

COMMUNITY SERVICES STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
10th October 2012 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors John Hampton (Chair), Ian Cavana, Kirsty Darwent, Hywel Davies, Hugh Hunter, Nan McFarlane and Corri Wilson.

Apology: Councillor Andy Campbell.

Attending: H. Garland, Executive Director – Children and Community; K. Leinster, Head of Community Care and Housing; V. Andrews, Head of Legal and Administration; C. Monaghan, Head of Policy, Performance and Communication; and A. Gerrish, Committee Services Officer.

Also Present: Councillors John McDowall and Philip Saxton, (Portfolio Holders), Councillors Douglas Campbell and Allan Dorans (for Call-ins) and Councillors Peter Convery and Helen Moonie.

1. Item for Call-in – Masterplan for Lochside, Ayr.

Reference was made to the Minutes of the Leadership Panel of 2nd October 2012 (Page 455, paragraph 1) when that Panel, having considered a report of 24th September 2012 by the Executive Director - Children and Community, had agreed

- (1) to note the contents of the Masterplan;
- (2) to submit a planning application for the development of fifty eight affordable homes for rent on the site of the former Greyhound Stadium in accordance with the Masterplan;
- (3) to transfer the land at the former Greyhound Stadium from General Services to the Housing Revenue Account for the sum of £200,000;
- (4) to seek the Scottish Government's consent to the transfer as outlined at 2.3 of the report;
- (5) to appoint the District Valuer to undertake negotiations with the twelve existing owners within the maisonettes for the purchase of their properties;
- (6) to demolish the nine remaining blocks of maisonettes at Ferguson Street and Sloan Street and lock ups at Cowan Crescent, Ayr;
- (7) to agree that the remaining Council tenants in the maisonettes at Ferguson Street and Sloan Street be given priority for the fifty eight new homes in line with the housing allocation policy at the time; and
- (8) subject to necessary approvals and Scottish Government funding, to proceed with the development.

The Panel was advised that the report had been the subject of a call-in (issued) details of which, together with the written responses circulated in advance of the meeting are outlined below

Question 1

To ask questions of Officers in relation to consultation with residents during December 2011 and January 2012.

Answer 1

Clarification was required on the specific issues surrounding the consultation.

Question 2

To ask questions of Officers concerning the Masterplan in respect of the numbers of affordable homes to buy and to rent and recreation facilities.

Answer 2

The Masterplan considered the inclusion of 34 houses for sale. Market research was carried out with private housing developers to identify interest in such a proposal. Each developer who responded indicated that economic uncertainty, alongside mortgage availability and deposit funding would make early delivery of housing for sale in this community challenging. Some of the respondents indicated that a phased approach with no certainty over future funding increased the risk of the project. Each of the developers indicated that affordable housing subsidy (including land in kind) would be required to deliver housing for sale in this area.

Question 3

To ask Officers, if the South Ayrshire Strategic Local Programme for affordable housing development was submitted to the Scottish Government prior to 31st August 2012 which detailed that the Lochside Ayr proposal would contain 58 homes in a South Ayrshire housing development, why the Lochside Masterplan report was not submitted to either the Leadership Panel on 4th September 2012 or to the Council meetings on either 3rd or 27th September 2012.

Answer 3

Yes the Strategic Local Plan (SLP) was submitted to the Scottish Government on 31st August 2012. Due to a delay in the Scottish Government advising of the increased funding allocation, the final draft programme was not completed until just prior to submission. This did not leave sufficient time for submission to the early September meetings. A decision was thereafter taken to submit the SLP to Leadership Panel after a decision had been taken regarding the Lochside Masterplan.

Question 4

To ask questions of Officers in respect of the tenant profile of allocations.

Answer 4

Clarification is required regarding the specific allocation referred to.

Question 5

To ask questions of Officers in respect of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SiMD) statistics for the communities covered by the maisonettes in Ferguson Street and Sloan Street.

Answer 5

Clarification is required regarding the specific SiMD statistics referred to.

Question 6

To ask the Portfolio Holder to clarify his statement that in the report submitted to the Council on 8th March 2012 funding was available for 26 houses for rent.

Answer 6

The statement refers to information I requested when elected to be Portfolio Holder for housing to look at what could be affordable with the funding from the Scottish Government for new social housing. I was astonished to find that only enough funding would be left after funds for committed developments were taken into account and that only enough Scottish Government funding would be available to build 26 new units in Lochside. I believe this information was available to the Portfolio Holder for Housing at that time prior to the meeting in March of this year, so therefore I was surprised that the SNP brought a paper to full council to build 96 new units when adequate funding was not available.

Question 7

To ask the Portfolio Holder, the Administration's intentions and timescale for developing the remainder of the site in Lochside.

Answer 7

Timescales for any future developments of social housing is predicated on funding from the Scottish Government and Lochside along with other areas in South Ayrshire will be considered when other future funding becomes available.

Question 8

To ask the Portfolio Holder, what discussions he had with Officers to compensation for those tenants, who opted for permanent accommodation between 8th March and 2nd October 2012.

Answer 8

This was part of the general discussion on the final paper and the conclusion of this particular issue was that since these residents volunteered to transfer into suitable permanent accommodation when no decision on the future of the Maisonettes was decided at that time then home loss and disturbance payments could not be paid.

The Chair invited Councillor Douglas Campbell to explain his reasons for the call-in and heard him state

- (a) should the Leadership Panel have considered ex-gratia payments to those tenants who moved to alternative accommodation between the Council's decision on 8th March and the Leadership Panel's decision on 2nd October 2012; and
- (b) whether the decision to build only Council houses on the site met other Council objectives in relation to minimising poverty and deprivation.

The Chair further invited Councillor Douglas Campbell to clarify the details of the call-in and thereafter, heard him enquire in relation to questions (1) to (8) above and heard the Head of Community Care and Housing and the Head of Legal and Administration provide further information and clarification in response to the questions raised.

Members of the Panel asked questions and received clarification from the Head of Community Care and Housing and the Head of Legal and Administration in respect of information in relation to:- the ratio of open space to house building, a sports and leisure strategy for the area, availability of sports facilities in the area, land value, ex-gratia payments to tenants and keeping tenants informed of progress of the project.

Councillor McFarlane, seconded by Councillor Wilson, then moved that the report be referred back to the Leadership Panel as the questions raised had not been answered adequately.

By way of Amendment Councillor Hunter, seconded by Councillor Cavana, moved that the decision made by the Leadership Panel at its meeting on 2nd October 2012 be confirmed and implemented.

On a vote being taken by a show of hands, five Members voted for the Amendment and two for the Motion. The Amendment was accordingly declared to be carried.

Decided: following review, that the decision of the Leadership Panel in respect of this matter be confirmed and implemented.

2. Item for Call-in –South Ayrshire Strategic Local Programme

Reference was made to the Minutes of the Leadership Panel of 2nd October 2012 (Page 457, paragraph 2) when that Panel, having considered a report of 14th September 2012 by the Executive Director - Children and Community, had agreed to approve the Strategic Local Programme for South Ayrshire as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report which had been submitted in draft form to the Scottish Government on 31st August 2012.

The Panel was advised that the report had been the subject of a call-in (issued) details of which, together with the written responses circulated in advance of the meeting are outlined below:-

Question 1

To ask Officers the basis on which the Leadership Panel considered the Lochside Masterplan before the South Ayrshire Strategic Local Programme.

Answer 1

To allow the Strategic Local Programme to be considered in full by Leadership Panel, it was the Officer's opinion that a decision was required either way regarding the proposed development at Lochside. In submitting the Strategic Local Programme by 31st August, discussion had taken place with the Portfolio Holder regarding strategic housing priorities across South Ayrshire.

Question 2

To ask when the Council, with respect to paragraph 3.4, was notified of the indicative allocation of £2.862m and to ask the date in August 2012 when the Council was advised of the additional resource allocation increased to £3.32m.

Answer 2

The Council was notified of the original allocation of £2.862m on 8th May 2012 and of the additional allocation on 27th August 2012.

Question 3

To ask Officers, if the Strategic Local Programme for South Ayrshire was submitted to the Scottish Government by the deadline of 4th September 2012 or the Council meetings of either 3rd or 27th September 2012.

Answer 3

Yes - the Strategic Local Programme was submitted to the Scottish Government by the deadline of 31st August 2012. Due to a delay in the Scottish Government advising of the increased funding allocation the final draft programme was not completed until just prior to submission. This did not leave sufficient time for submission to the early September meetings. A decision was thereafter taken to submit the Strategic Local Programme to Leadership Panel after a decision had been taken regarding the Lochside Masterplan.

Question 4

To ask Officers if any of the sites detailed in Appendix 1 (a) were included as new potential development sites after 28th June 2012.

Answer 4

The Ayrshire Housing Development at Forehill/Belmont was included in the programme after 28th June 2012. This was in response to discussion with the Scottish Government Housing Supply Division about the Strategic Local Programme, and the potential over-reliance on Council new build. It was suggested that more Housing Association developments should be included in the priority project list.

The bakeries site development was also brought forward into the priority list following announcement of the additional funding.

Question 5

To ask Officers for the dates on which briefings were held with the Portfolio Holder to discuss the South Ayrshire Strategic Local Programme.

Answer 5

17th and 30th August 2012.

Question 6

To ask the Portfolio Holder what scoring mechanism or policy priorities were used to identify the list of projects in Appendix 1 (a) that were submitted to the Scottish Government.

Answer 6

Rather than a scoring mechanism, emphasis was placed on projects identified within the Scottish Housing Investment Plan as strategic priorities against their likely delivery by 31st March 2015. Each of the projects identified in Appendix 1A were strategic priorities for the Council and could be delivered by 31st March 2015.

The Chair invited Councillor Douglas Campbell to explain his reasons for the call-in and, thereafter, the Panel heard him ask questions and receive clarification in relation to the time it had taken for this report to be presented to the Leadership Panel.

Members of the Panel asked questions and received further clarification from the Head of Community Care and Housing, the Head of Legal and Administration and the Executive Director – Children and Community in respect of:- the time delay of the report being submitted to Leadership Panel for consideration, the possible outcome of this matter if this report were to be referred back to the Leadership Panel with amendments and if the Portfolio Holder and Leadership Panel had been kept fully informed of the situation.

Decided: following review, that the decision of the Leadership Panel in respect of this matter be confirmed and implemented.

3. Minutes of previous meeting.

The Minutes of the previous meeting of 12th September 2012 (issued) were submitted and noted.

4. Matters Arising.**Improvement Plan for the Housing Repair Service.**

Decided: having heard a Member request an update on the report for the Improvement Plan for the Housing Repair Service, to note that this would now be issued as an Information Bulletin to all Members.

Adjournment.

The time being 11.15 a.m. the Panel adjourned for five minutes.

Resumption of Meeting.

The meeting resumed at 11.20 a.m.

5. Annual Performance Report to 31st March 2012.

With reference to the Minutes of South Ayrshire Council of 27th September 2012 (Page 446, paragraph 11), there was submitted a report (issued) of 27th September 2012 by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication providing updating on the Council's progress against its Corporate Plan to 31st March 2012.

Arising from discussion and questions from Members, the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication provided further information and clarification regarding the Annual Performance Report and intimated

- (1) that this report had been submitted to allow Panel Members to begin discussions with a view to what the Performance Information could provide in relation to the Scrutiny Reviews; and
- (2) that future Performance Reporting Workshops would be held for Members prior to Scrutiny.

Decided: to note the progress of elements relating to the remit of this Panel in the Annual Performance Report to 31st March 2012, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor McFarlane left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

The meeting ended at 12 noon.