

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **HOUSING COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Thursday 5 June 2003 at 4.30 pm.

Present: Councillors FRANK ELLIS, IAN ANGUS, IAN MACKINTOSH, STEWART McGLYNN, THE HON R J LESLIE MELVILLE, GLENNIS MIDDLETON, JOY MOWATT, GEORGE NORRIE MBE, KITTY RITCHIE, BILL ROBERTON, JENNIFER SPEIRS and TERRY WOOD.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Provost BILL MIDDLETON and Councillors PETER NIELD and SHEENA WELSH.

Councillor ELLIS, Convener, in the Chair.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mowatt declared an interest in item 20 as a relative had been awarded an Improvement Grant.

Councillor Ritchie declared an interest in item 12 due to her being a member of the Tayside Furniture Project Group.

Councillors Ellis and Middleton declared an interest in item 27 as Directors of Angus Community Care Charitable Trust.

2. APPOINTMENTS

(a) Membership of Committee

With reference to Article 6(b) of the minute of meeting of the Council held on 8 May 2003, the Committee agreed to note the members appointed to this Committee.

(b) Membership of Sub-Committees Etc

(i) Executive Sub Committee

The Committee agreed to appoint Councillors Ellis, Angus and Norrie to the Executive Sub-Committee.

(ii) Travelling People's Working Group

The Committee agreed to note that the Convener and Councillor Oswald, being the local member, had been appointed in terms of the Minute of Agreement of the above Advisory Group to attend meetings to consider matters relating to the Travellers' Site at Balmuir Wood, Tealing.

The Committee also noted that the chair would be in rotation with Dundee City Council and that the Convener and local member could appoint substitutes to attend in their place.

3. REMIT OF COMMITTEE

There was submitted and noted the remit of the Housing Committee.

4. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The [minute of meeting of this Committee of 1 April 2003](#) was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

5. HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME - HRA BLOCK - 2002/2003

With reference to Article 3 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 1 April 2003, there was submitted [Report No 610/03](#) by the Director of Finance setting out the latest position on the HRA Housing Capital Programme. The Report also detailed the latest estimate for the year and the near actual spend figures to the end of March 2003.

The Report advised that the spend achieved to 31 March 2003 on the Housing Capital Programme was £6.417 million which included internal fees.

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

6. HEATING UPGRADING IN SHELTERED HOUSING

There was submitted [Report No 611/03](#) by the Director of Housing which set out a policy for upgrading heating in sheltered housing.

The Report concluded that a policy to replace heating on a like-for-like basis as regards fuel would ensure work could be carried out easily and quickly to minimise delays and disruption to tenants, and that no further safety issues would arise with gas heating in properties occupied by elderly tenants.

The Committee agreed that no individual choices of fuel be offered within sheltered housing complexes, and that these schemes should remain either all fuelled by gas or electricity.

7. ST CHRISTOPHER'S TRAVELLING PEOPLE'S SITE, TAYOCK, MONTROSE

There was submitted [Joint Report No 612/03](#) by the Director of Planning and Transport and the Director of Housing requesting that the St Christopher's Travelling People's Site, Tayock be transferred from the Planning and Transport Account to the Other Housing Account.

The Report concluded that there would be no adverse financial implications for the Council or the two Departments involved and should result in a more efficient operation of the St Christopher's Travelling Site.

The Committee, for its interest, agreed to transfer the St Christopher's Travelling People's Site, Tayock from the Planning and Transport Account to the other Housing Account at no cost to the latter.

8. REGENERATE! NORTH ARBROATH

With reference to Article 20 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 13 August 2002, there was submitted [Report No 613/03](#) by the Director of Housing which outlined proposals for "Regenerate! North Arbroath", a jointly funded social regeneration initiative that complemented the physical regeneration of three Arbroath areas, namely, Clifftown, Demondale and Strathairlie and sought approval for a contribution from the Housing Revenue Account.

Councillor Angus, local member, having welcomed the Report, advised the Committee that some of the housing in the Demondale area would not be included within this project.

The Director of Housing advised that the submission for funding to the European Regional Development Fund had been successful and a letter confirming the formal acceptance was awaited.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the outline proposals for "Regenerate! North Arbroath";
- (ii) to approve a contribution of £91,428 over three years to "Regenerate! North Arbroath" subject to the confirmation of partner funding from Communities Scotland and the European Regional Development Fund; and
- (iii) to note the application to the European Regional Development Fund for £115,224 of match funding.

9. FIRST CHOICE - NOT LAST RESORT, PILOTING CHOICE BASED LETTING

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 22 May 2001, there was submitted [Report No 614/03](#) by the Director of Housing outlining proposals for a pathfinder pilot of "choice" based lettings for the allocation of Council housing.

The Report concluded that feed-back from the English pilots and the Scottish experience with "choice" suggested that it could bring benefits in terms of customer satisfaction, an increased customer focus to service delivery and, under the right circumstances, significant financial benefits.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to approve a comprehensive pathfinder pilot of "choice" based lettings across a selected housing management area;
- (ii) to note that the pilot would be developed with full tenant and community involvement; and
- (iii) to consider the use of "choice" across Angus, subject to the pathfinder pilot confirming its positive benefits to the Housing Service and its customers.

10. PROPOSED CHANGES TO POINTAGE AND ALLOCATION POLICY

With reference to Article 7 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 20 February 2001, there was submitted [Report No 615/03](#) by the Director of Housing seeking approval to make a number of changes to Angus Council's Housing Allocation Policy, a copy of which had been placed in the Members' Lounge.

The Report concluded that the allocations policy introduced in April 2002 had allowed the local authority to go beyond its statutory duties in meeting housing need. However, operational experience had shown that there was a need to make minor changes to the policy. The proposed changes should not only meet the stringent regulatory framework but also ensure a consistent yet locally responsive approach across Angus which met housing need and tackled some of the management problems which could be compounded by the more traditional and inflexible allocations policies.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed changes to the allocations policy, as outlined in Section C of the Report.

11. ANGUS COUNCIL HOUSE GARDEN COMPETITION

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 1 October 2002, there was submitted [Report No 616/03](#) by the Director of Housing outlining the format for the 2003 Council House Garden Competition, including arrangements for the prize giving ceremony.

The Report advised that, in a change to the format last year, tenants had been invited to enter their gardens in the competition. It was proposed to continue with this format for the 2003 competition, with the entry forms being printed in the next edition of Housing News, due to be issued to tenants of mainstream properties in June of this year.

The Committee agreed to hold the prize giving ceremony, with appropriate hospitality, immediately prior to the Housing Committee meeting scheduled for 9 October 2003, in the Board Room, St James House, Forfar.

12. HOUSING 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 617/03](#) by the Director of Housing advising members on the progress to date in achieving the targets and outcomes agreed with the Scottish Executive, in relation to the allocation of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 implementation funding for homelessness duties.

The Report concluded that Angus Council had, in the main, successfully met the specified targets agreed with the Scottish Executive and, where there had been some slippage as a consequence of recruitment problems, these targets would be carried forward and addressed in 2003/2004.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress to date; and
- (ii) in the context of community planning, to refer the Report to the Healthy, Safe and Caring Communities Partnership, for its interest.

13. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - WRITE-OFF OF RENT IN 2002/2003

With reference to Article 7 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 12 November 2002, there was submitted [Report No 618/03](#) by the Director of Housing on the Housing Revenue Account Rent Arrears for 2002/2003 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 rent amount associated with the cases as set out in the Appendix to the Report totalling £71,864.26.

14. APPEALS FRAMEWORK - WAITING LIST, ALLOCATIONS AND TENANCY CHANGES

There was submitted [Report No 619/03](#) by the Director of Housing seeking approval for the introduction of a formal appeals framework for allocations.

The Report concluded that, as Housing services were taken forward, it was only right that the Housing Department should seek to be as open and transparent with their customers as possible, and an appeals procedure was vital to those concepts. It was hoped that the procedure would foster confidence with the customers and provide valuable feedback on the operation of the allocations policy.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to approve the introduction of a formal appeals framework for allocations and tenancy changes, a copy of which had been placed in the Members' Lounge.

*** 15. OPTIONS FOR LOCK-UP GARAGES AT HILLRISE, KIRRIEMUIR**

There was submitted [Report No 620/03](#) by the Director of Housing outlining three options for the future of the lock-up garages at Hillrise, Kirriemuir.

The Report advised that structural surveys had been carried out on all Council owned lock-ups and five of the sold lock-ups and these had identified serious problems with the roof beams, ties and wall panels, as well as with water ingress. The surveys had found that the same faults were present in all the Council owned lock-ups, as well as in the five sold lock-ups which were included in the survey.

The Convener advised the Committee that Councillor Henderson, the local member, had expressed his disappointment at the recommended option for demolition.

COUNCILLOR ELLIS, SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR ANGUS, MOVED THAT OPTION A BE APPROVED AND THAT THE LOCK-UP GARAGES IN HILLRISE BE REMOVED IN A DEMOLITION CONTRACT AT AN ESTIMATED COST OF £30,000.

Councillor Mackintosh, seconded by Councillor Leslie Melville, moved, as an amendment, that option C be approved (ie, all the lock-up garages should be repaired or, as in most cases, rebuilt as required) at an estimated cost of £64,000.

On a vote being taken, the members voted:-

For the motion:-

Councillors Ellis, Angus, McGlynn, Middleton, Mowatt, Ritchie, Robertson (7).

For the amendment:-

Councillors Mackintosh, Leslie Melville, Norrie, Speirs and Wood (5).

The motion was therefore declared carried and became the finding of the meeting.

16. COUNCIL HOUSE SALES - PROGRESS REPORT

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 18 February 2003, there was submitted [Report No 621/03](#) by the Director of Finance detailing Council house sales for the period up to 31 March 2003.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Report.

17. SHORT BREAKS FOR ADULTS WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY

With reference to Article 15 of the minute of meeting of the Social Work and Health Committee of 5 June 2003, there was submitted [Joint Report No 644/03](#) by the Acting Director of Social Work and the Director of Housing seeking approval for Social Work to work in partnership with Housing in order to secure a local authority tenancy which would be used as a "stand alone" short break facility for people with a learning disability.

The Report advised it was proposed to rent a two bedroomed local authority property in Arbroath and use this to offer short breaks throughout the day and also overnight. The property would be on the ground floor with level access throughout, but would only be suitable for ambulant people.

The Committee, for its interest, agreed to approve the recommendations as detailed in the Report.

18. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Committee resolved, in terms of Standing Order 27(2), that the public and press 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 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9.

19. COUNCIL HOUSE SALES - QUARTERLY SCHEDULES

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 18 February 2003, there was submitted and noted [Report No 622/03](#) by the Director of Finance which detailed individual Council house sales for the fourth quarter of 2002/2003.

20. IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATIONS APPROVED UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

With reference to Article 15 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 1 April 2003, there was submitted and noted [Report No 542/03](#) by the Director of Planning and Transport detailing applications for Improvement Grants totalling £61,291.33, which had been approved under delegated authority.

21. REPAIR GRANT APPLICATIONS APPROVED UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

With reference to Article 16 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 1 April 2003, there was submitted and noted [Report No 543/03](#) by the Director of Planning and Transport detailing applications for repair grants totalling £32,732.39 which had been approved under delegated authority.

22. DISPOSALS

(a) Park Homes - Arbroath

There was submitted [Report No 623/03](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of surplus Park Homes in Arbroath.

The Committee agreed that the six Park Homes at Abbotsford Road, Arbroath be advertised for sale on the open market as soon as possible as they were now surplus to requirements.

(b) 116 Millfield Road, Arbroath

There was submitted [Report No 624/03](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of a small area of ground adjacent to 116 Millfield Road, Arbroath, as outlined in the plan attached to the Report.

The Committee agreed that, subject to Section 12 consent being received from 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.

(c) 1 East Den Brae, Letham

There was submitted [Report No 625/03](#) by the Director of Housing relating to the disposal of a small area of ground adjacent to 1 East Den Brae, Letham 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 applicants on the appropriate terms and conditions, including the purchaser meeting all of the Council's legal and survey costs, the applicant acquiring the Council's interest in the existing common footpath and accepting that there would be a right of access reserved over the common path to pedestrians and the Council "in all time coming".

(d) Ness Drive, Cliffrburn, Arbroath

With reference to Article 20 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 13 August 2002, there was submitted [Report No 626/03](#) by the Director of Housing regarding the disposal of the site at 17-63 Ness Drive and 2-8 Great Michael Road, Arbroath to Angus Housing Association, which would be developed as Phase 1 of the regeneration of Cliffrburn in Arbroath.

The Committee agreed that the site at 17-63 Ness Drive and 2-8 Great Michael Road, Cliffrburn be sold to Angus Housing Association for £125,000 as the agreed valuation.

23. SERIOUS ARREARS CASES - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT TENANTS

There was submitted [Report No 628/03](#) by the Director of Housing regarding serious arrears of rent in respect of 17 Council house tenants, as detailed in the Appendix to the Report.

The Committee agreed that all 17 cases be monitored and that approval be given to evict if regular payments to reduce the arrears were not received.

24. VOLUNTEER CENTRE, ANGUS

There was submitted [Report No 629/03](#) by the Director of Housing seeking approval to grant financial support from the Housing Revenue Account to Volunteer Centre, Angus during financial year 2003/2004.

The Report concluded that the Volunteer Centre, Angus had a number of identified key areas of work which clearly linked with Housing Service objectives in terms of community consultation in physical regeneration projects and obtaining customer views. In addition, they had stated that they were keen to promote volunteering in housing estates where residents were most likely to be at risk of, or experience, multiple deprivation.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to approve payment of financial support amounting to £10,000 to Volunteer Centre, Angus during financial year 2003/2004; and
- (iii) to note that the collaboration between the Housing Service and Volunteer Centre, Angus would be subject to an Outcomes Agreement, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report.

25. REVOCATION OF CLOSING ORDERS

There was submitted [Report No 630/03](#) by the Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection regarding revocation of Closing Orders made by Angus District Council.

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council that the Closing Orders placed on the undernoted properties be revoked following works having been undertaken to bring the properties up to the tolerable standard as described in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987:-

- (i) First floor flat right, namely 5B South Street, Arbroath;
- (ii) Four apartment lower flat, namely the Railings, Leysmill, by Arbroath;
- (iii) 10 James Street, Carnoustie; and
- (iv) 43 Main Road, Inverkeilor.

26. PILOT INSTALLATION OF SOLAR WATER HEATING AT NEWTON AVENUE AND NEWTON CRESCENT, ARBROATH

There was submitted amended [Report No 631/03](#) by the Director of Housing advising members of the proposal to pilot the installation of solar water heating in 36 maisonettes in Newton Avenue and Newton Crescent, Arbroath.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposal at an estimated cost of £107,180 (£44,500 from Housing Capital and £62,680 from grant funding), subject to a successful application for grant aid from the Scottish Community Renewables Initiative which had been provisionally approved.

Councillors Ellis and Middleton, having declared an interest in the following item, left the meeting.

Councillor Angus took the chair for the following item.

27. PROVOST JOHNSTON ROAD, MONTROSE

With reference to Article 19 of the minute of meeting of the Social Work and Health Committee of 5 June 2003, there was submitted [Joint Report No 627/03](#) by the Director of Housing and the Acting Director of Social Work providing detailed proposals for Angus Community Care Charitable Trust Ltd's "Sheltered Housing Plus" project at Provost Johnston Road, Montrose and its proposed link to Balmain Court, Montrose.

The Committee, for its interest, agreed:-

- (i) to approve the design proposals outlined in the Report;
- (ii) to approve the payment of home loss and disturbance amounting to £12,000;
- (iii) to approve an amendment to the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme to reflect costs to be incurred on the initial phase of works on Balmain Court as detailed in the Report, which was currently estimated at some £250,000, but would be subject to review;
- (iv) to approve an amendment to the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme to provide for a contribution of £453,758 to the development costs of the ACCCT development on land to be sold to the Trust, having noted that the figure quoted may change, depending on the amount to be attributed to the works, as described in recommendation (iii) above; and
- (v) to approve the use of Management and Project Agreements between the Council and ACCCT to regulate the development at Provost Johnston Road, Montrose and its subsequent management.