2009.

7266 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL'S INDEPENDENT LIVING FUND (ILF) – DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

7267 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services containing information on the progress of the implementation of West Dunbartonshire Council's Independent Living Fund Development Project and the financial implications.

7268 Having heard Councillor Rooney, Service Spokesperson for Social Work Services, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the success of West Dunbartonshire Council's implementation of the ILF development project; and

- (2) to note the ongoing increasing assessed need for these services and that Social Work Services would review the budgetary impact of this need in preparing the revenue estimates for financial year 2006/2007.

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- 7269 A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Social Work Services informing of progress towards accreditation of all Social Work Services with recognised quality management systems.
- 7270 Having heard Councillor Rooney, Service Spokesperson for Social Work Services, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 11.42 a.m.