

Motherwell, 28 March 2002 at 2 pm.

A Special Meeting of the HOUSING AND TECHNICAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

PRESENT

Councillor McLaughlin, Convener; Councillors Grant and Morris, Vice-Conveners; Councillors Cassidy, Clarke, Gorman, Gormill, Hogg, Lyle, McElroy, J. Martin, W. Martin, Mathieson, G. Murray, Robertson, Shields, Valentine, Wallace and Wilson.

CHAIR

Councillor McLaughlin (Convener) presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

The Committee Services Officer, Director of Housing and Property Services, Head of Housing Services, Finance and Administration Manager and Development Manager.

APOLOGIES

Councillors Chadha, Lafferty, McCabe, McKendrick and Maginnis.

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY

1. With reference to (1) paragraph 9 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 31 May 2001 when, *inter alia*, it had been agreed to note the Council's status as a pilot authority for the development of the new Local Housing Strategies, and (2) paragraph 2 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 30 August 2001, when, *inter alia*, it had been agreed that reports regarding the progress in developing the Local Housing Strategy be submitted to future meetings of the Committee, there was submitted a report (docketed) dated 18 March 2002 by the Director of Housing and Property Services seeking approval for the North Lanarkshire Local Housing Strategy Consultative Draft, prior to submission to the Scottish Executive at the end of the pilot period in April 2002 (a) informing that the Local Housing Strategy had been developed in conjunction with the Chief Executive, Directors of Planning and Environment and Social Work, Communities Scotland and NHS Lanarkshire; (b) advising that the purpose of the Local Housing Strategy was to set out the strategic framework to guide how the Council and partners would ensure that North Lanarkshire was a location for tenants to enjoy good quality housing; (c) detailing, within the report, four key priorities in North Lanarkshire highlighted by the Local Housing Strategy; (d) intimating that the Consultative Draft set out proposals for extensive consultation over the next six months, with a view to producing a final draft of the Local Housing Strategy by October 2002; (e) proposing that over the next six months (A) a series of issue specific focus group meetings be held with the Council's partners, registered social landlords, voluntary agencies and local communities to further develop the action plans set out in the Consultative Draft; (B) a series of area specific workshops be held with local residents, community organisations and local service providers, to develop strategies aimed at addressing local needs and issues, and (C) the Consultative Draft be publicised and distributed to various forums which would invite feedback on the Draft from North Lanarkshire residents, and (f) indicating that an Executive Summary would be included in the version to be submitted to the Scottish Executive, which would be made available for consultation, with the Local Housing Strategy continuing to be revised as information was updated.

Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Morris, moved:-

- (1) that North Lanarkshire Local Housing Strategy Consultative Draft be approved for submission to the Scottish Executive in April 2002, and

- (2) that the consultation proposals outlined within the report, for developing a final draft by October 2002, be approved.

Councillor G. Murray, seconded by Councillor Valentine, moved as an amendment that the North Lanarkshire Local Housing Strategy Consultative Draft be revised before its submission to the Scottish Executive in April 2002.

On a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the amendment and 16 Members voted for the motion, which was accordingly declared to be carried.

Decided:

- (1) that the North Lanarkshire Local Housing Strategy Consultative Draft, for submission to the Scottish Executive in April 2002, be approved, and
- (2) that the consultation proposals outlined within the report, for developing a final draft by October 2002, be approved.

REPLACEMENT OF GAS APPLIANCES - 7 GAS TOWERS AND ASSOCIATED ASBESTOS REMOVAL/ENCAPSULATION WORK

2. With reference to paragraph 19 of the Minute of the meeting of the Housing and Property Services Committee held on 29 November 2000 when, *inter alia*, the asbestos removal/ encapsulation to 690 houses in 7 gas towers was approved, there was submitted a report (docketed) dated 5 March 2002 by the Director of Housing and Property Services in respect of the replacement of gas appliances in 7 gas towers and associated asbestos removal/ encapsulation works and seeking approval to pay disturbance allowance to the tenants (1) advising that new gas wet heating systems had been installed in 690 houses, with the asbestos removal/ encapsulation work commencing imminently; (2) highlighting within Appendix 1 to the report, the two high rise towers in the Central District and five in the South District where the work was to be carried out; (3) informing that the houses in Redbridge and Coltswood Courts, Coatbridge would be more difficult to progress as they had been constructed with a higher asbestos content; (4) intimating that to undertake the works at Redbridge and Coltswood Courts, Coatbridge, the tenants would need to be moved out of their homes for up to a week; (5) proposing that disturbance allowance payments of (a) £240 be paid to the tenants of 3 apartment houses in Redbridge and Coltswood Courts, Coatbridge, with £120 being paid to the tenants in the South District towers in 3 apartment houses, and (b) £105 be paid to the tenants in 2 apartment houses, and (6) indicating that all payments would be inclusive of decoration allowance of £54.07 for a 2 apartment house, and £70.55 for 3 apartment house, with the payments being funded from the HRA Capital Budget

Decided: that the Disturbance Allowance payments, as detailed within the report, be paid to the tenants of the 7 gas towers.

BENEFIT FRAUD INSPECTORATE (BFI) REPORT - NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

3. With reference to paragraph 20 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 7 March 2002 when the outcome of the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) inspection and findings, following their visit to the Council between February and May 2001, was noted, there was submitted a report (docketed) dated 20 March 2002 by the Director of Housing and Property Services seeking homologation of the Council's response to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) on the findings and recommendations contained in the BFI's report on benefits administration in North Lanarkshire (1) advising that the Department of Work and Pensions had written to the Council on behalf of the Secretary of State for Social Security inviting proposals (a) to improve the Council's performance in relation to the prevention and detection of fraud relating to Housing Benefit and the administration of Council Tax Benefit, and (b) to remedy any failings identified in the BFI's report; (2) indicating that the Council's response was required by 29 March 2002; (3) intimating, within

appendix 1 to the report, the Council's proposals in response to the BFI's findings, and (4) informing that (a) the Council had established an action plan to take forward the BFI's recommendations, 75% of which had either been fully or partially implemented to date, and (b) a number of areas would be addressed during 2002/2003, with a target date of 31 March 2003 being identified for full implementation.

Decided:

- (1) that a further report be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee on the outcome, following the Secretary of State's consideration of the BFI's report and the Council's response, and
- (2) that the Council's response to the Department of Work and Pensions, appended to the report, be homologated.