

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Social Justice Committee held in the Council Chambers, Clydebank Town Hall, Dumbarton Road, Clydebank on Wednesday, 9 March 2005 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Denis Agnew, James Flynn, Linda McColl, Marie McNair and Martin Rooney.

Attending: Alexis Jay, Director of Social Work Services; David McMillan, Director of Housing and Technical Services; Stephen Brown, Head of Legal & Administrative Services; Bill Clark, Head of Strategy; John McKerracher, Head of Technical Services; Jim Pow, Finance Manager, Housing & Technical Services; Stephen West, Manager of Resources, Social Work Services; Margaret Caldwell, Section Head (Arrears, Benefits and Cash Control); Moira Swanson, Research and Information Manager; John Hepburn, Welfare Rights Officer and Craig Stewart, Administrative Assistant.

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

Councillor Rooney in the Chair

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

5350 The Minutes of Meeting of the Social Justice Committee held on 12 January 2005 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE CONSULTATION ON INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

5351 With reference to the Item under the heading "Notices of Motion – (D) Motion by Councillor Craig McLaughlin" in relation to the above subject and the subsequent amendment, considered at the meeting of Council on 23 February 2005, when it was agreed that "Council wishes to note that Council Officers will present a report with recommendations at the next Social Justice Committee meeting for consideration", the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that the Finance Committee of the Scottish Executive had since granted an extension to the original consultation date of 16 March 2005 for responses on the consultation; and

- (2) to note that a report on this matter would now be submitted to the meeting of the Corporate Services Committee on 30 March 2005 for consideration.

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

5352 A report was submitted by the Director of Corporate Services seeking further instructions on the Council's policy regarding loft/attic conversions in tenemental or four-in-a-block properties where the Council has or formerly had an ownership interest in the roof space.

5353 After discussion and having heard the Head of Legal and Administrative Services in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
- (2) that a further report be prepared on this matter giving (a) information on the number of residents affected by the policy; and (b) providing guidance on how any practical difficulties could be overcome and resolved.

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES – QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

5354 A report was submitted by the Director of Social Work Services providing information on performance based on the Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for Social Work Services.

5355 Having heard the Convener, Councillor Rooney, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
- (2) that the staff of Social Work Services be congratulated for the high quality of service provided.

SOCIAL WORK BUDGETARY POSITION 2004/05 AS AT PERIOD 9 TO 15 JANUARY 2005

5356 A report was submitted by the Director of Social Work Services advising of the performance of the Social Work budget for the period to 15 January 2005.

5357 Having heard the Convener, Councillor Rooney, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report; and

- (2) to commend Social Work Services staff for their hard work and assistance in bringing about a significant improvement to the budgetary position of the Department.

SOCIAL WORK GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

- 5358 A report was submitted by the Director of Social Work Services making recommendations on the level of grants payable to voluntary organisations.
- 5359 The Committee agreed to approve the recommendations in relation to the various applications detailed in the Appendix to the report. Details of the applications and the grants awarded are appended hereto.

THE MACMILLAN CANCER BENEFITS PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

- 5360 A report was submitted by the Director of Social Work Services providing information on a new partnership, developed between Macmillan Cancer Relief and the Council, the aims of which are to develop and deliver a dedicated benefits service to meet the needs of the local population affected by cancer in West Dunbartonshire.
- 5361 After discussion and having heard the Convener, Councillor Rooney, it was agreed:-
- (1) that this proposal be supported and endorsed;
 - (2) to note that progress reports would be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis; and
 - (3) to congratulate the staff from the Welfare Rights service and Macmillan Cancer Relief for all their hard work and dedication to the partnership.

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

- 5362 A report was submitted by the Director of Social Work Services:-
- (a) outlining proposals to maximise the take-up of the Independent Living Fund for people living in West Dunbartonshire; and
 - (b) requesting approval for the use of 2 posts funded through the Change Fund for Learning Disabilities to run an ILF Pilot Project.
- 5363 The Committee agreed:-
- (1) to approve the ILF Test Project on the basis outlined in the report; and

- (2) to approve the staffing requirements, as detailed in the report.

HOUSING & TECHNICAL SERVICES – PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 5364 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing information on the performance of the Housing and Technical Services Department and, in particular, giving:-
- (a) information on Statutory Performance Indicators for 2003/2004 and, where possible, comparisons with other local authorities;
 - (b) an update on the Department's Best Value Review Programme; and
 - (c) an update on departmental actions to meet Corporate objectives.
- 5365 After discussion, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2004/2005 – BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 15 JANUARY 2005 (PERIOD 9)

- 5366 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising of the progress of the HRA Capital Programme to 15 January 2005.
- 5367 The Committee agreed to note the report.

HOUSING – NON HRA REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGETARY CONTROL STATEMENT 2004/2005 TO 15 JANUARY 2005 (PERIOD 9)

- 5368 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services informing on how key elements within the Housing – Non HRA Revenue Account were performing against projected outturn for the period ended 15 January 2005 (Period 9).
- 5369 The Committee agreed to note the report.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2004/2005 BUDGETARY CONTROL STATEMENT TO 15 JANUARY 2005 (PERIOD 9)

- 5370 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing an update on the financial performance of the Housing Revenue Account for the period ended 15 January 2005 (Period 9).
- 5371 The Committee agreed to note the report.

HOUSING MAINTENANCE DLO BUSINESS PLAN 2004 – 2007

5372 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services seeking approval for the Housing Maintenance Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) Business Plan for the years 2004 – 2007.

5373 It was agreed:-

- (1) to approve the Housing Maintenance DLO Business Plan for 2004 – 2007 as prepared at March 2004; and
- (2) that the Director of Housing and Technical Services be requested to prepare a further progress report on this matter for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee.

HOUSING MAINTENANCE TRADING OPERATION 2004/2005 – FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO 15 JANUARY 2005 (PERIOD 9)

5374 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services presenting interim cumulative financial information for the period ending 15 January 2005 (Period 9).

5375 Having heard the Director of Housing and Technical Services, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

VOIDS AND LETTINGS

5376 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing:-

- (a) details of void houses and their status as at 28 January 2005;
- (b) an analysis of void houses by type and by area as at 28 January 2005;
- (c) details of the number of void houses by Ward and by area as at 28 January 2005; and
- (d) an analysis of houses let on a quarterly basis between January and December 2004 together with comparative figures for 2003.

5377 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

HOUSING & COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT PERFORMANCE

- 5378 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing an update on the Housing and Council Tax Benefit performance to the end of December 2004.
- 5379 The Committee agreed to note the continued improvement in Housing and Council Tax Benefit Performance.

WAITING LIST FOR WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL HOUSES

- 5380 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 December 2004 and figures for the same period in 2003 were also provided for comparison.
- 5381 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

HOUSE SALES

- 5382 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 December 2004.
- 5383 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

HOMELESSNESS STATISTICS

- 5384 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing statistical information on homelessness applications in West Dunbartonshire in the third quarter of financial year 2004/2005 (October to December 2004) and giving a comparison with the same quarter in the previous two years.
- 5385 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 10.18 a.m.