

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Thursday 27 May 2010 at 4.00 pm.

Present: Councillors JIM MILLAR, COLIN BROWN, MAIRI EVANS, IAN MACKINTOSH, RUTH LESLIE MELVILLE, DAVID MAY, BILL MIDDLETON, GLENNIS MIDDLETON, DONALD MORRISON, BOB MYLES, HELEN OSWALD, JOHN RYMER, BOB SPINK, SHEENA WELSH and JOHN WHYTE.

Councillor MILLAR, Convener, in the Chair.

Prior to the commencement of business, the Convener introduced Staff Sergeant John Finn, Housing Visitor, Housing Division who had recently been awarded a Warrant for Meritorious Service.

The Convener, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated Staff Sergeant Finn on being awarded the Warrant of Meritorious Service in recognition of the excellent service he provided to Her Majesty's Armed Forces, both home and abroad.

1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors, Alison Andrews, David Fairweather, Peter Nield, Mark Salmond and Margaret Thomson, with Councillors John Rymer, John Whyte, Ruth Leslie Melville, Bob Myles and Ian Mackintosh substituting respectively.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Oswald declared an interest in item 14 as her husband was a member of Carnoustie Community Council and she was Secretary of Carnoustie Forward. She indicated that she would leave the meeting while the matter was being considered.

3. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The [minute of meeting of this Committee of 15 April 2010](#) was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

4. HOUSING CAPITAL AND PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME - HRA BLOCK - 2009/2010

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 15 April 2010, there was submitted [Joint Report No 370/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services and the Director of Corporate Services setting out the near final outturn of Capital and Planned Maintenance spends to 31 March 2010 together with updated funding proposals.

The Report advised that the actual spend achieved to 31 March 2010 on the Housing Capital Programme was currently £9.543 million which represented an underspend of £216,000. It was currently projected that this would be the final capital position for 2009/2010. However, it was noted that, at the time of finalising the Report, some adjustments and accruals had still to be concluded and processed as part of the ongoing final accounts process. This therefore meant that the near final out-turn figures contained within the Report might change, albeit no significant changes were currently expected.

With regard to the 2009/2010 Planned Maintenance Programme, the near final actual expenditure to 31 March 2010 was £1.951 million which represented an underspend of £247,000 against the original budget of £2.198 million. This was mainly due to the extent of works required in communal areas being less than originally anticipated (£118,000) in the 2009/2010 tranch of the five year repainting programme. There had also been planned reductions in the guttering programme (£53,000) and the boundaries programme (£43,000) to offset increased expenditure in other areas of the HRA. There were also some less significant over and underspends amounting to £33,000 in total. As with the Housing Capital Programme, it was currently projected that this would be the final position for 2009/2010 in respect of planned maintenance. However, it was noted that, at the time of finalising the Report, some adjustments and accruals had still to be finalised as part of the ongoing final accounts process. This therefore meant that the near final out-turn figures contained within the Report might change, albeit no significant changes were currently expected.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the near final capital expenditure figures presented for the Housing Capital and Planned Maintenance Programmes for the period to 31 March 2010;
- (ii) to note the near final capital receipts position for the period to 31 March 2010; and
- (iii) to note the proposed funding approach.

5. COUNCIL HOUSE SALES

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 25 February 2010, there was submitted and noted [Report No 371/10](#) by the Director of Corporate Services detailing individual Council house sales for the fourth quarter of 2009/2010 and cumulative figures for 2009/2010 to 31 March 2010.

6. IMPROVEMENT/REPAIRS GRANT APPLICATIONS APPROVED UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 15 April 2010, there was submitted and noted [Report No 372/10](#) by the Director of Infrastructure Services detailing grant applications in respect of improvement, repairs, windows, gutter replacement and town centre refurbishments grants, all of which had been approved under delegated authority for the period 1-31 March 2010.

7. ARREARS UPDATE - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT TENANTS

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 15 April 2010, there was submitted [Report No 373/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services updating the Committee on current rent arrears levels and activities being undertaken to tackle them in Angus. The tables contained within Appendix A to the Report provided details of performance at 16 May 2010 in comparison with performance since 28 February 2010, as previously reported to Committee.

The Report indicated that throughout the financial year 2009/2010 there had been a consistent monthly drop despite the economic decline. The end of financial year figure as at 28 March 2010 showed the Division's rent arrears levels at 7.9% with a continuing fall to 7.5% as at 16 May 2010. The Division would continue to apply the methods which had been successful in reducing the rent arrears, including the further development of tenant profiling to target efforts to groups identified likely to be in arrears. This would give the Division a clear indication of the profile of tenants likely to accrue arrears and allow methods of advice, assistance and recovery to be tailored as necessary.

The Report further indicated that a review on the current rent arrears policy was being carried out and a Report would be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee. Also, in response to a request made at the previous Committee for a simplification of the presentation of the arrears statistics, Appendices A, B and C of the Report provided three reporting methods and members were asked to determine their preferred option for future reports.

The Report concluded that the Council remained committed to providing support with rent payment but ultimately where this was not utilised by tenants it must enforce the tenancy conditions agreed through the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement and make it clear that rent payment was a priority, and failure to keep up rent payments would result in the utilisation of the full range of sanctions available. The overall downward trend in arrears was encouraging, but it was noted that further and ongoing work was being done to ensure that the momentum on tackling arrears was maintained and where further improvements could be made, these would be thoroughly investigated, as set out in the Report.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to note the current performance information, as detailed in Appendix A to the Report;
- (iii) to note the progress to date in pursuing serious arrears; and
- (iv) to adopt the reporting methods as detailed in Appendix B for statistical reporting in future reports.

8. EVICTION OF TENANTS IN THE SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR: PROTECTION OF TENANTS WITH RENT ARREARS

There was submitted [Report No 374/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services setting out the Council's response to the Scottish Government's consultation on eviction of tenants in the Social Rented Sector: Protection of Tenants with Rent Arrears.

The Report indicated that, in response to the rising rates of home repossession in Scotland, the Scottish Government had set up a Repossessions Group in January 2009 to consider whether it was necessary to strengthen the existing protection for home owners in Scotland. The final report of the Group made it clear that it was just as important to consider the eviction of tenants in social housing. The consultation therefore outlined the current legislation around the eviction of tenants in the social rented sector and included options to improve the consistency and rigour of pre-eviction processes and procedures. The Scottish Government viewed these options as aiming to balance the needs of landlords who had a duty to protect public finances and prevent homelessness, along with the needs of tenants.

The Report concluded that the Council broadly welcomed the emphasis on ensuring that everything possible was being done to ensure that tenants paid their rent and developed good habits of rent payment. Whilst its preference was to avoid eviction wherever possible, there were instances where this was the final option when all other supportive avenues had been exhausted. The Council continued to look at innovative and supportive methods of helping tenants with their responsibilities and the consultation response, a copy of which was appended to the Report, demonstrated a willingness to develop even better support methodologies.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to approve the response to the Scottish Government's consultation on Eviction of Tenants in the Social Rented Sector: Protection of Tenants with Rent Arrears, a copy of which was appended to the Report;
- (iii) to instruct the Director of Neighbourhood Services to take whatever steps were necessary to ensure compliance with subsequent Government guidelines in this area; and
- (iv) to note that updated guidelines, when available, would be reported to the Committee.

9. **SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION TO EXTEND HOME INSULATION INVESTMENT TO ARBROATH**

With reference to Article 15 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 20 August 2009, there was submitted [Report No 375/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services advising the Committee of a successful application to the Scottish Government to commit further home insulation investment to Angus and outlining plans to utilise the funds in a co-ordinated fashion.

The Report indicated that Angus Council had now been successful in bidding for Arbroath to be one of the next wave of Home Insulation Scheme (HIS) areas. The successful bid covered a further 13,500 homes in and around Arbroath and it was estimated that it would provide an additional £2 million investment for the Angus economy in terms of employment opportunities and construction industry activity. The project would also increase the disposable income of householders by reducing fuel bills and maximising benefit uptake.

Although overall delivery of the Scheme would again be managed by the Energy Saving Trust (EST), the Council would provide a supporting role by endorsing marketing literature; promoting the Scheme through Council literature and publication; ACCESS staff providing basic project information and signposting customers to the EST; provision of office space; and Housing Officers providing expertise and knowledge on property types. There was also potential for some Housing Capital and Planned Maintenance Programmes to be aligned with the project area where a joined-up approach could bring benefits to Council tenants.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) that the Council should, where possible, align expenditure of Energy Assistance package grant money within the project area of the Home Insulation Scheme extension, to enable co-ordinated operational delivery of the investment stream;
- (ii) that the previously granted exemption from normal tendering requirements, as set out paragraph 4.5 of the Report, be continued in respect of the continuation of the Scheme; and
- (iii) that the Council continue to utilise the approved HIS installer to manage insulation surveys and installations under the Energy Assistance package and draw down carbon emissions reduction target money so that additional funding was maximised and co-ordinated, with similar work being undertaken within the Home Insulation Scheme.

10. **DISPOSAL OF AREA OF GROUND AT 93 BROOMHILL DRIVE, MONIFIETH**

There was submitted [Report No 377/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services seeking approval for the disposal of an area of ground at 93 Broomhill Drive, Monifieth.

The Committee agreed, subject to Section 12 consent being received from the Scottish Ministers, and planning permission for the change of use being granted:-

- (i) that the area of ground at 93 Broomhill Drive, Monifieth be sold to the owners of 93 Broomhill Drive, Monifieth for the sum of £1,000 on appropriate terms and conditions; and
- (ii) that the owners of 93 Broomhill Drive, Monifieth be responsible for meeting all the Council's and their own costs in connection with this matter.

11. **DISPOSAL OF AREA OF GROUND AT NEWMONTHILL, FORFAR**

There was submitted [Report No 378/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services seeking approval for the disposal of an area of ground at Newmonthill, Forfar.

The Committee agreed, subject to Section 12 Consent being received from the Scottish Ministers, and planning permission for the change of use being granted:-

- (i) that the area of ground at Newmonthill, Forfar be sold to the owner of 21 Academy Street, Forfar for the sum of £2,000, on appropriate terms and conditions; and

- (ii) that the owner of 21 Academy Street, Forfar be responsible for meeting all the Council's and their own costs in connection with this matter.

12. NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT KINLOCH, CARNOUSTIE AND LAIRD STREET, MONIFIETH - TENDER LIST

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of the special meeting of this Committee of 15 February 2010, there was submitted [Report No 421/10](#) by the Director of Corporate Services containing details of the contractors who it was proposed be invited to tender for the construction of new affordable housing at Kinloch, Carnoustie and Laird Street, Monifieth.

The Report indicated that each firm had been asked to supply information using Constructionline on its history, capability, financial standing and present and future commitments, together with other relevant details.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to invite the undernoted six contractors to tender for the project:-

CHAP Construction (Aberdeen) Ltd, Westhill
 G & J Seddon Ltd, Glasgow
 Muirfield (Contracts) Ltd, Dundee
 Ogilvie Homes Ltd, Stirling
 Rok PLC trading as Rok Building Ltd, Glasgow
 W H Brown Construction (Dundee) Ltd, Dundee; and

- (iii) to approve the undernoted two contractors to be held as reserves who might be invited to tender, in sequence, should any of the six approved contractors decline the invitation:-

Reserves

Clachan Construction Ltd, Perth
 Bancon Construction Ltd, Banchory.

13. ANGUS CREDIT UNION

With reference to Article 14 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 8 October 2009, there was submitted [Report No 379/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services advising the Committee of the assistance being sought by the Angus Credit Union with regard to cash transaction facilities at ACCESS Offices.

The Report indicated that cash transaction facilities had been made available free of charge at ACCESS Offices to customers of the Angus Credit Union for the financial year 2009/2010 (Report No 708/09 refers). It was now proposed that this service be provided free of charge for a further year to 31 March 2011, in support of the Angus Credit Union and taking into account the current economic climate. Whilst there had been a steady increase in the number of transactions over the year, it was unlikely that the volumes (between 50 and 70 deposits per month) involved would cause any operational difficulties to the ACCESS business. However, this would continue to be reviewed on a regular basis.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to approve the provision of cash transaction facilities through ACCESS Offices for customers of Angus Credit Union, free of charge, for the financial year 2010/2011; and
- (iii) to note that a formal agreement would be put in place, detailing the arrangements and responsibilities for this service.

14. CARNOUSTIE - LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF ASSETS

Councillor Oswald, having declared an interest at item 2 above, left the meeting during consideration of this item.

There was submitted [Report No 381/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services seeking approval for officers to enter into discussion with key organisations in Carnoustie about local management of community assets.

The Report indicated that for a number of years local community groups had expressed ambitions to improve the appearance of the burgh with a view to making it a more attractive place to live in, work in and visit. Carnoustie was visited by many golfers but the perception locally was that most of these visitors came to the burgh only for the golf and local businesses did not gain benefit to any significant degree as a consequence. The local Business Association, the Community Council and the local partnership, Carnoustie Forward, had all expressed a view that businesses and the community would be in favour of investigating ways to address these issues.

A specific suggestion had been to make the High Street area more attractive by increasing the number of hanging baskets and improving floral displays. It had also been suggested that improved signage and information about Carnoustie and events that were happening in the burgh might lead to achieving the various groups' aspirations. Initial informal discussions had taken place between officers and key people in the community and officers believed that there was merit in investigating the feasibility of increasing community management and ownership of resources needed to realise community aspirations, bearing in mind that Council budgets related to these aspirations were under pressure at this time.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to authorise officers to enter into discussions with Carnoustie Community Council, Carnoustie Forward and other key community based organisations about local management and control of community assets, including the provision of hanging baskets and areas of ground management in the burgh; and
- (ii) to instruct the Director of Neighbourhood Services to submit a Report to a future meeting of this Committee on the outcome of these discussions, including details of property and financial implications.

15. EAST LINKS, MONTROSE

With reference to Article 14 of the minute of meeting of the Neighbourhood Services Committee of 9 October 2008, there was submitted [Report No 382/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services advising the Committee of proposals for possible improvements at East Links, Montrose.

The Report indicated that Montrose Together, a local area partnership, was working with local organisations and Council services to identify proposals for the development of part of Montrose East Links. This area of land was bound to the south by the Seafront Splash, to the north and east by Traill Drive and to the west by the transition from rough dunes to the mown Links parkland grass, all of which was Montrose Common Good land managed and under the responsibility of Neighbourhood Services Department. There were currently two complementary projects proposed, the first being to increase the facilities of the wheeled sports facility as detailed in the Report and secondly that a consultation process, involving the wider community, be undertaken with a view to gathering stakeholders' views on the development of a BMX skills course. The local Community Planning Team would support Montrose Together to ensure co-ordination and partnership with all key stakeholders.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to approve, in principle, the proposals taking place around the East Links in Montrose, as outlined in the Report; and

- (iii) to note that any future progress on the developments would be the subject of a Report to this Committee.

16. WEST LINKS, ARBROATH

There was submitted [Report No 383/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services setting out an option for the regeneration of the West Links area in Arbroath.

The Report indicated that the West Links was a large recreational area located along the coast of Arbroath, the land of which was in the ownership of the Arbroath Common Good. The area hosted a number of recreational facilities, including Angus Council services and several private sector business operations. The area was historically a popular place with visitors and tourists but now required upgrading of facilities to meet increasing expectations. At a recent meeting held between representatives of Angus Council and private businesses operating at West Links there had been a general consensus from private sector representatives that they were willing to work co-operatively on the idea of a regeneration strategy and that a financial commitment in their business would be inevitable, should any strategy develop. At present, Angus Council had no plans for investment in the area. However, the Group were keen to explore options for regeneration, including the possibility of a private public partnership approach which might open doors to funding sources which were currently inaccessible.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to approve representatives of Angus Council entering into discussions with private sector stakeholders on options for the regeneration of the West Links area of Arbroath, with a view to improving recreational facilities for the local community and visitors and tourists to Angus; and
- (iii) to note that the Convener would arrange a meeting of all Arbroath members before the next meeting of this Committee to discuss how best to take this matter forward.

17. FORFAR AND MONTROSE WHEELED SPORTS FACILITIES - DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF LIGHTING

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 28 February 2008 and Article 15 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 16 April 2009, there was submitted [Report No 384/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services seeking approval, in principle, to the Council's position in the development and the adoption of floodlighting and the associated maintenance and electricity costs at the Montrose Wheeled Sports Facility, Traill Drive, Montrose and the Forfar Wheeled Sports Facility at Lochside Leisure Centre, Forfar.

The Report indicated that both the Montrose and Forfar Skate Park Groups had now raised the target funding amounts based on previous cost estimates supplied by Infrastructure Services - Roads Division to supply, install and adopt the lighting based on ten times the annual running costs. However, due to changing circumstances as detailed in the Report, updated costs to supply, install and maintain and run the lighting at both facilities were currently being sought and a detailed estimate would be provided to the respective groups for the total development (including fees), maintenance and running costs of the project as a basis for their fundraising. Equally, the respective skate groups would need to assure the Council that they could fully finance these costs, including a sum that equated to the 10 year maintenance of the lighting fixtures and a 10 year cost for the provision of power to the lights.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to approve, in principle, the adoption of the lighting columns and associated services by Neighbourhood Services Department at both the Montrose and Forfar Wheeled Sports Facilities, based on the respective groups providing the funding for the entire overall development costs and a commuted sum equating to ten times the overall maintenance and running costs; and

- (iii) to remit to officers to provide the respective groups with a specific total estimate for development and maintenance costs on the basis outlined in the Report for their overall funding contribution.

18. SPECIAL OLYMPIC INVITATIONAL FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

There was submitted [Report No 385/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services advising the Committee of the Special Olympic Invitational Football Tournament which would take place in Helsinki, Finland from 13-17 July 2010 and the inclusion of Angus athletes and Angus Council staff in the Great Britain Team.

The Report indicated that the Great Britain Team, consisting of ten athletes and three coaches, was made up entirely of athletes and coaches from Angus. The GB team would depart on the morning of 13 July 2010 and return home on the evening of 17 July 2010.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to note the participation of Angus athletes and staff from Angus Council Neighbourhood Services who had been selected to represent Great Britain at the event;
- (iii) to approve one member of staff from Neighbourhood Services being given absence from work, as paid leave, to attend the games as a team coach and manager; and
- (iv) to congratulate all those involved on their selection and to wish them every success at the tournament.

19. THE BELL ROCK LIGHTHOUSE - YEAR OF THE LIGHT

With reference to Article 16 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 28 May 2008, there was submitted [Report No 386/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services advising the Committee of plans to stage a series of events in celebration of the bi-centenary of the Bell Rock Lighthouse 2011.

The Report indicated that a programme of events had been developed by representatives of the local community supported by the local Community Planning Team and other Angus Council Officers, particularly those from the Cultural Services Division of Neighbourhood Services.

As well as developing these events as celebrations of the bi-centenary of the Bell Rock Lighthouse which was the oldest existing rock lighthouse in the British Isles, the local community saw the organisation of the events as being a contribution towards the economy of Arbroath and in particular the attraction of tourists to the burgh.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to note and welcome the Programme of Events as detailed in the Report, which were being arranged by local organisations in celebration of the Bell Rock Lighthouse Bi-Centenary 2011.

20. J M BARRIE LEGACY PROJECT, THE HILL ENHANCEMENTS, KIRRIEMUIR - ACCEPTANCE OF TENDER

With reference to Article 18 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 25 February 2010, there was submitted [Report No 387/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services providing details of the tenders received for phase 1 of the Kirriemuir Hill enhancements and recommending acceptance of the lowest tender submitted.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to approve the acceptance of the lowest tender submitted for the works at The Hill, Kirriemuir in the amount of £255,579.92 from Dundee Plant Company Ltd, Dundee.

21. RESTENNETH LANDFILL SITE PLANT AND EQUIPMENT PURCHASE - TENDER REPORT

There was submitted [Report No 388/10](#) by the Director of Neighbourhood Services seeking approval to purchase specific plant and equipment for Restenneth Landfill Site and composting area along with the associated servicing and maintenance contracts.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to approve the purchase of plant and equipment for use at Restenneth Landfill Site and composting area, along with the associated servicing and maintenance contracts from Finning (UK) Ltd and Komptech UK Ltd.

22. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Committee resolved, in terms of Standing Order 27(2) that the public and press be excluded during consideration of the following item, so as to avoid the possible disclosure of information which was exempt in terms of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, paragraph 3.

23. IMPROVEMENT/ADAPTATIONS GRANT APPLICATIONS APPROVED UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

With reference to Article 6 above, there was submitted [Report No 385/10](#) by the Director of Infrastructure Services detailing grant applications in respect of improvements and adaptations, all of which had been approved under delegated authority, for the period 1-31 March 2010.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Report.