

THE FIFE COUNCIL - CABINET COMMITTEE – BLENDED MEETING

Committee Room 2, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes

5 October 2023

10.00 am – 1.50 pm

PRESENT: Councillors David Ross (Convener), Tom Adams (substituting for Councillor Judy Hamilton), David Alexander, Lesley Backhouse, David Barratt, John Beare, James Calder, Fiona Corps, Altany Craik, Colin Davidson (substituting for Councillor Linda Erskine), Dave Dempsey, Cara Hilton, Gary Holt, Kathleen Leslie (substituting for Councillor Peter Gulline), Rosemary Liewald, Lynn Mowatt (substituting for Councillor Carol Lindsay), Jonny Tepp, Ann Verner (substituting for Councillor Derek Glen), Ross Vettraino, Craig Walker and Jan Wincott.

ATTENDING: Ken Gourlay, Chief Executive; Eileen Rowand, Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services), Elaine Muir, Head of Finance, Lindsay Thomson, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Jacqui Cameron, Service Manager, Human Resources, Helena Couperwhite, Democratic Services Manager and Michelle McDermott, Committee Officer, Legal and Democratic Services, Finance and Corporate Services; Michael Enston, Executive Director (Communities), Paul Vaughan, Head of Communities and Neighbourhood Services, John Mills, Head of Housing Services, Sheena Watson, Programme Manager and Sinead O'Donnell, Policy and Delivery Manager, Communities and Neighbourhood Services; Angela Logue, Head of Education and Children's Services, Scott McCallum, Service Manager, Deborah Davidson, Jackie Funnell and Sarah Else, Education Managers and Stuart Booker, Improvement Officer (Strategic Planning and Performance, Education and Children's Services; Gordon Mole, Head of Business and Employability Services; John Mitchell, Head of Roads and Transportation Services and Michael Anderson, Service Manager (Structural Services), Roads and Transportation; Pam Ewen, Head of Planning and Alastair Hamilton, Service Manager (Development Manager), Planning Service.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Gavin Grant, Service Development Team Leader (Collections Development), Fife Cultural Trust (for para. 160 only).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Derek Glen, Linda Erskine, Peter Gulline, Judy Hamilton, and Carol Lindsay.

151. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted in terms of Standing Order No. 22.

152. MINUTES

- (i) Minute of the Cabinet Committee of 7 September 2023.

Decision

The committee agreed to approve the minute.

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- (ii) The following minutes were submitted for noting:-

Education Appointment Committee of 19 April, 19 June, 20 June, 23 June, 25 August, 4, 6 and 12 September 2023.

It was noted that the minute for the 25 August 2023 meeting referred to the Headteacher appointment at Lochgelly High School but this should read Balwearie High School.

Decision

The minutes were noted.

153. COST OF LIVING SUPPORT - WINTER PROGRAMME 2023/24

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Communities) proposing a further programme of support for Winter 2023/24 to provide help during the continuing cost-of-living challenges.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) reviewed progress and lessons from the experience of providing a co-ordinated programme of support in 2022/23;
- (2) noted the continuing provision over the period from April to September 2023;
- (3) agreed the proposals for additional support for winter 2023/24 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (4) agreed to continue to implement a temporary Personal Vehicle Allowance payment from 1 October 2023 to 31 March 2024 to support staff with high business use of their personal vehicles.

154. EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIRECTORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023-26

The committee considered a report by the Head of Service, Education and Children's Service seeking approval for the Education and Children's Services (ECS) Directorate Plan 2023-26 and to set the plan in the context of other key strategic plans for children and families in Fife.

Decision

The committee approved the Education and Children's Services (ECS) Directorate Plan 2023-26.

155. COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING - PROGRESS REPORT

The committee considered a report by the Head of Business and Employability Services providing a progress update at the six month stage in relation to the Community Wealth Building (CWB) Policy Framework approved in April 2023.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted and commented on progress against the CWB Policy Framework;
- (2) endorsed the direction of travel for priority development work identified for council implementation of Community Wealth Building; and
- (3) agreed that future progress reports would be circulated to Cabinet Committee members for briefing and information with an annual report to the relevant Council and Fife Partnership Committees.

156. FIFE'S HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION PLAN 2023/25

The committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services highlighting the positive progress that had been made in reforming housing access and homelessness services but highlighted the difficulties created by the significant pressures facing services. The report identified a number of priority areas where policy change, coupled with additional external funding, was required to address the challenges within homelessness.

The meeting adjourned at 11.50 am and reconvened at 12.15 pm.

Motion

Councillor David Ross, seconded by Councillor Altany Craik, moved the following:-

"Replace Recommendations as follows:

Committee:

- i. Notes the progress made and on-going work by the Housing Service and partners to reform and improve housing access and homelessness services.
- ii. Notes the significant pressures on homelessness services in the context of specific pressures on temporary accommodation continuing to flow from the long-term consequences of the pandemic compounded by the cost of living crisis.
- iii. Notes and agrees to pursue the range of short term actions set out in appendix 1 to this report subject to the availability of funding, but requests officers to bring forward to the Cabinet Committee by January 2024, a costed, long term strategy and action plan for reducing homelessness, with milestones. This strategy should include as a minimum the following elements:
 - Housing supply:
 - Continuing the transfer led approach to the allocation of the substantial number of new build properties coming on stream through the affordable housing programme, which should meet multiple needs by creating allocation chains;
 - Acquisition of properties to meet specific needs and pressures on an area basis;
 - Reduction of void turnaround times;
 - Bringing empty properties back into occupation;

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- Reinstating a private sector letting scheme to provide the Council with access to private rented accommodation for allocations.
 - A renewed and transformed approach to prevention of homelessness.
 - Reprovisioning and modernisation of hostel accommodation.
 - The elimination of the use of hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation.
 - Pursuing the policy approach of property flips/conversions of temporary into permanent accommodation.
- iv. Notes the historic underfunding of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans by the Scottish Government and asks officers to engage with Scottish Government to bid for additional funding and non-financial resources to help deliver the key priorities outlined in the report, and to lobby with others for the policy changes highlighted in the report."

Amendment

Councillor David Alexander, seconded by Councillor Lesley Backhouse, moved the following amendment:-

"Amend Labour motions as highlighted in bold below:

Replace Recommendations as follows:

Committee:

- i. Notes the progress made and on-going work by the Housing Service and partners to reform and improve housing access and homelessness services.
- ii. Notes the significant pressures on homelessness services in the context of specific pressures on temporary accommodation continuing to flow from the long-term consequences of the pandemic compounded by the cost of living crisis.
- iii. Notes and agrees to pursue the range of short term actions set out in appendix 1 to this report subject to the availability of funding, but requests officers to bring forward to the Cabinet Committee by January 2024, a costed, long term strategy and action plan for reducing homelessness, with milestones. **Prior to that, a workshop requires to be held involving all councillors to allow input to this strategy.** This strategy should include as a minimum the following elements:
 - Housing supply:
 - Continuing the transfer led approach to the allocation of the substantial number of new build properties coming on stream through the affordable housing programme, which should meet multiple needs by creating allocation chains;
 - **Maximise the number of property acquisitions that meet Fife Council standards as the quickest way to house homeless and other vulnerable residents;**
 - Reduction of void turnaround times;
 - Bringing empty properties back into occupation;
 - Reinstating a private sector letting scheme to provide the Council with access to private rented accommodation for allocations.
 - A renewed and transformed approach to prevention of homelessness.
 - Reprovisioning and modernisation of hostel accommodation.

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- The elimination of the use of hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation.
 - Pursuing the policy approach of property flips/conversions of temporary into permanent accommodation.
- iv. Notes the historic underfunding of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans by the Scottish Government and asks officers to engage with Scottish Government to bid for additional funding and non-financial resources to help deliver the key priorities outlined in the report, and to lobby with others for the policy changes highlighted in the report. **In the light of the reduction in capital funding coming to the Scottish Government, Cabinet authorises the Leader of the Administration to write to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State urging them to provide substantial grant funding to the Scottish Government given the housing crises that exists in large part due to the policies their government have pursued.**
- v. **Fife Council takes its responsibility for at least part of the crisis and will seek to maximise its own resources, which are considerable, and if required bring forward proposals for funds that are currently unallocated, or will not have an impact for a considerable number of years, to show an urgency to attack this crisis that has been lacking since the formation of the current administration.**

Roll Call Vote

For the Motion – 13 votes

Councillors Tom Adams, James Calder, Fiona Corps, Altany Craik, Colin Davidson, Dave Dempsey, Graeme Downie, Cara Hilton, Gary Holt, Kathleen Leslie, David Ross, Jonny Tepp and Jan Wincott.

For the Amendment – 9 votes

Councillors David Alexander, Lesley Backhouse, David Barratt, John Beare, Rosemary Liewald, Lynn Mowatt, Ann Verner, Ross Vettraino and Craig Walker.

Having received a majority of votes, the motion was accordingly carried.

157. SWAN AND MEMORIAL COURTS, METHIL - HOUSING IMPROVEMENTS

The committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services outlining the outcomes of a review of fire safety at Swan and Memorial Courts, Methil, that the council replaces the external wall insulation at the high rise flats as well as improvements to internal fire safety works at the flats and other fire safety mitigations. Council officers were designing an overall housing improvement programme of works which included the replacement of the existing external wall insulation with an alternative mineral wool form of insulation. The report sought Cabinet endorsement for the programme of works running for the next twelve months.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the main findings of the review of fire safety at Swan and Memorial Courts, Methil;

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- (2) endorsed the proposed programme of works and proposed improvement works at Swan and Memorial Courts, Methil as outlined in the report;
- (3) agreed that the HRA Capital Budget would meet the costs of the project in 2023/24 and 2024/25;
- (4) agreed that progress reports would be made to the Levenmouth Area Committee on a regular basis; and
- (5) agreed that the finalised internal review on lessons learned be reported back to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

Councillors Graeme Downie and Craig Walker left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

158. RIVER LEVEN REGENERATION - CAPITAL FUNDING

The committee considered a report by the Head of Roads and Transportation Services seeking approval to progress delivery of the Mountfleurie Active Travel Bridge through Network Rail and their contractor as part of the River Leven Regeneration Programme.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) approved Option 2 in the Business Case to deliver the new active travel bridge at Mountfleurie at an estimated cost of £5.8m with Network Rail and their contractor through an Implementation Agreement; and
- (2) noted that further reports would be presented to this committee to consider the final Business Cases and delivery agreements for the On-Road Active Travel Network; Riverside Park, Glenrothes; and River Park Routes, Leven.

159. FIFE COUNCIL RESPONSE TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON MANDATORY TRAINING FOR ELECTED MEMBERS DEALING WITH DECISIONS RELATING TO PLANNING MATTERS

The committee considered a joint report by the Head of Planning and Head of Legal and Democratic Services seeking approval of a proposed response to the Scottish Government's consultation on the provisions for mandatory elected member training which were set out as enabling legislation in the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) reviewed and approved the proposed consultation response;
- (2) authorised officers to submit the consultation to the Scottish Government; and
- (3) delegated to the Head of Planning and Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Convener and Conveners of the Fife Local Review Body, West and Central and the North East Planning Committees, to include additional comments agreed by this committee and respond to the consultation.

160. TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP - SHUNA AND BARGANY SWORDS

The committee considered a report by the Head of Communities and Neighbourhood Services seeking approval for the transfer of ownership of two swords from the Museums' Collections managed by Fife Cultural Trust (OnFife):

- (1) The Shuna sword to the Kilmartin Museum in Argyll - discovered on the island of Shuna in Argyll in 1874.
- (2) The Bargany sword and scabbard to National Museums Scotland (NMS) in Edinburgh - discovered at Bargany, Girvan, Ayrshire before 1843.

At Kilmartin, the Shuna sword would be a focal object of their new permanent display opening in autumn 2023 in the refurbished museum and, at NMS, the Bargany sword is part of the long-term display about Scotland's early history in Chambers Street in Edinburgh.

Decision

The committee approved the transfer of ownership of each sword from Fife Council to Kilmartin Museum and National Museums Scotland, respectively.