

ORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Housing and Community Safety Committee

Tuesday, 19 October 2021

Various Locations via Video-Conference,

PRESENT

Councillor George Alexander, Councillor James Allan, Councillor Paula Coy, Councillor Lorna Creswell, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Ryan Edwards, Councillor Donald Gatt, Councillor Marc Macrae, Councillor Aaron McLean, Councillor Louise Nicol, Councillor Laura Powell

APOLOGIES

Ms Anna Bamforth, Ms Jane Bartecki, Councillor Theresa Coull, Mrs May McGarrie, Councillor Maria McLean, Councillor Derek Ross

IN ATTENDANCE

Also in attendance at the above meeting were the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Head of Housing and Property, Legal Services Manager, Building Services Manager and Lindsey Robinson, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the Committee.

1. Chair

Councillor Nicol, as Chair of the Housing and Community Safety Committee, chaired the meeting.

2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from Group Leaders or Spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Member's Interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

3. Resolution

The meeting resolved in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the public and media representatives be excluded from the meeting for Item 9 of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the relevant Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Paragraph Number of Minute	Paragraph Number of Schedule 7a and Reason
9	9 Information on terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the Authority.

4. Written Questions **

The Committee noted that there were no written questions.

5. Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2022-23 to 2026-27

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asked the Committee to approve the Council's draft Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2022/23 - 2026/27.

During consideration the Chair moved the recommendations as printed with Section 7 of the Draft SHIP report amended to include the following:

Moray Council will consider individual open market purchases if the following criteria are met:

- There is a need for the size and type of housing offered in the town/settlement (the approaches detailed in Section 3 above will apply).
- The purchase will not result in homelessness.
- The purchase price reflects the statutory condition requirements placed upon Council housing (SQHS/ EESSH or similar).

Open Market purchases will be prioritised as follows:

1. Where the purchase will assist the Council with delivery of SQHS/EESSH/Capital improvements.
2. Where the purchase will assist the Council to meet specialist housing need.
3. Where the purchase will bring an empty property back into occupation.

Each property considered will be subject to a value for money assessment to ensure that the capital costs for acquisition and required upgrades/improvements can be met through the rental stream of the property without a negative impact on the Housing Revenue Account. Each property will require a property condition report by the Council's Housing and Property officers. Purchases must be approved by the Head of Housing and Property. Vendors must pay their own costs. All properties purchased will become part of the Council's housing stock. Allocations will be made to Housing List applicants in accordance with the Council's Allocations Policy. This was seconded by Councillor A McLean.

The Legal Service Manager advised that in making the agreed changes to Section 7 of the SHIP, delegation should be given to the Head of Housing and Property to confirm in that section how valuations of potential properties will be arrived at.

There being no one otherwise minded, the Committee agreed:

- (i) to approve the draft SHIP for submission to the Scottish Government by 29 October 2021 with an amendment to Section 7 of the draft SHIP report to state that:

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- (ii) that in making the agreed changes to Section 7 of the SHIP, delegation is given to the Head of Housing and Property to confirm in that section how valuations of potential properties will be arrived at; and
- (iii) that further progress reports on the SHIP are presented to this Committee as required.

Councillor Allan joined the meeting during consideration of this item.

6. Local Lettings Plan 2022-27

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) presented the Committee with a Local Lettings Plan for approval prior to consultation with stakeholders.

Following consideration the Committee agreed:

- (i) to approve the Local Lettings Plan 2022-2027 as set out in Section 4 and Appendix 1.
- (ii) that a consultation exercise on the revised Local Lettings Plan is undertaken with key stakeholders as set out in section 5; and
- (iii) that following the consultation exercise a further report will be presented to this Committee.

7. Housing and Property Services Budget Monitoring - 31 August 2021

Under reference to paragraph 7 of the Minute of the meeting of the Council dated 18 February 2021, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) presented the budget position for the Housing Revenue Budget (HRA) and General Services Other Housing Budget for the period up to 31 August 2021.

Following consideration, where the Officers answered question relating to the plans to increase spend in the relevant budget areas now that Covid restrictions are easing and how the inflation rate for building supplies is impacting on services, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

8. Question Time ***

Councillor Alexander sought clarification on whether there was any indication on the impact of the Council Tax levy on empty properties and if it had helped to bring properties back into use, and if the Service had any plans to replace gas boilers with air source pumps.

In response, the Head of Housing and Property advised that he would provide a report to a future meeting of the Committee on the impact of the Council Tax levy. He further advised that it was not current policy to replace gas boilers in Council houses with air source heat pumps. He further added that there is an ongoing programme to replace electric and oil fired systems with air source heating as the need arises.

Councillor Aaron McLean sought an update on the Council's position as a landlord with regards to meeting the new legislation for fire and smoke alarms. He further requested information on what enforcement action the Council can take on behalf of private renters to ensure that private landlords are complying with the new legislation.

In response, the Head of Housing and Property assured the Committee that the Council would be in a position to achieve the required standards by February 2022. He further added that colleagues in Environmental Health deal with private landlords via landlord registration and he would arrange for a written response to be sent to Councillor McLean to confirm the position with regards to private landlords and the enforcement action available to the Council.

In regards to the recently published Scottish Government's Heat and Buildings Strategy, Councillor Gatt sought clarification on what discussions/correspondence Officers have had with the Scottish Government with regards to reducing building heating emissions by 68% by 2030. In particular he sought clarification on what tax payer funding the Scottish Government is going to provide to achieve this in the Moray Council area and what timeline is projected to achieve this.

In response, the Head of Housing and Property advised that he would have to check with colleagues as he has had no direct contact with the Scottish Government since he has been in post. He further confirmed that the Housing Revenue Account business plan is currently being refreshed to ensure the investment profile is available to achieve the standards within the deadline.

He assured Councillor Gatt that there are a number of schemes the Council are already participating in, in terms of grants from the Scottish Government and other associated schemes.

He further advised that he would provide a more detailed response following the Committee on the different schemes and grants available from the Scottish Government which are being utilised.

He further added that consultants have been engaged to look at the climate change approach for all Council buildings, including council housing and this work will provide a pathway to ensure that all funding opportunities are being utilised.

9. Building Services Trading Operation Budget 2021-22 - Budget Monitoring [Para 9]

Under reference to paragraph 21 of the Minute of the meeting of the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee dated 8 June 2021, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) presented the budget monitoring information for the period to 31 August 2021 for the Building Services Trade Operation.

Following consideration, where Officers answered questions on the impact trade vacancies are having on the service and the projected budget forecast allowing for changing priorities in the upgrade programme, the Committee agreed to note:

- (i) the financial information for the period to 31 August 2021, as detailed in section 5 and Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (ii) the Building Services operating performance for the period to 31 August 2021, as set out in section 6 of the report.