

Property Services Standing Sub Committee
11 August 2004

IRVINE, 11 August 2004 - At a Meeting of the Property Services Standing Sub Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

John Bell, Margaret McDougall, Elizabeth McLardy, David O'Neill, Samuel Taylor, Nan Wallace and Richard Wilkinson.

In Attendance

T Orr, Corporate Director; O Clayton, Head of Housing; J Currie, Head of Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Transport; J Paul, Head of Technical Services; and R Small, Head of Roads (Property Services); S Bale and C Graham, Corporate and Democratic Support Officers (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Wilkinson declared an interest in the following item of business in relation to the Housing Services Acceptance of Contracts in respect of Hansel Alliance contained in Appendix 4A to the report.

1. Scheme of Delegation to Officers

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the use of delegated powers by the Corporate Director (Property Services) in the period 1 May 2003 to 23 July 2004.

Details were provided on the decisions taken under the Council's Scheme of Delegation to Officers by the undernoted services:-

- Building Services
- Catering and Cleaning Services
- Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance & Transport Services
- Housing Services
- Roads Services and
- Technical Services

Clarification was provided on

- the purchase and use of minibuses and transit vans within the Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Transport section and
- the funding of works in relation to tenders within the Technical Services section.

Noted.

2. Public Performance Reporting: Statutory Performance Indicators 2002/03

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the Statutory Performance Indicators for Property Services for the year ended 31 March 2004.

The Accounts Commission requires councils to collate and publish their Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) each financial year, to facilitate comparisons not only between councils but also within each council over time. The figures are subject to external scrutiny by Audit Scotland and will be published by the Accounts Commission in due course.

Not all activities of the services within Property Services are subject to monitoring in terms of SPIs. Those which do come within this framework were detailed in Appendices A (1-4), B (1-4) and C (1-3) to the report.

Discussion followed on issues relating to

Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Transport

- partnership working in terms of recycling materials
- proposals and costs relating to refuse disposal on Arran and
- the mechanisms in place for glass and paper recycling

Technical Services

- the improvement in relation to rent loss due to voids and the time taken to re-let houses
- Housing Response Repairs by appointment, one-third of all repairs now being dealt with in this manner
- the proposed introduction of a direct debit scheme for the payment of rent and
- whether indicators in future years may be affected as a result of the transfer of housing stock from local authorities

Housing Services

- the large numbers of cases requiring assessment in respect of homelessness/potential homelessness within North Ayrshire and the process for appeals
- the lack of bed and breakfast facilities available due to the closure/redevelopment of those business and

- the possibilities of the provision of statistical information in future years of the cross-sections of the public who are within the homeless/potentially homeless category

Roads

- the target for the percentage of Traffic Light repairs completed within 48 hours
- the response times during 2003/04 in relation to the percentage of Street Lighting repairs completed within 7 days
- the appointment of a new contractor to carry out the Street Lighting repairs
- the costs of the replacement of Street Lighting

The Sub Committee (a) acknowledged the improvements in performance within certain SPIs; (b) noted the content of the reports; and (c) agreed to the proposals for ensuring this information is made widely accessible to the public and other stakeholders.

3. Housing Supply and Availability

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the Council properties let during 2003/04 and information on overall stock by area.

The efficient management of void properties is a key objective within the Service Plan for Housing Services 2004/2007. A number of new working practices and service initiatives have been introduced leading to significant improvements in performance. Re-let times have also been reduced and better services are being provided to customers.

The current number of properties becoming vacant has remained relatively stable at around 1,500, representing 9% of the housing stock. There are pockets within the Council's stock for which demand is either very low or non-existent. Measures taken to deal with areas of particularly low demand, including demolition and redevelopment, and householder purchase, have inevitably resulted in a reduction in the stock available for letting. Demand for houses continues to remain high, with a current waiting and transfer list of around 5,500. Details of the nature of properties in terms of house size, type and area, together with up to date stock information by estate, were provided in Appendices 1-3 of the report.

The Service Plan for Housing Services 2004/2007 contains a commitment to improve information to applicants on their prospects for rehousing including the provision of user-friendly advice on applications and availability and waiting times within areas.

The introduction of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard will have significant implications for the future of the Council's housing stock. The outcome of the Scottish Executive's Affordable Housing Review will also impact on future housing investment in North Ayrshire. Reports on both these issues will be submitted to the next Property Services Committee.

The Committee noted (a) the current position with regard to the supply and demand for the Council's own stock; and (b) the proposals to provide enhanced information to applicants on housing turnover and general availability within their areas of choice.

The meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.