

## ARGYLL AND BUTE STRATEGIC HOUSING & COMMUNITIES FORUM

### MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2006, LOCH FYNE HOTEL, INVERARAY

**Present:**

Cllr. George Freeman (GF) (Chair), Argyll & Bute Council  
 Malcolm MacFadyen (MM) Head of Planning & Performance, Argyll & Bute Council  
 Allan Brandie (AB) Research & Development Officer, Argyll & Bute Council  
 Allan Macdougall (AM) Director, Fyne Homes Housing Association  
 Mark Lodge (ML) Statutory Planning Officer, Argyll & Bute Council  
 Joanna Shedden (JS) Planning Co-ordinator, Communities Scotland  
 Janet Crook (JC) Investment Co-ordinator, Communities Scotland  
 David Dowie (DD) Operations Manager, Communities Scotland  
 Ian Mcfadyen (IM) Manager, Supporting People, Argyll & Bute Council  
 Susan Brooks (SB) Planning Officer, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park  
  
 Yolanda Shoemake (YS) LHS Admin Assistant, Argyll & Bute Council  
 Linda Haig (LH) Director of Investment and Regeneration, Argyll Community Housing Association  
  
 Morven Short (MS) Director, Dunbritton Housing Association  
 Lesley McInnes (LM) Chief Executive, West Highland Housing Association  
 Cllr. Isobel Strong (IS) Bute & Cowal Area Committee/ADA Partnership  
 Patricia McCrossan (PM) Service Officer-Community Work, Argyll & Bute Council  
 Eddie Renfrew (ER) Strathclyde Fire & Rescue  
 Eileen Belshaw (EB) Service Standards Officer, Argyll & Bute Council  
 Mike Firth (MF) Development Liaison Manager, Scottish Water  
 Alan Steele (AS) Scottish Water

ISSUES	ACTION BY
<p><b>1. Apologies:</b> Alistair McGregor, Argyll Community Housing Association; Stephen Youd, Communities Scotland; Moira MacDonald, Argyll &amp; Bute Council; Douglas Hunter, Argyll &amp; Bute Council; Jacqui Macleod, Crofters Commission; Eileen Wilson, Argyll &amp; Bute Community Planning Partnership; Alan Milstead, HIE; Fergus Murray, Argyll &amp; Bute Council; Jim Frame, SEPA; Steven Watson, Alienergy  <b>NB</b> – Chair noted the response received from Keith Miller, Forestry Commission regarding attendance and recommended seeking alternative representation for the Forum as appropriate.</p> <p><b>2. Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>  <b>(a) Strategic Housing Forum minutes 08/09/06</b> approved, subject to following amendment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Item 5, second bullet to read £34million not £37million.</li> </ul> <p><b>Matters Arising –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>MOD</b> - MM advised that this matter is to be pursued via the Helensburgh &amp; Lomond Housing Market Study.</li> <li>• <b>Item 7: Implementing 2006 Housing Act</b> – DD advised that the dedicated team within Communities Scotland was now in place to take this forward. Main contact – Ian Muirhead.</li> </ul>	

(b) CPP 3<sup>rd</sup> Theme Group minutes 25/05/06 – approved as accurate.

**Matters arising**

- **Item 2(a) – Home Safety Checks** – It was agreed that this matter was relevant to a wider range of organisations/partners (including all RSLs, Care & Repair and Supporting People) and recommended that Strathclyde Fire & Rescue (Geoff Calvert) be invited to provide a paper/presentation to the next Forum.
- **CPP Manager** – The appointment of Eileen Wilson was noted. She is included in the membership of the reconstituted forum and will be invited to future meetings.

**3. Strategic Forum - revised remit and membership**

- In accordance with the CPP management board's decision regarding the title and basic reconstitution of this Forum, the detailed proposals outlined in SHCF Paper 0106 were approved subject to the inclusion of more explicit statements/emphasis on a) Equal Opportunities and b) specific Planning issues (sustainable design, affordable housing) as key objectives.
- PM advised of a recent Communities Scotland-funded post appointed until march 2007 to support equalities issues primarily in respect of the ROA but potentially able to provide wider support to other partners.
- PM also suggested the Forum should explore links between Community Regeneration Fund and RSL's Wider Action role. To this end, it was proposed that Patrick Flynn from Communities Scotland should also be invited to participate. **(Post meeting note** – Communities Scotland advised that the three representatives currently attending the Forum would normally be sufficient to cover all relevant aspects, but further representation could be invited as and when appropriate).
- **Membership** – potential additional representation from NHS Highland and Council's Social Work/Residential Care services was considered. It was noted that Douglas Hunter, Service Officer for Joint Futures was an appropriate representative to link with community care/social work issues.
- MS requested clarification of Forum representation across the other CPP themes and MM agreed to table a paper for the next meeting reflecting strategic linkages between relevant groups/bodies. PM invited RSL representation on the Community Learning & Regeneration Strategic Board.
- It was agreed that the regular CPP six-monthly report should be included on this Forum's agenda in future, for information.
- DD advised of the timetable for the Community Plan review and opportunities to influence this. Chair requested any comments/proposals on this issue to be emailed to YS for collation, and a paper to be tabled at next meeting.

MM

DD/  
EW

Group

**4. Scottish Water development Programme**

- MF provided a verbal update on the investment programme covering the period 2006-2010 and circulated a summary of

<p>covering the period 2006-2010 and circulated a summary of development sites within Argyll and Bute. This pro active, longer term focus on development was generally welcomed by the group, as were the wider links now established with RSLs, Homes For Scotland as well as proposal for quarterly meetings with Council Planners. The need to link this programme with Communities Scotland's investment programme was stressed by all partners. MF advised that a detailed programme with dates for the priority sites is expected by spring 2007, and while the programme is robust it remains flexible to meet needs as they arise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An annual update on strategic site capacity is available online at <a href="http://www.scottishwater.co.uk">www.scottishwater.co.uk</a>.</li> <li>• Given the cross-border geographies of certain partners (eg National Park, Dunbritton), MF agreed to circulate a national list of sites.</li> </ul>	MF
<p><b>5. Planning Issues – Update</b> (NB. This item brought forward)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ML provided an update on following issues:</li> <li>• <b>Local Plan</b> – revised timetable for Public Inquiry was circulated. The lengthy process was acknowledged.</li> <li>• <b>Affordable Housing Policy</b> – the single objection to the policy, received from MOD, has now been withdrawn and therefore, in effect, this policy can be considered as actively in force pending formal adoption of the completed Plan. ML to circulate the finalised policy as a separate document for members' information.</li> <li>• <b>Renewable Energy Policy</b> – ML advised that all 3 strands of this policy had received conflicting objections and further work was required. However, the good practice Sustainable Design guide will be formally launched on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2006 on Council website, and includes guidance on eg energy efficiency/ heating systems etc. {ML left the meeting at this point}</li> </ul>	ML
<p><b>6. Local Housing Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MM provided a verbal update, confirming the stock transfer to ACHA was successfully completed on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2006.</li> <li>• Further guidance still awaited from Scottish Executive regarding implementation of 2006 Housing Act. Communities Scotland confirmed this would not now be a requirement of the 2007 LHS Update. An internal working Group has been convened to progress this within Council – external partners will have opportunity to participate as appropriate.</li> <li>• Positive progress with Home Argyll was noted (and the Gold Excellence Award acknowledged), and a memo summarising initial monitoring arrangements was circulated for members' information. Further promotion was recommended.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>7. Communities Scotland Investment Programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DD and JC circulated the current programme noting that the full details of future years should be available for next forum. While</li> </ul>	

details of future years should be available for next forum. While robust, the programme also has scope for flexibility.

- This year's expenditure profile is currently on schedule, with c. 70% of main investment committed. However, actual unit output is down at this stage and there is still risk of slippage with the Early Action Fund –£3.75m remains uncommitted.
- **Private Sector Housing Grant** - 50% currently spent and there is potential for additional spend this year.
- Overall, the position was acknowledged to be very positive and healthy.

## **8. Homelessness Update**

- In the absence of the Community Support Development Manager, MM tabled SHCF Paper 0206.
- While improved investment has resulted in some progress, the increasingly critical situation regarding homelessness and future allocations, as well as the current situation regarding use of (and duration of) B&B occupation was highlighted.
- The Scottish Executive's "changing goalposts" and onerous requirements/target setting were flagged as major causes for concern for all housing providers (and other partners).
- Chair advised that the Homeless Steering Group recently agreed that the national outcomes outlined at paragraph 3.5 of SHCF Paper 0206 should be prioritised as follows in the Argyll and Bute context:
  1. Fewer people become homeless in the first place;
  2. The duration of homelessness is reduced;
  3. Sustainable resettlement is secured for people who become homeless;
  4. Existing homelessness becomes more visible; and
  5. No one need sleep rough.
- AM raised issue of time-lag between presentations being recorded and appearing on system list – potentially, picture is even worse than appears.
- The issue of hidden homelessness being hugely underestimated in rural contexts was again highlighted as a major concern.
- The group agreed that the issue of re-branding/awareness-raising/ education was a critical concern. The Forum has a role to play in progressing this.

## **9. Community Regeneration**

- PM tabled SHCF Paper 0306 and EB circulated an appendix outlining local level Regeneration Outcome Agreements.
- PM advised that Communities Scotland's feedback on the ROA was overall "very good" and in particular capacity building was graded as "excellent".
- A Community Regeneration strategy conference will be held over 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> March 2007 with a view to developing a revised strategy for 2008.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PM flagged the changes outlined in the revised national SIMD report for Argyll and Bute, but noted concerns with the appropriateness of these indicators in the rural context.</li> <li>• Consultants ODS are currently reviewing the implementation of ROAs and will consider Argyll and Bute as one case study.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>10. Supporting People</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IM provided an overview and update of Supporting People services with SCHF Paper 0406.</li> <li>• Current service reviews are on schedule for completion by March 2007.</li> <li>• Future funding remains at risk, with potential reductions of up to £2m if the current Scottish Executive formula is applied.</li> <li>• The forum's role in lobbying the Scottish Executive was discussed and it was agreed that the situation required close monitoring.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>11. National &amp; Local Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JS tabled SHCF Paper 0506 and agreed to liaise with Council on a detailed paper for next forum in response to the <b>Bramley Report</b> on affordable housing need and the final version of the Newhaven Pro Forma for local authority needs assessments.</li> <li>• '<i>Glasgow &amp; Clyde Valley Gypsy Travellers Research Study</i>' – timescale for report now March 2007. Initial fieldwork in Argyll &amp; Bute has been completed.</li> <li>• <b>Homestake</b> research – DD advised that Communities Scotland are currently exploring the potential for funding an authority-wide exercise to estimate demand for the Homestake grant in conjunction with the local RSLs.</li> <li>• JS undertook to include wider research exercises in future updates, to reflect the broader remit of the Housing and Communities Forum</li> </ul>	<p>JS/AB</p> <p>JS</p>
<p><b>12. A.O.C.B</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DD requested an update on the proposals for the additional income generated from reduced <b>Council Tax discounts on holiday homes</b>. MM to produce paper for next meeting.</li> </ul>	<p>MM</p>
<p><b>13. Date of next Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2007, 10.30am (<b>NB – Change of venue. In future meetings will be held in the Council Chamber, Kilmory</b>)</li> </ul>	