

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Housing & Health Committee 4 February 2009

**IMPROVING LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOODS AND AMENDMENT
TO MEMBER OFFICER WORKING GROUP****Report by Executive Director (Housing & Community Care)****ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to seek retrospective approval for the extension of the Member Officer Working Group (MOWG) for Garden Maintenance to include other solutions for improving local neighbourhoods. The amended MOWG is to be referred to as Improving Local Neighbourhoods Member / Officer and Tenants Federation Working Group.

1 RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1.1 Approves the widening of the remit for the Member Officer Working Group for Garden Maintenance as detailed below.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A report was submitted to the Housing and Health Committee of 28 February 2007 (report 07/153 refers) reviewing the Council's Garden Maintenance Service as carried out from April 2006 to March 2007 and suggesting proposals to expand the service. It was agreed at this time that a Member Officer Working Group (MOWG) should be established with the remit of considering expansion to vulnerable tenants, other tenures and local Registered Social Landlords. After the May election, the new convenor reported the need to appoint five members and a member of the Tenants and Residents Federation to the Member Officer Working Group. This was resolved. A further report was submitted on 12 March 2008 (report 08/130 refers) and it was agreed by committee that the MOWG be convened following the completion of the Best Value Review of Environmental Services within the Council's Estates. The Head of Housing and the Head of the Environment Service, however, decided that a joint BITE (Business Improvement Team Event) would be the best way to approach this. This received Convenor approval and the event took place over three days in September 2008. As a result of this event it is now felt that the remit of the MOWG should be widened to include other solutions for improving local neighbourhood.

3 PROPOSALS

3.1 It is proposed that the Member / Officer and Tenants Federation Working Group (MOTWG) consider a range of solutions for improving local neighbourhoods. The first meeting of the MOTWG took place on 16 January 2009. The range of solutions could include the following:

- **Expansion of garden maintenance**
- **Stair, close and window cleaning**
- **Close Lighting**
- **Voluntary Factoring**
- **Improved caretaking**
- **Any other remedy as identified by the group**

4. REMIT OF MOTWG

4.1 It is suggested that the scope of the work covered by MOTWG will review the following areas of work

- Eligibility Criteria for the Garden Maintenance Service
- Feasibility of expansion
- Introduction of other services to improve neighbourhoods
- Specification of Services provided
- Monitoring the quality of Services
- Funding arrangements and charging policy
- Administration of the Services

4.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the Member / Officer Tenant Federation Working Group will be to work together to develop neighbourhood solutions which ensure that the Council provides a high quality, efficient and effective service to the right people which in turn will contribute to more sustainable communities and welcoming environments.

Objectives will be to consider

- whether we are providing the right service to the right people
- whether current levels of service are adding best value to local communities
- are we delivering the service in the most appropriate and efficient way
- does the service contribute to the council achieving its long and medium term goals
- are we working with other services and partners in the most joined up way

- is the service making best use of public money
- does the service provide equal opportunities
- the cost to the individual and Housing & Community Care

Likely Outcomes

- Improved environment
- Improved sustainability
- Improved service for residents of Perth & Kinross
- Better use of resources

Research

- Identify possible demand e.g. likely number of eligible Housing Association tenants, % properties owned by elderly/disabled
- Identify number of properties where communal drying area, communal stairwell exists
- Identify likely cost of service and associated charges
- Undertake benchmarking with other Local Authorities.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Tenant Representatives will sit on the Member / Officer Tenant Federation Working Group. Perth and Kinross Tenants and Residents Federation acknowledge the opportunity to be consulted on this report. They are pleased that there is to be a widening of the MOWTG to incorporate the improvement of the local neighbourhood. At the same time they welcome the tenant representation and look forward to the opportunity for further consultation with the tenants.
- 5.2 The Executive Director (The Environment Service) has been consulted on this report. Colleagues from the Environment Service, Repairs Service, Benefits and Revenues and Legal Services will also sit on the group.
- 5.3 Consultation was undertaken at the Open House event in November on the proposal for a stair cleaning service. This was welcomed by those attending
- 5.4 Further consultation will be required on the solutions agreed on by the group.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Resources to undertake this work will be contained within the current staffing complement. The work of the MOTWG will identify the financial resources required for these improvements and a further report will be submitted to the Housing & Health Committee in the latter half of 2009.

7. COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2006-2010

7.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2006-2010 lays out five Objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. They are as follows:-

- (i) A Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment
- (ii) Healthy, Caring Communities
- (iii) A Prosperous, Sustainable and Inclusive Economy
- (iv) Educated, Responsible and Informed Citizens
- (v) Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities

7.2 This Policy will assist the Council in meeting its Corporate Plan. In particular it will relate to objective 1 by allowing individuals to live in safe and secure environment, and objectives 2 and 4 as it will also assist in more healthy and confident communities.

8. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

8.1 The Council's Corporate Equalities Assessment Framework requires an assessment of functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant equality categories. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new policies to ensure there is no adverse impact on any community group or employees.

8.2 The proposals presented in this report will be considered under the Corporate Equalities Assessment Framework and assessed in relation to the Race/Disability/Gender Equalities Assessment by the Member Office Working Group once work is complete and before a further report is submitted to Committee

9. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

9.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS).

9.2 The plan, programme or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the determination was made that the items summarised in this report do not require further action as they do not qualify as a plan, programme or strategy as defined by the Act.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The appearance of neighbourhoods can affect the health and well being of its residents. Housing staff currently spend a great deal of time inspecting gardens and closes and due to problems with enforcement find this part of their role unfulfilling. New solutions will free up their time to concentrate on other important parts of the Housing Service such as housing advice and information to residents.

Dave Roberts

Executive Director
Housing & Community Care

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

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