

Housing Services Committee  
7 August 1997

**Irvine, 7 August 1997** - At a Meeting of the Housing Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

**Present**

Samuel Taylor, Gena Seales, Thomas Barr, James Clements, John Donn, David Gallagher, Samuel Gooding, Jane Gorman, Margaret Munn and Irene Oldfather.

**In Attendance**

The Director of Housing Services, E. McNaught, Head of Customer Services, J. Paul, Head of Property Services, and J. Houston, Divisional Manager Garnock Valley and Largs (Housing Services); H. Hunter, Senior Accountant, Accountancy (Financial Services); G. Wallace, Principal Officer (Design Services) (Architectural Services); M. Hewitt, Corporate Policy Officer and S. Paxton, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

**Chair**

Mr. Taylor in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Thomas Dickie and Robert Rae.

**1. Minutes Confirmed**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 5 June 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Nomination Agreements**

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on progress made in negotiating Nomination Agreements with Housing Associations operating in North Ayrshire.

The Council is responsible for meeting the needs of applicants on the Housing waiting list by working with other Housing Agencies, including Housing Associations. There are currently 9 Housing Associations operating in North Ayrshire and they provide another means by which applicants can enter public sector housing.

The Council's relationship with Housing Associations is formalised through a Nomination Agreement which establishes a framework for partnership and liaison between the Council and the Housing Association and sets out their obligations with regard to monitoring and review. All Housing Associations and other housing providers who are registered with Scottish Homes require to offer a minimum of 50% of empty houses for Council nominations.

The Director of Housing Services has concluded draft Agreements with Scottish Homes and 5 Housing Associations. He is currently in negotiation with the 4 remaining Housing Associations in North Ayrshire.

The Committee agreed that the Director of Housing Services conclude the Nomination Agreements with these Housing Associations.

### **3. Transfer of Scottish Homes Houses: Kilbirnie, Beith and Dalry**

The Director of Housing Services advised that the Minister for Housing had allowed the transfer of Scottish Homes houses in Kilbirnie, Beith and Dalry to proceed and that Scottish Homes had proposed that each of the four landlords previously identified by them, namely the Cunninghame Housing Association, Home Housing Association, Irvine Housing Association and Sanctuary Housing Association, would now prepare detailed proposals and submit those to the Scottish Office in November.

The Council had expressed its concern to the former Government over the exclusion of the Council from the ballot process and had made representations to be included as an option for Scottish Homes tenants.

The Committee agreed that representations be made to Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, Minister for Housing and Mr. Brian Wilson, Minister for Education and Industry requesting (a) that the Council be considered as an option for Scottish Homes tenants in the forthcoming ballot; and (b) that there be a 6 month delay in the implementation of the ballot for the transfer of Scottish Homes houses in Kilbirnie, Beith and Dalry in order for the Director of Housing Services to prepare a bid on behalf of the Council.

### **4. Ardrossan: Flats Above Shops at Ashgrove Road/Lawson Drive**

((Previous Minute Reference: Housing Services Committee: 19 September 1996))

On 30 May 1996 the Committee agreed that a Member/Officer Working Group consider options for the future use of the flats above the shops at Ashgrove Road/Lawson Drive, Ardrossan and report.

The Member/Officer Working Group has met on several occasions. As it was not possible to improve or convert the flats investigations were undertaken into the possibility of acquiring the 2 shops, with a view to the demolition of the block. As one shop owner was interested in selling but the other was not, and as the demolition of the shops would represent the loss of a community resource, this option is no longer being pursued. The Member/Officer Working Group recommended that the flats above the shops be demolished, a new roof erected over the shops and appropriate environmental works carried out to the back court/drying green area.

The Committee agreed (a) in principle, to the demolition of the flats and retention of the shops; and (b) that the Director of Housing Services report to the next Meeting of the Committee with further details and costs.

### **5. Kilwinning: Montgomerie Terrace: Strategy for Action**

((Previous Minute Reference: Housing Services Committee: 30 January 1997))

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services regarding progress on the implementation of the strategy for action for Montgomerie Terrace, Kilwinning.

The Housing Services Committee on 30 January 1997 agreed to a strategy for action concerning Montgomerie Terrace, Kilwinning for a period of 6 months, following which an evaluation report would be submitted to the Housing Services Committee. The Strategy sought to create (a) a demand for vacancies in Montgomerie Terrace; (b) a sense of community; and (c) a safe and more secure environment.

The level of vacancies in Montgomerie Terrace has been reduced from 25 to 11 where no potential tenant has been identified. This has been achieved by contracting specific groups on the housing waiting list and highlighting vacancies in the Terrace. Applicants expressing an interest in properties in Montgomerie Terrace were accompanied around a "showhouse" in which

central heating had been installed and other additional improvement work completed. Individual properties were improved when a prospective tenant had been identified.

As part of the discussion on addressing the remaining empty houses, it was suggested that these houses in Montgomerie Terrace be promoted to all needs groups and that the current housing waiting list be examined with specific reference to applicants in Corsehill.

It is anticipated that a Tenants' Association will be established in the next 6 months. The Housing Services Directorate has established a close working relationship with Strathclyde Police and, since the increased Police presence in the area in October 1996, there has been a marked reduction in reported incidents. Security lighting has been installed in over half the properties in Montgomerie Terrace and various road safety issues are being investigated by the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment.

The Committee agreed that a report be submitted to the Committee on 30 October 1997 detailing further progress made in the implementation of the Strategy.

## **6. Tenders: Central Heating Programme 1997/98**

Submitted report by the Architectural Services Manager on tenders received for the installation of central heating in two contracts for 116 and 123 houses in Irvine.

After discussion the Committee agreed to authorise the Architectural Services Manager to accept (a) the lowest tender of £210,109.45 submitted by D. Campbell and Company, Glasgow in respect of the installation of central heating to 116 houses in Irvine; and (b) the lowest tender of £210,513.62 submitted by D. Campbell and Company, Glasgow in respect of the installation of central heating to 123 houses in Irvine.

## **7. Private Water Supplies: Connection to Mains**

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services advising on the implications of the reduction in funding for new mains connections by West of Scotland Water.

In terms of the Water (Scotland) Act 1980 the Water Authority has a general duty to provide houses with a wholesome supply of water where a supply can be provided at a reasonable cost. West of Scotland Water contributed up to £2,660 per property, occasionally supplemented by £1,000 per property in rural areas, to the costs of extending the mains supply to houses. This contribution had almost always been sufficient to pay for the cost of extending mains water to even the most remote locations. In 1996, however, West of Scotland Water reduced its contribution to £1,000.

The public are encouraged to improve their water supply by connecting to the mains supply and the Council through its Non-HRA budget provides grant assistance for this. All the schemes supported by West of Scotland Water at the higher rate are now approaching completion but there remain around 200 households who are served by private water supplies. Although the Council continues to receive requests for grant assistance, many applicants are reluctant to proceed with works given the higher level of contribution they would now require to make towards the work. This has clear public health implications, particularly in light of recent concerns over E coli.

Representations have been made to Mr. Brian Wilson, MP by the Chair of the Infrastructure and Environment Services Committee requesting that West of Scotland Water reconsider its decision. The Director of Planning, Roads and Environment has, in addition, met with West of Scotland Water who are currently undertaking a review of the matter.

The Committee agreed that the outcome of the review being undertaken by West of Scotland Water be reported to a future Meeting of the Committee.

## **8. Private Sector Housing Grants**

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

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

## **9. Closing Orders**

### **(a) Fairlie: 85 Main Road**

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on the condition of a house at 85 Main Road, Fairlie which does not meet the tolerable standards as defined by Section 86 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.

The Committee agreed that a Closing Order in terms of Section 114 of the said Act be served on the house at 85 Main Road, Fairlie.

### **(b) Largs: 42 Boyd Street**

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on the revocation of the Closing Order served on the ground floor right flat at 42 Boyd Street, Largs on 2 August 1994.

The Committee agreed to authorise the revocation of the Closing Order on the ground floor right flat at 42 Boyd Street, Largs.

## **10. Urgent Items**

The Chair agreed to the consideration of the undernoted items as a matter of urgency.

### **(a) Community Alarms**

(Previous Minute Reference: Social Work Committee: 6 August 1997)

The Social Work Committee on 6 August 1997 considered a report by the Director of Social Work on community alarms. The Committee agreed, among other things, that the Housing Services Committee consider ways of clearing the waiting list of Council tenants who have applied for a community alarm service by funding the purchase of additional alarm units.

The Committee agreed that the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Housing Services and Social Work Committees and the Directors of Housing Services and Social Work meet to progress matters and report to the next meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee.

### **(b) Conference: Scotland's Parliament**

Submitted an invitation from the Scottish Council for Single Homeless to a Members' Consultation Meeting on the Government's White Paper entitled "Scotland's Parliament" to be held in Glasgow on 27 August 1997.

The Committee agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair or their nominees should attend.

### **(c) Home Energy Efficiency Scheme**

The Director of Housing Services advised that Solas Insulation, Dumbarton had been appointed by the Energy Action Grants Agency (EAGA) as a network installer for North Ayrshire under the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES).

The Committee agreed to approve Solas Insulation as an authorised company to undertake home insulation works under HEES in Council housing stock.

The Meeting ended at 2.45 p.m.