

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 13 April, 2010 - minute of meeting of the HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Malone, Convener; Councillor McDonald, Vice Convener; and Councillors Allan (as substitute for Councillor Young from article 13), Clark, Collie, Cooney, Corall, Dunbar, Fletcher, Hunter, Milne, Noble, Robertson, Kevin Stewart, Young (until article 13) and Yuill.

Also in attendance:- Councillor Boulton (for article 9 only).

DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. In terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Committee resolved in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the press and public from the meeting from article 42 so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the following paragraphs of Schedule 7(A) to the Act:- article 42 (paragraph 6); article 43 (paragraphs 8 and 9); article 44 (paragraphs 8 and 9); article 45 (paragraph 9); article 46 (paragraph 2); article 47 (paragraph 1 1 and 2); and article 48 (paragraph 1).

2. ANNOUNCEMENTS

At this point, the Convener handed over to the Director of Housing and Environment in order for a number of announcements to be made. Mr Leonard introduced John Quinn, who had just taken up his new post as Head of Regeneration and Housing Investment. Mr Leonard then explained that Craig Stirrat (Head of Housing Management) and Norrie Steed (Head of Environment Services) would be leaving the Council in the next few weeks. He continued that both Mr Stirrat and Mr Steed were highly respected members of staff, who had given many years of dedicated service to the Council. He thanked Mr Stirrat and Mr Steed for their ongoing help and support in taking the Housing and Environment Service forward.

The Convener paid a personal tribute to Mr Stirrat and Mr Steed and thanked them for all of their help and support.

The Vice Convener, Councillor Hunter and Councillor Milne all thanked both Mr Stirrat and Mr Steed for their advice and assistance, and wished them the very best for their future on behalf of their political groups.

MINUTE OF MEETING OF 20 JANUARY, 2010

3. The Committee had before it the minute of its meeting of 20 January, 2010.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 16 February, 2010.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE HOUSING CASES REVIEW SUB COMMITTEE

5. The Committee had before it the minute of meeting of the Housing Cases Review Sub Committee of 18 January, 2010.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the minute.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

During discussion of item 35 of the Business Statement, Councillor Yuill declared an interest due to his employment, and withdrew from the meeting at this stage. Councillor Yuill took no part in the discussion relating to this particular item on the Business Statement.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS STATEMENT

6. 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 6 of the list (Modernisation of Public Space CCTV), Mr Stirrat advised that the lead officer for this project, Lesley Brown, had recently left the Council, and that her responsibilities had been realigned to Colin Walker (Community Safety Manager), who was meeting with Grampian Police in the next week to progress the project.

In relation item 17 of the list (Housing Capital Programme – Review of Outcomes – Shower Cubicles), Mr Stirrat advised that the Council was now phasing out the fitting of shower cubicles as a choice, but that level access showers were still to be fitted in Sheltered Housing as standard. He continued that if a general needs

household required a specially adapted bathroom that this would be considered by the appropriate officers.

In relation to item 27 (Performance Report – City Wardens), Mr Stirrat advised that all ten of the vacant positions had now been filled, two internally, and eight externally.

In relation to item 35 (Contractual Arrangement with Aberdeen Cyrenians Limited), Mr Stirrat confirmed that a preferred provider had been identified but that the standstill period had not yet commenced. Mr Stirrat continued that an update would be provided as soon as was possible.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that reports would be submitted at the next meeting for items 1 (Property Management – Mixed Tenure), 3 (Public Toilet Review), 4 (Replacement Cremators), 11 (Shared Services Agenda – Trading Standards), 12 (Implementation of the Approved Recommendations of the Best Value Options Appraisal of the Public Analyst Service), 13 (Housing for Varying Needs), 18 (Lift Refurbishment Contract), 19 (Procurement Method for Phase 2 of Housing New Build Programme), 20 (Property Management), 21 (A Tree for Every Citizen), 22 (Countryside Ranger Service Five Year Plan), 24 (Garden Maintenance Scheme), 25 (Modernisation of Housing Service), 28 (Chartered Institute for Housing Conference), 29 (SURF Annual Conference), 32 (Furnishings Contract) and 39 (Auchmill Golf Course – Request for Permission to Extend Current Licence to Occupy);
- (ii) to note that a report would be included in the Information Bulletin next cycle in relation to item 2 (Control of Commercial Waste Storage);
- (iii) to note the update provided by Mr Stirrat in relation to item 6 (Modernisation of Public Space CCTV);
- (iv) to delete items 7 (Achieving Our Potential - Tackling Poverty and Income Inequality in Aberdeen City), 8 (Bulk Items Uplift from Housing Revenue Account Properties), 9 (Initiatives Adopted to Improve Rent Collection), 17 (Housing Capital Programme – Review of Outcomes – Shower Cubicles), 23 (Housing Revenue Account Tied Tenancies), 26 (St Fitticks Farmhouse Site, Torry), 27 (Performance Report – City Wardens), 30 (St Machar Primary School – Transfer from General Services Account to Housing Revenue Account) (resolution (iii)), and 31 (Properties Off Charge) from the statement;
- (v) in relation to item 34, to agree to suspend Standing Order 22 in order to alter the decision taken at the previous meeting; and thereafter to instruct that cyclical updates be provided in the Information Bulletin on Croft House, Aberdon House and Victoria House only;
- (vi) to note the update provided by Mr Stirrat in relation to item 35 (Contractual Arrangements with Aberdeen Cyrenians Limited); and
- (i) to otherwise note the updates as contained within the Business Statement.

MOTIONS LIST

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

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to request that Councillor Allan be kept informed of progress in relation to her motion; and
- (ii) to otherwise note the updates as contained within the list.

MOTION BY COUNCILLOR YOUNG

8. The Committee had before it a motion in the following terms by Councillor Young:-

“That this Council provides the residents of Clashieknow extra care housing with a detailed assessment of the approximate envisaged timescale to bring this establishment up to the Scottish Quality Housing Standard by 2015”.

The Convener proposed that this motion be incorporated into the report on Housing for Varying Needs that was due to be considered at the next meeting. Councillor Young agreed to this course of action.

The Committee resolved:-

to instruct that the terms of Councillor Young’s motion be explored within the aforementioned report, which would be considered at the next meeting of 25 May, 2010.

ABERDON HOUSE – HOMELESS SINGLE PARENTS - MOTION BY COUNCILLOR BOULTON

9. With reference to article 16 of the minute of meeting of Council of 24 March, 2010, the Committee had before it a motion in the following terms by Councillor Boulton:-

“Council agrees that Aberdon House should be utilised for homeless single parents with one child given the accommodation constraints, which would enable early engagement with parents by social services in developing their parenting and life skills prior to the family living alone”.

The Committee first heard from the Head of Housing Management who explained that on 1 December, 2004 the Scottish Parliament Communities Committee had approved the Unsuitable Accommodation (Scotland) Order 2004. This Order had been introduced as part of the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 which effectively banned the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children, except in specific circumstances. Mr Stirrat continued that although this legislation was aimed at bed and breakfast accommodation, the Council had applied it to the temporary accommodation units (owing to the fact that they had formerly been utilised as bed and breakfast accommodation).

Mr Stirrat reminded members that the aim of utilising Aberdon House was to meet the demand associated with single homeless persons. He further advised that there was no joint agreement in place with the Social Care and Wellbeing Service that would entitle single parents to have priority need for new funded support projects.

Councillor Boulton, seconded by Councillor Milne moved:-
that the motion be adopted.

At this juncture, the Committee enquired as to whether Councillor Boulton had been provided with the advice outlined by Mr Stirrat, prior to submitting her motion. Councillor Boulton advised that whilst she had met the Director who had explained the practical difficulties that could be experienced should her motion be adopted, that she had not been made aware of the legislative issues.

It was suggested by members, that although Councillor Boulton's motion may be outwith the spirit of the legislation, that it may still be workable within the actual legislation. Mr Stirrat advised that officers would have to take advice from the Legal Team in that regard.

On hearing the above advice and comments from Mr Stirrat, Councillor Boulton chose to withdraw her motion.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the withdrawal of Councillor Boulton's motion further to the advice and comments of officers;
- (ii) to instruct a report back at the next meeting addressing the option of the Council utilising Aberdon House for homeless single parents with one child; and
- (iii) to instruct that work on the above report should not delay progress on the refurbishment work on Aberdon House.

SEASONAL ENVIRONMENTAL STAFF REPORT – H&E/10/037

10. With reference to article 24 of the minute of meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee of 11 March, 2010 and article 4 of the minute of meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee of 10 December, 2009 (Budget Line ENV1), the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which proposed further budget savings against seasonal environmental staff, and requested approval to progress with this proposed additional saving. The saving proposed and accepted at the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee of 10 December, 2009 amounted to £33,000.

The report advised that environmental staff job descriptions had been redesigned to allow them to be flexible and undertake a variety of roles within Environmental Services including street cleaning, grounds maintenance and graffiti removals. This allowed current Environment Operatives to undertake a variety of work including all seasonal gardening works.

The report proposed that by using approximately 40 current staff in the seasonal role, graded as G7, it was allowing for temporary staff on a lower grade, G5, to be brought in on short term seasonal contracts to fulfil the street sweeping role, and that this shift of staff would allow for a further budget saving of £10,000.

This report had been presented to the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee of 11 March, 2010, where its contents had been approved in principle, and referred thereafter to this Committee for decision.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the steps being taken to achieve the additional £10,000 savings and to thank officers for their hard work in identifying these savings.

ABERDON HOUSE AND CROFT HOUSE – FUTURE USE / DISPOSAL – EPI/10/074

11. Reference was made to (1) articles 29 and 30 of the minute of meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee of 17 September, 2009 at which time it was agreed to authorise the then Head of Resources Development and Delivery to pursue the possible transfer of the former Aberdon House Care Home in Tillydrone and the former Croft House Care Home in Stockethill to the Housing Revenue Account in order to facilitate the possible future use or development of the sites/buildings for affordable accommodation purposes or as temporary or interim accommodation for the homeless; and (2) article 8 of the minute of meeting of Council of 10 February, 2010, at which time there was under consideration and approved, following a reference from this Committee of 11 January, 2010 (article 18 of the minute refers) under Standing Order 36(3), a decision on the future use of Aberdon House as a temporary accommodation unit for an initial period of 2 years for persons who were homeless. The Finance and Resources Committee of 11 March, 2010 had been presented with a report by the Director of Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure which had sought to update members with regard to the situation of both properties. This report had thereafter been referred to this Committee for further consideration.

The report contained an outline of the process followed in declaring the two properties at Aberdon House and Croft House surplus to Council requirements and as regards the subsequent interests expressed in the future use of the sites; highlighted that the Director of Housing and Environment had since indicated that the properties be transferred to the Housing Revenue Account at a total value of £1,250,000 (being £700,000 in respect of Croft House and £550,000 in respect of Aberdon House), being a reflection of current market values as advised by the Council's external property contractors; and explained that whereas it was intended that the Croft House Building be demolished and the site redeveloped as new build affordable housing, in the case of Aberdon House it was intended that the building be brought up to Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) standard to facilitate its use for an initial period of two years as a temporary accommodation unit for the Homelessness team, before also being demolished and the site redeveloped into affordable housing.

The Finance and Resources Committee of 11 March, 2010 had resolved (1) that the Head of Finance be instructed to conclude the transfer of Aberdon House from the General Services Account to the Housing Revenue Account, including the obtaining of Scottish Ministerial approval under section 74 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, if necessary; (2) that the Head of Finance also be instructed, subject to approval to that course of action by the Housing and Environment Committee, to conclude the transfer of Croft House from the General Services Account to the Housing Revenue Account, including the obtaining of Scottish Ministerial approval under Section 74 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973,

if necessary; and (3) that under resolution (ii) the report be referred to the Housing and Environment Committee meeting on 13 April, 2010, for consideration.

The Committee queried as to when the valuations of both Croft House and Aberdon House had been undertaken, and suggested that this should have been included within the report. Officers undertook to circulate the dates of the valuations and the valuation reports to Councillors Cooney and Young.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the transfer of Croft House to the Housing Revenue Account from the General Services Account, and to instruct that the Head of Finance undertake this course of action, including obtaining Scottish Ministerial approval under Section 74 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, if this should be necessary; and
- (ii) to request that the dates of the valuations and the valuation reports of both Croft House and Aberdon House be circulated to Councillors Cooney and Young.

PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE

12. With reference to article 9 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; and (2) a summary in the format of a performance indicator balanced scorecard with detailed information supporting those indicators being considered this cycle.

In relation to page 71 of the report (housing mutual repairs scheme), the Committee queried as to whether there had been much interest in this scheme. Mr Stirrat responded that there had been significant interest to date.

In relation to page 74 of the report (response repairs completed in target), Councillor Hunter enquired as to whether it was the case that agency staff were being utilised more than required, which was resulting in some Council staff having unproductive periods of work. The Director for Housing and Environment did not believe this to be the case, and intimated that he would welcome any information which indicated otherwise.

With further reference page 74 (response repairs completed in target), concern was raised with regard to the icons used throughout the report, with the icon for this particular outcome indicating that the attainment was within 5% of the target, wherein fact this was not the case. The Director advised that the Service was using new reporting methods and they would be improved for the next cycle.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to request that in relation to the mutual exchange programme, that tenants who were on the waiting list for an exchange of property be made aware of the new system;

- (ii) to request that the icons be investigated (specifically regarding pages 74 and 82) and corrected for the next meeting of the Committee to illustrate the accurate position; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the information contained within the report.

HOUSING CASES REVIEW SUB COMMITTEE - H&E/10/036

13. With reference to article 2 of the minute of its meeting of 26 August, 2010, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which requested approval for officers to amend the protocol for referring housing cases to the Housing Cases Review Sub Committee.

By way of background the report advised that the Housing Cases Review Sub Committee was formed to deliberate and make decisions with regards to individual housing cases. The report outlined the terms of reference of the Sub Committee as follows:-

“to act with delegated powers to deal with all matters relative to the allocation and management of individual Council houses including the leasing and management of pitches at Clinterty Caravan Site, with the exception of matters which have already been delegated to the Director of Housing and Environment”.

The report highlighted that the terms of reference did not provide any indication as to who could refer a case to the Sub Committee, but advised that through custom and practice, Councillors and Council officers, and very occasionally, MSPs and MPs, referred cases to the Sub Committee for its consideration.

The report continued that referral of cases by MSPs or MPs could result in local members being unaware of a particular constituent’s case being heard by the Sub Committee, and therefore in order to provide consistency and equity, it was recommended that all future referrals to the Sub Committee be initiated by a local member.

The report concluded that Council officers who submit housing cases to the Sub Committee were required to seek the authorisation of their service manager. In order to provide additional quality assurance and to ensure that it was appropriate to refer a particular case, the report suggested that in future, the Head of Housing Management and Community Safety should scrutinise and approve all officer referrals to the Sub Committee.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to agree that Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and Members of Parliament (MPs) wishing to refer a case on behalf of a constituent to the Housing Cases Review Sub Committee, must in future advise the constituent to contact one of their local Councillors who may refer the case to the Sub Committee on their behalf;
- (ii) to instruct that this be included on the agenda for the next MPs/MSPs briefing meeting so that MPs and MSPs can be made aware of this new procedure ; and

- (ii) to instruct that all referrals to the Housing Cases Review Sub Committee by Council officers must be approved by the Head of Housing and Community Safety to ensure that all the necessary criteria are met.

ANTI POVERTY STRATEGY - PRACTICAL MEASURES BEING ADOPTED BY HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT IN SUPPORTING THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT ANTI POVERTY STRATEGY - H&E/10/013

14. With reference to article 9 of the minute of meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee of 10 September, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which provided an update on the practical measures being adopted by the Housing and Environment Service in supporting the Council's draft Anti Poverty Strategy – 'Achieving our Potential, Tackling Poverty and Income Inequality in Aberdeen City'.

The report advised that the Housing and Environment Service played a key role in supporting the aims of the draft Anti Poverty Strategy within a number of strategic objective areas, and outlined these in detail.

The report first made reference to the aim of 'reducing income inequality', and advised that the Service was currently taking a number of practical measures to support this, namely:

- (1) establishing a partnership with Aberdeen Foyer, through the social firm Foyer Works, to provide employment opportunities for severely disadvantaged young people. The Service and Foyer Works were working in partnership to provide a property maintenance service to the Council's void properties. The Foyer's employability programmes, of which this initiative was an example, could help to support young people who would otherwise struggle to find mainstream employment. Trainees on the programme all lived in areas of multiple deprivation within Aberdeen. Young people on the Housing and Environment supported programme were provided with experience in property cleaning, painting and decorating, joinery repairs, removals, and basic ground maintenance. The scheme had been in operation since January, 2008, and in that time twenty four young people had been through the programme, three of whom had gone on to permanent employment.
- (2) The Service also supported measures to boost employment opportunities within the city by providing employment for twenty four apprentices in the Contract Services team each year.
- (3) The Trades Project, which was run by the Social Care and Well Being service annually for twelve pupils between the ages of thirteen to sixteen and normally took pupils from the more deprived areas of the city also helped to boost employment opportunities for young people. The project ran over two years; with pupils attending two days a week and going to school for the remaining three days. This was due to change to pupils attending the project on only one day per week from the 2010 intake, so that more pupils could get the opportunity to attend and benefit from the project. The project enabled pupils to work towards the SQA (Scottish Qualification Authority) Construction Award. The course covered units in trades including painting and decorating, bricklaying, plumbing, joinery, and roof tiling. The Housing and Environment Service provided a joiner to teach the pupils the joinery

element of the course, paid for by the project, and had donated wood and paint.

On further expansion of this aim. the report advised that income maximisation could make a contribution to addressing poverty by ensuring available sources of income like welfare benefits, and tax credits were pursued and controlling money going out through budgetary and debt advice; and continued that the Service was addressing this in a number of ways, namely:

- (1) Trading Standards, who were part of the Housing and Environment Service, regularly looked at ways of increasing people's incomes through uptake of benefits and application to charities through their Money Advice Service.
- (2) The Fairer Scotland Funded Cash in Your Pocket Partnership was also regularly used by money advice staff and they received referrals to their service through the system. Staff also took part in financial awareness sessions for communities and citizens in Aberdeen organised by the Partnership.
- (3) The Homelessness team operated a furnished tenancy grant scheme which provided previously homeless households with basic essential household items to assist in settling in to their new tenancy. It was hoped that this would prevent people taking on additional debt when they could least afford it. The scheme currently received £100, 000 per year and operated through services commissioned from the Instant Neighbour charity and directly.
- (4) The Care and Repair service was aimed at assisting older and/or disabled homeowners to maintain independence by keeping their homes in a good state of repair and suitable to their needs. The service was funded from the Private Sector Housing Grant through the Housing and Environment Service and in 2009/10 received £280,000. Public Sector Housing Grant funding provided a total budget of £750,000 for adaptations to properties in the private housing sector to make them suitable for use by owners who had disabilities.

The report further explained that the aim of 'supporting those experiencing or are at risk of poverty' was being tackled by the Housing and Environment Service through its fuel poverty schemes. Fuel poverty was determined by a combination of factors, most notably low household income and the high cost of fuel, but poor energy efficiency in the home also contributed significantly to this. The Housing and Environment were taking a number of measures in this area in support of the Council's draft Anti Poverty Strategy as follows:

- (1) The Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Scheme, a system where electricity was generated locally for sale and the heat produced by the generator is captured and used to heat properties instead of being released into the atmosphere, had been operating in Aberdeen since 2003. Currently 850 flats within multi storey blocks were linked in to CHP heating networks, and as a result, were fuel poverty proofed. The previous heating systems in the blocks had been expensive to run, causing the majority of occupants to be identified in 2002 as being in fuel poverty (by definition, having to spend more than 10% of their income on fuel bills). In contrast CHP was a very efficient method of producing heat and power and keeping the costs to users low. Fuel costs were now approximately half what they were before the blocks were linked into the CHP scheme which was a reduction from £20 per week to £9 per week on average. In addition to being linked into the scheme, work to improve energy efficiency in the blocks, improved insulation and cladding of buildings, was being carried out at this time. Funding for the

CHP scheme had come from the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme, and also from external bids to a fund established by energy companies. The Capital budget provided a contribution of £1.02M to support Aberdeen Heat and Power in the creation of Combined Heat and Power Plants. It was hoped that the CHP scheme could be extended to a further eight blocks sited in the Seaton and Balgownie areas of the city.

- (2) The Housing and Environment Service also operated the Heat with Rent Scheme, whereby charges for both rent and the costs for heating for a property were combined. This method of charging was applied to all sheltered housing properties and properties that have a communal heating system, like those covered by a CHP scheme. A cost matrix was used to determine the level of charges depending on the size of the property and the number of bedrooms therein. This system helped to address the issue of fuel poverty for residents of these properties and ensured that heating costs were always affordable.
- (3) The Private Sector Housing Grant contributed £70,000 per year to an overall funding plan of £100,000 for initiatives to fulfil the Home Energy Conservation Act in the private sector. This money was used to lever in additional monies from local and national funding sources, like bids to national grants provided by energy companies, to enable a range of work on measures to address fuel poverty to be carried out within Aberdeen.
- (4) As part of ongoing improvement to properties, all of the Council's housing stock would have cavity wall and loft insulation to Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2012/13. The Housing and Environment Service, from its Capital Programme budget, invested in energy efficiency and insulation measures to its housing stock to help to tackle fuel poverty;
- (5) In 2009/10 a budget of just over £3M was identified for a window replacement programme, upgrading to double glazing, loft insulation, and replacing heating systems with more efficient systems or boilers, as necessary;
- (6) The current new build programme of general needs and housing for varying needs also included a number of measures to improve the energy efficiency of the properties to minimise energy costs (for example solar panels, triple glazing) and in this way contributed to addressing fuel poverty.

Further ways in which the Service was addressing issues associated with this aim were outlined as follows:

- (1) The Money Advice Service based within Trading Standards provided advice to people experiencing financial difficulties. Figures provided by the service indicated that in 2008/09, 760 enquires or requests for advice were received and 170 full clients were provided with negotiation, advocacy or representation. The total debt handled by the team in 2008/09 was £4,136,369.46. Through the Housing Revenue Account, Housing and Environment funded one Welfare Rights Officer post and two Assistant posts. The staff were employed through Social Care and Wellbeing, but the costs were recharged to the Housing Revenue Account.
- (2) The Welfare Rights service provided information and advice and representation in relation to welfare benefit entitlement. The Welfare Rights Officer funded by the Housing Revenue Account assisted had 139 clients this financial year, 72% of whom were Council tenants.
- (3) Housing Officers were currently working jointly with Customer Relations Management (CRM) officers on a project to achieve early intervention with

- tenants who were at risk of losing their homes because of financial difficulties and non payment of rent.
- (4) The Council and the Housing and Environment Service were providing funding of £162,425 for 2009/10 from the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund to SCARF; (an organisation which provided advice and information on energy efficiency measures and how to get lower fuel costs).
 - (5) The Warm Zone Scheme (a pilot scheme designed to reduce fuel poverty by focusing on a specific geographic area of the city (the beach/harbour area and Bedford Road/Leslie Terrace area, which was around 8000 households in total) was designed to maximise income and improve energy efficiency and looked at both of these aspects by providing advice and information on energy saving measures and assisting householders to identify whether they were receiving all the income they were entitled to through benefit health checks, and providing help in applying for any extra benefits if they were eligible.
 - (6) The Aberdeen branch of the Citizens Advice Bureau received £14,000 from the Housing Revenue Account for 2009/10 to help people in long term health care at Woodend Hospital to resettle, by providing advice and information on their financial entitlements.

The report advised that in addition to all of the above, the Service operated a number of schemes (including the Affordable Warmth Scheme and Aberdeen Families Project) which contributed to tackling poverty in Aberdeen, and intimated that in conjunction with the service provided by the homelessness team and the new builds that were taking place around the city, an all encompassing approach to tackling homelessness was being taken by the Service.

The report concluded that the Housing Service was currently being redesigned to provide a customer focused housing service, to achieve more effective management of tenancy support and sustainment and more effective management of customer complaints about antisocial behaviour. The Housing Revenue Account provided funding for four members of staff within the Housing and Environment Service to carry out a specialist Tenancy Support function and this role included providing advice to tenants on sustaining their tenancies and referring them on to other specialist staff within the Council, and other agencies to provide the appropriate direct support on debt, personal, or other issues that may be compromising their ability to maintain their tenancy. It was intended that as part of the redesign of the housing service, initial provision of this type of information and advice would be incorporated into the role of the frontline Housing Officer.

In relation to page 131 of the report, the Committee queried as to what the current situation of the twenty one young people who had not entered permanent employment further to this scheme was. Mr Stirrat advised that four of the twenty one had left Aberdeen and to his knowledge, the rest were undertaking further training and development through Aberdeen Foyer.

Councillor Allan intimated that it was important that the threat of water poverty was monitored throughout the city to prevent this becoming an issue.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the measures the Housing and Environment Service were currently taking to address poverty and inequality, and measures planned for the future; and

- (ii) to note that the Housing and Environment Service was currently being redesigned to provide a customer focused housing service, to achieve more effective management of tenancy support and sustainment, and more effective management of customer relations.

2009/10 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING - H&E/10/052

15. With reference to article 15 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a joint report by the City Chamberlain and the Director of Housing and Environment, which advised of the current year revenue budget performance to date for the services which related to this Committee, and on any areas of risk, and management action being taken in this regard.

Appendix A to the report provided the Service report and associated notes and advised that the position reflected that there was an anticipated underspend of £78,000 and the total Housing and Environment budget (excluding the Housing Revenue Account) and that this reflected an unfavourable increase of £327,000 since the last report to this Committee. This was principally as a result of higher than anticipated management and administration costs being identified. The Housing Revenue Account was still anticipated to have a balanced budget, with a potential increase of the capital from current revenue due to the overall favourable position principally the result of reduced capital financing costs.

The report identified Supporting People as an area of risk, and advised that it was likely that there would be an overspend, and if this was the case this would be funded by the underspend within Homeless Strategy.

It was further highlighted that income streams from demand led areas such as Aberdeen Crematorium may not be as high as anticipated, however there may be other areas where further income would be generated, such as Private Landlord Registrations.

The report concluded that in addition, early indications were that there would be sufficient surplus within Trading Services to bring Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing back to budget, however there was a risk this may not occur.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the information on management action and risks that were contained therein; and
- (ii) to instruct that officers continued to review budget performance and report on Service strategies as required to ensure a balanced budget.

CAPITAL BUDGET PROGRESS REPORT - H&E/10/049

16. With reference to article 16 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a joint report by the City Chamberlain and the Director of Housing and Environment, which provided an update on the progress which had been made on the various projects within the Non Housing Capital Programme which were now aligned to the Housing and Environment Service.

Appendix A to the report outlined the Non Housing Capital Programme projects which related to this Committee, and provided for each (1) the total approved project costs; (2) the previous year's projected spend; (3) the total budget for 2009/10; (4) the total spend as at 31 December, 2009; (5) commitments for 2009/10; (6) the forecast outturn for 2009/10; (7) the future years' budget profiles for 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13; (8) the total forecast costs; and (9) the project forecast variance. Comments on particular projects, where appropriate, were included in the narrative.

The report advised that the spend to the end of February, 2010 only reflected payments that had been made and processed, and therefore excluded any commitments that had been made and were due to be paid by the end of the year.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the content of the report in relation to the projects outlined at appendix A.

2009/10 HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME - H&E/10/053

17. With reference to article 14 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a joint report by the City Chamberlain and the Director of Housing and Environment, which advised of the status of Housing Capital Programme for the financial year 2009/10 as at 28 February, 2010, and included information on both income and expenditure in this regard.

Appended to the report at appendix 1 was a financial monitoring statement which outlined the original budget for the current year in expenditure and income as at 28 February, 2010, which advised that at this date £43.372 million of the approved budget had been spent, with an anticipation of £9 million expenditure in the month of March, 2010, and that a large proportion of this would relate to internal recharges. It was currently anticipated that the forecast outturn would be £52.547 million, which was above the funded programme of £51.747 million, which would be funded from the additional capital from current revenue.

Appendix 2 to the report detailed the category spends in the Housing Capital programme and the spend to date against each category.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the financial information contained within the report; and
- (ii) to instruct the City Chamberlain to continue to update the Committee in consultation with the Director of Housing and Environment on the forecast and actual outturn position for 2009/10.

FUTURE JOBS FUND BID – ENVIRONMENT SERVICES – H&E/10/055

18. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which requested approval for Environment Services to complete a Future Jobs Fund bid.

By way of background the report advised that the fund had been announced in 2009 and the money was to be spent between October, 2009 and March, 2011. As the Future Jobs Fund was a challenge fund, not all organisations that submitted bids would be successful. The report continued that the fund was run by the Department of Work and Pensions in partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government, and with input from Jobcentre Plus, regional government offices in England and devolved administration in Scotland and Wales.

The report explained bids were made from organisations with the capability to create real jobs that deliver community and environmental benefit that were suitable for young people (aged 18 - 24) who had been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance for approaching one year. The Future Jobs Fund was a part of the Young Person's Guarantee and from early 2010, everyone between the ages of 18 and 24 who had been seeking work for a year would get an offer of a job, work experience, or training lasting at least 6 months.

The Future Jobs Fund was open to any organisation from the public, private or Third Sector from across England, Scotland and Wales and in the majority of cases, bids were expected to come from partnerships led by upper tier Local Authorities or Third Sector organisations, but this did not exclude other organisations from applying. The report advised that as part of the 2010 Budget, the Chancellor had extended the Future Job Fund initiative a further year.

The report further explained that the posts created as part of any bid that Environment Services submit must (1) be additional jobs, lasting at least 6 months for each individual; (2) deliver work that benefits local communities; (3) include support for employees to move into long term sustained employment; (4) not replace existing vacancies and or lead to another individual losing or reducing their paid employment; and (5) be for at least 25 hours a week and pay at least the national minimum wage.

The report concluded that Environment Services had made a long term commitment to their bid and would look to support as many jobs as possible through the scheme. The jobs created within Environment Services would be a job defined in the fund as a 'green job' and this type of job would provide a good or service that would lead to environmental improvement and would be involved in work including green space projects, clean ups, grass cutting, graffiti removal, street sweeping, tree squad works, winter gardens and partnership working with voluntary groups (for example, Aberdeen Greenspace).

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the steps being taken by Environment Services in making a Future Jobs Fund bid; and
- (ii) to instruct officers to provide an update on the progress of the bid at its meeting of 28 September, 2010.

UPDATE ON RENT COLLECTION INITIATIVES – H&E/10/046

19. With reference to article 17 of the minute of its meeting of 6 October, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which provided an update on the outcomes of the housing management 'New

Ways of Working' pilot which aimed to sustain tenancies by employing early intervention and thus preventing a tenant getting into serious arrears.

The report outlined a number of initiatives that had been piloted by the collaborative finance team within the Corporate Governance Service and housing management teams in relation to rent arrears.

The report provided an update in the areas of (1) housing benefit uptake; (2) new tenancies; (3) new ways of workings; (4) arrears of more than four weeks; (5) notices of proceedings served; (6) court warning letters; and (7) eviction actions.

A sample of customers that had taken part in the pilot had been requested to complete a customer satisfaction survey providing their feedback on the new ways of working employed by the pilot. Early responses had indicated that tenants were appreciative of the interventions provided by the team in assisting to reduce their level of debt.

The report concluded by advising that Audit Scotland and the Scottish Housing Regulator would ensure that all local authorities were clearly demonstrating that they were delivering customer focused services and that this requirement would be re-enforced in the forthcoming new housing legislation which would introduce a Service Charter that would incorporate national outcomes, determined by Government in conjunction with landlords and other stakeholders. The Charter would also incorporate local outcomes determined by the landlord in conjunction with tenants, homeless people and other service users; and would include measures on how social landlords would be expected to help tenants sustain their tenancies.

To ensure the Council was best placed to meet its landlord requirements in ensuring it helps tenants sustain tenancies, it was essential that the roles and responsibilities of the housing management service and the cash collection service were clearly defined, and that the authority to escalate to formal recovery proceedings was led by the housing management service.

The report suggested that the collaborative working arrangements should continue until all front line housing officers had been trained in the early intervention procedure.

Appended to the report was a breakdown of the financial cost of evictions associated with arrears action.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to support the initiatives being adopted, and continue to monitor the rent agreement rates through the regular performance reports; and
- (ii) to agree that the housing management team will undertake the early intervention aspects of the rent collection process, before it is agreed to escalate action to the finance team within the Corporate Governance Service, to instigate legal proceedings for debt recovery, which may include repossession of the tenancy.

ST MACHAR PRIMARY SCHOOL – TRANSFER FROM GENERAL SERVICES ACCOUNT TO HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

20. With reference to article 17 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which provided a further explanation as to why the St Machar Primary School had not been transferred to the Housing Revenue Account for redevelopment as part of the Housing Capital Programme for 2009/10.

The report advised that the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (Part 1, Section 9) provided local authority landlords with the power to acquire land for the provision of housing accommodation.

The report continued that for the Housing and Environment Service to acquire assets onto the Housing Revenue Account, the authority must seek prior approval from Scottish Ministers, on the basis of compliance with Part X (section 203) of Act, and compliance with Schedule 15 of the Act, namely that the land, houses and buildings are used for the purposes of providing accommodation, and not for any other purpose (other than those stated in the Act).

Therefore, it was explained within the report that the Housing Revenue Account could not purchase a property then lease it to another non housing service, in this case, the Education, Culture and Sport Service.

The report continued that it had not been possible for the Council to transfer the St Machar School to the Housing Revenue Account during 2009/10 due to the English as an Additional Language Service still being based at St Machar School, and in addition to this there was ongoing discussion between the Education, Culture and Sport Service, the Management Committee and user groups, on the relocation of the Portal Community Education Centre as part of the development of the community learning hubs.

The Portal Community Education Centre was on the St Machar School site and was integrally linked to the school's utilities.

The report concluded that even with the Education as an Additional Language Unit transferring to Sunnybank School after the Easter school break, it was unlikely that the Housing Revenue Account could obtain vacant possession of the whole St Machar Primary School site until the Portal Community Education Centre issues had been resolved. It was anticipated that these issues would be resolved during 2010 and therefore the site transfer would have to be programmed into the Housing Capital Programme for transfer to the Housing Revenue Account in the later part of 2010/11.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the explanation as to why the Director of Housing and Environment had not been in a position to comply with the previous Council decision to transfer St Machar Primary School from the General Services Account to the Housing Revenue Account during 2009/10.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

During discussion of the following article, the Vice Convener declared an interest by virtue of a close relative working for an asbestos removal company. The Vice Convener did not feel it was necessary to withdraw from the meeting.

PROPERTIES REMOVED FROM CHARGE – RETROSPECTIVE PERMISSION – H&E/10/031

21. With reference to article 13 of the minute of its meeting of 19 November, 2009 and article 19 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 1 within the report advised that the following properties had been removed from charge, but remained off charge at this time and therefore required retrospective approval from this Committee:

- 101f Menzies Road
- 164b Victoria Road
- 12c Auchinyell Terrace
- 97a Menzies Road
- 6b Ferrier Gardens
- 8B Granton Place
- 49b Beattie Avenue.

Table 2 within the report advised that the following properties had been removed from charge, but that their remedial works had been completed and the charge reinstated:

- 11 Hillside Crescent
- 9 Hillside Crescent
- 42b Menzies Road
- 13 Howburn Place
- 18a Howburn Place
- 101e Menzies Road
- 48 Balmoral Place
- 101c Menzies Road
- 14b Grampian Road
- 81 Fonthill Road
- 14 Craigton Park
- 14d Grampian Road
- 23e Nellfield Place
- 101b Menzies Road
- 23A Spital
- 16D Hill Street
- 25D Justice Street
- 11C Baker Street
- 25C Claremont Street
- 9F Belmont Street
- 22E Holland Street
- 17E Hartington Road

- 83E Jute Street
- 57D Esslemont Avenue
- 28b Marquis Road
- 4f Ferrier Gardens
- 6b Ferrier Gardens
- 6d Ferrier Gardens
- 6f Ferrier Gardens
- 1 Byron Avenue
- 3 Byron Avenue
- 5 Byron Avenue
- 7 Byron Avenue
- 345 Springhill Road
- 347 Springhill Road
- 349 Springhill Road
- 351 Springhill Road
- 5 Byron Terrace
- 363 Springhill Road
- 341 Springhill Road
- 1 Byron Park
- 2 Byron Park
- 3 Byron Park
- 4 Byron Park
- 12 Gray Court
- 337 Springhill Road
- 339 Springhill Road
- 343 Springhill Road.

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, questions were raised with regard to the asbestos removal and it was intimated that members had been previously advised that members of staff would be employed to remove asbestos. Members raised their concerns at this, and the Director was instructed to advise members if any Council employee was expected to assist in the removal of asbestos, and if, to what extent.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to instruct a report back exploring the options for former wardens' flats;
- (ii) to instruct that a progress report be submitted on Woodend House at the next meeting;
- (iii) to instruct the Director to advise members as to whether any Council employee was expected to assist in the removal of asbestos, and if so, to what extent;
- (iv) to grant retrospective permission for the removal from charge of the properties detailed in table 1 of the report;
- (v) to note the return to charge of the properties detailed in table 2 of the report; and
- (vi) to note the current position of all off charge properties as detailed at appendix 1.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Fletcher declared an interest in the subject matter of the following article by virtue of his position as a Vice President of CoSLA. Councillor Fletcher did not feel it was necessary to withdraw from the meeting.

NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST PROPOSAL – HE/10/048

22. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which detailed proposals by the Scottish Futures Trust to create a National Housing Trust to enable the development of short term affordable housing; and requested authority to continue the Council's interest in participating in the Trust.

The report provided a summary of the National Housing Trust scheme and advised that it aimed to meet housing need in particular areas, and to help to reduce waiting lists. Rent levels would be set initially at 80% of the relevant Local Housing Allowance levels which should make rents affordable to households on low to moderate incomes (generally earning between £15,000 and £20,000 a year, although this would vary depending on area and household size) who may struggle to afford private renting or to buy a home, but who were unlikely to be able to access social housing in the near future. The scheme could offer a choice to those on housing waiting lists or be adaptable to house some homeless households, therefore giving local authorities more flexibility in discharging their homelessness duties.

The report provided further background with regard to the scheme and concluded that the Scottish Futures Trust was planning to publish Prior Information Notices in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) as soon as possible, which would set out the requirements of the National Housing Trust. This would not commit the Council to proceed, but would identify market interest and potential development opportunities in Aberdeen.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to ensure that the Chief Executive and all other Services are fully aware of this project, and the Council's support of it;
- (ii) to instruct officers to continue with an interest in the National Housing Trust proposals as developed by the Scottish Futures Trust; and
- (iii) to instruct officers to report to a future meeting of this Committee as further decisions are required.

CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO THE HOUSING (SCOTLAND) BILL 2010

23. With reference to article 12 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 26 August, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which provided details of the response by the Council to the Scottish Government Consultation on the Housing (Scotland) Bill 2010, and requested approval for this to be submitted to the Scottish Government.

The report advised that this current consultation was specifically in relation to the sections of the Bill relating to issues within the private housing sector, which accounted for around 30% of the total housing stock in Aberdeen (compared to 22% Council housing and 4% registered social landlords (RSLs), both of which were already well legislated for). The measures proposed for enhancing the requirements on private sector landlords would bring the sector more in line with the standards expected in the social rented sector.

A copy of the draft response was appended to the report.

The Committee resolved:-

to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to submit the response as detailed at appendix 1, on behalf of the Council.

GAS SAFETY MANAGEMENT – ACCESS FOR ANNUAL GAS SAFETY CHECKS - H&E/10/050

24. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which outlined the Council's legal obligations for the management of gas safety, and suggested the introduction of an administrative charge and other measures for tenants who do not allow access to enable gas safety checks to take place.

By way of background the report explained that there were approximately 17,000 houses heated by gas throughout the Council, and the annual programme for servicing and safety checks was agreed between the Council and the gas servicing contractor. The contractor would commence the annual service and safety check process two months before the annual safety check was due, by writing to the tenant and providing them with approximately 2 weeks' notice of the proposed date of visit. At this point tenants would be invited to contact the contractor to arrange an alternative time and date if this was not convenient. If the contractor could not gain access to the property, a card would be left asking the tenant to contact the contractor either by returning the card or by phoning to arrange a mutually convenient time. If the contractor could still not gain access, the visit would be reprogrammed and the tenant would again be advised in writing of the time that the servicing and safety check would be carried out.

If all the attempts by the contractor to gain access were unsuccessful, the Council would take over by attempting to gain access by arranging a visit by a member of staff. During this period, checks would also be made to ensure that the tenant was not vulnerable in any way, or would require assistance to enable them to deal with the servicing and safety check visit. If this was the case, then appropriate assistance would be sought from a relative or carer.

If five attempts by the contractor and by the Council to gain access failed, action would be taken to schedule forced entry to the house in respect of the landlords repairing obligations set out within the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

The report advised that in practice, tenants would generally allow access at this stage and the forced entry would not have to be implemented, however continued

that there were considerable resources involved including the attendance of the gas servicing contractor, a joiner and a housing management officer. Forced entry had been scheduled for 520 properties between 1 January, 2009 and 31 March, 2009, although of these only 72 actual forced entries had taken place due to tenants permitting access on the day. The resources involved in these actions were additional to the resources already employed in the correspondence and visits that lead up to the forced entry action.

The report advised that performance on achieving the annual service and safety check within 12 months was generally good, and at the beginning of March, 2009, 88% of houses had been serviced and safety checked within one year and a total of 98% of properties had a certificate. It was proposed that to improve performance, and particularly to encourage tenants to allow access to their homes at a much earlier in the gas servicing and safety check process, that an administrative charge of £120 should be introduced that would be payable by all tenants who reached the forced entry stage. This amount would be charged even if the tenant allowed entry at this stage and the charge would be reviewed along with other rechargeable repair costs on an annual basis.

The report explained that the proposed administration charge would be made up of a number of components, namely (1) hourly rate for joiner; (2) high priority timescale additional payment; (3) hourly rate for gas servicing contractor; (4) cost of standard lock; and (5) administration costs of additional letters, phone calls, and visits.

The report continued that as a further measure to assist performance improvement, it was proposed that gas hibernation devices should be fitted to the gas heating system controls where the Council had reached the forced entry stage. The gas hibernation devices were programmed to switch off the heating at the date when the gas safety certificate expired, although a limited amount of heat was still allowed each day. If the tenant allowed access before the expiry date of the gas safety certificate, the device would not be activated.

During discussion of this item, officers advised that a contractor was liable to provide compensation to a tenant if the company did not turn up for to a scheduled appointment. Members requested that the Director provide tenants with advice to that effect which could be included in the letter advising of the initial appointment.

The report recommended:-

- (a) that an administrative charge of £120 should be made to tenants who do not allow access for the annual gas service and safety check until the Council has scheduled forced entry;
- (b) that this charge is reviewed on an annual basis;
- (c) that hibernation devices be fitted to properties where a tenant has reached the forced entry stage; and
- (d) that the Council use all means available to publicise to tenants the importance of allowing access for the annual gas service and safety check.

At this point the Convener alluded to the fact that the report would have to be referred to the Finance and Resources Committee, in order for the income generation aspect of this proposal to be approved.

The Convener, seconded by the Vice Convener, moved:-

that the Committee approve the recommendations with the addition that only two attempts to gain access be made (rather than 5 as suggested within the report), with a minimum of six weeks between attempts.

Councillor Hunter, seconded by Councillor Cooney, moved as an amendment:-
that the Committee approve the recommendations with the addition that three attempts to gain access be made (rather than 5 as suggested within the report).

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (10) – the Convener, the Vice Convener; and Councillors Clark, Corall, Dunbar, Fletcher, Noble, Robertson, Kevin Stewart and Yuill; for the amendment (5) Councillors Allan, Collie, Cooney, Hunter and Milne.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to adopt the successful motion; and
- (ii) to refer this report to the Finance and Resources Committee for their consideration of the financial implications.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY - UPDATE REPORT - H&E/10/028

25. With reference to article 15 of the minute of its meeting of 26 August, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which detailed progress associated with the key issues associated with the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan.

By way of background the report advised that since the strategy had been approved at the aforementioned meeting of this Committee, a number of changes had taken place within the Homelessness team. The Homelessness Manager and the Temporary Accommodation and Private Sector Leasing Scheme Manager had joined the team in November, 2009; roles and responsibilities had been realigned; and proposals for future service developments had been presented and approved by this Committee at its meeting of 11 January, 2010 (article 18 of the minute refers).

The report suggested that officers be instructed to carry out a full review of the strategy and report back to this Committee in April, 2011 with reports in the intervening period still being presented as and when appropriate. The report further advised that a Strategy Operations Group was being re-established and would be responsible for taking forward some of the actions within the Temporary Accommodation and the Homelessness and Resettlement Strategy Action Plans. The first meeting of this group had been held on 23 March, 2010 and included representatives from various services within the Council, Registered Social Landlords, NHS Grampian and the voluntary sector.

Appendix 1 to the report provided an update on the Temporary Accommodation Action Plan, and progress being made on six outcomes, namely (1) increased access to mainstream permanent accommodation; (2) appropriate use of SSSTs (short Scottish secure tenancies) where legislation permits, for homeless families or families threatened with homelessness; (3) improved timescales for the turnover of

temporary accommodation; (4) appropriate support systems being in place for people in temporary accommodation, and for those who had moved onto permanent accommodation; (5) increased access to mainstream temporary accommodation for homeless households; and (6) addressing the varying needs of homeless households through the provision of appropriate temporary accommodation.

In relation to page 239 of the report (rent deposit guarantee scheme), members enquired as to when the decision had been taken to not progress with this scheme. The Homelessness Manager advised that it was his preference that this scheme did not progress, as he saw little requirement for it further to the introduction of the Private Sector Leasing Scheme, but that a final decision in this regard would have to be taken by the Committee at a future meeting.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the progress being made on the outcomes identified within the action plan; and
- (ii) to instruct that officers carry out a full review of the strategy and report to Committee in April, 2011, and present reports to Committee on aspects of the Strategy in the intervening period.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION UNITS – SMOKING – POLICY EXCEPTION - H&E/10/033

26. With reference to article 23 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which requested approval for the exception to the Smoke Free at Work Policy for the Council's Temporary Accommodation units.

The report suggested that the Council should not put any restrictions on temporary accommodation that it would not put on a normal tenancy and continued that the current practice of not allowing smoking at all within the temporary accommodation unit had led to individuals trying to smoke in a concealed way, and that attempts to interfere with the fire detection system had been made. It was further suggested that this practice forced people to smoke outside which could cause nuisance to a neighbourhood.

The report explained that the Smoke Free at Work Policy outlined that the only exception to that policy was in designated smoking areas within the Council's residential homes for adults and older people, as these were considered to be a dwelling place. The report suggested that the temporary accommodation units could fall into the same category as this would be the only home of the individuals concerned.

The report concluded that a full risk assessment for staff would be undertaken and discussed with staff and union officials.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee:-

- (a) approve the exception to the Smoke Free at Work Policy to allow smoking to be permitted in a designated floor/wing of the properties at the Temporary

- Accommodation Units at Aberdon House, 165 Crown Street, 77/79 Bon Accord Street and 95 Bon Accord Street; and
- (b) note that the Homelessness Manager in conjunction with the Temporary Accommodation Senior Officer and Team Leaders of individual units, would designate a proportion of individual rooms as smoking rooms in this regard.

The Vice Convener, seconded by Councillor Corall, moved:-
that the Committee approve the exception to the Smoke Free at Work Policy to allow smoking to be permitted within designated individual rooms of the properties at the Temporary Accommodation Units at Aberdon House, 165 Crown Street, 77/79 Bon Accord Street and 95 Bon Accord Street; and approve recommendation (b) as contained within the report.

The Convener, seconded by Councillor Robertson, moved as an amendment:-
that this Committee does not agree that Temporary Accommodation Units should be exempt from the Smoke Free at Work Policy, and therefore instructs that the Policy is continued to be adhered to within the Council's Temporary Accommodation Units.

On a division there voted:- for the motion (5) the Vice Convener; and Councillors Corall, Dunbar, Noble and Kevin Stewart; for the amendment (10) the Convener; and Councillors Allan, Clark, Collie, Cooney, Fletcher, Hunter, Milne, Robertson and Yuill.

The Committee resolved:-
to adopt the successful amendment.

ABERDON HOUSE – BUDGET AND STAFFING STRUCTURE - H&E/10/032

27. With reference to article 23 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which outlined anticipated income and expenditure for Aberdon House, and the staffing required to provide a temporary accommodation service in this building.

The report provided details of the estimated income and expenditure for this service, and explained that this was based on the existing service provided currently at Crown Street/Bon Accord Street.

The report further advised that this facility would assist in reducing the use of bed and breakfast establishments, which would save the Council £8,580 per person, per annum.

The report advised that 24 full time equivalent staff would be required to enable Aberdon House to operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and outlined the proposed complement as follows:-

- 5 x Accommodation Assistant/Shift Leader (G10)
- 16 x Hostel Assistant (G8)
- 1 x Accommodation Manager (G12)
- 1 x Assistant Accommodation Manager (G11)
- 1 x Admin Assistant (G8).

The Committee queried as to the ratio of staff to residents and intimated that this seemed high. The Homelessness Manager advised that the aim with Aberdon House was to provide much more cohesive support to the residents than may be seen in other temporary accommodation units.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee:-

- (a) approve the draft income and expenditure budget for the interim temporary accommodation unit at Aberdon House; and
- (b) approve the recruitment of the, initially time limited, 24 full time equivalent staff required to operate this service.

The Convener at this point advised that there was an error in recommendation (b) which should have read 'approve the recruitment of the permanent 24 full time equivalent staff required to operate Aberdon House'.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations, with the amendment to recommendation (b) as outlined above by the Convener.

GRAMPIAN JOINT HEALTH PROTECTION PLAN

28. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which sought approval of the Grampian Joint Health Protection Plan for the period 1 April, 2010 to 31 March, 2012.

The report advised that the Council had worked closely with partners in NHS Grampian, Aberdeenshire Council and Moray Council and other agencies to deliver services to protect the health of the Grampian population. The Joint Health Protection Plan provided an overview of health protection priorities, provision and preparation for NHS Grampian, this Council, Aberdeenshire, and Moray Councils as required by the Public Health etc (Scotland) Act 2008.

The report further outlined that the plan supported the delivery of the Grampian Health Plan 2010-2013 and the Community Plans of the three Councils. The main section of the plan described the national and local priorities for health protection and what actions were to occur over the next two years.

Appended to the report was the full Grampian Joint Health Protection Plan which provided more detail on the planning, infrastructure, resources and operational arrangements, capacity and resilience, and public involvement associated with the plan.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the Joint Health Protection Plan;
- (ii) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to continue to implement the health protection priorities outlined in the plan; and
- (iii) to refer the report, for information, to the Social Care and Wellbeing Committee.

REPLACEMENT CREMATORS – PROGRESS REPORT

29. With reference to article 19 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 provided an update on the progress with the replacement of the cremators at Hazlehead Crematorium.

The report provided an update on the progress that had been made as at 1 March 2010, and advised (1) that the roof coverings had now been completed; (2) that the installation of extract fans and high level glazing was virtually complete; and (3) that installation of the cremators, ductwork, fans and filter was progressing well.

The report noted that the timetable of works had been extended by one week due to the adverse weather conditions; and indicated that section 1 of the renovation work should be completed by 23 May, 2010, section 2 by 1 August, 2010, and section 3 by 12 September, 2010.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the progress made to date on replacing the out of date and unreliable cremators at Hazlehead Crematorium; and
- (ii) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to report back on progress at the next meeting of 25 May, 2010.

COMMUNITY GARDENS POLICY ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND – H&E/09/116

30. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which sought approval for a Community Gardens policy to be established.

The report advised that the policy aimed to (1) make available public open space for gardening as a form of community recreation; (2) provide opportunities to educate the public on gardening by way of outdoor community education; (3) provide opportunities to foster social wellbeing through community interaction; (4) establish opportunities for local pride in public open spaces; and (5) provide options for those members of the community who lack sufficient private open space to have their own vegetable or fruit gardens.

The report advised of the Council's criteria for assessing proposals for community gardens on public land, provided guidelines for potential applicants about what the Council expects from a proposal for community gardens, and explained how the Council would consider applications for community gardens on its land.

The report outlined that a proposal to establish a community garden should include certain criteria, namely (a) the purpose of the proposed garden; (b) the objective of the formally constituted body and information to demonstrate that the entity is viable; (c) an outline of the benefit of the garden to the local area and community, including who would benefit from the produce; (d) information on alternative locations considered and a discussion on why those locations cannot be used; (e) opportunities for links and synergies with community organisations such as the

local Community Council, schools, church groups or volunteers; and (f) identification of a liaison person.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to adopt the Community Gardens policy for Council owned land;
- (ii) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to report back in 2011 on progress with the implementation of the policy;
- (iii) to thank all staff involved in the project for their continued efforts and hard work; and
- (iv) to request that officers ensure that all Community Councils are made aware of this new policy.

DUTHIE PARK RESTORATION - HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND BID – H&E/010/

31. With reference to article 19 of the minute of meeting of 6 October, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which outlined the progress that had been made in regards to the Duthie Park Restoration/Heritage Lottery Fund Bid.

By way of background, the report outlined that the Council had been awarded a Stage 1 pass and a development grant of £71,500 to develop a Stage 2 application and the Council's contribution to Stage 2 development would be £74,738.

The report advised that approval for the Stage 2 submission was now sought and the capital Ten Year Management and Maintenance Plan information must be supported by a signed statement in the form of a resolution, passed by the relevant Committee, indicating that the Council (1) formally adopted the management plan for the park; (2) agreed to uphold the standards of management and maintenance indicated in the plan with evidence by securing a Green Flag Award for a minimum of five years following the completion of the capital works; and (3) recognised and accepted the need to provide the financial resources required to implement the Management Plan for a minimum period of ten years.

The report also provided the Committee with an update on progress with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Bid to restore Duthie Park to its Victorian grandeur.

At this point, Councillor Clark advised the Committee that the Friends of Duthie group had reconvened and that they would welcome new members from all areas of the city.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment to sign a statement that (1) formally adopts the management plan for the park; (2) agrees to uphold the standards of management and maintenance indicated in the plan, evidenced by securing a Green Flag Award for a minimum of five years following the completion of the capital project works; and (3) recognises and accepts the need to provide the financial resources required to implement the Management Plan for a minimum of ten years; and
- (ii) to note the progress made to date.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Fletcher declared an interest in the following subject matter, by virtue of his appointment as a Director of Sport Aberdeen. Councillor Fletcher withdrew from the meeting prior to consideration of this item.

THE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICES FOR SPORTS GROUNDS, PLAYING FIELDS AND HOUSING AMENITIES CONTRACT AWARD – PROGRESS REPORT – H&E/10/025

32. With reference to article 16 of the minute of meeting of Council of 30 September, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which provided an update on progress made pertaining to the procurement and market testing of grounds maintenance services for sports grounds, playing fields and housing amenities, including the award of the contract to ISS Waterers Landscape.

The report advised that following the aforementioned meeting of Council, where it was agreed that ISS Waterers Landscape be awarded preferred bidder status, and from 1 October, 2010, officers had opened a dialogue with ISS Waterers Landscape to ensure acceptance of the Council's terms and conditions as instructed by the Council.

The report continued to advise that engagement with staff and trade unions had been very important and undertaken with the consultation requirements under the TUPE regulations being adhered to. Engagement with staff had commenced in March 2009, prior to a contractors' conference, and the 35 staff subject to the TUPE transfer were identified through examining staff contract charging data and the relevant areas of work.

The report also highlighted that as part of the transfer process, the Council's operation management had worked with ISS Waterers Landscape to ensure that those staff transferring had been able to undertake training and pre induction to ISS Waterers Landscape prior to the Contract start date.

The report outlined that in relation to the contract management and reporting, Sport Aberdeen and the sports services had been a vital part of the procurement and subsequent selection process, and as part of the transfer process the Grounds Procurement's Project Leader and Project Facilitators had undertaken an interim contract oversight and management role. This had been done in order to ensure a smooth transition from an inhouse service to one delivered by ISS Waterers Landscape.

The report further advised that a mechanism for managing the contract had yet to be agreed by the Director of Housing and Environment, the Director of Education, Culture and Sport, and Sport Aberdeen, and a decision would need to be made as to how and when the contract would be transferred to Sport Aberdeen. The Interim Contract Manager had been working with Sport Aberdeen, housing amenities and ISS Waterers Landscape to arrange a detailed work plan to take into account budget and service requirements.

In relation to paragraph 6.3.2, the Committee noted that a number of references to 2010 had been made in error and should have read 2009.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the contract award to ISS Waterers Landscape;
- (ii) to request that a progress report from the Director of Housing and Environment regarding the contract award, be submitted every second cycle; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the progress report.

CONSULTATION ON DEATH CERTIFICATION, BURIAL AND CREMATION – H&E/10/045

33. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which provided details of the draft response to the Scottish Government's consultation on Death Certification, Burial and Cremation.

By way of background, the report advised that in 2005 the former Health Minister set up a working group to review burial and cremation legislation in Scotland, and the terms of reference had been to review the Cremation Acts of 1902 and 1952 (and the Cremation (Scotland) Regulations 1935, as amended) and the Burial Grounds (Scotland) Act 1855 as amended, and to make recommendations on how the legislation could be changed in order to better serve the needs of the people of Scotland. The review was also, to recognise the established role of the Procurator Fiscal Service and take account of policy developments in England and international good practice.

The final report and recommendations of the Group had been presented to the Scottish Government in October 2007, with a report being published in March, 2008.

The report also noted that copies of the consultation paper and its 52 questions for consultees had been circulated for comment and feedback to all relevant Directorates. The Corporate Governance Service had requested feedback on the equalities, financial and legal issues raised; the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Service had requested feedback on the planning issues; and the Social Care and Wellbeing Service had requested feedback on the family issues raised within the paper.

Appended to the report was the draft response to the consultation questions.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the draft response to the Scottish Government consultation on Death Certification, Burial and Cremation; and
- (ii) to instruct the Director of Housing and Environment Services to provide the response to the Scottish Government on behalf of the Council by the due date of 21 April, 2010.

ABERDEEN CITY WASTE STRATEGY 2010–2025 – H&E/10/005

34. With reference to article 6 of the minute of meeting of the Waste Management Working Group of 5 March, 2010, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which sought approval to adopt the Aberdeen City Waste Strategy.

The report advised that the Aberdeen City Waste Strategy 2010-2025 provided a statement of the key outcomes for all waste management in the city for the next 15 years and provided a framework for the development of the next generation of waste infrastructure and services. The Strategy had been developed through analysis of the drivers who had affected waste management behaviour and practice, subsequently, a process was followed of identifying key themes, goals, objectives and targets.

The report outlined the key themes of the strategy and advised that its five targets were (1) municipal waste growth being eliminated by 2015; (2) source segregated municipal waste recycling and organic waste treatment targets being 45% by 2013, 50% by 2020, and 56% by 2025; (3) the introduction of organic waste collection for all households and development of treatment facilities within the Aberdeen area by 2013; (4) municipal residual waste treatment capacity (including energy from waste) not exceeding 45% by 2020 and 40% by 2025; and (5) no more than 5% of municipal waste being land filled by 2025.

Appended to the report was the Aberdeen City Waste Strategy 2010-2025 document, and an implementation plan for the strategy.

The Committee resolved:-

- (a) to approve the Aberdeen City Waste Strategy as attached at appendix 1; and
- (b) to refer the report to the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee for adoption.

MARKET STREET SOUTH – CENTRAL RESERVATION ROSEBED REFURBISHMENT – H &E/10/054

35. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which sought approval to undertake improvement works on the central reservation rosebed on Market Street.

The report advised that at present, the central reservation of Market Street South, between Commercial Quay and Albert Quay, was planted with floribunda roses, which were in bloom for approximately eight weeks per year. For the remainder of the year, the rose bushes acted as a litter trap, which made the area unsightly, and as one of the main routes through Aberdeen and the site of the ferry terminal to the Northern Isles, and the entrance to the main bus station, it was often one of the first areas viewed by visitors to the city.

The report highlighted to prevent litter gathering, the area required to be cleaned at least a once a week. Clearance of the litter was costly and disruptive as the traffic

lanes at either side of the central reservation had to be coned off to ensure the safety of the workers who carry out the work.

The report proposed that the following works would be undertaken to refurbish the central reservation on the aforementioned stretch of Market Street:- (1) removal of all of the roses; (2) no change being made to the existing trees; (3) removal of approximately four inches of top soil; (4) covering the area with a membrane to prevent or control weed growth; (5) covering the membrane with granite chips; and (6) planting of a few upright plants, such as phormium, through the granite chips, to give height and colour. The work would be undertaken early on a Sunday morning to minimise any disruption to traffic.

Councillor Cooney queried as to whether the membrane that would be laid under the gravel to deter weed growth would cause a problem with excessive lichen growth, as had happened in other areas of the city. The Head of Environment Services undertook to investigate this matter and advise Councillor Cooney of the outcome.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the proposed works being taken by Environment Services to remove the rose beds and improve the landscaping on Market Street central reservations;
- (ii) to instruct officers to provide an update on the progress of the work to the meeting of 24 August, 2010; and
- (iii) to note that the Head of Environment Services would investigate whether the membrane that would be laid under the gravel to deter weed growth would cause a problem with excessive lichen growth and advise Councillor Cooney of the outcome.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Kevin Stewart declared an interest in the following article, by virtue of his membership on the NEM SITA Management Board. Councillor Stewart did not consider it necessary to withdraw from the meeting.

LOCATION FOR WEST OF CITY RECYCLING CENTRE – H&E/10/009

36. With reference to article 16 of the minute of meeting of Council of 13 February, 2008, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which outlined the results of a consultation exercise relating to potential sites for a new recycling centre in the west of the city; and requested that a preferred site for the recycling centre be selected.

The transformation strategy for waste management services which was approved by Council at the aforementioned meeting, identified the need for a new recycling centre in the west of the city. At present there were four recycling centres located within Aberdeen, however, none of these were conveniently placed for residents in the west of the city.

The report outlined that officers had undertaken a two phase consultation with community groups in the west of the city, and an initial consultation undertaken in early 2009 focussed on understanding the issues of concern to communities and refining these into site selection criteria. A second phase of consultation commenced in January, 2010 when an information pack, which included details of the sites identified, a scoring matrix and a set of assessment criteria, was sent to a range of community groups based in the west of the city. Limited responses had been received from the consultation, however, a number of general themes had emerged from the consultation, namely: (1) that the area of the Lang Stracht was regarded as the preferred area within the west of the city, with the Whitemyres Industrial Estate seen as the best location; (2) that the Kingswells community did not believe the sites in that area were suitable but that should more suitable land be zoned to the west, there would be scope for a joint Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire facility in this area; (3) that residents in the Hazlehead area believed that Kingswells Park and Ride or land further west would be a good location for a site; (4) the workshop group felt that sites within the Hazlehead area were the best alternative to Lang Stracht and that whilst there were issues, the Grove Nursery and the Caravan Park were viable options; and (5) the Hazlehead and Seafield and Craigiebuckler Residents Associations were strongly opposed to any sites within the Hazlehead area.

The report highlighted the twelve potential sites for the Recycling Centre as being:

Kingswells Park and Ride
Adjacent to Kingswells
Hazledene Road
Pinewood
Grove Nursery, Hazlehead
Hazlehead Caravan Park
Hazlehead Bus Park
Summerhill
Rousay Drive
Whitemyres Estate
Greenfern; and
Granitehill.

The report concluded that none of the sites identified satisfied all of the criteria for a recycling centre, however, a process of elimination had therefore been undertaken with the Grove Nursery in Hazlehead and the former Hazlehead Caravan Park as being the two sites that came closest to meeting the requirements. The north west corner of the Grove Nursery site was considered to be the best available site for a new recycling centre serving the citizens of the west of Aberdeen.

Attached to the report was an appendix which (1) outlined the potential sites for the west of the city recycling centre; and (2) highlighted the consultation responses.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee:

- (a) approve the selection of the north west corner of the Grove Nursery site in Hazlehead, accessed from Hazlehead Avenue, as the preferred site for a recycling centre; and
- (b) recommend that the Greenfern Recycling Centre is retained within the masterplan for Greenferns and is developed as soon as roads and services are established to the site.

The Vice Convener, seconded by Councillor Kevin Stewart, moved:-
that the Committee approve the recommendations.

The Convener, seconded by Councillor Yuill, moved as an amendment:-
that the Committee (1) defers the consideration of recommendation (a) to allow officers to conclude discussions with Aberdeenshire Council in order to identify a site along the Kingswells to Westhill corridor that would be suitable for the recycling centre; (2) instruct that officers report back after the summer recess on the outcome of these discussions; and (3) approve recommendation (b) as detailed above.

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (10) – the Vice Convener; and Councillors Allan, Collie, Cooney, Corall, Dunbar, Hunter, Milne, Noble and Kevin Stewart; for the amendment (5) – the Convener; and Councillors Clark, Fletcher, Robertson and Yuill.

The Committee resolved:-
to adopt the successful motion.

BULK ITEM UPLIFT FROM HRA PROPERTIES - H&E/10/047

37. With reference to article 12 of the minute of meeting of 6 October, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which updated members on the reintroduction of a free uplift service to Council tenants; included details on the effectiveness of this interim arrangement and provided long term options for members to consider.

By way of background the report advised at the meeting of the former Resources Management Committee of 3 June, 2008, (article 23 refers) that the free uplift service of any two items per year to Council tenants was removed, and a charging mechanism was introduced. As a result Council tenants were charged £20 for the special uplift of up to four household items and tenants on low incomes or in receipt of state benefits being charged a reduced charge of £10. Further to this decision, there had been anecdotal evidence that fly tipping within housing estates had increased, and this had not only been recognised by Council staff but also by Grampian Fire and Rescue Service and had also been highlighted and discussed at the meetings of the Aberdeen Community Safety Partnership.

Further to this, at the aforementioned meeting of this Committee, the reintroduction of a free uplift service for four items for Council tenants had been agreed.

The report concluded that an advertising campaign was required to promote the service availability and existing networks, and advised that the actual spend and recharge to the Housing Revenue Account since the interim service was reintroduced as being £64,438.04.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the continuation of this free uplift service for up to four items for Council House tenants for 2010/11;

- (ii) to note that funding commitment was available and would be met by the Housing Revenue Account of £135,000;
- (iii) to instruct officers to prepare an advertising campaign to promote the availability of the scheme; and
- (iv) to instruct officers to progress discussions for consideration of developing a service using the social enterprise approach through the power of wellbeing for 2011/12.

A TREE FOR EVERY CITIZEN PROJECT - H&E/010/051

38. With reference to article 20 of the minute of meeting of 11 January, 2010, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which provided an update on the progress of the 'Plant a Tree for Every Citizen of Aberdeen' project.

By way of background, the report advised that the Council had previously agreed a commitment to plant a tree for every citizen in Aberdeen (approximately 202,000 by 2011), and instructed officers to continue with current tree planting programmes and to investigate funding opportunities to deliver this commitment. Planting work had now commenced at a number of sites but had been delayed by the lengthy period of snow cover and freezing conditions during February and March of this year.

The report explained that planting at Lochinch Farm had been delayed due to some deer still remaining within the enclosure, but that a smaller enclosure had now been built to accommodate the deer. It was also advised that most of the trees at Seaton had now been planted, and ground preparation and fencing had commenced at other sites, and it was expected that the planting of the first phase be completed by the end of May, 2010.

The report described how the project had been formally launched by the local MSP, Richard Lochhead in March, 2010 at the new Seaton Community Woodland, with the event attended by a number of elected members, Council officers, Aberdeen Greenspace Board Members, senior officers from Wood Group and children from Seaton School and Timber Kindergarten. Around 600 trees had been planted.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the progress to date; and
- (ii) to instruct officers to provide a further update on the first phase of the project and proposals for the second phase to the meeting of 24 August, 2010.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Kevin Stewart declared an interest in the following subject matter by virtue of his position as the Chairman of the Board of NESTRANS but did not feel it necessary to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of the report. Councillor Yuill declared a non pecuniary interest in the following article due to the location of his workplace but did not feel it necessary to withdraw from the meeting.

AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN AND AIR QUALITY UPDATE - H&E/010/040

39. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which considered the proposed actions contained in the draft Air Quality Action Plan, and sought approval for the draft plan to be circulated for public consultation. The report also requested authorisation for officers to proceed with a tender exercise for a service and maintenance contract of the six continuous air quality monitoring stations.

The report advised (1) that local authorities had a statutory duty under the Environment Act 1995 to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas in accordance with national guidelines; and (2) that poor air quality exacerbated pre existing heart and lung conditions, and was estimated to reduce the life expectancy of every person in the UK by six months with increased reduction in life expectancy in cities with poor air quality, at a cost an approximate £15 billion on health care per year.

The report continued to advise that an Air Quality Action Plan was produced for the city centre in 2005, however the plan was now outdated and a new Action Plan was required to cover all three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA). The Draft Air Quality Action Plan considered practical measures that could be introduced in Aberdeen to improve air quality that would hold limited impact on the commercial viability of the city.

The report then advised that in order to ensure best value, it was proposed that a tendering exercise be undertaken for a 3 year service and maintenance contract with the option for a one year extension.

Appended to the report was the draft Air Quality Action Plan for 2010.

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) was the salt in the air 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 report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) approves the draft Air Quality Action Plan for public consultation and submission to the Scottish Government;
- (b) instructs the Director of Housing and Environment to prepare a final Air Quality Action Plan for Committee consideration following the completion of the consultation;
- (c) give authorisation for Officers to proceed with a tender exercise for a three year service and maintenance contract for the six continuous air quality monitoring stations, with the option for a one year extension; and
- (d) to refer the report to the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee for information due to the links between air quality, transport and planning.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve recommendation (c);
- (ii) to defer recommendations (a), (b) and (d) until its meeting of 25 May, 2010;
- (iii) to instruct that officers address all questions raised by members in this report; and
- (iv) to note that the draft Air Quality Action Plan would be placed in the Members' Library, with the various changes being highlighted within the report, rather than the draft being circulated again in its entirety.

COMMUNITY SIGNATURE INITIATIVE – NEXT STEPS - H&E/010/057

40. With reference to article 4 of the minute of meeting of the former South of the City Regeneration Interim Board of 28 October, 2008, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment which advised members of the completion of the first year of the Community Signature Initiative and reported on the programme for year two.

The report outlined that the Council had entered into a one year Service Level Agreement (SLA) in April, 2009 with Aberdeen Foyer to deliver the Community Signature in Torry, however, an extension to the SLA would make the total contract value £75,000, which was over the Council's threshold at which a competitive tendering exercise must be undertaken in terms of the Standing Orders. As a result it was noted that an exemption from Standing Order 5 was required.

The report highlighted lessons that had been learned in the first year and how these would be applied in future years and also noted (1) key milestones achieved; (2) progress against the project timeline; (3) emerging findings from signatures to date; (4) challenges and lessons; and (5) future plans.

The report also advised that a Project Steering Group had been established which included partners from the Council, NHS Grampian, Grampian Police, Job Centre Plus, Aberdeen Foyer and Business Lab, and the project had also secured corporate support from Shell. The Group was formed to offer advice, support and direction to the project and to support effective action as a result of the Community Signature Programme.

In relation to year 2 of the project, the report outlined that the data collected would be fed back to participating agencies to consider actions as required and also to participating local groups, individuals and organisations to inform local community action and it was planned that two Signature events would be run in Torry between Easter and summer along side an ongoing schedule of individual Signature sessions with local groups.

The report concluded (1) that the Community Signature Initiative had demonstrated an ability to evidence needs and viewpoints in one locality, especially amongst hard to reach groups, offering invaluable insights into local values of the community; and (2) that there had also been invaluable links made with to other local initiatives in Torry including the Pier to Pier Project involving the prison, and the employability themed work around Retail Rocks.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the successful completion of the first year of the Community Signature Initiative in Torry and the Next Steps for year 2 as set out in the main considerations of the report;
- (ii) to approve the exemption of a contract extension for the Community Signature from the requirements of Standing Order 5, relating to contracts and procurement, on the grounds that the contract extension is justified by special circumstances as detailed within the report; and
- (iii) to instruct that a six monthly progress report be submitted to its meeting of 26 October, 2010.

SOUTH ABERDEEN COASTAL REGENERATION PROJECTS (SACRP) - H&E/10/058

41. With reference to article 3 of the minute of the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee of 23 February, 2010, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which advised members on the decision taken by the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee in relation to the South Aberdeen Coastal Regeneration Projects (SACRP).

The report provided a detailed overview of the aims of the study, and advised of the current status and proposed a way forward for the following aspects of the study: Coastal Park, the East Tullos Burn, developing the Marine and Geoscience study centre, the environment of Torry Bay, and the Torry Battery. The report reminded members that the purpose of the SACRP study was to rigorously test the feasibility of a series of coordinated and integrated projects, which included the acquisition of critical baseline data.

At the aforementioned meeting, the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee had resolved to (1) note the successful completion of the scoping and feasibility study as endorsed by the SACRP Steering Group at its meeting held on 26 November, 2009, and to record appreciation to all those organisations that provided support and assistance towards the completion of the work; (2) create a formal, multi agency Project Steering Group with proposed terms of reference, to reaffirm in principle the implementation of the Nigg Bay Coastal Park as a key project with special reference to the Community Wetlands Project; (3) appoint their Vice Convener, Councillor McCaig, as the Council's member on the proposed Project Steering Group; (4) note the present stage for the development of the Torry Community Wetlands Project in the St. Fitticks Community Park and the on going need to continue to attract external funding for the implementation of this project; (5) note that a report on the proposed land use issues was to be presented to a future meeting of the Guildry and Mortifications Board as a land owner in the vicinity of the Bay of Nigg; (6) endorse the present stage with the development of external funding bids for conservation works for the Torry Battery, with a progress report on the identified funding to date to be presented to the June cycle of the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee (7) note that at no additional cost to the Council, commitment to some of the outcomes of the study would continue until 31 March, 2010 by the University of Aberdeen; and (8) request officers to submit a report back to the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee from the Project Steering Group on the development of the sub projects for the June cycle of the Committee.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to concur with the resolutions of the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee; and
- (ii) to recommend to the Project Steering Group that due to the crossover between the Housing and Environment Service and the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Service on this project, that the Vice Convener of this Committee, Councillor Mark McDonald, be invited to join the Project Steering Group in addition to Councillor McCaig.

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

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT BY LANGSTANE HOUSING ASSOCIATION – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE - H&E/10/039

42. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which sought agreement to provide a grant to Langstane Housing Association, to assist with their purchase of a site at Copper Beech, Auchinyell Road.

The report advised that Langstane Housing Association had recently been successful in obtaining planning approval for the development of 11 one bedroom and 24 two bedroom flats, which would be developed as affordable social housing, on the site of the former Copper Beech public house, Auchinyell Road.

The report outlined that a fund of £700,000 was being sought from Langstane Housing in order to assist in the purchase of the site with £145,000 coming from their own resources. The report advised that normally, Langstane Housing would request grant funding from the Scottish Government, however there was currently no Housing Association grant available for the purchase of the site. The report went on to advise that the grant could be funded from the Section 75 income received from developers as part of their planning obligations, and this money had to be used to fund the delivery of affordable housing with RSLs (Registered Social Landlords). The report concluded that the request fitted within the acceptable uses for those funds and the fund currently had a balance of £880,776.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to agree to provide a grant to Langstane Housing Association at a value of £700,000 to enable their purchase of the development site at Copper Beech, Auchinyell Road, subject to the appropriate legal agreements being in place with Langstane; and
- (ii) to agree to the funding being met from the income received from Section 75 contributions from developers through the planning process.

SITE OPTIONS AND PROCUREMENT METHOD FOR PHASE 3 NEW BUILD COUNCIL HOUSE PROGRAMME

43. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which provided an option appraisal of three sites for the development of phase 3 of the New Build Council House Programme; evaluated each site within the parameters of the Scottish Government's Incentivising New Council House Building fund; and made recommendations for the way forward.

The report advised that following an evaluation of the new build options for phase 3, it was concluded that the most feasible new build option was Croft House, as this site had been declared surplus within the Property Account and was readily available to purchase. Based on availability, size, planning status and viability of this site, it would be an opportune site to put forward for phase 3. The other two sites discussed were Tillydrone Old School site and Victoria Road School, however, these were deemed unsuitable.

Appended to the report was the option appraisal study for all three sites which provided details on the size, build cost per unit, land cost, planning requirements and development timescales, price of site and transfer arrangements and risks associated with each site.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note and consider the site options and agree that Croft House be developed for phase 3 of the New Build Council House Programme;
- (b) to instruct the City Chamberlain to conclude the transfer of the property from the Property Account to the Housing Revenue Account at a cost of £700,000 and to obtain Scottish Minister approval if necessary;
- (c) subject to Scottish Government approval, that members agree 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 on the detail at next meeting of this Committee;
- (d) note that the Housing and Environment Service would advise the Head of Asset Management and Operations that they no longer had an interest in Victoria Road School, Torry at this present time;
- (e) agree the design and build (RIBA stage B/C) procurement route for phase 3 of the New Build Council House Programme; and
- (f) instruct officers to report back to a future meeting to provide an update on progress within the New Build Council House Programme.

At this point, the Convener made reference to the report 'Croft House and Aberdon House' that had been considered at an earlier point in the meeting (article 11 of this minute refers), and alluded to the fact that recommendation (b) as detailed above had already been agreed at this point in the meeting.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve recommendation (a), (c), (d), (e) and (f) as contained within the report.

FUNDING BID TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT FOR NEW BUILD COUNCIL HOUSING PHASE 3

44. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which sought approval for a submission to the Scottish Government for Phase 3 funding for new build Council housing.

The report advised that in February, 2010, the Scottish Government announced a further round of funding that would be made available to local authorities to build new housing, and advised that any bid should be submitted to the Scottish Government by 30 April, 2010. These would be assessed by the Scottish Government and a decision made on the allocation of this funding by mid July, 2010.

The report then advised that the Council hoped to progress to Phase 3 of the New Build Programme and develop the site at Croft House, Stockethill, as the site covers an area of 0.60 hectares and would provide around thirty one units of general needs family housing, of which eleven would be houses and twenty would be flats.

The report concluded that the estimated cost of construction for Phase 3 would be £4m based on an average unit cost of £133,600.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to agree that a submission be made to the Scottish Government by the 30 April, 2010; and
- (ii) to agree that the Convener and Vice Convener sign off the submission which was currently being drafted, and to instruct that a copy of the document is distributed to members of the Committee for information.

49 BEATTIE AVENUE - H&E/10/059

45. With reference to article 19 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which provided a progress report on options that could be associated with the properties at 49a, 49b and 49c Beattie Avenue, Ashgrove.

The report advised that the property at 49 Beattie Avenue was a detached two storey B listed building that contained three residential flats, namely: 49a (four bedroom flat), 49b (one bedroom flat) and 49c (four bedroom flat). It was advised that all properties within the building were now vacant, and Construction Consultancy had proposed two layout options for the renovation and redevelopment of the building. Option one would provide two 1 bedroom flats, one 2 bedroom flat and one 3 bedroom flat, with option two providing six 1 bedroom flats.

The report then outlined that a particular challenge facing the Council was the growing demand for special needs housing. The Community Care Strategy Officer in conjunction with Social Care and Wellbeing officers, had identified the following specific projects which could be accommodated at Beattie Avenue should the properties be used to provide special needs accommodation:

- (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 lived in Elmwood Unit, Royal Cornhill Hospital, and a number of whom were designated as delay 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, and revenue funding for support services should be available in 2010/11.
- (3) Re-provisioning 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 re-provisioning. Revenue funding would transfer from the existing service, with service users moving to individualised budgets.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve in principle the redevelopment of the Beattie Avenue property for Care in the Community use and instruct the Director of Housing and Environment, in conjunction with the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing, to develop the two options highlighted for the category B listed building for the properties at 49a, 49b and 49c Beattie Avenue, and provide life cycle costs, development costs and recommend the future use of the building at the next meeting of this Committee.

TIED HOUSING WITHIN ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES - H&E/10/038

46. With reference to article 5 of the minute of meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee of 8 September, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which provided information pertaining to the existence, location and present occupation status of tied housing within Environmental Services, and confirmed any requirement for the provision of tied housing within Environmental Services.

The report advised that historically tied housing was provided to Environmental Services staff within the Council, who predominantly took up occupancy of the lodge house attached to the park, grounds and/or facility to which they were appointed and provided services required to that facility. However, over time this practice had changed with the establishment of a city wide Environment Service and staff now worked in groups and covered a number of areas and service needs. Exceptions to this would be the Crematorium, Doonies Farmhouse and Hazlehead Zoo Lodge.

The Head of Environment Services advised the Committee that the Doonies Farm House was held on the Education, Culture and Sport account, not Housing and Environment and therefore should be referred to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee for consideration.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the content of this report;
- (ii) to agree that there is a Service requirement for a limited number of specific properties to be tied to Service provision, but on other properties there is no such requirement;

- (iii) to instruct officers to include this information with that of other Services in the report to the Finance and Resources Committee on the future of tied houses policy; and
- (iv) to note that Doonies Farm was included on the Education, Culture and Sport account and therefore to refer this property to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee for consideration.

MATTER OF URGENCY

The Convener intimated that she had directed in terms of Section 50(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 that the Committee consider the following item as a matter of urgency in order for a decision to be taken at an early stage.

TIED TENANCIES – HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – H&E/10/029

47. With reference to article 25 of the minute of meeting of 11 January, 2010, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Housing and Environment, which (1) outlined the background and current status of Caretakers and Senior Carers who currently still occupied tied tenancies; and (2) sought approval for amendments to the Tied Tenancy Policy to allow for the early rehousing of tenants. The Council currently had 28 tied tenancies, with 8 of these eligible for priority rehousing and the remaining 20 on the normal housing list.

The report advised that (1) the current Tied Tenancy Policy only provided priority to those employees who had been employed by either Grampian Regional Council or Aberdeen District Council prior to 22 March 1995; (2) the policy was required to be amended to allow priority for rehousing to all former Housing Revenue Account Tied Tenants with two offers of suitable alternative accommodation being made; (3) where Tied Tenants qualified for extra care housing and were within the top ten on the housing waiting list, it was envisaged that their current tenancy transfer from non secure to secure; and (4) once all Housing Revenue Account Tied Tenants had been rehoused or awarded a secure tenancy then the Tied Tenancy Policy would no longer be required to be part of the Scheme of Allocation.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the current difficulties being experienced in resolving the housing situation for those Caretakers and Senior Carers who still occupy Housing Revenue Account tied tenancy properties; and
- (ii) to approve the recommended amendments to the Tied Tenancy Policy as follows (1) to allow priority for rehousing to all former HRA tied tenants, with two offers of alternative accommodation being given; (2) to allow the automatic transfer of a Tied Tenants current tenancy from non secure to secure where the applicant qualifies for sheltered accommodation and are within the top 10 of the housing waiting list; and (3) to agree that once all Housing Revenue Account Tied Tenancies have been rehoused or awarded a secure tenancy that the Tied Tenancy Policy no longer requires to be part of the Scheme of Allocations, and any tied tenant who remain within non Housing Revenue Account properties will be dealt with on an individual basis by the Housing Cases Review Sub Committee.

MATTER OF URGENCY

The Convener intimated that she had directed in terms of Section 50(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 that the Committee consider the following item as a matter of urgency in order for a decision to be taken on the future of these posts at an early date.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO FIXED TERM CARETAKER/CLEANER POSTS

48. The Committee had before it a business case prepared by the Director of Housing and Environment, which sought approval to establish one post of Caretaker/cleaner for 51 weeks, and also to convert a second post to permanent status.

The business case sought approval for (1) the creation of one caretaker/cleaner post for a period of up to 51 weeks; and (2) the conversion of one fixed term caretaker/cleaner post to permanent. The business case outlined the postholder already in the fixed term position had been in employment since 2007 and was employed before the Temporary Workforce Policy came into force. As a result, the post holder would still be entitled to 13 weeks redeployment and a statutory redundancy payment should the post not be converted.

The business case outlined that the cost associated with the two posts would be £24,425.57 for the next financial year, which could be met from the Housing Revenue Account budget.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the business case

- **COUNCILLOR AILEEN MALONE, Convener.**