**Scottish Building and Housing advisory group**

**Minutes 15 November 2017**

**Hamilton Town House, Hamilton**

1. **Introduction and welcome**

Cllr George Paul and Alistair Shaw of West Lothian Council welcomed all to the meeting, thanking everyone for attending the Building and Housing advisory group.

1. **Attendance and apologies**

Please see attached.

1. **Minutes from previous meeting held on 24 August 2017**

The group agreed the previous minutes were a true and accurate record.

1. **Matters arising from previous meeting**

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

1. **Our New Build Programme Phase 2 – Sprinklers and MVHR**

Mark Herd and Douglas Ferguson from Fife Council delivered a presentation on phase 2 of Fife’s new build programme, and in particular looked at Sprinklers and their Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) systems. Mark began with an overview of Fife Council Building Services, noting the amount of staff, turnover and work they have. This includes specialist jobs such as working in properties that have asbestos, heritage repairs for the University of St. Andrews, and repairing sash and case windows. He also spoke about the role of subcontractors and how they complement the established in-house team. Fife work towards, and have achieved, Building Controls Silver Sustainability Standard.

Mark moves on to show some specific projects that occurred during Phase 2 of Fife’s new builds, which included energy efficiency initiatives and fitting sprinkler systems in the properties. There were a total of 13 projects, ranging in cost between £1.4 million to £8 million. The presentation shows pictures and details of these projects, available online. Mark noted that one of the major challenges was the diversity of the projects, with each coming with a unique set of challenges. Moving forward into Phase 3, Fife will be focusing on a standardised approach.

Douglas Ferguson then took the group through the specifics of the Sprinkler System and MVHR systems. He mentioned that whilst this is new to the public sector, much work had been done commercially. He notes however, that there are key differences in approach. Commercially, often the intention of sprinklers is to minimise property damage, whereas the sprinkler systems used by fife were first and foremost about saving lives. This means that they are designed to reduce heat and smoke and allow for residents to leave their homes quickly. Sprinkler systems are designed to run for a minimum of ten minutes once triggered If running off a tank system.

The difference between a tank system and a mains system was discussed. Tank systems could either be installed individually to each house, or a communal tank that has pipes leading to each property. The advantage to the latter was that it was easier to maintain, though ensuring the proper laying of pipes was a challenge, particularly as the required pressure and flow are different for sprinklers than normal water pipes. This was also the main drawback for mains operated sprinkler systems. The minimum standards required of the water supplier is much lower than what is needed for sprinklers to be effective. There was a discussion on the issues that had been faced when dealing with water suppliers. Douglas also emphasised the need for adequate testing of sprinkler systems.

A discussion on MVHR systems followed. Douglas drew attention to the benefits of these systems, estimating a saving on annual heating bills of £300 to £400. However, he also discussed the challenge of educating residents. Fife council found that many residents were turning off the fans as they perceived them to be a waste of money. To combat this, units were being installed in attics to make it harder for residents to turn off. There is also an issue of ensuring they are tuned properly to ensure savings are maximised.

Douglas mentioned a few other issues that were faced during the projects, including getting proper S.I. information, working with External Design Consultants and workers puncturing the gas membrane of buildings they were working on.

Following the presentation, there was a discussion on a number of topics that had been raised. The cost of installation of these systems was raised, and it was estimated that to install sprinklers in the average house would cost around £3000, and MVHR around £2000. There was also conversation around conducting refurbs on old buildings, and particularly avoiding costs getting too high. It was recommended that a soft-strip is conducted at the start, to allow for a somewhat accurate estimate of the total cost.

1. **Integrated Futures – collaboration between housing, health and social care**

Margaret Kelly, Business Strategy Officer for North Lanarkshire Council, gave a presentation on the integrated approach North Lanarkshire are taking to housing and health & social care. It began with a brief background of some of the successes North Lanarkshire had already enjoyed with the services working together over the past ten years.

Moving forward, NLC intends to support older people to live well, safely and independently for longer in their own home, and to improve health and wellbeing more generally amongst the older population. They also aim to improve support for those with more complex conditions and their carers, and ultimately to make the best use of the resources and assets that are available.

To achieve this, NLC focused on three sites to develop integrated day services either attached or within sheltered housing complexes. These varied depending on both on site factors and the needs of the communities they were serving. The third project was the first to be attached to sheltered housing, sharing a common room with the complex. Margaret showed a slide of the range of services that were now able to be provided within a single location, including dementia care, respite and rehabilitation/reablement services. The benefits of this is that it improved health and wellbeing of older people and carers, increased independence and resulted in more cohesive communities. On the third point, Margaret mentioned that there were some challenges at first with integration, as people were using the space differently resulting in some tensions, but this has broadly been overcome.

Margaret went over some of the reasons that she believed had made the project is successful. The first of these was the creative use of resources, especially in a time of restraint, and that it is a good example of what can be achieved by different areas working together. The project also delivers on most of the nine national health and wellbeing outcomes, and in particular outcome 2, and has built more resilient, cohesive communities.

Margaret drew particular attention to the design specifications they were using, that were primarily aimed to assist those with dementia, but that this same design philosophy helps people with a range of conditions and needs. North Lanarkshire will be publishing a guide to these designs, which were developed together with Stirling University, on the 6th of December.

Following the presentation, there was a discussion on various elements of the presentation. There was interest in the guidelines that NLC is due to publish on housing design, and there was also an in-depth discussion on funding. Various funding schemes were discussed, as well as what relationship housing projects have with the health and well-being budget.

1. **Discussion Items**

There was discussion on a number of topics. It began with a discussion on Condensation and Dampness, with a particular question on whether local authorities were seeing an increase in cases. The consensus in the room that a large part of the issue is in tenant lifestyle, and that there needs to be better education, such as providing starter packs when moving in homes. One authority noted that dampness and condensation problems had reduced significantly, and they were now dealing with a spike in woodworm cases.

Other areas discussed were on multi-skilling, and in particular how it relates to trade unions. This included how pay grades are handled between authorities, and implications various approaches had for staff retention.

1. **APSE update**

Iain Scherr provided an update on the current work of the Association, including the latest briefings, the recent APSE publication ‘Accountability and Scrutiny’, the APSE/ITN ‘Redefining Neighbourhoods’ programme, recent advocacy work, network queries, deadlines for Performance Networks data returns, upcoming APSE Energy and APSE Training events in Scotland, the work of APSE Solutions and upcoming Scottish and National seminars.

1. **AOCB**

Suggestions were requested for potential speakers, panel members and topics for the upcoming Building and Housing Seminar that APSE is hosting on the 22nd and 23rd of February in Dunblane. This included suggestions for a replacement for Dylan Skelhorn, who is no longer available to deliver a talk to the apprentices on health and safety.

There was also a brief discussion of how the advisory group wished to handle Performance Networks / Process Benchmarking. It was decided that it would be best for these to be handled at their own dedicated meeting.

There was a brief conversation surrounding electric vehicles, particularly the implications for installing chargers at the homes of workers who commute directly to job sites.

1. **Date and venue of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 19th April 2018, but the venue/location is to be confirmed.

1. **Lunch**

**Attendance**

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| **Name** | **Council** |
| Iain Scherr | APSE |
| Colin McInnes | APSE Associate |
| Derek Spence | East Ayrshire Council |
| Richard Stewart | East Ayrshire Council |
| John Jamieson | East Dunbartonshire Council |
| Robert Fotheringham | Falkirk Council |
| Cllr Judy Hamilton | Fife Council |
| Douglas Ferguson | Fife Council |
| Mark Herd | Fife Council |
| Steve Anderson | Fife Council |
| Margaret Kelly | North Lanarkshire Council |
| Oliver Baylis | Renfrewshire Council |
| Kevin Mitchell | South Lanarkshire Council |
| Stewart Neville | South Lanarkshire Council |
| Ian Spence | West Dunbartonshire Council |
| Jim Fraser | West Dunbartonshire Council |
| Alistair Shaw | West Lothian Council |
| Duncan MacPherson | West Lothian Council |
| George Paul | West Lothian Council |
| Marc Garland | West Lothian Council |

**Apologies**

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| Bruce Patrick | Dundee City Council |
| Kenny Gillespie | Falkirk Council |
| Alan Barclay | Fife Council |
| Ross Grieve | Fife Council |
| Angela Gribbin | South Ayrshire Council |
| David Hainey | South Ayrshire Council |
| Heather Michael | South Ayrshire Council |
| William Andrew | South Ayrshire Council |
| Dougie McMillan | South Lanarkshire Council |
| Martin Feeney | West Dunbartonshire Council |
| Grant Taylor | West Lothian Council |