

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 25 May, 2010 - Minute of Meeting of the HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Malone, Convener; Councillor McDonald, Vice Convener; and Councillors Clark, Collie, Cooney, Corall, Dunbar, Hunter, Milne (from article 2), Noble, Robertson, Kevin Stewart, Young (until article 22) and Yuill.

1 DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND ORDER OF AGENDA

The Convener advised that item 7.1 of the agenda (Aberdon House) had been withdrawn; and proposed that the Committee consider those report identified on the agenda as being for determination in private, with the press and public excluded.

Councillor Hunter requested that item 9.1 of the agenda (CAB – Debt Counselling) be considered with the press and public in attendance.

Further to discussion on this matter, the Convener moved, as a procedural motion:-
that the Committee consider item 9.1 of the agenda (CAB – Debt Counselling), with the press and public excluded.

On a division, there voted:- for the procedural motion (8) – the Convener, the Vice Convener; and Councillors Corall, Dunbar, Noble, Robertson, Kevin Stewart and Yuill; against the procedural motion (4) – Councillors Collie, Cooney, Hunter and Young; declined to vote (1) – Councillor Clark; absent form the division (1) – Councillor Milne.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the procedural motion and therefore in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude the press and public from the meeting in relation to item 9.1 of the agenda (CAB – Debt Counselling) (article 23 of this minute) so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the paragraphs 8,9 and 10 of Schedule 7(A) to the Act;
- (ii) in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude the press and public from the articles detailed below so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the following paragraphs of Schedule 7(A) to the Act: article 24 (paragraph 6); article 25 (paragraph 6); 26 article (paragraph 1); and article 27 (paragraph 8); and
- (iii) to note that item 7.1 of the agenda (Aberdon House) had been withdrawn.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

The Convener welcomed Donald Urquhart (Head of Housing and Community Safety) to his first meeting of the Housing and Environment Committee; and advised that Gillian Milne (Operational Support Manager) was leaving the Council at the end of the month. The Convener wished Mrs Milne the very best of luck for the future, and the Committee reiterated these sentiments.

3 MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 13 April, 2010.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

4 MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE HOUSING CASES REVIEW SUB COMMITTEE

The Committee had before it the minute of meeting of the Housing Cases Review Sub Committee of 8 March, 2010.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the minute.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Kevin Stewart declared an interest in relation to the discussion that took place regarding item 8 of the Business Statement (Shared Services Agenda – Trading Standards) by virtue of his membership on the Shared Services Board, but did not feel it was necessary to withdraw from the meeting during discussion of this item.

5 COMMITTEE BUSINESS STATEMENT

The Committee had before it a statement of pending and outstanding Committee business, which had been prepared by the Director of Corporate Governance.

In relation to item 8 of the list (Shared Services Agenda – Trading Standards), the Committee were provided with an update by the Trading Services Manager who

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

advised that (1) the Aberdeen City and Shire Shared Services Board had approved the implementation of closer shared working between the two Councils' Trading Standards Services by means of a series of agreed protocols; (2) the Board acknowledged that both services had already provided large relative savings in management costs in the last two of years, and recognised that there was no realistic likelihood of further significant savings in terms of an integrated shared service if that service was to be adequately resourced; (3) the salary differentials between the services was proving problematic; (4) the necessary governance arrangements would be complex and hard to justify for such a small service (around 50 staff in total); (5) IT issues, in particular the need (if possible) for a shared database were complex, and the solutions expensive; and (6) partnership working offered all of the advantages of an integrated shared service with minimal increase in set up and on costs, but with less risk. The Trading Standards Manager indicated that a report would be submitted to this Committee after the summer recess requesting formal ratification of the Board's recommendation and approval of the action plan which would set out a list of protocols to be agreed between officers of both services.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) in relation to item 8 of the list (Shared Services Agenda – Trading Standards), to note the update provided by the Trading Standards Manager and to instruct that officers engage in discussions with Aberdeenshire Council with a view to presenting an action plan and draft protocols to its meeting of 24 August, 2010; and to note that this paper would then be referred to the Shared Services Board;
- (ii) to note that reports would be submitted after the summer recess for items 6 (Modernising Public Space CCTV), 10 (Housing for Varying Needs), 14 (Lift Refurbishment), 17 (Countryside Ranger Service Plan) 18 (Garden Maintenance Scheme), 19 (Modernisation of Housing Service), 21 (SURF Conference), 23 (Furnishings Contract), 24 (Incentive to Encourage Tenants to Downsize), 25 (Housing Access Centre), and 36 (Grounds Maintenance Service);
- (iii) to remove items 9 (Public Analyst Service), 16 (Tree for Every Citizen), 20 (CIH Conference), 26 (Contractual Arrangements with Cyrenians), 30 (Auchmill Golf Course), 33 (Properties Removed From Charge) (resolution (i) only), 38 (Air Quality Action Plan), 40 (Phase 3 New Build), 41 (Beattie Avenue), and 42 (Financial and Performance Monitoring and Reporting to Committee), from the list; and
- (iv) to otherwise note the updates as contained within the list.

6 MOTIONS LIST

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

The Committee had before it a list of outstanding motions which had been prepared by the Director of Corporate Governance.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the updates as contained within the list.

7 IN BLOOM WORKING GROUP - REQUEST TO EXTEND REMIT

Reference was made to the minute of meeting of the In Bloom Working Group of 12 April, 2010 (article 6(C) refers) where a discussion had taken place regarding the 'Light Nights' initiative, and thereafter the Working Group had requested, on the advice of the clerk, that their remit be extended to include the power to explore this initiative. Members today had before them an extract from the said meeting which requested that the Committee, as parent Committee to the In Bloom Working Group, extend its remit as detailed above.

At this point, the Convener explained that the 'Light Nights' initiative was being explored by the Community Safety Partnership.

The Committee resolved:-

to note that the Community Safety Partnership dealt with matters pertaining to the 'Light Nights' initiative, and to therefore not approve the request of the In Bloom Working Group to extend their remit.

8 ST MACHAR OUTDOOR CENTRE - EPI/10/137

Reference was made to article 5 of the minute of meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee of 11 May, 2010, where representatives of the Sunnybank Park Group addressed the Committee in the form of a deputation. The representatives, being Emma Chapman (the spokesperson), Andrew Coventry and Abdul Latif, had outlined to members the work that had been undertaken in putting together plans, conducting meetings and raising funds to create Sunnybank Park, all of which had culminated in the submission of a draft Business Plan to Council officers in March, 2010. The plan contained details of the initial surveys carried out, the subsequent meetings held with potential partners and funders, and a draft constitution. The spokesperson for the group advised with regard to more recent developments in the form of support provided by Greenspace Scotland (the Scottish Government advisory body on greenspace

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

issues); as regards funding received and promised; and involving the completion of the initial survey of local support for the proposals drawn up.

The spokesperson requested that the following recommendations be adopted and agreed by the Finance and Resources Committee:-

- (I) that the Council retains liability for the grade B listed Firhill Well, which occupies part of the park area;
- (II) that the Council delegate authority to the Environment Manager to provide help in kind to the group in the ongoing management of the park and, in particular that the Council consider (a) that the Council has already saved over £50,000 each year by withdrawing all services from the site; (b) that the Group will be bringing in hundreds of thousands of pounds of investment; (c) that the Group will be stepping in to fill the gap in accessible open space and to provide services that the public sector traditionally would provide; and (d) that the Council already provides help in kind to support many community initiatives across Aberdeen and that the help being sought would simply involve a redistribution of community spending to include the park project; and
- (III) that in light of developments since the draft Business Plan had been drawn up, a leasing agreement be concluded quickly in order that the funding secured is safeguarded, and the risk of vandalism is kept to a minimum.

The Finance and Resources Committee had resolved to refer the request from the Sunnybank Park Steering Group regarding the delegation of authority to the Council's Environmental Manager ((II) as detailed above) to assist them with the ongoing management of the park, to the next meeting of this Committee for consideration. Members today had before them the relevant minute extract from the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee, along with the original report.

The Committee resolved:-

to delegate authority to the Environment Manager to provide help in kind to the Sunnybank Park Steering Group with the ongoing management of the park.

9 HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT

With reference to article 12 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which presented key management information and performance indicators for the Housing and Environment Service which consisted of two sections, namely (1) a progress report by the Director;

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
25 May 2010

and (2) a summary in the format of a performance indicator balanced scorecard with detailed information supporting the indicators being considered this cycle.

The Committee noted the high attainment that had been achieved in the Environment Services section of the report, against a backdrop of cuts, and commended staff in this regard.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) in relation to page 103 of the report (rent loss due to voids), to request that a detailed report be submitted after the summer recess on void properties, including details as to what percentage of voids are sheltered properties;
- (ii) to instruct that officers cease referring to properties as either 'high demand' or 'low demand', and further that a letter be sent by the Convener and Vice Convener to the Scottish Government requesting that they adopt the same approach in order to tackle the stigmatisation associated with properties categorised as 'low demand';
- (iii) in relation to page 115 of the report (incidents of vandalism, malicious damage or malicious mischief), to request that a report be submitted after the summer recess detailing the impact the city wardens have had on levels of anti social behaviour, and for this to include information as to how many fixed penalty notices for dog fouling had been paid to date, compared to those issued;
- (iv) to request that in future, officers omit the page numbering on the scorecard section of the report; and
- (v) to otherwise note the information as contained within the report.

10 HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

With reference to article 10 of the minute of its meeting of 16 February, 2010, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which presented an update on the key improvement work which was taking place within the Housing and Environment Service.

By way of background the report advised that the Housing and Environment Improvement Plan incorporated the key improvement work to take place across the Service between April, 2009 and March, 2012, and was a key outcome from the approved Service Plans, which aimed to contribute to the Council's wider Corporate Plan.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

A progress summary of the 44 projects within the Improvement Plan was appended to the report.

In relation to page 147 of the report (review and improve the cleanliness and security of multi storey blocks), the Committee noted the update which advised that Legal Services anticipated that a Freedom of Information request and complaint that had been received would cause a delay in the implementation of the security system; and queried as to how long this delay was likely to be. The Head of Housing and Community Safety advised that he was meeting with officers in Legal Services at an early date, and would provide the Committee with an update further to this.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) in relation to page 147 of the report (review and improve the cleanliness and security of multi storey blocks), to note that the Head of Housing and Community Safety would provide members of the Committee with an update by email further to his meeting with Legal Services regarding the security in multi storey blocks; and
- (ii) to otherwise note the updates as contained within the report.

11 HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN

The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which presented the Business Plan for the Service for 2010/11.

The report advised that this one year Plan was developed from previously approved plans from the different services within the Directorate; and that its aim was to outline the priorities for the Service, whilst the five year plan was being developed.

The report comprised (1) a section detailing an action plan for the Service which had been in place since April, 2009; and (2) an excerpt from the Corporate Risk Register that was aligned to the Service. Copies of the Business Plan had been made available online and in the Members' Library.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the Housing and Environment Business Plan for 2010/11;
- (ii) to instruct officers to build this plan into the fully costed five year Business Plan which was still being developed; and
- (iii) to instruct officers to continue to report every second cycle on the Housing and Environment Improvement Plan.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
25 May 2010

12 HOUSING CAPITAL AND REVENUE PROGRAMMES 2010/11 - H&E/10/079

With reference to article 3 of the minute of the Council Budget meeting of 11 February, 2010, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which detailed the estimated expenditure from the housing capital and housing revenue budgets. At the aforementioned meeting of Council, the sums set out in the housing capital and housing revenue expenditure budgets for 2010/11 and indicative sums for 2011 – 2013 had been approved by members. The report also provided information on the proposed way forward regarding the tendering and letting of the gas central heating replacement framework.

The report advised of the diverse range of works and services procured under the housing capital programme, and continued that in order for the budgets to be expended it was necessary for the Director of Housing and Environment to let tenders for the works and services covered by the various budget headings in a timely fashion. The report explained that tenders were received on a weekly basis and gaining approval for each individual tender would impact on the progress of budget expenditure by delaying acceptance of the preferred contractor. It was therefore proposed that all sums shown against the various headings under the housing capital and housing revenue expenditure budgets be regarded as estimated expenditure for the works and services required under these headings for the 2010/11 financial year.

In relation to the tendering and letting of the gas central heating replacement framework, the report advised that officers had been preparing for the appointment of contractors to participate in the Council's multi supplier framework for the replacement of central heating systems within the Council's housing stock. The report proposed that a contract in this regard be let for a period of up to three years, with the continuation of the contract at the end of each year at the discretion of the Council, which would enable the Council to review its budgetary commitments and the value of works it could afford annually under the contract. The report continued that the indicative value of this work, as set out within the housing capital expenditure budget, was £14.55 million over the next three years, which would require an EU Procurement process to be undertaken.

The report concluded that the Director and Head of Finance would continue to report each cycle on the budgetary position of the Service, and that these reports would detail any amendments to the budget amounts when appropriate.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
25 May 2010

Copies of the housing capital and housing revenue budgets were appended to the report, with headings where works or services required to be tendered marked with an asterisk.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to authorise the Director for Housing and Environment to carry out a European Procurement process to appoint one or more contractors for the gas central heating replacement framework;
- (ii) to approve the estimated expenditure from the housing capital and housing revenue expenditure budgets as appended to the report; and
- (iii) to authorise the Director of Housing and Environment to carry out the appropriate procedures to procure these works in consultation with the Convener or Vice Convener of this Committee.

13 INTRODUCTION OF FURNISHINGS SERVICE CHARGE - H&E/10/090

The Committee had before it a joint report by the Director of Housing and Environment and the Head of Finance which presented options in relation to a furnishing scheme for tenants.

By way of background the report advised that at present, the Council provided furniture to tenants in two different ways, namely (1) through the Homeless Strategy Budget in cases where tenants had been housed following a homeless presentation; and (2) through the Housing Revenue Account, where tenants had been identified as requiring assistance by Housing Assistants. The report continued that as the numbers of tenants requesting help had increased (395 in 2006; 320 in 2007; and 484 in 2008), the value of the grant available to tenants had decreased; and the Council were currently providing furnishings up to the value of £300 for a single person and £700 for a family.

With regard to the introduction of a service charge, the report advised that discussions had been held with Housing Benefit officers to ensure that any furnishings service charge could be eligible for Housing Benefit. The report explained that if a scheme were to be adopted, the furnishings provided to tenants would always remain the property of the Council and if a tenant either ended their tenancy or did not want to pay the service charge, the Council would have to remove all of the furnishings; and further the Council would be responsible for the maintenance and replacement of any furnishings as and when this was necessary, and any electrical goods would be subject to an annual portable appliance test.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
25 May 2010

Appended to the report were four options to enable the Council to provide new tenants with furniture, namely:

- (1) To continue with the current system, which provided furnishings to tenants at no charge.
- (2) To discontinue the furnishing service, which would provide a saving for the Council in both monetary and staffing terms.
- (3) To introduce a service charge which would include electrical goods. This would require an additional member of staff in order to administer the scheme, but officers hoped that this additional cost would be covered by the income related to the scheme. Housing Benefit would cover the service charge for those eligible.
- (4) To introduce a service charge which would not include electrical goods. This would cost less and require less administration support; and Housing Benefit would cover the service charge for those eligible.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee agree on the type of scheme for the furnishing for new tenants listed in the appendix (and as outlined above).

The Committee resolved:-

to agree in principle to the introduction of a service charge, and to instruct officers to report back after the summer recess with costed options in much more detail; and for this to (1) include details of what is currently included in the £300 (for single persons) and £700 (for families) grant that is currently provided, and (2) outline how this project links with the Council's Anti Poverty Strategy.

**14 AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE -
H&E/10/084**

Reference was made to article 43 of the minute of its meeting of 13 April, 2010 when the Committee agreed in principle that part of the monies from the Council Tax income from second homes and long term empty properties be used to fund the New Build Council House programme, and for officers to report back in more detail at a future meeting. The Committee now had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which provided an update on the position with Section 75 contributions for affordable housing and the income received from the reduction in Council Tax discount for second homes and long term empty properties.

By way of background the report advised that Section 75 agreements negotiated through the planning process with housing developers may, on occasion, require that

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
25 May 2010

the developer makes a financial contribution toward affordable housing rather than delivering affordable housing on the specific site to which the planning permission applies. The report continued that agreements to date had provided an income of £1,678, 201, and that no further agreements were in place which would require a financial contribution to be provided. Payments were linked with completion, and cash flow from sales, so officers suggested that it was unlikely that any additional income would be generated in the next two years, which would be coupled with the slow down in the house building industry in the terms of completion of existing projects, new site starts, and the low level of planning applications.

In relation to Section 75 negotiations, the report intimated that in negotiating onsite affordable housing through the planning system it was important that the Council could deliver the finance required by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to acquire completed properties from a developer. With Scottish Government Housing Association grants tied into Devanha Housing for the next year, it was important that the Council was able to provide some level of assurance that new schemes being negotiated could be funded, as without this assurance, the planning negotiations may lead to only commuted sums being paid as an alternative to onsite provision or provision by way of Low Cost Home Ownership (discounted house prices) which was ordinarily provided by a developer rather than affordable housing for rent which was the main priority for the Council.

In considering the Council Tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties, the report reminded members that since 2005/06, the Council had used its powers to reduce the Council Tax discount to 10% for relevant properties. The income received to date for this year was £5,444,411, with an available balance of £3,960,364 after commitments of £1,484,047 being taken into account.

The report continued that the Government, following discussion with CoSLA, had changed the rules on the use of Council Tax monies in November, 2008. Until then the money could only be provided to a RSL with the agreement of the Scottish Government, but now the Council Tax monies could now be used by local authorities for the direct provision of affordable council housing as well as grant funding for RSLs.

The report advised that the Housing Revenue Account had in effect made a contribution of £2,041,287 to this budget through the reduced discount it had received for long term vacant properties held on the Housing Revenue Account. The figure for 2009/10 was 49% of the 2005/6 figure reflecting the significant reduction in the number of long term vacant Council houses.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

The report concluded that the fund for Council Tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties was currently £3,960,364, and explained that if the recommendations before members on this day were approved, £2,041,287 would be used for the Council's new build programme, leaving a balance of £1,919,077 for affordable housing projects.

Appended to the report were details of (1) committed funding for affordable housing; (2) payments made during 2009/10; (3) affordable housing completions during 2009/10; (4) affordable housing developments currently onsite; (5) builds that had not yet commenced; (6) sites that were awaiting grant funding for the construction phase; and (7) potential new projects.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to instruct officers to continue to develop proposals for projects to utilise this funding whether they be Council or Registered Social Landlord led projects; and to request that the Scottish Government be asked to undertake a financial assessment of all projects to ensure value for money is achieved prior to reporting projects to Committee for approval;
- (ii) to agree that £2,041,287 from Council Tax income from second homes and long term empty properties be used as funding for the 151 properties in the first 3 phases of the Council's new build programme; this being the Housing Revenue Account contribution from 2005/6 to 2009/10; and
- (iii) to instruct a report back detailing options for the balance of Council Tax income from second homes (of £1.9 million), in particular exploring the possibility of the Council having the priority in terms of any spend that is made in future.

15 REFURBISHMENT OF KEPPLEHILLS GARAGES - H&E/10/065

Reference was made to article 11 of the minute of meeting of the former Community Services Committee of 15 November, 2005, at which time it was agreed that the demolition of 44 garage units and the refurbishment of the remaining 235 lock up garages could proceed. The Committee had before it on this day, a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which updated members on the progress of these works, and advised of problems encountered in relation to phase three of the project.

By way of background, the report advised that phases one and two of the project had been completed, with 167 garages having been built, and 25 having been demolished. Tenants had returned to their garages and no problems had been encountered during the first two phases.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
25 May 2010

Phase three of the project, in which it was proposed to demolish 89 garages and rebuild 58, covered garages that had not been built in a traditional manner, but that had been built with precast concrete rather than block concrete. This meant that although the internal dimensions were similar, the overall footprint of the garages was less than those in phases one and two.

The report continued that the first 8 of the phase three garages had been handed back to tenants on 23 March, 2010, and on 24 March, 2010, officers had received complaints stating that the garages were smaller than they had previously been, and that tenants could not get their car doors to open far enough to exit their cars when in the garage. On inspection, it was found that the width of the garages had indeed decreased from 2440mm to 2300mm, which was a loss of 140mm (approximately 5.5 inches). The report advised that this was due to (a) the failure of a lead officer to respond to a request from the appointed contract administrator to check the proposed layout of the phase three garages which clearly showed the use of 215mm blockwork to reconstruct the internal and gable walls; (b) the use of 215mm wide blocks to rebuild walls which were originally constructed of precast concrete panels; and (c) the garages being rebuilt on the original concrete bases, which meant that when the wider block work was used to construct the new walls, the internal dimensions of the garages was reduced.

The report continued that work was suspended on the garages with the exception of two sites, the first of which had 17 garages that were nearing completion and it was decided to continue in order to ensure they were protected against the weather; and at the second of which demolition had already commenced, so it was decided that work should be completed for health and safety reasons.

The report then presented three costed options for the way forward, namely (1) do nothing with the 25 garages that had been rebuilt to smaller dimensions and cancel works at the remaining sites; (2) do nothing with the 25 garages that had been built to smaller dimensions but complete work at the remaining sites in phase three; and (3) partially replace the gable and internal walls of the 25 garages that had been completed, and complete the works at the remaining sites in phase three.

The Committee intimated their strong disappointment at this situation; and were also concerned at the length of time it had taken for the project to get to this stage, with the original decision having been taken at the aforementioned meeting of the Community Services Committee in 2005, and instructed that the matter be referred to the Audit and Risk Committee in order for a full investigation to be undertaken. At this point the Convener suggested that there may be a requirement for a policy to the effect that if a

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

Committee decision has not been implemented within a set period of time (for example, one year) then a report must be presented to the Committee with an explanation.

The Committee were advised by the Head of Regeneration and Housing Investment that should the suspension of these works continue, that a charge of £178 per week would be made to the Council by the contractor as part of a penalty clause, but that this could be built into the cost of the overall project.

The report recommended:-

- (a) note the content of this report, and
- (b) approve option 3 as detailed within the report (partially replace the gable and internal walls of the 25 garages that had been completed, and completion of the works at the remaining sites in phase three).

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve recommendation (a);
- (ii) to instruct officers to report back at the next meeting providing more clarity on the options set out within the report;
- (iii) to defer any decision to continue until a further investigation is conducted into cost of each garage in phase three and whether this is now best value for the Housing Revenue Account;
- (iv) to refer this matter to the Audit and Risk Committee in order for a full investigation to be undertaken; and
- (v) to request that the Chief Executive report to the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee, proposing a policy that would instruct officers to report back to a Committee with an explanation in the circumstance where a Committee decision has not been implemented within a set period of time.

16 EX WARDEN ACCOMMODATION - H&E/10/081

Reference was made to article 21 of the minute of its previous meeting, when officers were requested to submit a report on the future use of ex warden flats. This report was now before members and advised that a sum of £170,000 had been committed from the housing capital budget heading (6.10 Housing for Varying Needs – Sheltered/Adaptation) to upgrade all ex warden accommodation during the financial year 2010/11.

The report explained that although the overall responsibility for void management currently lay with the respective Area Housing Manager, performance was determined

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

by the successful joint working between Estate Management, Repairs and Maintenance, Asset Management, and Lettings Management. The report continued that there had been significant improvements in housing management service delivery, including void management, through a network of Service Improvement Teams (SITs).

The report advised that, to date, seven ex warden properties had been upgraded or converted and added to the sheltered housing stock with varying degrees of conversions having been carried out; and that only applicants from the sheltered housing list would be selected for this style of property.

The report detailed the void ex warden properties still to be converted, as follows:

- 23 Dominies Court
- 29 Taransay Court
- 4 Hamewith
- 5 Hamewith
- 10 Clashieknowe
- 21 Fairley Den
- 20 Clashieknowe
- 26 Charlie Devine Court
- 11 Stocket Grange
- 9 Taransay Court; and
- 27 Constitution Court

In relation to page 196 of the report, the Committee queried as to why some properties were losing a room as part of the conversion renovation process, and as to the cost of this work. The Housing Improvement Officer informed the Committee that there was not a demand for 3 or 4 bedroom properties of this type and it was felt more beneficial to remodel them to be 2 bedroom properties where there was a higher level of demand. Mr Perry added that the waiting list was being scrutinised to see if there were any suitable applicants that could utilise the properties in their current format.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to work in partnership with the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing to establish the most suitable client group for this style of accommodation;
- (ii) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to select applicants from the amenity housing list for this style of accommodation;
- (iii) to note the progress on all ex warden accommodation held on the UTBR (unable to be relet) list; and

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

- (iv) to request that officers advise the Committee (1) of the cost associated with creating two bedroom properties in Fairley Den, Charlie Devine Court and Taransay Court; and (2) whether the properties due to be on charge during June, 2010, are on schedule in this regard.

17 PROPERTIES REMOVED FROM CHARGE - H&E/10/064

With reference to article 21 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which requested authority to grant retrospective approval for properties that had been removed from charge.

Table 2 within the report advised that the following properties had been removed from charge or were previously removed from charge and the remedial works had been completed and the charge reinstated; retrospective permission was required for the following properties where permission had not previously been obtained:

- 101f Menzies Road
- 38b Menzies Road
- 29 Hollybank Place
- 5 Byron Park
- 6 Byron Park
- 52 Bryon Crescent
- 1 Regensburg Court
- 5 Regensburg Court
- 8b Granton Place

The report included an update on Woodend House, 254 Queens Road, which advised that this property was previously let as a Women's Aid Shelter until the service provider ceased to provide the service which resulted in the property being vacated. The report continued that there was still a requirement for this type of service and reminded members that they had previously approved the commissioning of a new provider. It was expected that a new service provider could be appointed in August although it was anticipated that the service would not commence for a further 3-6 months dependant on the appointed service provider's requirements.

The report concluded that significant upgrading of the property would be necessary to allow it to be let as mainstream accommodation.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

Also appended to the report was a list of properties which were either unable to be relet (UTBR) or not to be relet (NTBR) and details as to why they had been removed from charge.

During discussion of the report, the Committee raised concerns about the length of time certain properties had been on the list as UTBR or NTBR and asked for this to be addressed as a priority. The Committee further commented that this point had been raised on a number of occasions to date at previous meetings, and still did not seem to be in hand.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the return to charge of the properties detailed at table 2 of the report;
- (ii) to note the current position of all off charge properties detailed at appendix 1;
- (iii) to note the additional comments in respect of Woodend House, 254 Queens Road; and
- (iv) to instruct that a detailed report be submitted after the summer recess advising of accurate target dates for all properties, and outlining any issues that are being encountered by officers that may be impeding progress.

18 CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF HOUSING CONFERENCE - H&E/10/082

With reference to article 11 of the minute of its meeting of 16 February, 2010, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, informing members of the key issues and priorities for the housing service over the coming years which were highlighted at the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Conference and Exhibition held in Glasgow in March, 2010.

By way of background, the report advised that attending the CIH Conference provided the opportunity for housing professionals and community representatives to advance their knowledge and personal effectiveness by attending workshop sessions and networking with other housing practitioners and tenant groups.

Appended to the report were (1) a document highlighting key priorities for the Housing and Environment Service; (2) comments from staff who had attended the conference; (3) a report on the conference by Florence Cal-Anglia (Secretary of the North Area Subgroup); (4) a report on the conference by Bill Pinkerton (Treasurer of Loch Court Tenant Association); and (5) an assessment of the exhibition stand.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

It was noted by the Committee that, due to budgetary constraints, they had taken the decision at the aforementioned meeting of the Committee not to send any elected members to the conference this year. The Director of Housing and Environment commented that many other local authorities had elected members in attendance at the conference.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the content of the report and to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to pursue appropriate responses to the key priorities listed in the report appendices as part of the Council's redesign and modernisation plans for the Housing Service; and
- (ii) to request that officers investigate whether it would be possible to fund the attendance of elected members at next year's conference through the Housing Revenue Account.

19 REVIEW OF PUBLIC TOILETS - H&E/10/073

With reference to article 21 of the minute of its meeting of 19 November, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which advised of the outcome of the public toilet review, and proposed a way forward in order to improve existing public toilet facilities throughout the city.

By way of background the report advised that the provision of public toilets was not a statutory function of a local authority, but was seen as a matter of importance for both residents and visitors to the city. The report outlined the range of toilets available to the public including stand alone toilets made available by the Council, and facilities in supermarkets and shopping centres; and further advised that Aberdeen had 13 public toilets that were well managed and maintained, and four of which (Upperkirkgate, Footdee, Chapel Street and Beach Central) had won Loo of the Year awards in 2009. The report continued that there were many other sites throughout the city that had been public toilets in the past, but that these were generally old, in poor condition, and would not meet today's accepted standards.

The report outlined the progress made to date on upgrading facilities; and highlighted that Automatic Public Conveniences (APCs) had been situated at Duthie Park, Victoria Park and Seaton Park since March, 2008. These units were coin operated, fully automatic, self cleaning, public conveniences, and exceeded specification for a DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant toilet.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
25 May 2010

The report presented a costed options appraisal of the four options regarding the future of public toilets in the city, namely (1) close all public toilets; (2) continue the service as it currently stands; (3) retain existing public toilets, adding 24/7 facilities in the city centre and priority locations (including city parks) and introduce a community toilet scheme across the city; or (4) retain the existing public toilets with the addition of new public toilet facilities and APC units across the city.

Appended to the report were (a) a list of the existing operating toilet facilities within the city, and details of the opening times in this regard; (b) a table detailing all toilet facilities that were open and property sites that had in the past been utilised as public toilets, together with a grading for each property; (c) details of the refurbishment programme undertaken on existing public toilet facilities; and (d) the costed options appraisal regarding the four options detailed within the report.

The report recommended:-
that the Committee:

- (a) notes the progress and improvements made to date with Aberdeen's public toilets;
- (b) approves option three as detailed within the report; to retain existing public toilets, adding 24/7 facilities in the city centre and priority locations (including city parks) and introduce a community toilet scheme across the city, as the preferred option for the long term strategy for public toilets in Aberdeen;
- (c) instructs the Director of Housing and Environment to report back next cycle with a detailed, costed business analysis having taken into consideration the potential influence and implications of the City Centre Development Framework (article 14 of the meeting of Council of 19 May, 2010 refers) on option three as detailed within the report.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the progress and improvements made to date with Aberdeen's public toilets;
- (ii) to approve the retention of existing public toilets and the addition of 24/7 APC facilities in the city centre and priority locations;
- (iii) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to report back after the summer recess with a detailed, costed business analysis, taking into consideration the potential influence and implications of the City Centre Development Framework on resolution (ii), above;

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

- (iv) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to report back in one year detailing any opportunities there may be to provide public toilet facilities in communities who have a longstanding wish for public toilets;
- (v) to instruct a report back providing (1) more details on the community toilet scheme, and (2) alternative options in this regard, including the possibility of capitalising the revenue money that would be required for the scheme, to develop public toilets in the areas they are required; and
- (vi) to request that officers consider opening existing public toilets (as detailed at appendix 1) until 8pm, rather than 5.30pm.

20 TREE FOR EVERY CITIZEN PROJECT - UPDATE - H&E/10/068

With reference to article 38 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 13 April, 2010, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which updated members on the Tree for Every Citizen Project.

The report outlined progress as at mid May, 2010, and advised that planting work had continued at a number of sites following delays caused by the adverse weather conditions experienced in February and March of this year. All trees at Seaton, St Fitticks Park, Balgownie Drive, Inverdee and Abbotswells had now been planted, and contractors were currently working at Westfield Park, Danestone and Greenfern, all of which were scheduled for completion by the end of May, 2010.

The report highlighted that a great deal of community involvement had taken place throughout this project, both with local schools and businesses electing to get involved.

The report concluded by advising of the proposed planting sites until December, 2011, the area of land involved, and the number of trees to be planted, as follows:

- Danestone (2.2 hectares 4,700 trees)
- Balgownie Drive (2.69 hectares 5,470 trees)
- Greenfern Woodland (7.67 hectares 16,500 trees)
- Seaton (near Donmouth local nature reserve to the rear of Shell petrol station) (8.54 hectares 19,000 trees)
- Inverdee pitches, (adjacent to the existing riverside woodland, not encroaching into the pitches) (1.87 hectares 4,000 trees)
- Lochinch Farm (3.29ha 7,150 trees)
- Abbotswells open space (6.95 hectares 12,000 trees)
- St Fitticks Park (7.23 hectares 13,250 trees); and

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

- Westfield Park (7.55 hectares 12,150 trees).

The report recommended:-

that the Committee:

- (a) notes progress to date; and
- (b) instructs officers to provide a further update on the completion of the first phase of the project and proposals for the second phase, at the meeting of 24 August, 2010.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve recommendation (a); and
- (ii) to instruct officers to provide an update in the information bulletin next cycle on the completion of the first phase of the project and proposals for the second phase.

21 AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN - UPDATE - H&E/10/040

Reference was made to article 39 of the minute of its previous meeting, when the Committee were presented with the draft Air Quality Action Plan, and whereby the Committee questioned officers extensively on the report and requested that officers report back and address the following issues: (1) whether the sensors on Market Street could be moved to better reflect the air quality issues; (2) if mobile sensors could be installed if the sensors in place could not be moved; (3) if the salt in the air had been taken into consideration; and (4) could the sources of pollution be better identified on Market Street, taking into consideration the fumes from boats in the harbour. It was further suggested that due to the resources that would be required to implement the Plan, that the report may have to be referred to the Finance and Resources Committee for their consideration. The Committee now had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which sought to address these issues.

With reference to the questions raised in relation to air quality monitoring, the report advised that national guidance prescribed the type of equipment that should be utilised to monitor air quality, and locations where monitoring should be carried out. As the air quality objectives were health based, monitoring was carried out at locations of relevant population exposure for the specific pollutants of concern (nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particles (PM₁₀)) in Aberdeen. Where a risk of exceedance of an objective was identified through the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) process, authorities should monitor in these areas using approved continuous monitoring equipment such as the 6 stations throughout Aberdeen. The report explained that these stations were

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

audited every 6 months and the data was checked daily and ratified by external agents who were appointed by the Scottish Government. The selection of a site was determined by various criteria including population exposure, risk of exceedances of objectives, traffic flows, pavement width, proximity to major junctions, bus stops and other pollution sources.

The report continued that indicative levels of NO₂ were also measured through diffusion tubes attached to lamp posts and downpipes at approximately 40 locations across Aberdeen. These measurements were used to monitor trends and identify locations of potential exceedances. There were 20 sites in the city centre and almost all exceeded the annual mean objective. Maximum levels were on Market Street (70-80ugm⁻³), Union Street close to the Holburn Street junction (60-70ugm⁻³) and on parts of King Street (70ugm⁻³).

The report advised that it was not possible to measure PM₁₀ concentrations through diffusion tubes. While other semi portable systems were available, costs were approximately £6,300 (compared to less than £10 for diffusion tubes), they required a power supply, and may be subject to vandalism, for example if attached to lamp posts in parts of the city. Continuous monitoring through the existing stations had been considered the most appropriate measurement technique for PM₁₀ monitoring.

In relation to the questions raised at the last meeting regarding emissions from ships in the harbour, the report highlighted that monitoring measures the total concentration of a pollutant at a specific location, and it was not possible to distinguish the contribution from different sources such as traffic, shipping or industrial sources.

The consultant Cordah had been contracted to model emissions from the harbour in 2004 and this modelling had predicted that shipping accounted for annual mean NO₂ and PM₁₀ concentrations of 3-10ugm⁻³ and 1-1.5ugm⁻³ respectively. Emissions may have been over estimated due to a number of worst case assumptions. Prior to the commencement of construction works associated with the Union Square development, the annual mean NO₂ and PM₁₀ concentrations at the continuous monitoring station on Market Street were 50-60ugm⁻³ and 51-52ugm⁻³ respectively. It was concluded that emissions from shipping contributed to exceedances of the annual mean objectives, however traffic was the main source of the raised levels.

The report further advised members that in 2004, Aberdeen Harbour Board had commissioned Aberdeen University to carry out a study of the impact of harbour activities on air quality. The study concluded that the harbour was not a major contributor to city centre pollution levels. Monitoring of NO₂ showed a significant gradient of low levels at the harbour mouth to high levels at the Market Street area. An

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

NO₂ monitoring exercise by the environmental health service from 2005-2008 similarly showed lower levels at the harbour mouth away from road traffic and harbour internal activities such as the loading of cargo, with highest levels close to Market Street.

The report continued that the Technical Guidance document described the pollution sources, and processes that authorities must consider when undertaking annual air quality assessment reports, including occasions when specific sources such as airports, railway and bus stations, shipping and industrial sources must be considered in detail. Using the criteria within the guidance, which considered the size, type and number of vessel movements, exceedance of the air quality objectives would not be predicted at Aberdeen Harbour and therefore no detailed assessment was required. The guidance also considered emissions of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) to be the main pollutant of concern associated with shipping. Both the Cordah modelling and the Aberdeen University study confirmed SO₂ emissions associated with the vessel movements in Aberdeen were well below objective levels.

Emissions from vessels were controlled by European Union legislation specifying the fuel composition, and there were therefore limited actions the authority could take to reduce emissions. The report concluded that the draft Air Quality Action Plan recognised that shipping and activities at the harbour did contribute to air pollution within the city centre, and included a measure to consider initiatives to improve air quality in the harbour area.

Copies of the draft Air Quality Action Plan, which had not been amended since the aforementioned meeting of the Committee, had been made available in the Members' Library.

Members intimated their concern that the impact the harbour had on monitored emissions could not be quantified; and that decisions could be taken based on inaccurate information in this regard, and therefore the wrong areas of the city could become the focus of the Plan.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the information regarding emissions from Aberdeen Harbour and the monitoring of air quality, including Market Street contained within the report;
- (ii) to approve the draft Air Quality Action Plan for public consultation and submission to the Scottish Government;
- (iii) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to prepare a final Air Quality Action Plan for Committee consideration following the completion of the consultation; and

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

- (iv) to refer the report to the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee for information due to the links between air quality, transport and planning.

22 REPLACEMENT CREMATORS - PROGRESS REPORT - H&E/10/067

With reference to article 29 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which provided an update on the progress with the replacement of the cremators at Hazlehead Crematorium.

The report advised that works were currently on schedule for completing section 1 on 23 May, 2010 (although officers hoped this was achievable by 16 May, 2010) and that the commissioning of the cremators was due to commence on 12 April, 2010. The first cremations were due to take place during the week commencing 3 May, 2010, and would be carried out by Facultatieve Technologies (cremator manufacturer) engineers with Council staff in attendance. The following week hands on training of Crematorium staff would take place with a further 4 weeks when Crematorium staff would continue to operate the machines with Facultatieve Technologies engineers on site to advise and do any further training that may be necessary. The report explained that there would be 3 weeks of using the new machines before the existing ones were decommissioned either on 17 or 24 May, 2010 depending on progress over the next five to six weeks; and further advised that there was insufficient electricity capacity on site to run the existing cremators and the new equipment simultaneously, therefore the new equipment was going to be commissioned using the stand by generator which would be fuelled by liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and the existing LPG tank would be replaced with 3 new larger tanks to supply the generator and dual fuel cremator.

The report concluded that the target spend for 2009/10 in relation to this project had been achieved.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the content of the report; and
- (ii) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to report back on progress at the next meeting of 24 August, 2010.

In accordance with the decision recorded under article 1 of this minute, the following items were considered with the press and public excluded.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

23 CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU - MINUTE OF AGREEMENT AND THE PROPOSED MERGER OF DEBT COUNSELLING AND WELFARE RIGHTS TEAMS

Reference was made to article 34 of the minute of meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee of 11 May, 2010 when a report by the Director of Housing and Environment had been considered and it had been agreed to refer matters pertaining to the budgets within the Housing and Environment Service to this Committee for consideration.

The report before the Finance and Resources Committee had amongst other things, requested that the £70,000 of savings (previously proposed to be made from the cessation of funding to Aberdeen Citizens' Advice Bureau) be found from elsewhere within the Environment Service as follows (recommendation (i) of the report):

- (a) £15,000 from Private Landlord Registration fees (the projected saving was £96,000 on average for the next three years, but it was anticipated that there would be much more than that in 2010/11, given the characteristics of the renewal cycle);
- (b) £15,000 from the disestablishment of one trainee Environmental Health Officer post;
- (c) £10,000 from street cleansing (over and above the savings already set for 2010/11);
- (d) £10,000 from the public toilets budget; and
- (e) £20,000 from street sweeping trading account (over and above the savings already set for 2010/11).

The above recommendation had been referred to this Committee for consideration, and members had before them on this day the report that had been presented to the aforementioned meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee, and were circulated a copy of the relevant minute extract from the said meeting.

The Committee raised concerns at the proposal to save £10,000 from the street cleansing budget, and £20,000 from the street sweeping account, but were assured by officers that this would not result in any downgrading of the service currently provided.

On hearing that the Convener intended to move the recommendation as a motion, Councillor Cooney intimated that he would like to move an amendment to the effect that the Committee do not approve recommendation (i) as contained within the report; and agree that the £70,000 required, be funded from the Council's contingencies.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

The Committee were advised that the Housing and Environment Committee could only take decisions regarding its own Service budgets, and that if such a decision were to be made, it would have to be referred back to the Finance and Resources Committee for their further view on the matter.

On hearing the above advice, Councillor Cooney withdrew his amendment.

The Committee resolved:-

to agree that the required £70,000 of savings (previously proposed to be made from the cessation of funding to Aberdeen Citizens' Advice Bureau) be found from elsewhere within the Environment Service as follows:

- (a) £15,000 from Private Landlord Registration fees (the projected saving was £96,000 on average for the next three years, but it was anticipated that there would be much more than that in 2010/11, given the characteristics of the renewal cycle);
- (b) £15,000 from the disestablishment of one trainee Environmental Health Officer post;
- (c) £10,000 from street cleansing (over and above the savings already set for 2010/11);
- (d) £10,000 from the public toilets budget; and
- (e) £20,000 from street sweeping trading account (over and above the savings already set for 2010/11).

24 AUCHMILL GOLF CLUB - EXTENSION OF LICENCE TO OCCUPY

Reference was made to article 19 of the minute of meeting of Council of 10 February, 2010, when members had agreed to extend the Management Committee of Auchmill Golf Club's (MCAGC) current licence to occupy the golf course for a further twelve months from 31 March, 2010. The Committee had before it on this day, a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which provided an update on the negotiations between the Council and MCAGC in connection with the Auchmill Golf Course.

The report advised that further to the aforementioned meeting of Council, the Scottish Government had granted Section 74 consent to enable the MCAGC to continue their licence to occupy until March, 2011; and that officers had contacted MCAGC in order to review progress on a range of routine operational matters.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the agreement from the Scottish Government to extend the Section 74 consent for the MCAGC's licence to occupy the golf course for a further twelve months (from 31 March, 2010); and
- (ii) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to report back next cycle with a further progress update.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Yuill declared an interest in the subject matter of the following article by virtue of his employment and withdrew from the meeting prior to any discussion on the matter.

25 49 BEATTIE AVENUE

Reference was made to article 45 of the minute of its previous meeting, when the development of 49a, 49b, and 49c Beattie Avenue as a property for Care in the Community use was approved in principle, and the Director of Housing and Environment was instructed to develop options in this regard, and to report back thereafter detailing the life cycle costs and development costs associated with these options. The Committee now had before a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which detailed the information requested at the aforementioned meeting.

The report outlined possible examples for the future use of the property as follows:

- (1) Elmwood Hospital Resettlement Project - Revenue funding had been identified within 2010/11 budget to provide support services to a number of service users with learning disabilities who currently live in Elmwood Unit, Royal Cornhill Hospital, and a number of whom were designated as delayed discharge and were unable to leave hospital as appropriate accommodation could not be found.
- (2) Transitions Project - The project would provide accommodation, with support for young people moving on to adult services. Revenue funding for support services should be available in 2010/11.
- (3) Reprovisioning of Care Home - Granton Place was currently registered as a care home facility providing accommodation for people with learning disabilities, however, the property was no longer fit for purpose and was in need of urgent reprovisioning. Revenue funding would transfer from the existing service, with service users moving to individualised budgets.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

Appended to the report were details of the costs in relation to the two options for the development of the property (option one – convert to four flats; option two – convert to six flats), and a table detailing a ten year life cycle costing model for both options.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee

- (a) approve option one (to convert 49 Beattie Avenue (Ashgrove House) into 4 flats) and instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to make provision in the Housing Capital Programme 2010/11 to develop 49 Beattie Avenue (Ashgrove House) as detailed within the report; and
- (b) instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to work in partnership with the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing to develop the most suitable Care in the Community option; explore all funding options available to undertake this project; and report back after the summer recess with recommendations in this regard.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to not approve either option one or two at this stage;
- (ii) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to liaise with the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing regarding options for the funding of this project, and the input of the Social Care and Wellbeing Service in this regard, and to report back on the outcome of these discussions after the summer recess;
- (iii) to instruct, that if the Social Care and Wellbeing Service are not in a position to contribute significantly to this project, that a report be submitted after the summer recess detailing costed options in relation to converting 49 Beattie Avenue into mainstream housing; and
- (iv) to refer this report to the Social Care and Wellbeing Committee for consideration.

26 PUBLIC ANALYST LABORATORY - IMPLEMENTATION OF THE APPROVED RECOMMENDATION OF THE BEST VALUE OPTIONS APPRAISAL - H&E/10/062

Reference was made to article 33 of the minute of meeting of Council when it was agreed (1) to appoint a Laboratory Manager to commence work early in the financial year 2009/10; (2) to complete negotiations with Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils with a view to signing a Service Level Agreement; (3) to continue to investigate ways of reducing the costs of analysis as far as possible, commensurate with the maintenance of a good “one stop shop” scientific service in the North East; (4) to work with the then Corporate Director for Continuous Improvement to market the services of the laboratory to organisations other than the current three client authorities; (5) to further explore

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

option 5 and the possibility of achieving further economies of scale and improved service provision by an agreed arrangement with the Aberdeen Forensic Laboratory of the Scottish Police Services Agency; (6) in the event that Dundee City Council decides not to support this option, that Aberdeen City Council instruct the then Corporate Director for Neighbourhood Services (South Area) to immediately initiate the recruitment process for a Public Analyst, albeit not at Chief Officer grade, and continue with all of the aforesaid recommendations; and (7) to instruct that a report be submitted on progress to the Council meeting on 20 May, 2009. The Committee had before it on this day an update on the above resolutions by way of a report by the Director of Housing and Environment.

The report advised (a) that a Laboratory Manager had been appointed in September, 2009; (b) that the laboratory had successfully negotiated new service level agreements with a number of services both within and outwith the Council; (c) that the technical and operations restructure of the service had identified several areas where savings could be made; (d) that a marketing project group had been created to identify areas of improvement and actions; (e) several potential partnerships were being investigated in relation to a shared service agenda; and (f) that networking arrangements with Dundee City Council had not been finalised, but informal networking was still in place.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the work being undertaken to implement and develop the resolutions of Council of 25 March, 2009; and
- (ii) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to submit a further report to its meeting of 26 October, 2010, which should include information relating to (a) the marketing of the laboratory's services, (b) basing the Public Analyst in the Aberdeen Laboratory, and (c) the shared Scottish Scientific Service.

27 ABERDEEN SCIENTIFIC SERVICES LABORATORY - PROCUREMENT OF ANALYTICAL EQUIPMENT - H&E/10/061

The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which provided details of a decision taken by the Chief Executive, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, and the Head of Finance, to enable the Council's Standing Orders to be suspended to allow a contract to be awarded without a formal tendering process being undertaken.

The report explained that Aberdeen Scientific Services Laboratory (ASSL) had successfully applied for a Non Housing Capital Bid, totalling £69,000, in order to

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25 May 2010

purchase scientific equipment for the Public Analyst Laboratory. However, on investigation with colleagues in the Central Procurement Unit (CPU), ASSL had been informed that the Council thresholds for tender processes would be breached with the desired purchase programme.

By way of background the report explained that the scientific techniques (Inductively Coupled Plasma optical emission spectroscopy (ICP) and High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC)) employed were integral to 34% of all work that was undertaken in the laboratory and directly responsible for £295,000 of the 2009/10 revenue budget. The report explained that the purchase proposed had benefits in reduced running costs, time and Health and Safety concerns of personnel and workload throughput. The savings associated in safer utilisation of manpower and consumables used were in themselves identified as being significant. The service objective for the coming years was to capture and create revenue generation from contract analysis work and this equipment will allow capacity to increase workload at no extra cost while maintaining a competitive unit charge base with which to invite tenders.

The report outlined the action taken to gain the permission of the Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Head of Finance, to suspend Standing Order 69(3)(ii) (prior to 1 April, 2010), in order to take advantage of the substantial savings offered.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the spend to save initiative undertaken to ensure the continued service delivery and the significant cost savings realised with the immediate purchase of this equipment.

- **COUNCILLOR AILEEN MALONE, Convener.**