

THE FIFE COUNCIL - CABINET COMMITTEE - BLENDED MEETING

Committee Room 2, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes

12 September 2024

10.00 am - 1.05 pm

PRESENT: Councillors David Ross (Convener), Tom Adams (substituting for Councillor Cara Hilton), David Alexander, David Barratt, John Beare, James Calder, Altany Craik, Colin Davidson (substituting for Councillor Judy Hamilton), Linda Erskine, Derek Glen, Brian Goodall, Peter Gulline, Gary Holt, Allan Knox, Kathleen Leslie, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, Sarah Neal, Ross Vettrano, Craig Walker and Jan Wincott.

ATTENDING: Ken Gourlay, Chief Executive; Eileen Rowand, Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services), Les Robertson, Head of Revenue and Commercial Services, Tracy Hirst, Finance Operations Manager, Emma Lennon, Accountant, Mary McLean, Legal Services Manager, Helena Couperwhite, Committee Services Manager, Michelle McDermott, Committee Officer, Legal and Democratic Services, Fiona Allan, Service Manager, Kirsty Mcelroy, Service Manager and Nicola Harris Lead Officer, Human Resources, Finance and Corporate Services; Michael Enston, Executive Director (Communities), Sheena Watson, Team Manager, Communities, John Mills, Head of Housing Services, Joan Lamie, Service Manager and Donna Christie, Lead Officer, Housing Services, Communities Directorate; and Michael O'Gorman, Service Manager, Property Services, Place Directorate.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Fiona Corps, Judy Hamilton and Cara Hilton.

278. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

279. MINUTE

The committee considered the minute of the Cabinet Committee meeting of 15 August 2024.

Decision

The committee agreed to approve the minute.

280. COST OF LIVING SUPPORT - FUNDING AND PRIORITIES

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Communities) proposing priorities for continuing funding of cost-of-living support in 2024/25. Members were asked to review the evaluation of the programme to date and to consider extending flexibility for the allocation of Community Recovery Funding.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the delivery and learning from the provision of cost-of-living support programme 2022/23 and 2023/24;
- (2) agreed the allocations proposed for temporary funding in 2024/25 noting the need for flexibility between headings;
- (3) agreed the extension of the Community Recovery Funding flexibility into 2025/26; and
- (4) noted that the reference to "Boiler Repair and Handy Service" in Appendix 1, - "Handy Service" was included as a separate item; and that there should be no negative figures in the "Budget Remaining" columns in Appendix 2 - the minus sign (-) should be removed.

281. BUDGET 2025-28 UPDATE

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services) updating members on the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2025-28 following a review of the council's financial planning assumptions and planned approach to achieve a sustainable and balanced budget.

Decision

The committee noted:-

- (1) the updated financial planning assumptions;
- (2) the continuing uncertainty around those planning assumptions; and
- (3) the planned approach to achieve a sustainable and balanced budget for 2025-26 onwards.

282. REVENUE MONITORING 2024-25

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services) providing a strategic overview of Fife Council's finances and reporting on the current forecast position for 2024/25.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the worsening high level financial position as detailed in the report;
- (2) noted that there were ongoing financial impacts and pressures which continued to be managed by services with an element of protection from financial risk being accounted for centrally;
- (3) instructed Executive Directors to identify plans to mitigate overspends in order to manage within overall service budgets in the current year and ensure strong financial management;

2024 CC 150

- (4) approved the proposal to de-commit £8.752m of balances;
- (5) noted that detailed monitoring reports would be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Committees; and
- (6) requested that Scrutiny Committees ensured an appropriate level of support and challenge in relation to financial reports.

283. CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN - PROJECTED OUTTURN 2024-25

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services) providing a strategic financial overview of the Capital Investment Plan and advising on the provisional outturn for the 2024/25 financial year.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) approved the Capital Investment Plan re-profiling as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report to deal with carry forward budgets from 2023/24 into later years of the plan;
- (2) noted the projected outturn position and that the level of financial risk continued to be heightened due to the impact of inflation and supply chain challenges;
- (3) instructed Services to plan projects within the approved resource within the Capital Investment Plan;
- (4) noted that more detailed capital outturn reports for 2024/25 would be submitted to relevant Scrutiny Committees;
- (5) noted that budget variances would be managed by the appropriate Directorate in conjunction with the Investment Strategy Group; and
- (6) noted the updated prudential indicators provided.

284. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT: CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN 2024-27

The committee considered a joint report by the Head of Housing Services, Head of Finance and Head of Environment and Building Services proposing a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Investment Plan 2024-27, aligned to council priorities for investment in component replacements, wider works and new affordable housing.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) approved the proposed investment of £164.427m over the three years 2024-2027 for wider works which maintained existing HRA assets;
- (2) noted the investment in the Affordable Housing Programme of £216.251m and the Property Acquisitions Programme of £8.993m;

2024 CC 151

- (3) noted the planned spend on the various areas of the HRA Capital Investment Plan; and
- (4) noted the current financial position and the required borrowing of £275.018m to fund the capital plan.

Councillor Kathleen Leslie left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

285. REVISED HOUSING ESTATES MANAGEMENT APPROACH - HOUSING GARDEN FENCING POLICY

The committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services detailing the findings from the Fencing Test of Change, developed under the Revised Housing Estates Management Approach that tested the principles and associated funding requirements to develop a Housing Garden Fencing Policy. The lessons learned from the completion of the Fencing Test of Change projects had informed the recommended policy position.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) approved the Housing Garden Fencing Policy;
- (2) approved an annual budget of £1.7m to support the Housing Garden Fencing Policy;
- (3) noted that £1.7m budget was funded from a realignment of both HRA revenue and HRA capital budgets;
- (4) agreed that the Fencing Policy be reviewed at the People and Communities Scrutiny Committee in September 2025; and
- (5) agreed that a briefing paper be circulated to elected members detailing the process to be used in implementing the fencing policy to ensure consistency of approach across all wards.

Councillor Kathleen Leslie rejoined the meeting during consideration of the above item.

The meeting adjourned at 11.45 am and reconvened at 12.00 noon.

286. FORTH GREEN FREEPORT - DELIVERY UPDATE AND PROPOSED RATES RELIEF POLICY

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Place) seeking authority to progress ongoing development of the Forth Green Freeport (FGF) in conjunction with the Forth Green Freeport Operating Company and seeking approval to implement Fife Council's policy approach for the delivery of Forth Green Freeport Non-Domestic Rates relief in line with Scottish Government requirements.

Prior to discussion on the report, it was highlighted that, following guidance received, recommendation (i) should be in consultation with the Cabinet Committee Convener and not the Spokesperson for Finance, Economy and Strategic Planning.

Motion

Councillor David Ross, seconded by Councillor Altany Craik, moved the recommendations contained in the report including the change to recommendation (i) that consultation be with the Convener of the Cabinet Committee.

Amendment

Councillor Craig Walker, seconded by Councillor Brian Goodall, moved that the Area Conveners of Kirkcaldy Area Committee and South and West Fife Area Committee also be consulted as detailed in recommendation (i) of the report.

Roll Call Vote

For the Motion - 9 votes

Councillors Tom Adams, James Calder, Altany Craik, Colin Davidson, Linda Erskine, Gary Holt, Allan Knox, David Ross and Jan Wincott.

For the Amendment - 12 votes

Councillors David Alexander, David Barratt, John Beare, Derek Glen, Brian Goodall, Peter Gulline, Kathleen Leslie, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, Sarah Neal, Ross Vettrano and Craig Walker.

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

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) delegated to the Executive Director (Place) and Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services), in consultation with the Conveners of the Cabinet Committee, Kirkcaldy Area Committee and South and West Fife Area Committee, to progress joint working arrangements with the FGF Operating Company in line with established FGF governance processes and delivery of the economic priorities within the Fife Economic Strategy (2023-30) and the Plan4Fife (2017-2027); and
- (2) approved use of Fife Council's policy approach for the delivery of Forth Green Freeport Non-Domestic Rates relief and delegated to the Head of Revenues and Commercial Services the execution of this policy as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

287. WORKFORCE MATTERS: STRATEGY, WORKFORCE PLANNING AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The committee considered a report by the Head of Human Resources providing an update on progress in delivering the workforce strategy, Our People Matter (OPM), and updating on the plans to review and refresh the strategy for the period 2025-2028. The report also gave an update on the council's workforce planning activity, the identified key priority themes and set out the next steps in developing a Corporate People Plan. The report included information on the recent Heartbeat 2024 employee engagement survey and the workforce insight it provided.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted progress in delivering the workforce strategy (OPM) and authorised the planned work including the development of a refresh OPM 2025-2028;
- (2) noted the workforce planning activity undertaken, priority themes identified and the plans to develop a Corporate People Plan 2025-2028;
- (3) agreed the objective of the council's workforce planning activity as detailed in the report; and
- (4) noted the findings from the Heartbeat 2024 employee engagement survey and the improvement work which would be undertaken.

288. APPOINTMENTS TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS - CIRECO (SCOTLAND) LLP, RIVER LEVEN TRUST AND FIFE SPORTS AND LEISURE TRUST

The committee considered a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services seeking nominations to external organisations.

Cireco (Scotland) LLP

Councillor Altany Craik, seconded by Councillor Linda Erskine, nominated Councillor Patrick Browne as the Labour representative.

Councillor James Calder, seconded by Councillor Allan Knox, nominated Councillor Gary Holt as the Liberal Democrat representative.

River Leven Trust

Councillor Altany Craik, seconded by Councillor Linda Erskine, nominated Councillor Tom Adams (Levenmouth Area Committee) as the council's representative.

Councillor John Beare, seconded by Councillor Craig Walker, nominated Councillor David Alexander (Levenmouth Area Committee) as the council's representative.

Roll Call Vote

For Councillor Tom Adams - 11 votes

Councillors Tom Adams, James Calder, Altany Craik, Colin Davidson, Linda Erskine, Peter Gulline, Gary Holt, Allan Knox, Kathleen Leslie, David Ross and Jan Wincott.

For Councillor David Alexander - 10 votes

Councillors David Alexander, David Barratt, John Beare, Derek Glen, Brian Goodall, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, Sarah Neal, Ross Vettraino and Craig Walker.

2024 CC 154

Having received a majority of votes, Councillor Adams was appointed as one of the council's representatives on the River Leven Trust.

Fife Sports and Leisure Trust

Councillor Altany Craik, seconded by Councillor Linda Erskine, nominated Councillor Patrick Browne as the Labour representative.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) agreed that Councillor Patrick Browne and Councillor Gary Holt be appointed as the Labour and Liberal Democrat representatives to Cireco (Scotland) LLP;
- (2) agreed that Councillor Tom Adams (Levenmouth Area Committee) be appointed as one of the council's representatives on the River Leven Trust; and
- (3) noted that the Fife Sports and Leisure Trust's governance required that six members be appointed to their organisation and agreed that Councillor Patrick Browne be appointed as one of the council's representatives.

Councillors David Barratt and Sarah Neal left the meeting following consideration of the above item.

289. CABINET COMMITTEE - OUTSTANDING REMITS FROM COMMITTEES

The committee noted the list of outstanding remits from committees.

The committee resolved, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 8 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

290. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME - MILESMARK DUNFERMLINE (PRIVATE REPORT)

The committee considered a joint report by the Head of Housing Services and Head of Property Services, as part of the implementation of the Phase IV Affordable Housing Programme (June 2024 - May 2029), providing details of a proposal to conclude legally binding agreements for the acquisition of land and the delivery of 12 houses for social rent at the site known as Milesmark, Rumblingwell, Dunfermline.

Decision

The committee authorised the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to enter into legally binding agreements on terms to their satisfaction:-

- (1) for the acquisition of land at the site known as Milesmark, Rumblingwell, Dunfermline; and
- (2) to enter into a Design and Build Contract for the development of 12 new council houses at the site recognising that the figure may be adjusted as detail of the proposed land was finalised.