

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **HOUSING COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Thursday 26 August 2004 at 4.00 pm.

Present: Councillors FRANK ELLIS, IAN ANGUS, IAN MACKINTOSH, The Hon R J LESLIE MELVILLE MBE, Provost BILL MIDDLETON, GLENNIS MIDDLETON, JOY MOWATT, ROB MURRAY (substituting for Councillor STEWART McGLYNN), PETER NIELD, GEORGE NORRIE MBE, BILL ROBERTON, JENNIFER SPEIRS, SHEENA WELSH and TERRY WOOD.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors STEWART McGLYNN and KITTY RITCHIE.

Councillor ELLIS, Convener, in the Chair.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Welsh declared an interest in item 31(j) as a Committee member of Angus Housing Association.

Councillors Glennis Middleton and Wood declared an interest in items 14 and 21 as they were Council appointees to Angus Care and Repair.

2. MINUTES

(a) Previous Meeting

The [minute of meeting of this Committee of 3 June 2004](#) was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

(b) Executive Sub-Committees

The [minutes of meetings of the Executive Sub-Committee held on 22 June and 3 August 2004](#), copies of which are appended hereto, were submitted and noted. (**APPENDICES I and II**).

3. HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME - HRA BLOCK - 2004/2005

With reference to Article 3 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 3 June 2004, there was submitted [Report No 940/04](#) by the Director of Finance setting out the latest position on the HRA Housing Capital Programme and the HRA Planned Maintenance Programme for 2004/2005. The Report also detailed the latest estimate for the year and also the capital spend figures to the end of June 2004.

The Report advised that the near actual spend achieved to 30 June on the Housing Capital Programme was £1,328 million. This did not include internal fees to 30 June 2004.

The Committee, for its interest, agreed to note the figures presented for the HRA Capital Programme.

4. REGULATION AND INSPECTION - PATHFINDER INSPECTION OF LANDLORD AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES - IMPROVEMENT PLAN

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 3 June 2004, there was submitted [Report No 941/04](#) by the Director of Housing advising the Committee of the contents of the Improvement Plan which had been devised in response to the Inspection Report published by Communities Scotland in May 2004.

The Report advised that comments on the draft Improvement Plan had been received from Communities Scotland and following consideration of these comments and examination by a sounding board of three elected members, the Plan had now been finalised and was attached to the Report as Appendix 1.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Report and approve the implementation of the Improvement Plan, as detailed in the Appendix to the Report.

5. HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION ACT - THIRD PROGRESS REPORT

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 9 October 2003, there was submitted [Report No 942/04](#) by the Director of Housing advising members of the third HECA Progress Report.

The Report advised that there had been a 3.6% reduction in domestic fuel use in Angus for the two-year period between 1 April 2001 to 31 March 2003, and a 4.4% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from the corresponding period. The total reduction in domestic fuel use for the period of the strategy (1997-2003) was calculated at 10.6% with a 12.3% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the third Progress Report under the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA), as attached to the Report.

6. GAS SAFETY (INSTALLATION AND USE) REGULATIONS 1998 - REVISED HARD NON-ACCESS PROCEDURES

With reference to Article 21 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 21 August 2003, there was submitted [Report No 943/04](#) by the Director of Housing advising members on the revised hard non-access (including forced access) procedures which would be applied against the majority of tenants who failed to give access in accordance with the Regulations.

The Report indicated that a small number of cases caused repeat/annual non-access difficulties and associated additional expense in relation to officer supervision, contractor repeat calls and (until now) the raising of Court action to secure access. These tenants were also in breach of the conditions of tenancy and were causing potential danger to themselves, immediate family and neighbours. The Council could also find it was in breach of the relevant Gas Safety Regulations and could be prosecuted by the Health and Safety Commission.

The Committee agreed to implement the revised hard non-access proposals outlined in the Report, with effect from 1 September 2004.

7. MONITORING OF THE ETHNICITY OF ALLOCATIONS AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICE USERS 2003-2004

There was submitted [Report No 944/04](#) by the Director of Housing giving details of the ethnicity of users of the Allocations and Homelessness Services provided by Angus Council over the period 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004.

The Report indicated that the Council's policies and procedures were designed to be non-discriminatory. The Council would continue to check that they were also non-discriminatory in practice, and would make the necessary effort to ensure that all groups had fair access to the Council's Housing Services.

The Committee noted the contents of the Report and agreed that consultation should take place with representatives of the Asian community and individuals in Angus on how best to ensure access to Council housing for that group.

8. PUBLICATION OF REVISED HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2003-2008

With reference to Article 11 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 22 April 2004, there was submitted [Report No 945/04](#) by the Director of Housing seeking approval of the revised Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008. The Strategy had been revised in response to comments from the Scottish Executive Homelessness Monitoring Group, who had now approved the revised Strategy. Copies of the two parts of the Strategy document had been placed in the Members' Lounge.

The Report concluded that approval for the revised Strategy had been received from the Scottish Executive in July 2004 and it was intended that the revised Strategy be published at the same time as the local Housing Strategy.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to approve the revised Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008;
- (ii) to remit to the Director of Housing to publish the Strategy document for public distribution and on the Council's intranet and web-site; and
- (iii) in the context of Community Planning, to refer this Report and the revised Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008 to the Joint Healthy, Safe and Caring Communities Partnership, for its interest.

9. HOUSING (SCOTLAND) ACT IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING - HOMELESSNESS LOCAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT - PROGRESS REPORT

With reference to Article 10 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 19 February 2002, there was submitted [Report No 946/04](#) by the Director of Housing advising the Committee on the progress to date in achieving the targets and outcomes agreed with the Scottish Executive, for Housing (Scotland) Act Implementation funding for homelessness duties.

The Report indicated that Angus Council had achieved the priority objectives and had met most of the specific targets agreed with the Scottish Executive. Where slippage had occurred, significant progress had been made towards meeting these targets.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress to date; and
- (ii) in the context of Community Planning, to refer this report to the Joint Healthy, Safe and Caring Communities Partnership, for its interest.

10. RENT ARREARS PERFORMANCE - ANNUAL STATISTICS 2003/2004

With reference to Article 10 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 9 October 2003, there was submitted [Report No 947/04](#) by the Director of Housing which provided statistical information in relation to serious arrears cases during 2003/2004.

The Report advised that on 1 June 2004 the Housing Department had employed three Arrears Recovery Officers throughout Angus to try and tackle, and reduce, the levels of rent arrears for both current and former tenants. Although this initiative was in the early months, it was proving to be successful with the Council managing to make face-to-face contacts with debtors at a much earlier stage and being able to enter into and monitor part payment arrangements at an earlier stage in the arrears process.

The Committee, having welcomed the introduction of the three Arrears Recovery Officers, agreed to note the contents of the Report.

11. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - WRITE-OFF OF RENT IN 2003/2004

With reference to Article 13 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 5 June 2003, there was submitted [Report No 948/04](#) by the Director of Housing on the Housing Revenue Account Rent Arrears for 2003/2004 which it was proposed be written off. The Appendix to the Report gave numeric details of the cases in each area, analysed into categories and amounts.

The Report advised that the term "written off" did not mean that the debt was totally ignored in future and applicants for Council houses were vetted to ensure that all housing related debts to Angus Council were acknowledged, and in as many cases as possible cleared before allocation took place.

The Committee agreed to write-off the agreed amount associated with the cases as set out in the Appendix to the Report totalling £120,989.39.

12. ESTABLISHMENT OF ASSESSMENT OFFICER POSTS

There was submitted [Report No 949/04](#) by the Director of Housing seeking approval to establish three Assessment Officer posts within the Special Needs Section.

The Report advised that the creation of these three posts would ensure that the Housing service could continue to respond effectively and efficiently to existing and future obligations relating to special needs and joint working across agencies. The postholders would play an important role in promoting transparency and consistency in the decision making process which would allow better targeting of resources. The provision of information and advice to housing applicants and tenants would help service users make informed choices about how their needs could be best met.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to establish three posts of Assessment Officer, grade AP3; and
- (ii) that line management responsibility for the posts should lie initially with the Supported Accommodation Officer (Special Needs), to be reviewed after two years.

13. ESTABLISHMENT OF POST OF HOUSING IMPROVEMENT CO-ORDINATOR

There was submitted [Report No 950/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the establishment of a new post within the Technical Section of the Housing Department.

The Report advised that due to the steady rate of Council house sales, there was a need for additional support in liaising with owner/occupiers to ensure the Council acted reasonably in relation to their maintaining their property, and provided suitable advice to owner/occupiers regarding their responsibilities in this regard. The establishment of this new post would allow this work to be developed and ensure the Council collected any revenues due from mutual and common repair works.

The Committee agreed to establish a new post of Housing Improvement Co-ordinator, Grade AP2, to assist with liaison between the Council and owner/occupiers.

14. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANTS

With reference to Article 11 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 26 February 2004, there was submitted [Report No 951/04](#) by the Director of Planning and Transport advising the Committee of the outcome of the bid that had been submitted to Communities Scotland for funding in respect of private sector housing grants for the years 2004/2005 and 2005/2006.

The Report advised that the Council bid had requested funding of £794,750 for 2004/2005 and £889,250 for 2005/2006. The actual allocation for 2004/2005 had been £780,000 and for 2005/2006 - £849,000. It was therefore noted that the Council had received almost the entire amount of funding bid for, the exception being the bid for grant for private rented sector insulation amounting to £15,000 for year 1 and year 2.

The Committee, having expressed their disappointment that funding in respect of private rented sector insulation had not been obtained, agreed to note the contents of the Report.

15. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANTS - EMPTY HOMES INITIATIVE

With reference to Article 14 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 26 August 2004, there was submitted [Report No 952/04](#) by the Director of Housing seeking approval for a proposal to create an Empty Homes Grant, using additional private sector Housing Grant funding from the Scottish Executive, which would be targeted at returning to use empty homes in towns and larger settlements.

The Report indicated that there was a need to address the high number of empty properties in Angus, especially in town centres and the impact this had on regeneration and housing supply. The proposal to develop a programme of Grant Aid for empty homes in the private sector would bring these properties back into use and with it, wide-ranging benefits. However, it would require a change in policy and careful targeting to be effective.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to approve the creation of a new Empty Homes Grant to bring long standing vacant properties back into use;
- (ii) to approve a change in Angus Council policy to allow all owners of town centre empty properties to receive the Empty Homes Grant, including landlords, developers and businesses;
- (iii) to approve initial priority being given to the town centres in the Arbroath and Brechin/Montrose housing market areas, with further priority areas to be identified through research;
- (iv) to approve a maximum grant level of £15,000 per property for the scheme; and
- (v) to note the commissioning of research into the quality of housing in the private sector that would assist in developing this service and improve targeting.

16. ALLOCATION CRITERIA FOR SHELTERED HOUSING SUBSEQUENT TO ONE-OFF UPGRADES TO HOUSES

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 15 January 2004, there was submitted [Report No 953/04](#) by the Director of Housing seeking approval of allocation criteria for permanent moves by current sheltered housing tenants within sheltered housing subsequent to one-off upgrades.

The Report indicated that there was a need to ensure that the sheltered housing stock was improved to meet current standards, but that this must be balanced with the needs of tenants. Internal transfers within schemes would be kept to a minimum, but where there was significant benefit to the tenant, or in addressing the long-term objectives of the scheme, transfers should be made.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed allocation criteria which would allow for continuous improvement to the sheltered housing stock, while minimising disturbance to and addressing evident housing need of current sheltered housing tenants.

17. SERVICE PLAN UPDATE

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 3 June 2004, there was submitted [Report No 905/04](#) by the Chief Executive providing the contextual background for submission of all departmental service plan updates and asking the Committee to approve the Housing Department Service Plan update, a copy of which had been circulated to all members.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to approve the [Housing Department Service Plan update](#); and
- (ii) to note that a progress report on the various actions set out in the action plan within the update would be prepared by the Director of Housing for consideration in the January 2005 cycle of meetings.

18. CODE OF GUIDANCE ON HOMELESSNESS 2004

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 15 January 2004, there was submitted [Report No 955/04](#) by the Director of Housing advising the Committee of the publication of a new Code of Guidance on Homelessness and requesting homologation of the decision to submit a response to the recent Scottish Executive consultation on the revision of the "Code of Guidance on Homelessness", a copy of which had been placed in the Members' Lounge.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the publication of a new statutory Code of Guidance on Homelessness; and
- (ii) to homologate the decision taken by the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Convener of the Housing Committee, to submit a response to the Scottish Executive consultation on the revision of the "Code of Guidance on Homelessness", a copy of which was appended to the Report at Appendix 1.

19. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 7 January 2003 there was submitted [Report No 956/04](#) by the Director of Housing advising the Committee of the health and safety activity within the Housing Department during 2003/2004 and outlining areas that would be addressed during 2004/2005.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Report.

20. CO-ORDINATION AND ACCESS TO HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ALL HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE IN ANGUS

There was submitted [Report No 957/04](#) by the Director of Housing seeking approval of a recommendation arising from the research undertaken by Ann Rosenguard Associates into "Co-ordination and Access to Housing and Support Services for All Young Homeless People in Angus". A copy of the Report had been placed in the Members' Lounge.

The Report indicated that implementation of the Action Plan as detailed in the Report was fundamental to achieving co-ordination of a comprehensive assessment process and delivery of an enhanced range of housing and support services for young homeless people. It would also ensure compliance with the Regulation of Care standards, Supporting People and other legislative requirements.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents and recommendations of the study; and
- (ii) to approve the Action Plan to address the issues identified by the study.

21. ANGUS CARE AND REPAIR - PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT

With reference to Article 14 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 21 August 2003, there was submitted [Report No 958/04](#) by the Director of Housing advising members of the activities undertaken by Angus Care and Repair during the 2003/2004 financial year, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report.

The Committee agreed to note the satisfactory performance by Angus Care and Repair.

22. ANGUS LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2004-2009

There was submitted [Report No 959/04](#) by the Director of Housing which provided the outcome of the assessment, recently completed by Communities Scotland, in relation to the Angus Local Housing Strategy 2004-2009.

The Report advised that although the Local Housing Strategy was now available to members of the public in draft form, it was intended to hold a formal launch on 18 October 2004. This would be an opportunity to publicise the strategy, highlighting the housing issues in Angus and to recognise the contribution made by members of the Housing Forum. Details of the launch had not been finalised but members would be kept informed.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the assessment made by Communities Scotland; and
- (ii) to note the provisional date for the formal launch of the Angus Local Housing Strategy.

23. COUNCIL HOUSE SALES

With reference to Article 10 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 3 June 2004, there was submitted and noted [Report No 954/04](#) by the Director of Finance detailing Council house sales for the period up to 30 June 2004.

24. 2004 REVIEW OF JOINT COMMUNITY CARE PLAN 2003-2006

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of the Social Work and Health Committee of 24 August 2004, there was submitted [Joint Report No 914/04](#) by the Director of Social Work and Health and the Director of Housing advising the Committee of the production of the 2004 Review of the Joint Community Care Plan 2003-2006, a copy of which had been placed in the Members' Lounge.

The Committee, for its interest, agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to approve the 2004 Review of the Joint Community Care Plan 2003-2006; and
- (iii) to approve the issuing of the 2004 Review of the Joint Community Care Plan 2003-2006.

25. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Committee resolved, in terms of Standing Order 27(2) that the public and press should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items, so as to avoid the disclosure of information which was exempt in terms of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, paragraphs 4, 6, 8 and 9.

26. IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATIONS APPROVED UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

With reference to Article 15 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 3 June 2004, there was submitted and noted [Report No 961/04](#) by the Director of Planning and Transport detailing applications for Improvement Grants totalling £76,801.16, which had been approved under delegated authority.

27. REPAIR GRANT APPLICATIONS APPROVED UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

With reference to Article 16 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 3 June 2004, there was submitted and noted [Report No 962/04](#) by the Director of Planning and Transport detailing applications for Repair Grants totalling £52,549.22, which had been approved under delegated authority.

28. COUNCIL HOUSE SALES - QUARTERLY SCHEDULES

With reference to Article 19 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 3 June 2004, there was submitted and noted [Report No 975/04](#) by the Director of Finance which detailed individual Council house sales for the second quarter of 2004/2005.

29. REDEVELOPMENT OF QUEEN'S PARK, BRECHIN - PROGRESS REPORT

With reference to Article 29 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 21 August 2003, there was submitted [Report No 960/04](#) by the Director of Housing updating members on the progress, amendment to partnership members and proposed phasing of the redevelopment of Queen's Park, Brechin.

Having heard a number of members pay tribute to the work of the officers involved, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the Report.

30. VOLUNTEER CENTRE, ANGUS

With reference to Article 24 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 5 June 2003, there was submitted [Report No 963/04](#) by the Director of Housing advising the Committee on the result of the grant aid provided to Volunteer Centre, Angus during 2003-2004 and seeking approval to continue funding Volunteer Centre, Angus from the Housing Revenue Account during financial year 2004-2005.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to note the results of the collaboration between the Housing Service and Volunteer Centre Angus in the Outcomes Agreement, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report; and
- (iii) to approve payment of financial support amounting to £10,000 to Volunteer Centre, Angus during financial year 2004-2005 based on the Outcome Agreements, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the Report.

31. DISPOSALS**(a) 25 Dalgetty Court, Muirhead**

There was submitted [Report No 964/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the purchase of a common footpath at Dalgetty Court, Muirhead.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the request be deferred to allow further investigations to take place.

(b) 23 Bloomfield Crescent, Arbroath

There was submitted [Report No 965/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of an area of ground at Bloomfield Crescent, Arbroath, as outlined in the plan attached to the Report.

The Committee agreed that the area of ground be not sold to the applicants.

(c) 121 Market Street, Brechin

There was submitted [Report No 966/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of an area of ground at Market Street, Brechin, as outlined in the plan attached to the Report.

The Committee agreed that, subject to Section 12 Consent being received from the Scottish Ministers and planning permission for change of use being granted, the ground be sold to the applicant on the appropriate terms and conditions, including the purchaser meeting all of the Council's legal and survey costs.

(d) 16 Millfield Road, Arbroath

There was submitted [Report No 967/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of an area of ground at Millfield Road, Arbroath, as outlined in the plan attached to the Report.

The Committee agreed that, subject to Section 12 Consent being received from the Scottish Ministers and planning permission for change of use being granted, the ground be sold to the applicant on the appropriate terms and conditions, including the purchaser meeting all of the Council's legal and survey costs.

(e) Charles Street, Carnoustie

There was submitted [Report No 968/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of an area of ground at Charles Street, Carnoustie, as outlined in the plan attached to the Report.

The Committee agreed that, subject to Section 12 Consent being received from the Scottish Ministers, the ground be sold to the applicant on the appropriate terms and conditions, including the purchaser meeting all of the Council's legal and survey costs.

(f) 13 Elm Road, Kirriemuir

There was submitted [Report No 969/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of an area of ground at Elm Road, Kirriemuir, as outlined in the plan attached to the Report.

The Committee agreed that, subject to Section 12 Consent being received from the Scottish Ministers and planning permission for change of use being granted, the ground be sold to the applicant on the appropriate terms and conditions, including the purchaser meeting all of the Council's legal and survey costs.

(g) 65 East Kirkton Road, Arbroath

There was submitted [Report No 970/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of an area of ground adjacent to 65 East Kirkton Road, Arbroath, as outlined in the plan attached to the Report.

The Committee agreed that, subject to Section 12 Consent being received from the Scottish Ministers and planning permission for change of use being granted, the ground be sold to the applicants on the appropriate terms and conditions, including the purchasers meeting all of the Council's legal and survey costs.

(h) Disposal of Park Homes in Friockheim and Forfar

There was submitted [Report No 971/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of surplus Park Homes in Friockheim and Forfar.

The Committee agreed that the four Park Homes at Friockheim and six at Lochside Road, Forfar be advertised for sale on the open market as soon as possible as they were now surplus to requirements, but that, two of the Park Homes at Forfar be retained meantime as they may be used for temporary accommodation for Forfar Housing staff, with these two homes to be advertised once they became surplus.

(i) 16 Alfred Street, Montrose

There was submitted [Report No 972/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of a common roof space at Alfred Street, Montrose.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) that, in response to a request from the owners of 16 Alfred Street, Montrose, an exception be made to the current Council policy; and
- (ii) that the Council's interest (as owner of No 14 Alfred Street, the remaining tenant's flat) in the roof and roof space be sold to the applicants at an appropriate valuation with the purchasers meeting all of the Council's reasonable expenses and erecting a division wall within the roof space, subject to the purchasers being required to acquire the right that the owner of 12 Alfred Street, Montrose had to the roof space.

(j) Ness Drive, Clifftown, Arbroath

With reference to Article 17 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 3 June 2004, there was submitted [Report No 973/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of the site, formerly occupied by 1-15 Ness Drive, Arbroath to Angus Housing Association, which would be developed as Phase 3 of the regeneration of Clifftown in Arbroath.

The Committee agreed that, subject to Section 12 Consent being received from the Scottish Ministers, the site, as outlined in the plan attached to the Report, formerly occupied by 1-15 Ness Drive, Clifftown, be sold to Angus Housing Association for the revised price as detailed in the Report.

32. SERIOUS ARREARS CASES - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT TENANTS

There was submitted [Report No 974/04](#) by the Director of Housing regarding serious arrears of rent in respect of 13 Council house tenants, as detailed in the Appendix to the Report.

The Committee agreed that all 13 cases be monitored and that approval be given to evict if regular payments to reduce the arrears were not received.