

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

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

Present: Councillors Denis Agnew, Jim Bollan, James Flynn, Douglas McAllister, Marie McNair, Martin Rooney and Andy White.

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; Cy Neil, Head of Housing Services; John McKerracher, Head of Technical Services; Jim Pow, Finance Manager, Housing & Technical Services; Stephen West, Manager of Resources, Social Work Services; Miriam McKenna, Policy and Development Officer (Diversity) and Craig Stewart, Administrative Assistant.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Dennis Brogan, Margaret McGregor and Linda McColl.

Councillor Rooney in the Chair

WELCOME

4710 Before commencing with the business of the meeting, the Convener, Councillor Rooney, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Committee of 2005.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4711 The Minutes of Meeting of the Social Justice Committee held on 10 November 2004 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

REVIEW OF ROSSHEAD LETTING INITIATIVE

4712 With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Committee held on 10 November 2004 (Page 1220, paragraph 4133 refers), a report was submitted by the Director of Corporate Services providing advice on the Council's legal position in relation to comments made by Communities Scotland following their review of the Special Letting Initiative in the Rosshead Estate, Alexandria.

- 4713 Having heard the Convener, Councillor Rooney, it was noted that the local Member, Councillor McLaughlin, had made a further request to address the Committee on this matter.
- 4714 The Committee agreed that Councillor McLaughlin should not address the Committee and that the matter be determined without a further contribution from him.
- 4715 Councillor Bollan, having failed to obtain a seconder for a proposed motion, asked that his dissent be recorded.
- 4716 After discussion and having heard Councillor Flynn, Service Spokesperson for Housing Services, and the Head of Legal & Administrative Services in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-
- (1) to note that the Rosshead Letting Initiative could not operate as it had formerly done so; and
 - (2) to accept the conclusion of the Director of Housing and Technical Services that the Rosshead Letting Initiative should now be terminated.
- 4717 Councillor Bollan, having failed to obtain a seconder for a proposed motion, asked that his dissent be recorded.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY WORKING GROUP

- 4718 A report was submitted by the Chief Executive recommending that an Equality and Diversity Working Group be set up to promote equality and diversity matters, which would report to the Committee.
- 4719 Having heard Councillor McNair, Service Spokesperson for Equal Opportunities, the Committee agreed to set up an Equality and Diversity Working Group comprising five Labour Members and two Opposition Members.

SOCIAL WORK BUDGETARY POSITION 2004/05 AS AT PERIOD 7 TO 15 NOVEMBER 2004

- 4720 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 November 2004.
- 4721 It was noted that the overall net position at Period 7 was an adverse variance of "£302,030" and not "£302,830" as indicated in paragraph 4.1 of the report.
- 4722 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

SOCIAL WORK GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

- 4723 A report was submitted by the Director of Social Work Services making recommendations on the level of grants payable to voluntary organisations.
- 4724 After discussion and having heard the Convener, Councillor Rooney, the Committee agreed to approve the recommendations in relation to the various applications detailed in the Appendix to the report, with the exceptions of Say Women and Yorkhill Family Bereavement Service who would be awarded the amounts of £2,000 and £3,870 respectively. Details of the applications and the grants awarded are appended hereto.
- 4725 Councillor Bollan, having failed to obtain a seconder for proposed motions, asked that his dissent be recorded.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL'S DIRECT PAYMENTS SCHEME

- 4726 A report was submitted by the Director of Social Work Services informing on the implementation of West Dunbartonshire Council's Direct Payments Scheme and its financial implications.
- 4727 After discussion and having heard the Convener, Councillor Rooney, and the Director of Social Work Services in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-
- (1) to confirm its support to West Dunbartonshire Council's implementation of Direct Payments, and to acknowledge its success;
 - (2) to note the action taken to control existing and further expenditure on Direct Payments;
 - (3) to make representation to CoSLA regarding future funding of Direct Payments to be pursued with the Scottish Executive within the overall community care agenda; and
 - (4) that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee dealing with the implications of the Scheme for the Council as an Employer.

DOCUMENT IMAGE AND WORKFLOW SYSTEM

- 4728 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising on the method of funding recommended for the Document Image and Workflow system for the Housing and Council Tax Benefit service.

- 4729 It was noted that a document image and workflow system would improve document management and performance within the Benefits service and a successful bid for two thirds funding for such a system had been made to the Performance Standards Fund which was administered by the Department of Work and Pensions.
- 4730 Having heard the Finance Manager, the Committee agreed to approve the recommendation that the windfall sum of £99,958 referred to in the report be used to fund the Council's share of the Benefits Service Document Image and Workflow system.

**HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2004/2005 – BUDGETARY CONTROL
REPORT TO 15 NOVEMBER 2004 (PERIOD 7)**

- 4731 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising of the progress of the HRA Capital Programme to 15 November 2004.
- 4732 After discussion and having heard Councillor Flynn, Service Spokesperson for Housing Services, and the Head of Technical Services in explanation, the Committee agreed to note the report.
- 4733 Councillor Bollan, having failed to obtain a seconder for a proposed motion, asked that his dissent be recorded.

**HOUSING – NON HRA REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGETARY
CONTROL STATEMENT 2004/2005 TO 15 NOVEMBER 2004
(PERIOD 7)**

- 4734 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 budget for the period ended 15 November 2004 (Period 7).
- 4735 After discussion and having heard Councillor Flynn, Service Spokesperson for Housing Services, the Committee agreed to note the report.
- 4736 In relation to a point raised by Councillor Bollan concerning vacant posts in Housing Benefit/Council Tax Administration, it was noted that the Director of Housing and Technical Services would arrange to provide Councillor Bollan with the information which he was requesting.
- 4737 Councillor Bollan, having failed to obtain a seconder for a proposed motion, asked that his dissent be recorded.

**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2004/2005 BUDGETARY CONTROL
STATEMENT TO 15 NOVEMBER 2004 (PERIOD 7)**

- 4738 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 November 2004 (Period 7).
- 4739 It was noted that Appendix 1 which detailed the 2004/05 probable outturn had been omitted from the report in error and a copy of said Appendix was circulated to Members at the meeting.
- 4740 After discussion and having heard Councillor Flynn, Service Spokesperson for Housing Services, and the Director of Housing and Technical Services in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the report.

**HOUSING MAINTENANCE TRADING OPERATION 2004/2005 –
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO 15 NOVEMBER 2004 (PERIOD 7)**

- 4741 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services presenting interim cumulative financial information for the period ending 15 November 2004 (Period 7).
- 4742 After discussion, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.
- 4743 Councillor Bollan, having failed to obtain a seconder for a proposed motion, asked that his dissent be recorded.

**FIRE PRECAUTIONS INSPECTION IN MULTI-STOREY FLATS
WITHIN WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE**

- 4744 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services advising of proposed actions in response to recommendations made by Strathclyde Fire Brigade, following their inspection of all multi-storey flats within West Dunbartonshire.
- 4745 The Committee agreed:-
- (1) that, in partnership with Strathclyde Fire Brigade, the Council would ensure that the recommendations identified in the Fire Brigade's report were met;

- (2) that staff from Tenancy Services and Property Services would co-ordinate meetings with residents in order to advise of timescales associated with the removal of loose floor coverings, carpets and furnishings from common circulation areas within individual blocks;
- (3) action would be taken to address any necessary repair issues arising from the condition of underlying floor areas; and
- (4) that officers from the Housing and Technical Services Department would arrange to liaise with Strathclyde Fire Brigade, in order to explore the possibility of training in inspection procedures of building technical standards.

DEMOLITION OF HOUSING AT GRANVILLE STREET, CLYDEBANK

4746 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services seeking approval to demolish houses in Granville Street, Clydebank as specified in the Appendix to the report, and to re-house the remaining tenants of these properties.

4747 After discussion and having heard Councillor Flynn, Service Spokesperson for Housing Services, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to approve the demolition of the properties shown in the Appendix to the Director's report;
- (2) to approve the suspension of allocations to the properties shown in the Appendix;
- (3) to approve the allocation of additional points in accordance with the Council's allocation policy to tenants living in the properties shown in the Appendix;
- (4) to approve the payment of home loss and disturbance payments to qualifying tenants;
- (5) to approve the demolition costs being included in the 2005/2006 HRA Capital Programme; and
- (6) 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.

VOIDS AND LETTINGS

- 4748 A report was submitted by the Director of Housing and Technical Services providing:-
- (1) details of void houses and their status as at 26 November 2004;
 - (2) an analysis of void houses by type and by area as at 26 November 2004; and
 - (3) details of the number of void houses by Ward and by area as at 26 November 2004.
- 4749 Having heard Councillor Flynn, Service Spokesperson for Housing Services, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

WAITING LIST FOR WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL HOUSES

- 4750 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 30 November 2004 and figures for the same period in 2003 were also provided for comparison.
- 4751 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

HOUSE SALES

- 4752 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 30 November 2004.
- 4753 After discussion and having heard Councillor Flynn, Service Spokesperson for Housing Services, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.
- 4754 Councillor Bolland, having failed to obtain a seconder for a proposed motion, asked that his dissent be recorded.

HOMELESSNESS

- 4755 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 30 November 2004.
- 4756 The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 11.10 a.m.