

Housing Services Committee
19 September 1996

Irvine, 19 September 1996 - At a Meeting of the Housing Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Samuel Taylor, Gena Seales, Thomas Barr, Patrick Browne, David Gallagher and Margaret Munn and Robert Rae.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive, The Director of Housing Services, E. McNaught, Head of Customer Services and J. Paul, Head of Property Services (Housing Services), G. Wallace, Principal Officer Design Services (Architectural Services), J. Hair, Principal Officer (Financial Services), M. Hewitt, Corporate Policy Officer and S. Paxton, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. Taylor in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

James Clements, John Donn, Jane Gorman, Irene Oldfather and George Steven.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Services Committee held on 8 August 1996, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Housing Services Directorate: Structure

(Previous Minute Reference - Housing Services Committee - 7 March 1996)

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services regarding a review of the Housing Services Directorate structure.

The Housing Services Committee on 7 March 1996 noted that the structure of the Housing Services Directorate, established in the latter part of 1995 following the appointment of the Director of Housing Services, was an interim measure to allow a staged handover of responsibility from the District to the Unitary Authority and that a further review of the Directorate's structure would require to be undertaken following the ballot exercise for houses owned and managed by Irvine Development Corporation.

The ballot exercise is now complete and around 2,000 properties, 75 % of IDC's stock, will transfer to the Council at the end of November 1996. The Council will also take on 75% of IDC's staff, around 20 persons.

In order to accommodate personnel transfers and additional responsibilities, promote service decentralisation, prepare for the implementation of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) and enhance levels of customer service, a number of structural changes are proposed to the Directorate's structure.

The changes address the central client related services, services being prepared for decentralisation (Benefits, Arrears Control and Cash Control and Collection) and the full

decentralisation of already partially decentralised services as detailed in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of the report respectively.

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Support Services Committee (a) that 26 new posts be created to allow the transfer of IDC staff and other development of the service; (b) that 8 posts be deleted without any detriment to the service; (c) that 30 posts be upgraded including 19 posts at area office level; and (d) that certain posts currently vacant be retained and filled all as detailed in the report.

3. Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Submitted reports by (a) the Chief Executive; and (b) the Director of Housing Services on Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) considered by the Corporate Strategy Committee at its Meeting on 10 September 1996.

The roles assigned to Directors, the Head of Corporate Business and Managers were outlined to progress the Council's preparation for each of the "defined activities" to be put out to tender under the latest round of Compulsory Competitive Tendering. The Director of Housing Services detailed a strategy for Housing Management CCT which will allow the Directorate to progress preparations for the introduction of Housing Management CCT. Further reports on this progress will be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Noted.

4. Housing Benefit Computer System

(Previous Minute Reference - Housing Services Committee - 18 April 1996)

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services regarding the replacement of the Housing Benefit Computer System.

The Support Services Committee on 30 April 1996 agreed that the Information Technology Services Manager in consultation with the Director of Housing Services investigate the provision of a new computer system for the administration of Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

Following an examination of a wide range of available systems a suitable, fully comprehensive Housing computer package has been identified which would be in keeping with the Council's Corporate I.T. Strategy. This system should assist in the further decentralisation of the housing service.

To allow as short a tender process as possible, it is intended to issue an open tender for a Housing/Council Tax Benefit system in late September 1996 and that a recommendation be submitted to the Housing Services Committee in January 1997.

Noted.

5. Policy on Homelessness

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on a proposed policy on homelessness.

The Council has a statutory obligation towards homeless persons in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 Part II supplemented by the Homelessness Code of Guidance issued by the Scottish Office. There are, however, a number of areas left to be decided by local authorities on a policy basis.

A draft policy has now been prepared to establish a comprehensive approach by all Directorates and other agencies towards homelessness. In addition it is proposed that the Council develop the

range of temporary accommodation available.

The Committee agreed to refer consideration of the proposed homelessness policy to a Member/Officer Working Group consisting of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Leader of the Council along with appropriate officers to allow a consultation process with groups working with homeless persons and report back to a future Meeting of the Committee.

6. Draft Code of Guidance on Homelessness

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on a response to the draft Code of Guidance on Homelessness.

The draft Code of Guidance has been issued by the Scottish Office as the first stage in the replacement of the 1991 Code of Guidance which is currently followed by the Council. The draft Code proposes a wide range of changes in relation to prevention of homelessness, co-operation with agencies such as Housing Associations, the handling of applications and enquiries, and the issues of "priority need", the intentionally homeless and of referrals to other authorities.

The Committee agreed that the Scottish Office be advised that the Council welcomes the revision of the Code of Guidance on Homelessness generally but has concerns in relation to the following issues:-

- (a) the removal of the right to permanent accommodation which will cause difficulties for homeless people by causing a great deal of uncertainty and may also prove to be more expensive as a result of the generally higher costs of temporary accommodation;
- (b) the greater emphasis on "collusive removals" (ie where a person colludes with the owner of their accommodation to claim that they are obliged to leave the accommodation) which is difficult to justify since local authorities are already required to satisfy themselves that these have not taken place and the proposals contained within the Code would seem to be very difficult to operate in practice;
- (c) the Code does not recognise the vulnerability of young people, particularly 16 and 17 year olds, and it would be appropriate for such young people to be regarded as being in priority need;
- (d) the proposal to categorise those who suffer from external violence, e.g. from anti-social tenants, as homeless is of concern since, which the Council is aware of the distress this can cause, it would prefer that the emphasis was on removing the source of the problem rather than the victim.
- (e) the Council would also ask that recognition be given to the impact on the problem of homelessness that is caused by the restriction on the building of low cost local authority housing.

7. Aids and Adaptations Policy for Council Housing Stock

Submitted joint report by the Directors of Housing Services and Social Work on a proposed policy for Aids and Adaptations for Council housing stock.

The provision of aids and adaptations is aimed at allowing tenants with a disability to remain in their own home with safety and with a degree of independence. The Council's present policy, adopted from the former Cunninghame District Council, was established in April 1994.

Occupational Therapy (OT) staff from within the Social Work Directorate currently assess the needs of people with disabilities who make application for aids and adaptations. The Housing Services Directorate is responsible for approving and arranging for the installation of adaptations for tenants and has a budget of £200,000 in 1996/97 for that purpose.

All applications are placed on a waiting list on the date they are received in the categories of either

Urgent, Hospital Priority or Date Order. The waiting list currently stands at 727.

The Directors of Social Work and Housing Services have reviewed the existing arrangements and propose, as detailed in the appendix to the report, to introduce a five point system to prioritise applications on the basis of need and establish a two-tier waiting list for assessed applicants, of a Qualifying List and a Hospital Discharge List. In addition, the policy incorporates the principles of the best use of housing stock and value for money. In order to introduce the new policy effectively it will be necessary to undertake an exercise to re-assess the needs of all applicants currently on the waiting lists. Reports monitoring the operation of the policy will be issued to members in due course.

The Social Work Committee at its meeting on 18 September approved for its interest the joint policy, in the recommendation of its Development Sub-Committee.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve for its interest the joint policy in relation to aids and adaptations provision for the Council's housing stock; and (b) to authorise the re-assessment of the existing waiting list in line with the new policy and that a report on the outcome be submitted to the Housing Services Committee.

8. Policy on Anti-Social Neighbours and Neighbour Disputes

(Previous Minute Reference - Housing Services Committee - 18 April 1996)

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on a proposed policy for anti-social neighbours and neighbour disputes.

The Housing Services Committee in April 1996 agreed to the establishment of a Member/Officer Working Group to examine the problem of anti-social neighbours and produce a policy to address such behaviour.

The Working Group considered various aspects of the policy, a copy of which was appended to the report, which includes a definition of neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour arrangements for co-operation between other agencies of the Council; procedures for dealing with three new categories of complaints and appropriate options for legal action (with eviction as a last resort) where other efforts to resolve the problem fail.

The Committee agreed to adopt the policy on anti-social neighbours and neighbour disputes to be implemented from 1 December 1996.

9. Cunninghame Women's Aid: Funding

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on funding arrangements for Cunninghame Women's Aid.

Cunninghame Women's Aid is an autonomous local group within Women's Aid providing safe accommodation, support and counselling for women and children who encounter or are threatened with domestic violence and other physical or emotional forms of abuse.

Since 1989 Cunninghame District Council and Strathclyde Regional Council funded this organisation on a 50/50 basis but in 1995/96 there was a deviation from the joint funding approach as Cunninghame District Council accepted an application for additional funding of £30,000 for development purposes while Strathclyde Regional Council did not. The District Council contributed a total of £185,075 while the Regional Council contributed £155,075.

The Council's Social Work Committee on 17 April 1996 approved a contribution of £155,075 for 1996/97 to Cunninghame Women's Aid.

The Committee agreed that a grant of £185,500 be paid to Cunninghame Women's Aid for the

financial year 1996/97.

10. Irvine: Multi-Storey Flats

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on the allocation of multi-storey flats in Irvine.

A number of issues relating to allocation of vacancies and the security of the multi-storey flats in Irvine have been raised by the local Member for that area. Multi-storey flats are by their nature more difficult to manage than traditional accommodation as a high concentration of residents within a relatively small area can cause conflict and security problems.

The Committee agreed that this issue be dealt with as part of the review of the Allocation Policy which will address security issues.

11. Ardrossan: Flats Above Shops at Ashgrove Road/Lawson Drive

(Previous Minute Reference - Housing Services Committee - 8 August 1996)

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services regarding flats above shops at Ashgrove Road/Lawson Drive, Ardrossan.

The Housing Services Committee on 8 August 1996 agreed that the Director of Housing Services, in conjunction with the Architectural Services Manager, submit a report on the proposals for the physical and structural alterations to the layout of the flats and associated costs to the next Meeting of the Committee.

A number of different layouts have been prepared, which would involve substantial investment on the part of the Council from the Housing HRA Capital Programme, ranging from the development of single persons one bedroom accommodation to the provision of two/three bedroom apartments.

Any proposed revision to the housing layout would not, however, address the anti-social activity which takes place on or around the site and it is proposed that a Member/Officer Working Group examine the possible physical changes to the property within a broader environmental context.

The Committee agreed that a Member/Officer Working Group consisting of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Local Member and appropriate officers examine possible alterations to the structure of the buildings and report.

12. Stevenston: New Street: Fabric and Repair Improvement Scheme

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on the fabric repair and improvement scheme at New Street, Stevenston.

Cunninghame District Council had identified sub-tolerable housing and associated commercial premises at 37-95 New Street, Stevenston within the town centre for improvement under the Council's Housing Action Area programme. Following condition surveys and cost estimates it was concluded that the properties at 51/67 New Street could not be improved at reasonable cost and these were declared a Housing Action Area for Demolition. Acquisitions are well advanced, a Planning Brief has been approved by the Council and demolition is to take place as soon as possible.

Other properties identified for improvement were at numbers 37, 37a, 39, 39a, 75, 95 and 95a New Street. Repairs Notices and Improvement Orders were served on the owners of the properties, a scheme prepared and tenders invited. The tender costs were, however, considerably in excess of the estimated cost and as a result the properties were re-surveyed and the necessary repair and improvement work re-assessed.

It is proposed, given the poor condition of the properties, the high cost of rehabilitation and their

proximity to the Housing Action Area for Demolition that no action be taken in respect of the tenders submitted. It is also proposed that discussions be held with the owners and Scottish Homes on the future of these properties.

The Committee agreed (a) to take no further action to promote the scheme; and (b) that the Director of Housing Services (i) subject to ascertaining whether the owner of the public house is unable or unwilling to spend the monies required to bring the property up to the tolerable standard, discuss with the owners the future use of the properties and associated land; and (ii) to explore with Scottish Homes the possibility of an enlarged redevelopment site in New Street including these properties.

13. Tenders

(a) Stevenston: Central Heating Programme

Submitted report by the Architectural Services Manager on tenders received for the installation of central heating in 132 houses in Stevenston.

After discussion the Committee agreed to authorise the Architectural Services Manager to accept the lowest tender of £268,445.92 submitted by James Frew Limited, Stevenston.

(b) Irvine: Sloan Avenue/Ballot Road: Flat to Pitched Roof Conversions

Submitted report by the Architectural Services Manager on tenders received to convert existing flat roofed blocks of flats to tile pitched roofs at Sloan Avenue/Ballot Road, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to accept the lowest tender of £266,886.60 from Central Building Contractors, Glasgow.

14. Private Sector Housing Grants

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix HS1) by the Director of Housing Services on applications for improvement, disabled, lead replacement and environmental improvement grants.

The Committee agreed the decisions intimated in the final columns of the said Appendix.

15. Millport: 7/9 Cardiff Street: Repair Notices

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on the condition of property at 7 and 9 Cardiff Street, Millport contained within the Millport No. 5 Housing Action Area for Improvement..

The Committee agreed to serve Repair Notices in terms of Section 108 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 on (a) the flat and public house at 7 Cardiff Street; and (b) the 3 flats and store at 9 Cardiff Street (rear), Millport.

16. Stevenston: 48/50 Lundholm Road: Demolition Order

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on the condition of two semi-detached houses at 48/50 Lundholm Road, Stevenston which have been vandalised, are fire-damaged and below the tolerable standard.

The Committee agreed to authorise the service of a Demolition Order in terms of Section 115 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 on the semi-detached houses at 48 and 50 Lundholm Road, Stevenston.

17. Conference

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on an invitation from the Scottish Local Government Information Unit to attend a conference entitled "Decent Housing: A Manifesto for a Scottish Parliament" to be held in Glasgow on 8 November 1996.

The Committee agreed to be represented by the Chair and Vice-Chair or their nominees at the conference.

18. Urgent Items

The Chair agreed that the following items be considered as matters of urgency.

(a) Montgomerie Terrace, Kilwinning

The Chair outlined the current concerns with regard to Montgomerie Terrace, Kilwinning and the Committee agreed that a Member/Officer Working Group consisting of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Local Member and appropriate officers examine the issues surrounding Montgomerie Terrace and report back to a future Meeting of the Committee;

(b) Membership of Housing Associations

Intimations have been received from the Irvine and the Cunninghame Housing Associations to nominate a member of the Council to their Management Committees.

The Committee agreed (a) that Councillor Patrick Browne represent the Council on the Irvine Housing Association; and (b) that the Chair represent the Council on the Cunninghame Housing Association.

The Meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.

**Housing Services Committee
19/09/96**

Appendix No
HOU 1

Code	Ref No & Date Rec'd	Name & Address of Applicant (and of Owner if different)	Property to be Repaired/Improved	Lowest Estimate	Amount & Rate of Grant
APPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT GRANT (DISABLED OCCUPANT)					
5	IG/96/107 15/8/96	Mrs. Janet McNaught	Farmfield Cottage West Kilbride	1914	1436 (75%)
5	IG/96/109 19/8/96	Douglas White	27 Kelburne Street Millport	2500	1875 (75%)
5	IG/96/103 7/8/96	Josephine Monaghan	4 Burns Place Stevenston	4500	3375 (75%)
5	IG/96/100 29/7/96	Thomas McKechnan	26 Townhead Street Stevenston	696	522 (75%)
5	IG/96/106 14/6/96	Robert Hamilton	17 Glenside Crescent West Kilbride	1817	1363 (75%)
5	IG/96/102 5/8/96	Robert Millar	7 Broomlands Drive Irvine	5565	4174 (75%)
5	IG/96/110 21/8/96	Thomas Murray	7 Kerr Drive Irvine	678	509 (75%)
5	IG/96/101 5/8/96	Gordon & Anne McKenzie	5 Barra Place Irvine	1081	811 (75%)
5	IG/96/111 23/8/96	John & Georgina Kerr per The Gray Aitken Partnership 7 Glasgow Street Ardrossan	6 Churchill Drive Ardrossan	10579	7934 (75%)
5	IG/96/112 26/8/96	William Strachan	24 Watson Terrace Irvine	3380	2535 (75%)
5	IG/96/113 29/8/96	John Lees per McMilan & Cronin Architects 24 Main Street Largs	26 Castlepark Drive Fairlie	12600 (max.)	9450 (75%)
5	IG/96/124	Hamish Thomson	"Shalarel" Brodick, Arran	12600 (max.)	9450 (75%)
APPLICATIONS FOR LEAD REPLACEMENT GRANT					
15	LG/96/63 19/8/96	Mary Rose Howard	26 Burnside Road Largs	390	351 (90%)
15	LG/96/61 16/8/96	Stewart Weir	Ceol-Na-Mara Bungalow Road Lamlash Arran	600	495 (90%)
15	LG/96/56 31/7/96	Carol Clarke	27 Sidney Street Saltcoats	383	300 (90%)
15	LG/96/62	Alister Hyndman	Burnside	1181	1018 (90%)

	16/8/96		Blackwaterfoot Arran		
15	LG/96/64 26/8/96	William Adamson	16 Glenacre Drive Largs	284	256 (90%)
15	LG/96/65 26/8/96	Catherine Brown	44 Dalry Road Kilwinning	495	401 (90%)
15	LG/96/59 12/8/96	Marion Reid	56 Gladstone Road Saltcoats	729	611 (90%)
15	LG/96/66 30/8/96	Sarah Conway	125 Glencairn Terrace Stevenston	479	386 (90%)
15	LG/96/67 2/9/96	Charles Iley	7 Caledonia Road Ardrossan	965	824 (90%)
APPLICATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL LEAD REPLACEMENT GRANT					
15	LG/96/14 27/1/95	William Black	120 Bank Street Irvine	981	838
APPLICATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENT GRANT					
19	IG/54/96 11/3/96	Janet Kerr	Carmahome Kilpatrick Arran	6436	4827
APPLICATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT GRANT					
21	E7/96 4/9/96	The Owners per Cunninghame Housing Association 82/84 Glasgow Street Ardrossan	7,9,15 & 17 Cardiff Street Millport	25200	21000 (3000 max. per unit)
APPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT GRANT					
3	IG/96/105 9/5/96	Gerald Fox per Cunninghame Housing Association 82/84 Glasgow Street Ardrossan	9 Cardiff Street G/R Rear Millport	40538	36439 (90%)
1	IG/96/94 17/7/96	Marjory McCallum per Cunninghame Housing Association 82/84 Glasgow Street Ardrossan	17 Cardiff Street Millport	53249	47879 (90%)
1	IG/96/104 7/8/96	Henry McLaughlan per Cunninghame Housing Association 82/84 Glasgow Street Ardrossan	7 Cardiff Street Millport	66773	60050 (90%)
APPLICATIONS FOR REPAIRS GRANT					
2	RG/96/18 7/8/96	Henry McLaughlan per Cunninghame Housing Association 82/84 Glasgow Street Ardrossan	7 Cardiff Street Millport (Public House)	32758	24568 (75%)
2	RG/96/17 7/8/96	Henry McLaughlan per Cunninghame Housing Association 82/84 Glasgow Street Ardrossan	7 Cardiff Street Millport (Rear Store)	20286	15214 (75%)