

Housing Services Committee
18 September 1997

Irvine, 18 September 1997 - At a Meeting of the Housing Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Samuel Taylor, George Steven, Gena Seales, Patrick Browne, James Clements, David Gallagher, Margaret Munn and Robert Rae.

In Attendance

The Director of Housing Services and E. Munro, Capital Controller, (Housing Services); The Legal Services Manager; H. Hunter, Senior Accountant, Accountancy (Financial Services) and S. Paxton, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. Taylor in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Thomas Barr, John Donn and Irene Oldfather.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 7 August 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Transfer of Scottish Homes Houses: Kilbirnie, Beith and Dalry

(Previous Minute Reference: Housing Services Committee: 7 August 1997)

On 7 August 1997, the Committee agreed that representations be made to Malcolm Chisholm, Minister for Housing and 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 six 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.

The Minister for Housing has now advised that the Government will permit the Council to become involved in the transfer of Scottish Homes stock, but will not permit any delay in the stock transfer timetable in the Garnock Valley. There are, however, major obstacles to be overcome if the Council wishes to pursue its interest in this stock, namely the timescale for the submission of bids; the availability of finance required to fund the bid; and the subsequent acquisition of land. The Minister has indicated that there will be no additional borrowing consent and therefore all preparatory work and eventual acquisition costs will have to be met from existing resources.

The Minister has indicated that he would wish to see a new partnership between central and local government and that there is an opportunity for the Council to enter into negotiations with Scottish Homes to create a new Housing Partnership for the stock in the Irvine area which is due for disposal or transfer within the next two years.

The Committee agreed that the Council (a) does not make a bid to be a Landlord in the transfer process for Scottish Homes stock in the Garnock Valley; and (b) enters negotiations at an early stage with Scottish Homes on the development of a new Housing Partnership within the Irvine area.

3. Saltcoats: Miller Road: Review

Submitted report by Director of Housing Services regarding the review of the development proposals for Miller Road, Saltcoats.

The Miller Road area has been the subject of a number of initiatives by North Ayrshire Council and its predecessor authority, Cunninghame District Council which had approved a programme of partial demolition and the creation of open space for new housing to be provided by either private or public sector agencies. It was not possible, however, to secure funding for the programme from Scottish Homes nor has the private sector shown any interest in acquiring the sites within the Miller Road area. The Council does not have the resources to regenerate the site by itself and any solution would have to involve partnership arrangements with other public and possibly private sector bodies.

The properties on the site have been demolished and the area of ground cleared will be maintained by the Council. The potential for the development of the site, however, is hindered by the perception of the area. A review is therefore now proposed involving various agencies to explore new and radical ways of securing the development of the area. Further progress reports to be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Noted.

4. Stevenston: Land Adjacent to 83C Glencairn Street

Submitted report by Legal Services Manager regarding land adjacent to 83C Glencairn Street, Stevenston.

The tenants at 83C Glencairn Street, Stevenston purchased their council house in March 1990 and sought to acquire ground to the side and front of their property. The matter was considered by the former Cunninghame District Council in October 1990 and the request for the purchase of the ground was refused. In 1992 the owners made a further application to the District Council to acquire the ground and the Council agreed to sell an area of ground to the front of the property.

The property owners have now applied to North Ayrshire Council to purchase the ground situated to the side of their property or such part of it as might be declared surplus to requirements. The owners have indicated that they would be willing to purchase a narrow strip of ground immediately adjacent to their gable and would be prepared to erect a suitable boundary wall or fence to enclose the area. The applicants consider that the purchase of the ground would enhance their privacy and improve the amenity of their property.

The Committee agreed that the Chair, Vice-Chair and local member undertake a site visit and report to a future meeting of the Housing Services Committee.

5. Customer Comments Scheme

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee: 29 July 1997)

Submitted report by Director of Housing Services regarding the Directorate's handling of Customer Comments from September 1996 to March 1997.

Arising from this, concern was expressed about the backlog of Housing Benefit applications awaiting processing.

The Committee (a) agreed that a report on proposals to address the backlog of Housing Benefit applications be submitted to its next meeting; and (b) otherwise noted the terms of the report.

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

(Previous Minute Reference: Housing Services Committee: 7 August 1997)

The Housing Services Committee on 7 August 1997 agreed (a) in principle to the demolition of the flats and the 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.

The demolition of the flats would take approximately 6 to 8 weeks but the shops would continue to operate as a community resource. Following demolition a pitched roof would be erected which would take around 16 weeks. The total cost of the demolition and other associated works would be approximately £200,000. Although no provision has been made for the project in the current financial year, part of the costs could be met from any slippage in the 1997/98 Capital Programme with the balance being met in 1998/99.

The Committee discussed the costs of the proposed project when compared to the possible cost of acquisition of the shops and the total demolition of the block.

After a full discussion the Committee agreed (a) that the proposals, including the possible acquisition of the shops by the Council, be discussed with shop owners; (b) that subject to the outcome of these negotiations, tenders be invited for the demolition of the flats, reroofing of the shops and associated works; (c) that the costs associated with the demolition of the flats etc. be met, if possible, from the Housing (HRA) Capital Programme for 1997/98 and 1998/99; and (d) that the Director of Housing Services report to a future meeting of the Committee on the matter in due course.

7. Private Sector Housing Grants

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

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

8. Stevenston: No 3 Housing Action Area

Submitted a report by the Director of Housing Services on a Draft Resolution in respect of the Stevenston No 3 Housing Action Area for Demolition.

The former Cunninghame District Council had agreed to make a final resolution in respect of the Stevenston No 14 Housing Action Area for Improvement including the properties at 11-17 Fullarton Place, Stevenston. The Secretary of State for Scotland gave his approval to the proposal and grant applications were approved by the Housing Services Committee on 24 April 1997.

The cost of works has exceeded the statutory limits and the owners have stated that they

are unable to meet the balance of the improvement costs.

The properties, which comprise three shops and three flats, have now fallen into a serious state of disrepair and it is proposed that the properties be declared a Housing Action Area for Demolition.

The Committee agreed to make a draft resolution in respect of the Stevenston No. 3 (11 - 17 Fullarton Place) Housing Action Area for Demolition as detailed in Appendix HS2.

9. Conferences and Seminars

Submitted report by Chief Executive on an invitation to attend the Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland's Conference to be held in Dundee from 3 - 6 March 1998.

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

The Meeting ended at 2.40 p.m.