

Minute of Meeting Communities and Housing Policy Board

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday, 17 January 2023	13:00	Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

Present: Councillor Jacqueline Cameron, Councillor Carolann Davidson, Councillor Gillian Graham, Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes, Councillor Robert Innes, Councillor Alec Leishman, Councillor Mags MacLaren, Councillor Colin McCulloch, Councillor Janis McDonald, Councillor Cathy McEwan, Councillor Jamie McGuire, Councillor Marie McGurk, Councillor Iain McMillan, Councillor John McNaughtan, Councillor Emma Rodden

Chair

Councillor McGurk, Convener, presided.

In Attendance

M Crearie, Director of Communities & Housing; L McIntyre, Head of Policy & Commissioning, J Castle, Senior Communications Officer (Chief Executives); C Dalrymple, Head of Facilities & Property Management (Environment & Infrastructure); O Reid, Head of Communities & Public Protection, N Drummond, Lead Officer (Environmental Co-ordination), L Feeley, Housing Asset & Investment Manager, D Murray, Area Housing Manager, C Robertson, Warden Services Manager J Murdoch, Housing Regeneration & Service Improvement Manager, K Sillars, Housing Maintenance Manager and A Miller, Development Officer (Housing Regeneration & Service Improvement)(all Communities & Housing Services); and J Kilpatrick, Finance Business Partner, D Pole, End User Technician, R Devine and C MacDonald, both Senior Committee Services Officers and D Cunningham, Assistant Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Resources).

Webcasting of Meeting

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Convener intimated that this meeting of the Board would be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast on the Council's internet site.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest intimated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

1 **Police and Fire & Rescue Services Scrutiny Sub- committee**

There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Sub-committee held on 25 October 2022. The Minute forms the Appendix to this Minute.

DECIDED: That the Minute be approved.

2 **General Services Revenue, Housing Account and Capital Budget Monitoring Rep**

There was submitted a General Services Revenue, Housing Account and Capital Budget Monitoring report by the Director of Finance & Resources for the period 1 April to 11 November 2022.

The report stated that the projected outturn as at 31 March 2023 for all services reporting to this Policy Board was an underspend position of £0.040 million. The projected capital outturn for projects reporting to this Policy Board was a breakeven position against the revised budget for the year. Summaries were provided over the relevant services in the tables within the report, together with further analysis. In addition, the report indicated that revenue expenditure budget adjustments totalling £0.153 million and capital budget adjustments of £5.595m, had been processed since consideration of the previous report at the meeting of the Policy Board held on 17 January 2023. Details of the adjustments were outlined within the report.

DECIDED:

(a) That the projected Revenue outturn position, detailed in table 1 of the report, be noted;

(b) That the projected Capital outturn position, detailed in table 2 of the report, be noted; and

(c) That the budget adjustments, detailed in sections 4 and 6 of the report, be noted.

3 **Building Communities, Greenspaces, Parks & Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund Update**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Communities & Housing Services relative to the Greenspaces, Parks & Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund.

The report indicated that the key objective in allocating funding was to work with, and support, community groups to identify and deliver improvement projects in their local communities, improve their local greenspaces, including parks and play areas, and strengthen the identity, heritage, uniqueness and character of village life. An update on progress made in terms of supporting community projects through the Greenspaces, Parks & Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund, detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, projects approved, in terms of delegated authority, by the Director of Communities & Housing Services during the previous three-month period together with work undertaken by the Building Communities service to support active

and engaged communities. It was highlighted that as the programme had developed it had become evident that a number of projects had either completed without requiring the full grant allocation or had encountered difficulties in developing their project fully in the way that they originally anticipated. In order to ensure that funding was available for projects that could be implemented, a review of successful applicants, whose funds had not yet been released had been undertaken and applicants contacted to ascertain the status of their project. This had resulted, to date, in a return of £12,000 to the Villages Investment Fund and £5,000 to the Green Spaces Fund. Details of the projects involved were provided. As the Green Spaces Fund was almost fully committed, it was proposed that 50% of the allocated funding ringfenced for school projects be returned into the wider Fund. It was noted that only three schools, to date, had expressed an interest in applying for funding. In addition, it was proposed that smaller, grass roots community projects be prioritised over larger applications and that areas who had, to date, benefitted less from the fund, be favoured if bidding in competition with a community who had benefitted significantly in previous funding applications. Taking account of the projects approved in terms of delegated authority during the previous three-month period and all other projects awarded funding to date, £30,000 was currently unallocated in the Villages Investment Fund and £55,000 in the Green Spaces Fund.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the work currently being undertaken to support communities as they developed and delivered projects to be funded using the Greenspaces, Parks & Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund be noted;
- (b) That the impact of the funding and the benefits to the wider communities delivered by the projects, as set out in section 4 of the report, be noted;
- (c) That the return of unspent grant awards by Pachedu and Bishopton Community Development Trust, £5,000 to the Green Spaces Fund, and £12,000 to the Villages Investment Fund respectively, be noted;
- (d) That the prioritisation of awards to communities who had benefitted less from previous grant awards be approved; and
- (e) That a 50% reduction of the ringfenced school fund be agreed to boost available Green Spaces funding for smaller projects.

4 Community Empowerment Fund

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to an application considered for funding from the Community Empowerment Fund in the current round of funding. The total value of requested grant funding was £10,000. A cross-service panel of officers had been established to review and assess applications to the Community Empowerment Fund against agreed objectives and criteria. The report outlined the key objectives and aims of the Fund and indicated that no new applications had been received during the current round but that one application, which had previously been deferred, had been considered. A summary of the application, together with a recommendation, was provided within an appendix to the report.

DECIDED: That the recommendation, detailed in Section 4 and Appendix 1 of the report, to award £10,000 to Western Desert Recce Group to undertake an Architectural Feasibility Report and Value Added Tax Consultancy Report to inform the development of their Community Asset Transfer request for the Whitehaugh Barracks site in Paisley be approved.

5 **Land and Property Transfers to the Housing Revenue Account**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Communities & Housing Services relative to the proposed transfer of land and properties from the Council's General Services Account to the Housing Revenue Account

The report advised that it was proposed to transfer four areas of land, identified within table 1 of the report, to facilitate the delivery of new housing within the context of the approved Renfrewshire Strategic Investment Plan 2023/28.

In addition, the report indicated that six properties, which were previously operational residential properties within the school estate, were to be considered at the meeting of the Infrastructure, Land and Environment and Policy Board to be held on 25 January 2023 as to whether they were surplus to requirements. The properties, detailed within table 2 of the report, had been assessed as suitable for transfer to the Housing Revenue Account and subsequently to be rented as part of the housing portfolio. It was deemed appropriate that the General Services fund be compensated for the transfer of these properties and taking cognisance of market values for social housing and the level of investment required to bring them up to appropriate standards for social housing it was proposed that in the event they were deemed surplus to requirements a total settlement figure of £252,550 for all six properties be agreed.

The Renfrewshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2023/28 set out how Scottish Government funding for affordable housing would be targeted to achieve the objectives set out within Renfrewshire's Local Housing Strategy. A key element was the use of existing land within the Council's ownership to develop new affordable homes across Renfrewshire. Accordingly the proposed transfer of land from the General Services Account to the Housing Revenue Account at four areas of land at Blackstoun Road, Paisley; Carbrook Street, Paisley; Former Garthland House; and Former Cochrane Castle Primary School, was proposed to enable the delivery of new social rented housing on the sites involved, The sites, which were contained within the Renfrewshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan 202/28, would be transferred at the net values detailed within the report in order to facilitate the delivery of social rented housing.

DECIDED:

(a) That the transfer of the four sites, detailed within the report, from the General Services Account to the Housing Revenue Account, at the net values listed in Table 1 of the report, be approved;

(b) That it be noted that the six properties detailed in table 2 of the report were to be considered whether they were surplus to operational requirements at the meeting of the Environment Land and Infrastructure Policy Board to be held on 25 January 2023; and

(c) That it be agreed agree that subject to the decision of the Environment Land and Infrastructure Policy Board these properties be transferred to the Housing Revenue Account at the value noted within the report.

6 Social Housing Charter Performance: 2022/23 Half Year Update

There was submitted a report by the Director of Communities & Housing Services relative to the Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance 2022/23 Half Year Update.

The report intimated that Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords were required to submit an Annual Return relating to their performance to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) by the end of May each year. A copy of the Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance 2021/22 Performance Report had been considered at the meeting of this Policy Board held on 22 August 2022. The Half Year update report, a copy of which was appended to the report, provided a performance update for the first two quarters of 2022/23, detailed Renfrewshire's performance in terms of the specific Charter indicators and provided information for key areas of the housing service. Comparative information for the previous three-year period was also provided. It was highlighted that due to technical issues in the implementation of the IT system used for reporting repairs it had not been possible to provide performance information in respect of Charter Indicators 8 and 9, namely the average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs and the average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs.

DECIDED: That the Social Housing Charter Performance 2022/23 Half Year Update Report, attached as Appendix 1 of the report, be noted.

7 Housing Customer Engagement Annual Report 2021/22

There was submitted a report by the Director of Communities & Housing Services relative to the Housing Customer Engagement Annual Report for 2021/22, a copy of which was appended to the report. The Convener intimated that the Annual Report contained a number of typographical errors within Section 2 and advised that the report outlined how the Council had engaged with tenant and customer groups during the period April 2021 to March 2022 while the Action Plan which had been developed related to 2022/24.

The Annual Report reviewed progress made in relation to the Council's Customer Engagement Strategy, outlined resources available to promote tenant involvement, detailed the mechanisms used to engage with customer groups during 2021/22 and provided an action plan for 2022/24. It was noted that the content of the Annual Report would be published on the Council's website, circulated to Tenants' & Residents' Groups and partner organisations and also made available at Council offices. It was proposed in light of the lifting of restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, that the annual registration process for Tenants' & Residents' Associations be re-introduced with effect from the 2023/24 registration year and that the previously agreed enhanced registration status and eligibility to apply for grant funding from the Housing Revenue Account cease.

It was proposed that arrangements be made to include all elected members on the

distribution list of the Council's 'Good Times – Sheltered and Amenity Housing Newsletter'. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

(a) That the Housing Customer Engagement Annual Report 2021/22, attached as Appendix 1 of the report, be noted;

(b) That it be noted that due to the relaxing of restrictions which were in place relating to Covid-19, the normal annual re-registration process for Tenants and Residents Associations would be introduced for all tenants groups for 2023/24 registration year; and

(c) That arrangements be made to include all elected members on the distribution list of the Council's 'Good Times – Sheltered and Amenity Housing Newsletter'.

8 Housing: Tackling Dampness, Mould and Condensation

There was submitted a report by the Director of Communities & Housing Services relative to tackling dampness, mould and condensation in Council-owned housing stock in Renfrewshire.

The report made reference to the recent investigation and inquest into the tragic death of a two-year-old boy in Rochdale in December 2020 which had concluded that this had been due to environmental mould exposure over a prolonged period. The case had led to an increased focus on landlords and how they dealt with reports of mould and dampness. The Housing Ombudsman had subsequently produced a report entitled 'Spotlight on: Damp and Mould' which contained several recommendations.

For Local Authority providers of social housing, this had prompted reviews of the strategy for dealing with cases of dampness and mould. The Director's report detailed current processes in place in Renfrewshire to deal with reports of dampness and mould, the actions taken to review these and further planned actions. Statistical reports on volumes of repairs of this nature and details of challenges requiring future monitoring were also provided.

DECIDED: That the measures in place, the actions taken and proposed future actions to ensure the effective management of dampness, mould and condensation cases within Renfrewshire Council housing stock be noted.

Valedictory

The Convener advised that this was the last meeting of the Policy Board Oliver Reid would attend before he took up his new position as Chief Executive of Orkney Council and took the opportunity to thank him for his professionalism and, specifically the help, support and advice he had provided during his employment with Renfrewshire Council. Other elected members echoed the sentiments expressed by the Convener.