

Motherwell, 30 January 2003 at 9.30 am.

A Special Meeting of the HOUSING AND TECHNICAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

PRESENT

Councillor McLaughlin, Convener; Councillors Gorman, Gormill, Hogg, Lafferty, Lyle, McKeown, Maginnis, J. Martin, Mathieson, G. Murray, Selfridge, 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 Tenancy Services and Accommodation Manager.

APOLOGIES

Councillors Chadha, Glavin, Grant, W. Martin, Morris, McCabe, Robertson, Ross and Smith.

HOUSING REVENUE ESTIMATES 2003/2004

C 1. With reference to (1) paragraph 3 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 9 January 2003 when, *inter alia*, there was approved a 4% increase in lock-up charges within the former District Authority areas and no increase in lock-up charges in respect of the former Cumbernauld Development Corporation areas, and (2) paragraph 6 of the Minute of that meeting when, *inter alia*, there was approved the HRA base budget and consideration of a range of savings was continued to this meeting, there was submitted a report (docketed) dated 22 January 2003 by the Director of Housing and Property Services setting out the position and options in relation to the Housing Revenue Account for 2003/2004.

Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Maginnis, moved

- (1) that, in addition to the financial savings arising from the 4% increase in lock-up charges in respect of the former District Authorities stock as approved by the Committee on 9 January, the financial savings totalling £1.067m as detailed in Appendix 1 and the other Housing Charges as detailed in Appendix 1(a) to this Minute, be approved;
- (2) that service improvements totalling £1m, as detailed in Appendix 2 to this Minute, be approved;
- (3) that housing rent levels be increased by an average of £1.57 per week over 52 weeks equivalent to 4%, this to be applied as follows:
 - (a) varying rent increases applied towards implementation of the standard rent structure based on a points weighting system;
 - (b) a minimum rent increase of £1.41 per week, and
 - (c) a maximum rent increase of £1.71 per week, and
- (4) that all increases should be applied from 1 April 2003.

Councillor Lyle, seconded by Councillor Valentine, moved as an amendment

- (1) that service improvements totalling £0.508m, as detailed in Annex A to this Minute, be approved;
- (2) that the financial savings totalling £1.067m, as detailed in Annex B(i) and the other Housing Charges as detailed in Annex B(ii) to this Minute, be approved, and
- (3) that rents be increased by an average of 3.4% equivalent to £1.35 per week, this to be applied as follows:
 - (a) a minimum rent increase of £1.00 per week, and
 - (b) a maximum rent increase of £1.99 per week.

On a vote being taken, 3 Members voted for the amendment and 11 Members voted for the motion, which was accordingly declared to be carried.

Decided: that the proposals as detailed in the motion be approved.

2002/2003 HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE BUDGET

2. With reference to paragraph 14 of the Minute of the meeting of the Housing Committee held on 23 October 1996 when, *inter alia*, the financial control arrangements in respect of the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Budget allocated to Area Housing Offices was approved, there was submitted a report (docketed) dated 16 January 2003 by Director of Housing and Property Services seeking approval to repairs budget transfers which were outwith the scope of the Divisional Housing Manager's authority (1) advising that there were a number of pressure points within some area budgets where demand exceeded available resources and overspends were anticipated; (2) intimating that, in order to maximise spend on repairs and maintenance in the current year, transfers between budgets, within ringfenced areas were recommended, and (3) detailing within Appendix 1 to the report, the budget transfer proposals.

Decided: that the budget transfers detailed within Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

STAFFING REVIEW : PHASE II TENANCY SERVICES AND SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION DIVISION

3. With reference to paragraph 2 of the Minute of the special meeting of this Committee held on 23 September 2002 when, *inter alia*, the Director of Housing and Property Services was authorised to submit a further report to a future meeting of the Committee on the structure of the Tenancy Services and Supported Accommodation Division, taking into account issues which were emerging as part of the Homelessness Strategy, there was submitted a report (docketed) together with a revised Appendix 4 (tabled and docketed) dated 23 January 2003 by the Director of Housing and Property Services in respect of Phase II of the Staffing Review of the Tenancy Services and Supported Accommodation Division (1) enclosing (a) in Appendix 1 to the report a copy of Statutory Instrument No. 444 of 2002 which defines services eligible for grant payment, and (b) in Appendix 2 to the report, a summary of the principal functions and activities of the Tenancy Services and Supported Accommodation Division; (2) detailing within Sections 3-5 of the report, proposals for alterations to the structure within the Division; (4) summarising in Appendix 5 to the report details of proposals in respect of alterations to the establishment with associated financial implications, and (5) recommending that the proposals be approved and the report be remitted to the Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub-Committee for consideration.

Decided:

- (1) that the restructuring of the Tenancy Services and Supported Accommodation Division as detailed in Sections 3-5 of the report, be approved, and
- (2) that the report be remitted to the Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub-Committee for consideration.

COUNCIL HOUSE SALES - HOME LOANS

4. With reference to paragraph 11 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 9 January 2003, when consideration of proposals for loans in respect of Council Houses Sales was continued to a future meeting of the Committee, there was submitted a report (docketed) dated 10 January 2003 by the Director of Housing and Property Services regarding changes following the enactment of the Housing (Scotland) 2001 with regard to provisions for loans to be made available to purchasers of Council Houses (1) outlining the existing procedures for purchasers acquiring their houses; (2) advising that (a) the new Housing Act had repealed legislation contained within the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, ending the obligation on authorities to offer such loans, and (b) any further loans could be given within the discretionary powers that continued to be available within the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987; (3) intimating the amount of Home Loan advances and repayments made over the last four years, which were financed from the HRA Capital Programme, and (4) detailing proposals for dealing with future applications using the discretionary powers available.

Decided: that future loan applications in Right to Buy cases be dealt with using the existing framework, subject to the conditions detailed in Section 4.2 of the report.

NEW TAX AND PENSION CREDITS - REVIEW OF ESTABLISHMENT

5. With reference to (1) paragraph 10 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 31 October 2002 when the anticipated impact on Housing/Council Tax Benefit Administration of the introduction of New Tax Credits from April 2003 was noted, and (2) paragraph 10 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 9 January 2003 when, *inter alia*, it had been noted that (a) the Department of Work and Pensions would make funds available to off-set the costs of software changes, staff training, publicity and additional staff for the implementation of New Tax Credits, and (b) a report on any staffing changes required to administer both Tax and Pension Credits would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee, there was submitted a report, dated 21 January 2003 by the Director of Housing and Property Services seeking approval to create an additional eight full time posts to assist with the introduction of Tax and Pension Credits from 1 April 2003 (A) proposing that the benefit staffing structure be increased by eight Benefit Officers, six permanent and two temporary, until 31 March 2004, with the posts being graded AP1/2, and (B) detailing the annual costs of the new posts from 1 April 2003, totalling £142,500.

Decided:

- (1) that the creation of the posts as detailed in Section 3 of the report be approved, and
- (2) that the report be remitted to the Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub-Committee for consideration.

VERIFICATION FRAMEWORK - HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT

6. With reference to paragraph 19 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 7 March 2002 when, *inter alia*, the appointment of two temporary Verification Officers to assist in carrying out verification visits with regard to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit had been approved, there

was submitted a report dated 21 January 2003 by the Director of Housing and Property Services seeking approval to extend the contracts of the two Verification Officers until 31 March 2004 (1) advising that the two posts had been funded through an additional one-off grant in financial year 2002/2003, and the Department of Work and Pensions was now increasing the grant for the financial year 2003/2004, which would cover the extension of the two posts until 31 March 2004; (2) proposing that the contracts of the two temporary posts of Verification Officer be extended to 31 March 2004 which would bring the termination dates into line with the remaining verification posts within the structure, and (3) intimating that the funding of the Verification Framework by the Department of Work and Pensions beyond 31 March 2004 had still to be confirmed.

Decided:

- (1) that the extension of the posts as detailed within the report until 31 March 2004 be approved, and
- (2) that the report be remitted to the Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub-Committee for consideration.

Financial Savings

	Projected Housing Stock 42,586	
	Estimated Annual Saving £000	Weekly Rent Reduction £
1. Increase other housing charges by 4% as detailed at Appendix 1(a).	154	0.07
2. Housing Revenue Account share of PPP income streams.	50	0.02
3. Saving resulting from redesignation of Gowkthrapple caretakers from Resident to Estate.	6	0.00
4. Savings on SPS shuttering resulting from implementation of empty house security pilot project.	200	0.09
5. Supporting People grant for rent pool costs.	657	0.30
Total	1,067	0.48

Other Housing Charges

Description	No. of Units	Weekly Charge (52 weeks)		Proposed Increase		Additional Revenue Per Annum £
		Present £	Proposed £	£	%	
Former District Authorities						
Lock ups	3,893	3.57	3.71	0.14	4	28,341
Lock ups higher rental	114	4.54	4.72	0.18	4	1,067
Garage sites	847	1.14	1.19	0.05	4	2,008
Parking Bays	28	2.64	2.75	0.11	4	154
Tied Houses	53	Various	Various	Various	4	1,281
Temporary accommodation						
- Unfurnished	13	189.02	166.08	(22.94)	(12)	(13,181)
- Furnished	155	228.38	216.90	(11.48)	(5)	(78,649)
- Supported	135	229.53	265.30	35.77	15.6	213,440
Laundry (per wash)		0.60	0.60	-	-	-
Laundry (per dry)		0.60	0.60	-	-	-
Sheltered housing heating						
- Central (Wellwynd Gardens)		5.77	5.77	-	-	-
- South (Unitas Road)		12.20	12.20	-	-	-
- South (Drummond Drive)		11.38	11.38	-	-	-
Hostel heating - South		7.00	7.00	-	-	-
Sub Total						154,460
Former CDC Housing Stock						
Lock ups	501	4.69	4.69	-	-	-
NLC Overall						154,460

Service Improvements

		Projected Housing Stock 42,586	
		Estimated Annual Cost £000	Weekly Rent Increase £
<u>Recurring Items</u>			
1.	Loan Worker Initiative To finance a lone worker initiative in accordance with the Council's risk management strategy.	20	0.01
2.	Close Cleaning Extend close cleaning service to increase demand for flatted properties	50	0.02
3.	Lock Up Repairs Increase budget for lock up repairs to reflect additional revenue generated through charge increases	30	0.01
4.	Adaptations Increase budget for adaptations.	50	0.02
5.	Housing Repairs Increase budget for housing repairs and maintenance.	600	0.27
	Sub Total	750	0.34*
<u>One Off Items</u>			
6.	Adaptations Increase budget for adaptations.	150	0.07
7.	Management Initiative Increase budget provision to continue to develop a marketing strategy to positively promote low demand housing, make better use of the stock and maximise income generation.	100	0.05
	Sub Total	250	0.11*
	Total	1,000	0.45*

* Minor variances due to roundings

Service Improvements

	Projected Housing Stock 42,586	
	Estimated Annual Cost £000	Weekly Rent Increase £
1. Lock Up Repairs Increase budget for lock up repairs to reflect additional revenue generated through charge increases.	30	0.01
2. Close Cleaning Extend close cleaning service to increase demand for flatted properties. 50% of increase to be spent in North Area (Blocks to be identified).	221	0.10
3. Adaptations Increase budget for adaptations.	221	0.10
4. Stair and Close Lighting Abolish factoring charge inherited from the former Cumbernauld Development Corporation	36	0.02
Total	508	0.23

Financial Savings

	Projected Housing Stock 42,586	
	Estimated Annual Cost £000	Weekly Rent Reduction £
1. Implement revised charges as detailed at Annex B (ii).	154	0.07
2. Housing Revenue Account share of PPP income streams.	50	0.02
3. Savings resulting from redesignation of Gowkthrapple caretakers from Resident to Estate..	6	0.00
4. Savings on SPS shuttering resulting from implementation of empty house security pilot project.	200	0.09
5. Supported People grant for rent pool costs.	657	0.30
Total	1,067	0.48

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