

Housing Services Committee
30 May 1996

Irvine, 30 May 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, John Donn, David Gallagher, Jane Gorman, Margaret Munn, Irene Oldfather, Robert Rae and George Steven.

In Attendance

The Director of Housing Services, the Head of Customer Services, the Head of Property Services, the Head of Strategy and Development, the Principal Officer, Design Services (Architectural Services), the Principal Officer, Accountancy Services (Financial Services), a Corporate Policy Officer (Miss Hewitt) and an Administration Officer (Mr Paxton).

Chair

Mr Taylor in the Chair

Apologies for Absence

James Clements and Thomas Dickie.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 April 1996, copies of which had been previously circulated, were confirmed.

2. Rent Arrears Recovery

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services regarding rent arrears recovery.

Rent arrears which resulted in a delay in receiving income or loss of income is a significant problem for North Ayrshire Council. The main objective of the Council's approach to the management of rent arrears is to minimise the level of arrears and reduce the likelihood of eviction. The current procedure involves eight separate stages of contact with tenants and commences at the stage when one month's rent is outstanding. Letters to tenants are progressively firmer as the procedure progresses stressing the serious consequences of failing to address an arrears problem. Regular visits are also made to tenants in arrears by trained Housing Directorate staff to help to resolve the problem.

If the tenant enters into an arrangement to repay the arrears, no further action is taken unless the arrears continue to increase because repayment arrangements have broken down.

Eviction is the Council's ultimate sanction and can only be undertaken once a decree has been obtained. At this point the tenant is given a further opportunity to make payment or enter into an arrangement. If the tenant fails to do so, an eviction is scheduled.

The Director of Housing Services notifies the Director of Social Work when a decree has been obtained against a tenant and an eviction has been scheduled. Intervention by a social worker at this stage may help in assisting the tenant manage their arrears problem.

When eviction is scheduled the tenant receives a further approach from the Director of

Housing Services concerning the arrears problem, cases scheduled for eviction are reviewed to examine all relevant circumstances and to ensure that the arrears procedure has been applied in full.

After a full discussion the Committee agreed (a) that initial contact with tenants who fall into arrears should take place after two weeks rather than one month; and (b) otherwise to continue the present approach to rent arrears recovery.

3. Major HRA Repair and Improvement Programmes 1996/97

Submitted report by Director of Housing Services on the proposed major repair and improvements programmes for the Council's housing stock for 1996/97.

Cunninghame District Council had an incremental approach to major repair and improvement work on Council houses with separate programmes for different elements in each property, each with its own criteria for determining priority, funded from revenue and capital programmes. These separate programmes were, where possible, co-ordinated.

North Ayrshire Council on 20 February 1996 approved the HRA revenue budget in the same format and structure as the previous Cunninghame District Council budget. The criteria for such repair and improvement programmes dealing with boundary fencing, external fabric paintwork, baths and kitchens were detailed in the Director of Housing Services' Report.

The HRA capital programme for 1996/97, based on the rolled forward programme previously approved by Cunninghame District Council, was approved by North Ayrshire Council on 14 May 1996. The programme covers central heating, cavity wall insulation, re-roofing, re-rendering and metal window replacement. The latter represents the final year of a 4 year programme to replace all metal windows originally installed by the Council on a worst first basis and should complete the replacement of windows in the remaining 1000 houses in the programme. There are still, however, 900 houses not included in the programme with replacement metal windows. These were installed by Cunninghame District Council in the late 1970's and will be replaced in financial year 1997/98.

Tenants will be notified of their inclusion in the revenue and capital programmes. The feasibility of double glazing all of the Council's housing stock was also discussed.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the criteria proposed in respect of major HRA repair and improvement programmes in 1996/97; (b) that all remaining metal windows be replaced in 1997/98; and (c) that the Director of Housing Services report on the cost and feasibility of installing double glazing in the Council's housing stock.

4. Central Heating Programme

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on proposals for the Central Heating Programme.

Most of the Council's housing stock now has either gas or white meter electric central heating as all tenants receiving new central heating systems have a choice of systems.

Cunninghame District Council had identified for priority treatment older, obsolete gas systems and systems installed by tenants which had been excluded from previous central heating programmes.

Prior to each central heating contract commencing, a public presentation is given to tenants by Architectural Services and Housing Services Directorate Officers, and attended by the local Member, which provides details of the new system and the timescale for installation work.

The HRA Capital Programme approved by the Council at its meeting on 14 May 1996 made provision of £2.3 million for new central heating which would be sufficient to fund the replacement

in 1996/97 of all gas systems installed before 1975. A similar sized programme in 1997/98, financed by the continuation of Capital Funded from Current Revenue (CFCR) which offsets reducing capital allocations, will fund the replacement of gas systems installed before 1980.

Different circumstances with regard to tenant choice now apply as the central heating programme targets the replacement of existing gas systems for the first time, rather than installing new central heating systems. Most of the older gas systems have fires with back boilers and the pipework is installed to accommodate this. It is therefore proposed that these tenants receive back boilers, rather than wall-mounted boilers, and continue to have a choice of special gas fires, on the basis that they pay the additional cost involved.

In houses with gas hot air systems without traditional chimney flues, which are mainly in Irvine, tenants will be offered a wall-mounted gas boiler heating system and electric fire because neither a back boiler and a gas fire or a free standing gas fire are feasible.

The Committee discussed the difficulties which can arise in houses with single brick walls where cavity wall insulation is not practicable and the feasibility of overcladding.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) the criteria outlined in the report for determining the direction of the central heating programme for the financial years 1996/97 and 1997/98; (b) that tenants with existing back boilers choosing new gas systems will receive new back boilers; (c) that tenants with hot air systems choosing gas will receive wall mounted gas boilers with electric fires; and (d) that the Director of Housing Services report on the costs of overcladding where cavity wall insulation is not practicable.

5. Irvine Development Corporation Stock Disposal: Advertising Campaign

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on the campaign to advertise the Council's bid for IDC stock.

There are three main elements to this campaign: -

(a) the distribution of a leaflet by Housing Services Directorate staff on 12 May 1996 incorporating a copy of the press advertisement and a message from the Chair of the Housing Services Committee. The leaflets cost of £572;

(b) the insertion of advertisements in the "Irvine Herald" and "Irvine Times" for a 5 week period commencing on 29 April 1996, and in week 6 of the campaign, a full page advertisement will be taken in each of the papers together with editorial comment at a cost of £2,673; and

(c) the delivery in the final week of the campaign to all households of a "reminder" in the form of a specifically prepared card at a cost of £1,700 to which the cost of either postage or overtime for hand-delivery would be added.

The strategy adopted by the Housing Services Directorate will allow the Council to reach all households affected by the proposals. Tenants can also contact the Housing Services Directorate if they require further information or advice. There was some discussion on the public's response to members promoting the Council's campaign and on offers of assistance from other organisations.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the campaign strategy; and (b) to approve the costs of its component parts.

6. Houses in Multiple Occupation

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on the current position regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

Cunningham District Council had approved a strategy for dealing with Houses in Multiple

Occupation (a) to ensure, having assessed capital and revenue resource requirements, that low income households had access to housing of an acceptable standard; and (b) to ensure that private rented housing in multiple occupation is (i) of a tolerable standard; (ii) in a reasonable state of repair; (iii) self contained where possible, and appropriate; (iv) let on reasonable conditions with a written agreement between the landlord and tenant; and (v) managed responsibly.

In pursuit of this strategy, in 1994 the Council exercised its powers under Section 152 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and confirmed a Scheme of Registration for HMOs setting minimum standards for lighting, ventilation, sanitary facilities, food preparation, refuse disposal and fire safety management. This scheme applied to HMOs in the first instance in Ardrossan, Saltcoats, Stevenston and the Irvine New Town area with the intention that the Scheme would be extended in due course to encompass the whole District.

Following adoption of the scheme 37 landlords registered their premises and a comprehensive survey was then carried out by the Environmental Health Department.

Following the registration and survey process owners of HMOs are required to comply with the adopted standards. The Council has statutory power in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 to enforce compliance if this cannot be achieved voluntarily within a reasonable timescale.

It is proposed that the Scheme be extended from the pilot areas to the whole of North Ayrshire. This would require a new Scheme of Registration to be confirmed, premises registered and a second survey completed for all areas outwith the previous scheme.

The Committee agreed that the Director of Housing Services report on the proposed extension of the Scheme to the whole of North Ayrshire and on the staffing implications involved.

7. Ardrossan: Flats above Shops at Ashgrove Road/Lawson Drive

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

In constructing local authority houses, former housing authorities often incorporated shops within a block of flats on the ground floor which, while providing a valuable local shopping facility, could also attract anti-social behaviour causing stress and disturbance to local residents, particularly those living in the flats above shops.

The flats located at the junction of Ashgrove Road and Lawson Drive, Ardrossan continue to be the focus of anti-social behaviour despite increased surveillance by the Police and considerable investment in 1991 by Cunninghame District Council in terms of environmental improvements, security enhancements, including the installation of robust door entry systems and metal security fencing.

The allocation of the flats has become increasingly difficult and the situation has deteriorated to the extent that a decision was taken in 1995 to vacate the flats. These have now been secured, their services disconnected and they are currently held as void, until a decision is taken on their future use.

The Committee agreed that a member/officer working group consisting of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Local Member and appropriate officers consider options for the future use of the flats and report back to the next Meeting of the Committee with its recommendations.

8. Stevenston: New Street Improvement Scheme

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on the improvement scheme for New Street, Stevenston.

Improvement Orders and Repair Notices have been served in respect of properties in New Street, Stevenston as part of the Council's programme of improvement and repair work to private

sector housing within the Stevenston town centre Small Urban Renewal Initiative (SURI).

Tenders have been received for the repair and improvement works to the properties which were in excess of the original estimate and require to be reviewed with regard to grant eligibility, value for money and compliance with the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.

The Committee agreed to (a) authorise the Director of Housing Services to review the tender costs of the scheme; and (b) remit with powers to the Chair and the Vice Chair to approve the revised costs.

9. Saltcoats: 7-45 Countess Street: Proposed Housing Action Areas for Improvement

Submitted report by Chief Executive on proposed Housing Action Areas for Improvement at Countess Street, Saltcoats.

In August 1994 Cunninghame District Council served draft resolution notices declaring three Housing Action Areas for Improvement in Countess Street, Saltcoats to bring the houses and shops up to the tolerable standard and to enhance the appearance of the town centre. The potential costs of the improvement scheme increased in November 1994 following an investigation of the mineral conditions in Countess Street and the Council at that time agreed to re-examine the housing action area proposals with a view to reducing the scale and costs of the works. The draft resolution was, consequently, rescinded and further consultations were undertaken with Scottish Homes and Enterprise Ayrshire regarding their contributions to the proposed works.

Enterprise Ayrshire have agreed to the funding of the necessary grouting works. Cunninghame District Council in March 1996 referred the consideration of the Housing Action Areas for Improvement to North Ayrshire Council as no decision could be taken on the draft resolution until the funding of the scheme had been determined.

The Special Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council on 9 May 1996 approved the non housing revenue account funding which could meet the Council's share of the cost of the project.

The Council may recommence the statutory procedure by agreeing to the service of a draft resolution notice on each of the owners and tenants of the houses and shops in the proposed three housing action areas at 7-15, 23-27, and 29-45 Countess Street. Approval to proceed will be sought from the Secretary of State and once received Notices could then be served.

Repairs notices will also be served on the owners of property in the Housing Action Areas for Improvement and in adjoining properties at 29 - 33 Countess Street in order that the Council can ensure that the necessary minimum works are carried out to bring each property up to the tolerable standards.

The Committee agreed (a) to recommend to the Council that draft resolution notices be served in respect of the properties at 7-15, 23-27 and 39-45 Countess Street, Saltcoats; and (b) that Repairs Notices be served on these properties and the properties at 29-33 Countess Street, Saltcoats.

10. Private Sector Housing Grants

Submitted the annexed report by the Director of Housing Services (Appendix H1) on applications for environmental improvements, disabled, lead replacement and repairs grants.

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

11. Dalry: Munnoch Cottage and Stevenston: 83 Boglemart Street: Closing Orders

Submitted reports by the Director of Housing Services on the condition of (a) Munnoch Cottage, Dalry and (b) 83 Boglemart Street, Stevenston which do not meet the tolerable standard as defined by Section 86 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.

The Committee agreed that Closing Orders in terms of Section 114 of the said Act be served immediately in respect of the property at Munnoch Cottage, Dalry and the ground floor flat at 83 Boglemart Street, Stevenston.

12. Millport: 50 George Street: Revocation of Closing Order

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on the Closing Order served on 28 December 1984 on the ground right two apartment flat at 50 George Street, Millport which now meets the tolerable standard as defined by Section 86 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.

The Committee agreed to the revocation of this Closing Order.

13. Seminars

(a) Housing Management Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services proposing a policy seminar for elected members on housing management compulsory competitive tendering.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) for housing management will commence within the next two years and will entail major changes to the management of the housing service.

It is proposed that a two hour presentation and seminar organised by the Director of Housing Services take place in June to advise members of the implications for the housing service of housing management CCT.

The Committee agreed to the proposed two hour seminar on Housing Management Compulsory Competitive Tendering.

(b) The Enabling Strategy for Housing Services

Submitted report by Director of Housing Services proposing a half day forum on an enabling strategy for housing services.

The purpose of the enabling strategy is to maximise investment from other agencies, such as Scottish Homes, Enterprise Ayrshire and the Ayrshire and Arran Health Board, in a co-ordinated manner to fulfil objectives laid out by the Council.

The Committee agreed to the proposed half day forum on the enabling strategy for Housing Services.

14. Exclusion of Public

Resolved in terms of Section 50A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude from the meeting the press and the public for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7a of the Act.

15. Largs: Flat at 107 Nelson Street

Submitted report by Director of Housing Services on the condition and occupation of property at 107 Nelson Street, Largs.

The property at 107 comprises two ground floor flats, two first floor flats and two attic flats. It is in a serious state of disrepair which would require major renovation work to overcome.

The owner of the ground floor right flat is in a vulnerable situation due to the condition of the building and has been in discussion with Housing Services Officers in this regard.

The Committee agreed to authorise the service of a Closing Order on the owner of the ground floor right flat at 107 Nelson Street Largs.

The meeting ended at 3.10 p.m.

Housing Services Committee
30/05/96

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					
11	IG/57/96 15/3/96	Helen Coll	5 Millar Street Millport	2560	1280 (50%)
1	IG/71/96 13/5/96	Mr J Anderson 38 High Street Renfrew Per Gray Aitken Partnership 7 Glasgow Street Ardrossan	No 3 The Row Catacol Isle of Arran	23255	20884 (90%)
APPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT GRANT (DISABLED OCCUPANT)					
5	IG/24/96 8/2/96	Elizabeth McLean	Rowandene 22 The Lane Skelmorlie	5255	3941 (75%)
5	IG/41/96 20/2/96	Agnes Lothian	9 Inverclyde View Largs	1531	1148 (75%)
5	IG/67/96 26/4/96	William & Mary Steel	36 Garnock Street Dalry	1338	1003 (75%)
5	IG/6/96 11/1/96	David John Doull	6 Montgreenan View Kilwinning	1670	1253 (75%)
APPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT GRANT (DISABLED OCCUPANT)					
5	IG/59/96 15/3/96	Catherine Cook	9 Seymour Avenue Kilwinning	1298	934 (75%)
5	IG/61/96 22/3/96	Marion F Stevenson	29 Howden Avenue Kilwinning	1380	1035 (75%)
5	IG/86/95 13/3/96	Gareth M Foster	35 St Winnings Well Kilwinning	1694	1271 (75%)
5	IG/65/96 29/3/96	John Mackay	39 Lawfield Avenue West Kilbride	1957	1468 (75%)
5	IG/62/96 25/3/96	David Dickie	14 Stevenston Road Kilwinning	1319	989 (75%)
5	IG/66/96 29/3/96	George Barnett	17 Simson Avenue West Kilbride	1965	1474 (75%)
5	IG/60/96 15/3/96	David Browning	48 Dick Terrace Irvine	607	455 (75%)
5	IG/69/96 30/4/96	William Thomson Per McMillan & Cronin 24 Main Street Largs	27 Bellesdale Avenue Largs	11156	8367 (75%)
5	IG/58/96 15/3/96	John Maxwell	20 Harvey Gardens Ardrossan	1791	1343 (75%)

5	IG/63/96 26/3/96	Alexander J Wilson	50 Stakehill Largs	295	221 (75%)
APPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT GRANT (DISABLED OCCUPANT)					
5	IG/68/96 30/4/96	Jean & Thomas Clarkson	12 Glenriddet Avenue Kilbirnie	1720	1290 (75%)
5	IG/73/96 17/5/96	Robert Cotton	15 Millglen Road Ardrossan	1789	1342 (75%)
5	IG/72/96 15/5/96	Isabell Sinclair	1 Livingstone Terrace Irvine	1750	1313 (75%)
APPLICATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENT GRANT (DISABLED OCCUPANT)					
5	IG/202/96 14/12/95	Elizabeth J Gardiner	51 Ranken Crescent Irvine	656	492 (75%) (increase of £164)
5	IG/19/92 5/3/92	Charles Tahaney	10 School Street Largs	4574	3431 (75%) (increase of £1143)
5	IG/170/95 26/9/95	Mrs M Stewart	Janette House Park Terrace Lamlash Isle of Arran	6875	5156 (75%) (increase of £1719)
5	IG/37/96 16/2/96	John & Agnes Gallagher	23 West Doura Avenue Saltcoats	958	718 (75%) (increase of £240)
5	IG/188/96 13/11/95	Hugh Conway	65 Burns Crescent Girdle Toll	2938	2203 (75%) (increase of £735)
APPLICATIONS FOR LEAD REPLACEMENT GRANT					
15	LG/37/96 26/4/96	Aldo Tortolano	24 Ardrossan Road Saltcoats	673	467 (90%)
15	LG/25/96 15/3/96	Tracey Paterson	41 Brisbane Street Largs	392	308 (90%)
15	LG/27/96 21/3/96	David Baird	Fern Cottage 16 Gateside Street West Kilbride	340	261 (90%)
15	LG/30/96 25/3/96	Michael Diamond	25 Lovat Street Largs	798	673 (90%)
15	LG/29/96 19/4/96	Raymond Sang Hai Shek 2 Spallander Road Troon Per Murray Gillies & Wilson Solicitors 22 Bank Street Irvine	26 Bank Street Irvine	450	360 (90%)
15	LG/42/96 20/5/96	John Thomson	3 Parkhouse Road Ardrossan	490	441 (90%)
15	LG/43/96 21/5/96	Mrs Elizabeth Munro	17 Headrigg Road West Kilbride	840	711 (90%)
APPLICATIONS FOR LEAD REPLACEMENT GRANT					
15	LG/91/95 21/9/95	Freida Kerr	9 Duncan Drive Irvine	605	500 (90%) (increase of £105)
15	LG/18/96 29/2/96	Thomas P Madden	34 Gogoside Road Largs	580	477 (90%) (increase of £103)
15	LG/14/92 26/2/92	Alex Anderson Per Director of Housing Services North Ayrshire Council	11 Montfode Drive Ardrossan	434	326 (75%) (increase of £108)

15	LG/27/92 2/3/92	J & M Wallace Per Director of Housing Services North Ayrshire Council	22 Seton Street Ardrossan	374	281 (75%) (increase of £193)
15	LG/30/92 2/3/92	Janet E Dawson Per Director of Housing Services North Ayrshire Council	42 McGregor Avenue Stevenston	545	409 (75%) (increase of £136)
15	LG/34/92 4/3/92	Ellen Blackwood Per Director of Housing Services North Ayrshire Council	11 Dalry Road Ardrossan	490	368 (75%) (increase of £122)
15	LG/47/92 4/3/92	J & S Mathieson Per Director of Housing Services North Ayrshire Council	72 McGregor Avenue Stevenston	506	380 (75%) (increase of £126)

APPLICATIONS FOR LEAD REPLACEMENT GRANT

15	LG/75/92 24/3/92	Mr & Mrs Alex Hammond Per Director of Housing Services North Ayrshire Council	38 McGregor Avenue Stevenston	549	412 (75%) (increase of £137)
15	LG/80/92 31/3/92	Hugh P Boyle Per Director of Housing Services North Ayrshire Council	36 McGregor Avenue Stevenston	586	440 (75%) (increase of £144)

APPLICATIONS FOR REPAIRS GRANTS

18	RG/14/96 11/4/96	Mary McMillan	20 Orchard Street West Kilbride	565	283 (50%)
18	RG/12/96 29/3/96	Anne Carmichael	28 Overtoun Crescent West Kilbride	2394	1197 (50%)
7	RG/6/96 27/2/96	John C Donaldson Per A A Sinclair 32 Machanhill Larkhall	9 Hillview Place Brodict Isle of Arran	4691	2321 (50%)
10	RG/11/96 14/3/96	Mr A Smith 56 Righead Stewarton Per A A Sinclair 32 Machanhill Larkhall	10 Hillview Place Brodict Isle of Arran	4691	2321 (50%)

APPLICATIONS FOR REPAIRS GRANTS

7	RG/9/96 5/3/96	A Hardie Per A A Sinclair 32 Machanhill	12 Hillview Brodict Isle of Arran	5403	2676 (50%)
7	RG/15/96 15/5/96	May Steele Per J Paul Head of Property Services Cunninghame House	67 McGregor Avenue Stevenston	585	293 (50%)

Irvine