MINUTE of MEETING of the HOUSING SERVICES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, EH54 6FF, on 6 FEBRUARY 2025.

Present – Councillors George Paul (Chair), Alison Adamson, Tony Boyle, Robert De Bold, Jim Dickson, Andrew McGuire and David Russell (substituting for Tony Pearson)

Apologies – Councillor Tony Pearson

In attendance – Jessie Duncan (Tenant Panel Representative) and Silence Chihuri (Third Sector Representative)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor McGuire declared that he was a Chartered Member of the Institute of Housing. He also declared he was employed by Wheatley Homes East referenced in a report but as his team did not operate in West Lothian it would not prevent him taking part in the business on the agenda.

2. MINUTE

The Panel confirmed the Minute of its meeting held on 12 December 2024. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services reporting current levels of performance for Housing, Customer and Building Services indicators that were the responsibility of the Housing Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel for Quarter 3, 2024/25.

The Panel was asked to note the performance on Housing, Customer and Building Services key performance indicators in Quarter 3, 2024/25 and determine if further action or enquiry was necessary

Decision

To note the content of the report

4. CIH SCOTLAND 2025 HOUSING FESTIVAL

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services informing the panel of the intention to seek approval from Council Executive for the attendance of the appropriate elected member(s) to attend the CIH (Chartered Institute of Housing) Scotland's Housing Festival on 4-5 March

at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre, Morrison Street, Edinburgh.

The Panel was asked to note the recommendation that the Executive Councillor for Housing Services attend the CIH Scotland Festival which would be reported to Council Executive for approval.

Decision

To note the content of the report which would be presented to Council Executive for approval.

5. PROPERTY TURNOVER OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2024

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services informing the panel of property turnover for Quarter 3 of 2024/25 (1 October to 31 December 2024).

The Panel was asked to note the current level of activity relating to property turnover for Quarter 3 of 2024/25 and in particular note :-

1. The increase in property lets for Quarter 3 2024/25 compared to the same period last year;

2. Of the 49 communities in West Lothian, 19 had no properties available for let throughout Quarter 3 of 2024/25; and

3. 63% of lets throughout the quarter were allocated to people who were homeless.

Decision

To note the content of the report

6. HOMELESS STRATEGY 2025-2028

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services presenting the draft West Lothian Council Homeless Strategy 2025-2028 and the action plan with associated timescales for prevention activities designed to reduce homelessness.

The Panel was asked to :-

a) Consider and provide comment on the draft Homeless Strategy; and

b) Note the intention to seek Council Executive approval of the Strategy.

Decision

To note the content of the report which would be presented to Council Executive for approval.

7. HOUSING REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26 TO 2027/28 AND RENT LEVEL 2025/26

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive providing on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) financial plan 2025/26 to 2027/28, as well as the proposed HRA budget, rent and service charges for 2025/26.

It was recommended that the Panel:-

1. Notes the proposed 3.5% per annum rent strategy and financial plan for the period2025/26 to 2027/28, which would fund service needs and the Housing Capital Investment Programme;

2. Notes the proposed rent increase of 3.5% for 2025/26 and the associated HRA budgets for 2025/26, as set out in the report; and

3. Notes the proposed rent increase of 3.5% for Sheltered Housing and Homelessness properties, as well as related service and support charges for 2025/26.

Decision

To note the content of the report

8. HOUSING CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2025/26 TO 2027/28

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive advising of the proposed Housing Capital Investment Programme for 2025/26 to 2027/28 and noting the scope of the works to be undertaken by Building Services under the terms of the Best Value Framework.

It was recommended that the Panel

a. Notes the proposed 2025/26 to 2027/28 Housing Capital Investment Programme and related funding as details in the report; and

b. Notes the scope of the works to be undertaken by Building Services under the terms of the Best Value Framework, as outlined in Section D.5 of the report.

Decision

To note the content of the report

9. QUARTER 3 2024/25 PERFORAMNCE – AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an update on the Quarter 3 2024/25 performance for the Affordable Housing Programme in West Lothian.

It was recommended that the Panel

1. Notes the anticipated outcomes of the Affordable Housing Programme to 2027/28;

2. Notes the updated Scottish Government Resource Planning Assumptions (RPAs) for West Lothian in 2024/25 had reduced by net 11% since 2023/24; and

3. Note the progress to the end of Quarter 3 2024/25 on delivering the Affordable Housing Programme in West Lothian over the five-year period to 2027/28.

Decision

To note the content of the report

10. WORKPLAN

A workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the content of the workplan.