

Housing Services Committee
19 November 1998

Irvine, 19 November 1998 - At a Meeting of the Housing Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Gena Seales, Thomas Barr, Patrick Browne, David Gallagher, Samuel Gooding, Margaret Munn, Irene Oldfather and George Steven.

In Attendance

The Corporate Director (Property Services); F. Kelly, Head of Housing and J. Paul, Head of Technical Services (Property Services); D. Nibloe, Principal Officer, Accountancy (Financial Services); and S. Bale, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mrs. Seales in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Samuel Taylor, James Clements, John Donn and Jane Gorman.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 8 October 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. General Consent for Rent Deposits for Private Landlords

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the new General Consent for Guarantees, Indemnities and Rent Deposits for Private Landlords in Scotland 1998.

The General Consent issued by the Secretary of State for Scotland in September 1998, under Sections 25-26 of the Local Government Act 1988 allows Local Authorities to give rent guarantees or indemnities or, if required, payment to private landlords, where this is necessary to secure the grant of a tenancy without their having to seek the consent of the Secretary of State in each case. Such assistance by the Local Authority is subject to the conditions that (i) the Local Authority is of the opinion that the tenant would not reasonably be able to pay the rent deposit required by the landlord; and (ii) the aggregate assistance shall not exceed eight times the initial weekly rent of the tenancy. There would be a number of implications for the Council if it wished to establish such a scheme, including the complexities of the administration, the requirement for means testing and the financial implications, as all costs including administration costs, would have to be met from existing resources, chargeable against the General Fund.

Although the Scottish Office links rent guarantee or rent deposit schemes to the prevention of homelessness, it also emphasises the need to set and monitor standards for the condition and management of properties included in the scheme, as well as the need for rules on returning deposits and dealing with disputes. The implication is that a rent guarantee or rent deposit scheme should be only one element of a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary strategy aimed at targeting homelessness and improving the condition of and access to privately rented accommodation.

After a full discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to consider further the feasibility of

implementing a rent deposit scheme, as part of the review of the Council's Homeless Policy in December 1998/January 1999; and (b) to request the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Regulatory Services) to report on the current position in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation and the implications arising from both the General Consent for Rent Deposits for Private Landlords and the recent consultation document on mandatory licensing of HMOs.

3. Red Cross Properties at Kiln Walk, Irvine

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the purchase of the British Red Cross properties at Kiln Walk, Irvine.

British Red Cross (Scotland) have approached the Council regarding five one-apartment virtually barrier free houses in Kiln Walk, Irvine which are surplus to their requirements. The properties are bedsit type which have been purpose built and can accommodate disabled/wheelchair access. The properties would be suitable as temporary furnished accommodation for homeless persons, including the elderly and people with learning disabilities, multiple disabilities and mental health problems. The purchase price amounts to £19,000 per unit, inclusive of furnishings and fittings.

The Committee agreed to approve the purchase of the five one-apartment British Red Cross properties at Kiln Walk, Irvine for a total sum of £95,000, inclusive of furnishings and fittings, subject to a satisfactory formal valuation prior to purchase, the costs to be met from the 1998/99 HRA Capital Account.

4. Mill Cottage: Sevenacresmill: Kilwinning

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the serving of a Demolition Order in respect of the property at Mill Cottage, Sevenacresmill, Kilwinning.

Following a complaint by a tenant, the property was inspected and found to be below the tolerable standard in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act, 1987. It is proposed therefore to re-house the tenants and to serve a Demolition Order on the owners.

The Committee agreed to authorise the serving of a Demolition Order in respect of the property at Mill Cottage, Sevenacresmill, Kilwinning.

5. Lift Replacement at Lambie Court and O'Connor Court, Saltcoats

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on tenders for lift replacement at Lambie Court and O'Connor Court, Saltcoats.

Tenders were received from Pickerings Lifts Limited, Lift Maintenance Limited and Hammond and Champness Limited, details of which were given in the report.

The Committee agreed to approve the acceptance of the lowest tender, amounting to £310,214.10 submitted by Pickerings Lifts Limited.

6. Ground Surplus to Requirements: 17 Garelet Place, Irvine and 83a Glencairn Street, Stevenston

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on requests for sale of ground at 17 Garelet Place, Irvine and 83a Glencairn Street, Stevenston.

The owners of these properties have approached the Council to purchase areas of ground, held in the Housing Account, outside their properties for the purpose of extending their garden ground and in the case of 83a Glencairn Street, Stevenston to use also as off-street car parking.

The Committee agreed (a) to declare the areas of ground as shown on the plans attached to the report as surplus to requirements; and (b) to remit the disposal to the Support Services Committee.

7. Private Sector Housing Grants

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix HS1) by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on grant applications for Improvement, Disabled Occupants, Lead Replacement and Repairs.

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

8. Conference: Chartered Institute of Housing Conference and Exhibition

Submitted invitation to attend the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference and Exhibition to be held in Harrogate from 21 to 25 June 1999.

The Committee agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair or their nominees be authorised to attend.

9. Urgent Items

The Chair agreed that the following item be considered as a matter of urgency.

10. Central Heating Programme 1998/99: Installation of Central Heating to 121 Houses in Kilwinning and Stevenston

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on tenders to instal central heating in 121 houses in Kilwinning and Stevenston.

Tenders were received from James Frew Limited, Thomson Construction, Drake & Scull, CFM Building Services and D. Campbell & Co., details of which were given in the report.

The Committee agreed to approve the acceptance of the lowest tender, amounting to £233,684.07 submitted by James Frew Limited, Stevenston.

The meeting ended at 2.25 p.m.