

THE FIFE COUNCIL - FIFE COUNCIL – REMOTE MEETING

25th February, 2021

10.00 a.m. – 12.45 p.m.
and 1.05 p.m. – 4.10 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillors Jim Leishman (Convener), David Alexander, Lesley Backhouse, Alistair Bain, David Barratt, John Beare, Tim Brett, James Calder, Ken Caldwell, Alistair Cameron, Ian Cameron, Alex Campbell, Rod Cavanagh, Bobby Clelland, Dave Coleman, Altany Craik, Neil Crooks, Colin Davidson, Dave Dempsey, John Docherty, Gavin Ellis, Linda Erskine, Ian Ferguson, Derek Glen, David Graham, Fiona Grant, Mick Green, Sharon Green-Wilson, Gary Guichan, Garry Haldane, Jean Hall-Muir, Judy Hamilton, Zoe Hisbent, Linda Holt, Gordon Langlands, Helen Law, Kathleen Leslie, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, Jane Ann Liston, Mary Lockhart, Donald Lothian, David MacDiarmid, Mino Manekshaw, Karen Marjoram, Alice McGarry, Lea McLelland, Derek Noble, Dominic Nolan, John O'Brien, Tony Orton, Ross Paterson, Bill Porteous, Graham Ritchie, David Ross, David J Ross, Fay Sinclair, Ryan Smart, Kate Stewart, Jonny Tepp, Brian Thomson, Ann Verner, Andrew Verrecchia, Ross Vettraino, Craig Walker, Darren Watt, Richard Watt, Vikki Wilton and Jan Wincott.

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Margaret Kennedy.

206. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Brian Thomson declared an interest in paragraph 215 below as he had been the subject of one of the complaints referred to in the report. He indicated that he would leave the meeting during consideration of this item.

The Provost, Councillors Brian Thomson, Ann Verner and Lesley Backhouse all declared an interest in paragraph 216 below as they were Council appointed members of the St Andrews Links Trust or St Andrews Links Management Committee. They each indicated that they would leave the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor Dominic Nolan declared an interest in paragraph 216 below as he was a Council appointed Trustee of the St Andrews Community Trust which has connections to the St Andrews Links Trust. He indicated that he would leave the meeting during consideration of this item.

207. CIVIC BUSINESS BULLETIN

There was circulated at the meeting a Civic Business Bulletin, a copy of which is appended as Appendix 1 to the minute.

208./

208. MINUTES

The Provost, seconded by Councillor Smart, moved that the minutes of Fife Council meetings of 12th November, 2020 (Special Meeting) and 12th November, 2020, be approved.

Decision

The minutes were approved.

209. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

The minutes of the undernoted Committees and Sub-Committees, as contained in the volume of minutes, were submitted for accuracy:-

- (1) North East Planning Committee of 18th November, 16th December, 2020 and 13th January, 2021.
- (2) Central and West Planning Committee of 25th November, 16th December, 2020 and 20th January, 2021.
- (3) Fife Planning Review Body of 30th November, 2020 and 18th January, 2021.
- (4) Glenrothes Area Committee of 2nd December, 2020 and 27th January, 2021.
- (5) South and West Fife Area Committee of 25th November, 2020 and 13th January, 2021.
- (6) Kirkcaldy Area Committee of 1st December, 2020 and 19th January, 2021.
- (7) City of Dunfermline Area Committee of 1st December, 2020.
- (8) Levenmouth Area Committee of 2nd December, 2020 and 27th January, 2021.
- (9) Cowdenbeath Area Committee of 9th December, 2020 and 13th January, 2021.
- (10) North East Fife Area Committee of 28th October, 9th December, 2020 and 20th January, 2021.
- (11) Policy and Coordination Committee of 19th November, 2020 and 7th January, 2021.
- (12) Environment, Finance and Communities Scrutiny Committee of 27th October, 2020.
- (13) Education, Children's Services, Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee of 4th November, 2020.
- (14) Standards and Audit Committee of 26th November and 17th December, 2020.
- (15) Superannuation Fund and Pensions Committee and Fife Pension Board of 26th November and 15th December, 2020.
- (16) Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board of 23rd October, 2020.

Decision

The minutes were noted.

210./

210. CO-LEADERS' REPORT

The Council considered a report by the Co-Leaders on a number of strategic issues. The Co-Leaders provided updates on a number of issues in response to questions from members.

Decision

The Council noted the report.

211. QUESTION TIME

In terms of Standing Order 1.7, the questions put by members to the meeting, the written answers and supplementary questions, are contained in Appendix 2 to the minute.

The Provost advised that due to the similar nature of questions 3, 11, 12, 13 and 14, he had agreed that a combined response be provided and that the members who had submitted these questions would only be allowed one supplementary question each.

212. SETTING OF COUNCIL TAX FOR 2021/2022

In connection with the consideration of the Setting of Council Tax for 2021/22, the Council considered the following papers:-

- (a) report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services) advising of the terms of section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 which restricted the voting rights of elected members who were in arrears in respect of the payment of Community Charge or Council Tax. The report referred also to the provisions of the Councillors' Code of Conduct which enabled members to participate, discuss and vote on matters relating to the setting of the Council Tax without the need to declare a financial interest, notwithstanding that members might have an interest in any item of expenditure; and
- (b) report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services) which provided information relating to the setting of a Council Tax position for the next financial year 2021/22.

Motion

Councillor David Ross, seconded by Councillor Alexander, moved that the recommendations in the report be approved.

Amendment

Councillor Brett, seconded by Councillor Calder moved as follows:-

"We accept the recommendations that Council Tax rates should be frozen at 2020/21 rates but ask that the Co-Leaders write to the Scottish Government to clarify/

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clarify whether the funding which is being received to freeze the Council Tax will be base lined into the Local Government settlement next year."

With the agreement of the Provost, the mover of the motion agreed to accept the amendment.

Decision

The Council:-

- (1) agreed that Council Tax be set ahead of the remainder of the Council's General Revenue Budget;
- (2) agreed to set a Band D equivalent Council Tax figure for 2021/22;
- (3) noted that the General Funding Revenue Budget report would be reported to Council on 11th March, 2021 and would be subject to all the relevant information having been made available from Scottish Government; and
- (4) agreed to write to the Scottish Government to confirm whether the funding received to freeze the Council Tax would be base lined into the Local Government settlement next year.

The meeting adjourned at 11.30am and reconvened at 11.40am.

213. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET 2021 - 2022 AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN 2021 - 2024

The Council considered joint reports by the Head of Housing Services and Head of Finance which brought forward budget proposals for the Housing Revenue Account with a view to determining rent levels and other charges which would apply during 2021/22 and a proposal for the Housing Revenue Capital Investment Plan 2021/24.

Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22

Motion

Councillor Judy Hamilton, seconded by Councillor Lesley Backhouse, moved as follows:-

"That the Council:-

1. Approves the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2021-22 report by the Head of Housing Services and the Head of Finance and agrees the following recommendations:-
 - (a) Approves a rental increase of 1.5% for HRA rents and charges for 2021- 22.
 - (b) Approves to freeze charges for lock-ups for one final year following the continuing review into asset condition and to remove any remaining direct debit discounts.
 - (c)/

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- (c) Approves the proposed HRA savings and pressures for 2021-22.
- (d) Approves a rental increase of 1.5% on Homelessness Temporary Accommodation to keep rental increase on the General Fund Housing Account in line with increases on HRA rents and charges for 2021-22.”

Housing Revenue Account: Capital Investment Plan 2021/24

Motion

Councillor Judy Hamilton, seconded by Councillor Lesley Backhouse, moved as follows:-

“That the Council:-

1. Approves the Housing Revenue Account: Capital Investment Plan report by the Head of Housing Services and the Head of Finance and agrees the following recommendations within the report:
 - a) An HRA Capital Investment Plan of £244.230m over the three years 2021- 2024 across the Component Replacement, Wider Works and Affordable Housing Programmes.
 - b) Additional new borrowing of £6.435m included within the proposed investment plan for 2021-22 to complete the affordable housing Phase 3 programme delivery to May 2022.
 - c) A commitment to review the potential to enhance the proposed programme of works within the HRA Capital Investment Plan in the summer of 2021-22. In particular, to seek to maximise opportunities to accelerate the speed of the component replacement programme
2. Agrees to the apportionment of funding as recommended in appendix 1 of the report. A summary of the total recommended investment is detailed below:

Recommendation A – HRA Capital Investment	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Total Investment 2021-24
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Component Replacement	31.000	31.000	31.000	93.000
Wider Works				
Major Projects	1.362	0.525	1.650	3.537
ESSH 2 & Fuel Poverty	2.075	4.075	3.500	9.650
Regeneration/ Estates Action	4.950	4.850	5.950	15.750
Specific Needs	1.630	2.075	0.905	4.610
Safety & Structural Works	2.650	2.650	1.708	7.008
Land Acquisitions	2.000	2.000	2.000	6.000
Property Acquisitions	5.000	5.000	5.000	15.000

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Sub-total	19.667	21.175	20.713	61.555
Affordable Housing Programme	30.000	30.000	29.675	89.675
Total	80.667	82.175	81.388	244.230

The meeting adjourned at 12.45pm and reconvened at 1.05pm.

Amendment

Councillor Tepp, seconded by Councillor Calder moved as follows:-

“Propose that the HRA revenue and capital budget proposals be withdrawn and re-represented to the Council meeting on 11th March 2021 with options to fund a rent freeze for 2021/22 to reduce the pressures on hard working households that do not received housing benefit rent payments.”

The Provost advised that for the purposes of the vote, both motions in relation to the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 and the Housing Revenue Account Capital Investment Plan 2021/24 would be combined.

Roll Call

For the combined Motions – 51 votes

Councillors David Alexander, Lesley Backhouse, Alistair Bain, David Barratt, John Beare, Ken Caldwell, Alistair Cameron, Ian Cameron, Alex Campbell, Rod Cavanagh, Bobby Clelland, Altany Craik, Neil Crooks, Colin Davidson, John Docherty, Linda Erskine, Ian Ferguson, Derek Glen, David Graham, Fiona Grant, Sharon Green-Wilson, Gary Guichan, Garry Haldane, Jean Hall Muir, Judy Hamilton, Zoe Hisbent, Linda Holt, Gordon Langlands, Helen Law, Jim Leishman, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, Mary Lockhart, David MacDiarmid, Karen Marjoram, Lea McLelland, Alice McGarry, Derek Noble, John O'Brien, Ross Paterson, David Ross, Fay Sinclair, Ryan Smart, Kate Stewart, Brian Thomson, Ann Verner, Andrew Verrecchia, Ross Vettraino, Craig Walker, Vikki Wilton and Jan Wincott.

For the Amendment – 15 votes

Councillors Tim Brett, James Calder, Dave Coleman, Dave Dempsey, Gavin Ellis, Mick Green, Kathleen Leslie, Jane Ann Liston, Mino Manekshaw, Dominic Nolan, Tony Orton, David J Ross, Jonny Tepp, Darren Watt and Richard Watt.

Abstained – Councillors Donald Lothian, Bill Porteous and Graham Ritchie.

Decision

Accordingly, the combined motions were carried.

Councillor/

Councillor Suttie joined the meeting following consideration of the above item.

214. CALL-IN - EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE DECISION OF 3RD NOVEMBER, 2020 RELATING TO "CHILDCARE SERVICES AND PLAY PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT" (MINUTE REFERENCE PARAGRAPH 186 OF 2020 ECS 70)

The Council considered a report by the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services which requested members, in terms of Standing Order 12(5)(b), to make a final determination in relation to the call-in of the Education and Children's Services Sub-Committee decision of 3rd November, 2020 relating to Childcare Services and Play Practice Development.

Motion

Councillor Dempsey, seconded by Councillor David J Ross, moved as follows:-

"This Council recognises the need to modernise Childcare Services in Fife where services are duplicated or underutilised. We recognise the significant degree of consultation that took place prior to this proposal, and the detailed work of Education and Children's Services staff. This Council supports the concept of "commercialisation" as a key tool in achieving value for money in the delivery of services to the taxpayer. We are appreciative of the opportunity, provided by scrutiny, to re-examine the original proposals presented and agree that all should be implemented with the exception of the proposal to change the service offered by the Additional Support Needs (ASN) Out of School Clubs. Council agrees that this ASN service should continue to be offered to families on the same basis as is currently delivered and that no cost saving is sought from this area. Targeting Respite Care for families that have children with complex additional support needs is a step too far and should be ring fenced. As such, Council asks that a further report be prepared for the Education & Children's Services Sub-Committee on the basis set out above, identifying alternative areas where any consequential savings shortfall can be realised."

Amendment

Councillor David Ross, seconded by Councillor Law, moved as follows:-

"Council agrees the recommendation from the Education and Children's Services and Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee to:

Defer implementation of the new approach to Childcare Services and Play Practice and request further reports to the Education and Children's Services Sub-Committee detailing:

1. the impact of these proposals on children and families and on disadvantaged communities;
2. options for maintaining or expanding these services to better meet needs and where possible increase income;
- 3./

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3. a full business plan for the future provision of childcare and play practice development.”

Roll Call

For the Motion - 12 votes

Councillors Dave Coleman, Dave Dempsey, Gavin Ellis, Mick Green, Kathleen Leslie, Mino Manekshaw, Dominic Nolan, Tony Orton, Graham Ritchie, David J Ross, Darren Watt and Richard Watt.

For the Amendment – 56 votes

Councillors David Alexander, Lesley Backhouse, Alistair Bain, David Barratt, John Beare, Tim Brett, James Calder, Ken Caldwell, Alistair Cameron, Ian Cameron, Alex Campbell, Rod Cavanagh, Bobby Clelland, Altany Craik, Neil Crooks, John Docherty, Linda Erskine, Ian Ferguson, Derek Glen, David Graham, Fiona Grant, Sharon Green-Wilson, Gary Guichan, Garry Haldane, Jean Hall Muir, Judy Hamilton, Zoe Hisbent, Linda Holt, Gordon Langlands, Helen Law, Jim Leishman, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, Jane Ann Liston, Mary Lockhart, David MacDiarmid, Karen Marjoram, Lea McLelland, Alice McGarry, Derek Noble, John O'Brien, Ross Paterson, Bill Porteous, David Ross, Fay Sinclair, Ryan Smart, Kate Stewart, Alistair Suttie, Jonny Tepp, Brian Thomson, Ann Verner, Andrew Verrecchia, Ross Vettraino, Craig Walker, Vikki Wilton and Jan Wincott.

Decision

Accordingly, the amendment was carried.

Councillor Thomson left the meeting prior to consideration of the following two items, having earlier declared an interest in both.

215. STANDARDS COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND DECISIONS

The Council considered a report by the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services which presented the findings of the Standard Commission for Scotland in relation to complaints against Councillors Brian Thomson, Tony Miklinski and Andy Heer.

Decision

The Council noted the report.

The Provost, Councillors Verner, Backhouse and Nolan left the meeting prior to consideration of the following item, having earlier declared an interest.

The Chief Executive convened the meeting for the following item.

216. APPOINTMENT TO PARTNER ORGANISATION - ST ANDREWS LINKS TRUST

The Council considered a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which/

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which asked members to agree the appointment of a non-elected member representative, nominated by the local golf clubs, to the St Andrews Links Trust.

Decision

The Council agreed to appoint Mrs Sandra Tuddenham, a nominee from the local golf clubs, to the St Andrews Links Trust for a period of three years from 1st April, 2021 to 31st December, 2023.

The Provost, Councillors Verner, Backhouse, Nolan and Thomson all rejoined the meeting following consideration of the above items.

217. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Council considered a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which required the Council to consider motions submitted in terms of Standing Order 8.1.

Motion 1

Councillor Calder, seconded by Councillor Brett, moved as follows:-

“Council commends the young people in Fife who selflessly provide care for others. Council notes that: • Recent research shows that one in five secondary school children may be a young carer. For many, their caring journey begins at a much younger age. • Caring for someone can be very isolating, worrying and stressful. For young carers, this can negatively impact on their experiences and outcomes in education, having a lasting effect on their life chances. • Each year, The Carers Trust has organised a Young Carers’ Action Awareness Day. In 2021 this will be renamed Young Carers’ Action Day and marked on March 16. • The purpose of the day is to raise public awareness of the challenges faced by young people and young adults because of their caring role, and to campaign for greater support for young carers to meet their needs. Council resolves to: • Promote Young Carers Action Day as widely as possible on an annual basis, particularly to young carers and their families. • Ask the Education and Children’s Services Directorate and Fife Health and Social Care Partnership to work with the Carers Trust Scotland, Fife Young Carers and Young Scot to establish an annual event in Fife to mark this date to which young carers and their families can be invited in person or online, and at which appropriate information and services can be accessed.”

Decision

The Council agreed the motion unanimously.

Motion 2

Councillor Ellis, seconded by Councillor Leslie, moved as follows:-

“Council recognises there is currently work being done by the Scottish Parliament and charities such as the SSPCA in dealing with illegal puppy farming, However, Council also notes the increase in the sale of puppies from a domestic setting and calls/

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calls for a report to be presented to the Environment & Protective services sub committee outlining the following:

1. What more Fife Council can do to tackle the rise in domestic puppy selling from homes in Fife.
2. What more could be done to increase applications for a breeding licence across Fife.
3. How a version of the Trusted Trader scheme could be adapted to allow the citizens of Fife a simple online check of breeders who hold a current Fife Council breeding licence allowing our citizens to have confidence in where they are buying their puppies from.”

Decision

The Council agreed the motion unanimously.

Councillor Stewart left the meeting during consideration of the above motion.

Motion 3

Councillor Ritchie, seconded by Councillor David J Ross, moved as follows:-

NOT EVERY DISABILITY IS VISIBLE.

“Fife Council notes that the charity Crohn's and Colitis UK is encouraging venues, providing accessible toilets to install new signage. This is to help stop stigma and discrimination towards people with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis and other invisible conditions. The signs have two standing figures and a wheelchair user with the words " accessible toilet" and the logo "NOT EVERY DISABILITY IS VISIBLE".

Furthermore, Fife Council resolves to ensure that accessible toilets on Council premises bear these signs, also to ask town centre retailers and leisure outlets to do likewise with their accessible toilets.

And seek advice from the charity on the information and training we should provide to Council staff members, ensuring that any changing places toilets in our buildings are properly signposted for visitors.”

Decision

The Council agreed the motion unanimously.

Councillor Backhouse left the meeting during consideration of the above motion.

Motion 4

Councillor Darren Watt, seconded by Councillor Ellis, moved as follows:-

“Council recognises and praises our staff's tireless efforts with gritting and snow clearing/

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clearing Fife's roads and pavements throughout the winter period and recent cold snap.

Council further recognises and praises the heroic efforts of local residents who assisted and supported their neighbours, communities, and fellow Fifers throughout winter.

Council recognises despite everyone's best efforts, far too many people experienced preventable distress and difficulties, were entirely cut off from their communities, and endured unnecessary risks and costs because of the lack of snow clearing and gritting in the areas in which they live and work.

Council calls for an urgent review into Fife Council's current Winter Gritting and Snow Clearing Services Policy to assess and determine:

- If it is fit for purpose.
- What lessons can be learnt.
- What additional resources are required to ensure disruption is kept to an absolute minimum.
- The need for more localised budgets and decision making.

Amendment

Councillor Craik, seconded by Councillor Beare, moved as follows:-

"Para 1&2 remain

Replace to end from 'Council recognises' with

Furthermore, the combined efforts across the service kept Fife moving during the recent snow event where staff were redeployed to snow clearing duties from a range of other duties.

Winter reviews are part of the 'business as usual' of the service and of the Economy, Tourism, Strategic Planning and Transportation sub committee.

Notes that a report will come to the sub-committee in due course.

Council reiterates its thanks for the efforts of our staff during the winter and as always will look to improve performance for the residents of Fife."

Roll Call

For the Motion – 18 votes

Councillors Tim Brett, James Calder, Dave Coleman, Dave Dempsey, Gavin Ellis, Mick Green, Linda Holt, Kathleen Leslie, Jane Ann Liston, Mino Manekshaw, Dominic Nolan, Tony Orton, Bill Porteous, Graham Ritchie, David J Ross, Jonny Tepp, Darren Watt and Richard Watt.

For/

For the Amendment – 49 votes

Councillors David Alexander, Alistair Bain, David Barratt, John Beare, Alistair Cameron, Ian Cameron, Alex Campbell, Rod Cavanagh, Bobby Clelland, Altany Craik, Neil Crooks, Colin Davidson, John Docherty, Linda Erskine, Ian Ferguson, Derek Glen, David Graham, Fiona Grant, Sharon Green-Wilson, Gary Guichan, Garry Haldane, Jean Hall Muir, Judy Hamilton, Zoe Hisbent, Gordon Langlands, Helen Law, Jim Leishman, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, Mary Lockhart, Donald Lothian, David MacDiarmid, Karen Marjoram, Lea McLelland, Alice McGarry, Derek Noble, John O'Brien, Ross Paterson, David Ross, Fay Sinclair, Ryan Smart, Alistair Suttie, Brian Thomson, Ann Verner, Andrew Verrecchia, Ross Vettraino, Craig Walker, Vikki Wilton and Jan Wincott.

Decision

Accordingly, the amendment was carried.

Motion 5

Councillor David Ross, seconded by Councillor Alexander, moved as follows:-

Independent Review of Adult Social Care

“Council agrees to endorse the motion in response to the publication of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care that was agreed unanimously by COS:A Leaders on Wednesday 10th February as follows, and agrees to write to the Scottish Government and to COSLA on this basis:

Leaders note the publication of the Feeley Report on the Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland.

Leaders express their grave concern at the recommendations on governance and accountability which would see the removal of local democratic accountability and a degree of centralisation that would be detrimental to the local delivery of social care and its integration with other key community services.

Leaders endorse the principles set out in the report of:

- Empowering people
- Valuing the workforce
- A human rights approach

Leaders strongly agree that the lived experience of those who rely on social care should be embedded within the system and that social care should move to a more person centred approach, recognising the value of not for profit provision.

Social/

Social care should be:

- Accessible;
- Personalised;
- Integrated;
- Preventative;
- Respectful; and
- Safe.

However, Leaders express particular concern at the recommendation 15 that states:

“Accountability for social care support should move from local government to Scottish Ministers, and a Minister should be appointed with specific responsibility for Social Care.”

This concern mirrors the findings of the report itself when it says:

“We asked what would worry people about a National Care Service, and the most frequently mentioned concern was that it would bring loss of local knowledge and expertise.”

Leaders also endorse the comments from SOLACE and from Directors of Finance in paragraphs 17 and 18 of the report.

Leaders therefore restate COSLA’s position as expressed in the agreed Blueprint for Local Government that:

“Discussion on the future of social care has centred on the potential creation of a National Care Service. This can mean many different things to different people. Moving towards a National Care Service should not be merely accepted as the necessary means of reform without proper consideration of its scope, resourcing and, vitally, its implications for local decision making. Any National Care Service must be locally empowered, reflect the needs of our communities and recognise the vital role of the third sector. It must be outcome focussed with the principle of addressing health inequalities at its core, ensure that social care is on an even playing field and address the financial challenges facing the sector. This can only be achieved by Local Government that is rooted in the community and employs local people.”

Leaders mandate COSLA officers and spokespeople to undertake appropriate lobbying in relation to this report, based on this position.”

Amendment/

Amendment

Councillor Brett, seconded by Councillor Calder, moved as follows:-

“We support the motion but in addition requests that there should be a further opportunity for members to discuss the recommendations and ideas in the review.”

With the agreement of the Provost, the mover of the motion agreed to accept the amendment.

Decision

Accordingly, the conjoined motion was agreed.

Councillors Grant, Sinclair, Verrecchia and Richard Watt left the meeting during consideration of the above motion.

Councillors Sinclair and Backhouse rejoined the meeting prior to consideration of the following motion.

Motion 6

Councillor Liston, seconded by Councillor Tepp, moved as follows:-

“Fife Council:

- * reiterates its belief that the council tax is inherently unfair;
- * recalls that the party currently in Government promised to 'abolish the unfair council tax' in 2007 and again in 2011, and
- * agree that the Co-Leaders should write to the Scottish Government to urge that it commits to doing so and replacing this tax with a system more based upon ability to pay.

This is to ensure that:

- * power can be decentralised, and
- * councils can be held to account by their electors, and are more able to provide the services pertinent and necessary to their residents.”

Amendment 1

Councillor Beare, seconded by Councillor McLelland, moved as follows:-

“Fife Council notes, that the Scottish Parliamentary Elections are scheduled to take/

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take place on Thursday May 6th and that the Scottish Parliament has the powers to alter the form of local taxation in Scotland.

Fife Council acknowledges that despite the talents of the Co-Leaders even they will be unable to ensure that there is the time in this parliamentary session to replace the current form of local taxation.

Fife Council calls on all political parties to put forward manifestos to the voting public which reflect their beliefs, aspirations and policies and Fife Council urges them to do so.”

Amendment 2

Councillor David Ross, seconded by Councillor Lockhart, moved as follows:-

“Council notes its disappointment that the Scottish Government has failed to develop a rules based framework for local government funding in partnership with COSLA that would be introduced in the next Parliament, or to bring forward legislation by the end of this Parliament for the replacement of the council tax, based on cross-party agreement, contrary to its commitments in January 2019. Council acknowledges that there is now no time for such proposals to be brought forward in the current Parliament but resolves to write to all political parties represented in the Scottish Parliament urging them to commit to both the introduction of a rules based fiscal framework for the funding of local government and the replacement of the council tax with a fairer and more progressive form of local taxation in the next Parliament.”

Amendment 3

Councillor Dempsey, seconded by Councillor Darren Watt, moved as follows:-

"Council believes that the key to council funding lies in a fair framework rather than the details of taxes. Council likes Barnett for Councils and asks COSLA to pursue that"

Roll Call

For the Motion – 6 votes

Councillors Tim Brett, James Calder, Jane Ann Liston, Donald Lothian, Bill Porteous and Jonny Tepp.

For Amendment 1 – 24 votes

Councillors David Alexander, Lesley Backhouse, Alistair Bain, David Barratt, John Beare, Rod Cavanagh, John Docherty, Derek Glen, Sharon Green-Wilson, Jean Hall Muir, Zoe Hisbent, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, David MacDiarmid, Karen Marjoram, Lea McLelland, Alice McGarry, John O'Brien, Fay Sinclair, Alistair Suttie, Ann Verner, Ross Vettraino, Craig Walker and Vikki Wilton.

For Amendment 2 – 23 votes

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Councillors Alistair Cameron, Ian Cameron, Alex Campbell, Bobby Clelland, Altany Craik, Neil Crooks, Colin Davidson, Linda Erskine, David Graham, Gary Guichan, Garry Haldane, Judy Hamilton, Linda Holt, Gordon Langlands, Helen Law, Jim Leishman, Mary Lockhart, Derek Noble, Ross Paterson, David Ross, Ryan Smart, Brian Thomson and Jan Wincott.

For Amendment 3 – 11 votes

Councillors Dave Coleman, Dave Dempsey, Gavin Ellis, Mick Green, Kathleen Leslie, Mino Manekshaw, Dominic Nolan, Tony Orton, Graham Ritchie, David J Ross and Darren Watt.

As there was no overall majority, the motion fell, and a further vote was taken between the amendments.

For Amendment 1 – 24 votes

Councillors David Alexander, Lesley Backhouse, Alistair Bain, David Barratt, John Beare, Rod Cavanagh, John Docherty, Derek Glen, Sharon Green-Wilson, Jean Hall Muir, Zoe Hisbent, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, David MacDiarmid, Karen Marjoram, Lea McLelland, Alice McGarry, John O'Brien, Fay Sinclair, Alistair Suttie, Ann Verner, Ross Vettrains, Craig Walker and Vikki Wilton.

For Amendment 2 – 29 votes

Councillors Tim Brett, James Calder, Alistair Cameron, Ian Cameron, Alex Campbell, Bobby Clelland, Altany Craik, Neil Crooks, Colin Davidson, Linda Erskine, David Graham, Gary Guichan, Garry Haldane, Judy Hamilton, Linda Holt, Gordon Langlands, Helen Law, Jim Leishman, Jane Ann Liston, Mary Lockhart, Donald Lothian, Derek Noble, Ross Paterson, Bill Porteous, David Ross, Ryan Smart, Jonny Tepp, Brian Thomson and Jan Wincott.

For Amendment 3 – 11 votes

Councillors Dave Coleman, Dave Dempsey, Gavin Ellis, Mick Green, Kathleen Leslie, Mino Manekshaw, Dominic Nolan, Tony Orton, Graham Ritchie, David J Ross and Darren Watt.

As there was no overall majority, the Amendment 3 fell, and a further vote was taken between the remaining amendments.

For Amendment 1 – 24 votes

Councillors David Alexander, Lesley Backhouse, Alistair Bain, David Barratt, John Beare, Rod Cavanagh, John Docherty, Derek Glen, Sharon Green-Wilson, Jean Hall Muir, Zoe Hisbent, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, David MacDiarmid, Karen Marjoram, Lea McLelland, Alice McGarry, John O'Brien, Fay Sinclair, Alistair Suttie, Ann Verner, Ross Vettrains, Craig Walker and Vikki Wilton.

For Amendment 2 – 28 votes

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Councillors Tim Brett, James Calder, Alistair Cameron, Ian Cameron, Alex Campbell, Bobby Clelland, Altany Craik, Neil Crooks, Colin Davidson, Linda Erskine, David Graham, Gary Guichan, Garry Haldane, Judy Hamilton, Linda Holt, Gordon Langlands, Helen Law, Jim Leishman, Jane Ann Liston, Mary Lockhart, Donald Lothian, Derek Noble, Ross Paterson, Bill Porteous, David Ross, Ryan Smart, Jonny Tepp and Jan Wincott.

Abstained – Councillors Dave Coleman, Dave Dempsey, Gavin Ellis, Mick Green, Kathleen Leslie, Mino Manekshaw, Dominic Nolan, Tony Orton, David J Ross and Darren Watt.

Decision

Accordingly, Amendment 2 was carried.

Councillors Ferguson and Thomson left the meeting during consideration of the above motion.

Motion 7

Councillor Leslie, seconded by Councillor Dempsey, moved as follows:-

“Council recognises that from August 2023 a fully funded year of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) for all children who are not yet five years old at the beginning of the school term will become a universal right. Council recognises that all children born in January or February can be deferred automatically at parental request and require no assessment for additional funding for ELC. Council recognises that currently those children born after the start of the school term until December 31st are also entitled to be deferred at parental request but are not automatically granted additional funding for ELC. Council recognises that there is a lack of equity in this provision and requests a report to the Education & Children’s Services Sub-Committee to advise on the possibility that all children who are under the age of five at the start of the school term will automatically be funded for an additional year of nursery – to begin from this academic year.”

Decision

The Council agreed the motion unanimously.

Councillors Lothian, Green-Wilson and Hall Muir left the meeting during consideration of the above motion.

218. BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE PROVOST AS A MATTER OF URGENCY

It was noted that there was no business to be brought forward under this item.

FIFE COUNCIL

25th February, 2021

Agenda Item No. 3

Civic Business Bulletin

10th Scottish Empty Homes Awards

Congratulations to Joanne Saurin for winning the 'outstanding individual' award at the 10th Scottish Empty Homes. Joanne, Housing Professional in the Private Sector Team, has been bringing empty homes back into housing use across Fife since 2014. Her successes with voluntary sector partners in Glenrothes and through the 'matchmaker' scheme were recognised during the ceremony.

Chartered Institute of Housing's Scotland Awards

Fife Council's Housing Team won Team of the Year at the Chartered Institute of Housing's Scotland Awards recently. This is the first time we have won a CIH Award. The award was for the Covid response to managing housing access and homelessness services working in conjunction with Building Services and Business Support.

Marsh Awards Nomination

The Inverkeithing Heritage programme's Burgh Survey work, supported by the Town Centre Development Unit, Planning, Fife Historic Buildings Trust and Communities & Neighbourhoods, was nominated for the Marsh Awards, recognising excellence in community archaeology projects. In the paid support category, one of only two this year, the project was in a shortlist of only 3, and the only Scottish project. At the Council for British Archaeology AGM yesterday, the project was Highly Commended by the CBA judges (the runner up award).

Scottish Photography Awards

Congratulations to Ben Marshall, a modern apprentice Youth Worker who was chosen for the Young Photographer of the Year award at this year's Scottish Portrait Awards. He also won the UK-wide Wex student Photographer of the year while he was studying at Dundee and Angus college for a Diploma in Creative and Digital Media as part of his Modern Apprenticeship with Fife Council .



MEETING OF FIFE COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 25TH FEBRUARY, 2021

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7 - QUESTION TIME

QUESTION 1 FROM COUNCILLOR DAVE DEMPSEY

What use was made in Fife schools of Education Scotland's publication "The Road to the Scottish Parliament" before it was withdrawn and how much use was made after that?

Answer

Following notification from Education Scotland on the withdrawal of the publication "The Road to the Scottish Parliament", our Headteachers and wider staff groups were advised that it should not be used in any of our schools until the national review was completed. We are not aware of any school making use of this publication in advance of its withdrawal and no queries were received from schools following the advice not to use until the review had been completed. However, schools and teachers do make use resources according to the needs of their own courses and lessons, we do not hold this information centrally.

QUESTION 2 FROM COUNCILLOR JONNY TEPP

What actions are the administration taking to tackle contamination in domestic recycling bins and at recycling points?

Answer

Council Officers, together with Officers of Fife Resource Solutions are currently working on a funding application to Zero Waste Scotland. The application seeks finance for a project to address, not only contamination issues, but to engage with and inform the community of forthcoming statutory changes, which should increase the recycling of waste products.

QUESTION 3 FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES CALDER (combined response to questions 3, 11, 12, 13 and 14)

What percentage of primary and what percentage of secondary school pupils have been engaging with online learning in the current lockdown?

Answer

In January into early February, an authority-wide survey has been used to gather data on engagement in remote learning. Schools reported on the percentage of their learners who are engaging with remote learning in line with their school expectations:

Across all Fife schools:

- 48% of schools reported that almost all of their learners (90%+) were engaging with remote learning.
- 84% of schools reported that most of their learners (75%+) were engaging with remote learning.
- 97% of schools reported that the majority of learners (50%+) were engaging with remote learning.

In Secondary schools:

- 33% of secondary schools reported that almost all of their learners (90%+) were engaging with remote learning.
- 55% of secondary schools reported that most of their learners (75%+) were engaging with remote learning.

In Primary schools (including nursery classes):

- 53% of primary schools reported that almost all of their learners (90%+) were engaging with remote learning.
- 91% of primary schools reported that most of their learners (75%+) were engaging with remote learning.

Schools are carefully tracking and monitoring engagement level of learners across classes and are using a wide range of approaches to improve engagement. These include:

- Communicating directly with parents/carers by phone, video calls, emails, texts, online chats and in some cases garden visits.
- Provision of paper learning packs.
- Provision of IT devices / connectivity solutions.
- Offer of school place, even for short periods to support engagement in remote learning.
- Provision of IT support for both children and parents/carers.
- Multi-agency working.
- Parent/Carer and Pupil surveys evaluating the success of approaches to remote learning and making adaptations as appropriate.
- Opportunities for daily interactions with teachers to ask questions and receive feedback.
- Use of the online platform, SeeSaw, has improved engagement of the younger learners.

Supplementary – Councillor Calder

Have we any idea how the lack of engagement from some senior pupils will affect grades?

Answer

All schools are doing a significant amount of work to ensure pupils are engaging and continuing to work towards their expected grades.

Supplementary – Councillor Holt

What is being done by Fife Council to reach people who have not engaged in remote learning? Will senior pupils be disadvantaged?

Answer

Significant amounts of work going on in schools to engage all pupils and no evidence to suggest senior pupils will be disadvantaged.

QUESTION 4 FROM COUNCILLOR JONNY TEPP

Following the recent bad weather our thanks go to the workers who helped keep our communities safe. In our Tay Bridgehead Ward there are many steep, hilly roads and many elderly residents. Some of these particularly on steep side-roads think they were let down by Fife Council because their roads were inaccessible for several days. What reassurance can the administration offer to Fifers that adequate resources will always be made available to deliver the winter services policy; and what would they say to those residents who live on steep hills that are not gritted as a priority and who see the policy itself as not meeting their needs?

Answer

Due to the vast road network within Fife it is not possible to treat all roads simultaneously therefore we operate a priority system for gritting action with streets split into Primary, Secondary & All Other Routes. Storm Darcy hit Fife on the evening of 8 February and there followed repeated snow falls over many days. This meant that it was extremely difficult to keep our Primary Routes open for the first few days and often treatments had to be repeated after further snow falls. Only once the Primary network was widened and secured could resources fully move onto the lower priority roads. Every available Gritting vehicle and Snow Plough was used on a 24/7 split shift system by Roads & Transportation. Additional plant was hired from external contractors, hundreds of employees from Grounds Maintenance, Waste Collection and Building Services were deployed on the lower category roads, footways and grit bin filling in what was a Fife-wide event. Significant efforts had been made in the Tay Coast area once the higher priorities had been attended to and many of these hard to reach locations by their nature must wait their turn. No greater effort could have been made and the level of resource suggested should be employed is vastly beyond that of any council.

Supplementary

Can you confirm that budget constraints do not come into play in winter emergencies?

Answer

Yes that is correct.

QUESTION 5 FROM COUNCILLOR BILL PORTEOUS

Will Fife Council be appointing an Older Peoples Champion following the recommendation made by Age Scotland and the Scottish Older Peoples Assembly. An Older Peoples Champion is an ambassadorial role held by an Elected Councillor whose job is to be a link between the Council and older people in the local area. Nine older people's champions have been appointed across Scotland to date. What plans does Fife Council have for appointing a champion?

Answer

Consideration will need to be given as to how this would be resourced but that will be for the next Administration to consider.

QUESTION 6 FROM COUNCILLOR TIM BRETT

What input will Elected Members from North East Fife have in the development of the regional spatial strategy for the whole of Fife. Previously North East Fife Members contributed to Tayplan but the regional spatial strategy for Tayside Local Authorities does not include North East Fife. North East Fife will come under the Edinburgh City Deal. There are no Elected Members on the SESPLAN Committee from North East Fife.

Answer

The new partnerships for Regional Spatial Strategies mean Fife now falls entirely within the Edinburgh and South East Scotland regional partnership and this also includes the Lothians, Scottish Borders and City of Edinburgh. Elected member representation has been agreed by Fife Council administration. Councillors Craik and Beare are the Fife Council representatives on the SESplan Joint Committee and the City Region Elected Member Oversight Committee. The duties of the SESplan Joint Committee are being transferred to the oversight Committee. The Regional Spatial Strategy will be prepared after Scottish Government publish related Regulations. An interim strategy has been prepared to inform the review of the National Planning Framework and this was considered and approved for submission to the Scottish Government by the Council's Economy, Tourism, Strategic Planning and Transport Committee on 1 October 2020.

As the Regional Spatial Strategy develops and at key stages workshop(s) will be held through, and any necessary reports presented to, the Economy, Tourism, Strategic Planning and Transport Sub Committee to involve elected members. Briefings will be provided to all Fife Councillors at key stages.

The Tay Cities Regional Spatial Strategy does not involve elected member representation on its joint committee. However, Fife Council officers are involved with the Board to contribute and report, where appropriate, on matters as they may affect Fife.

QUESTION 7 FROM COUNCILLOR TIM BRETT

Will Fife Council Administration support a request to the Scottish Government for an increase in the minimum price of alcohol? Scotland has a significantly greater number of deaths linked to alcohol and, whilst the introduction of minimum pricing has been welcomed, this has not kept pace with inflation and the number of deaths continues to be a concern.

Answer

Fife Council questions is not an appropriate place to take a policy decision. Should be followed up with Licensing Board and IJB.

QUESTION 8 FROM COUNCILLOR DONALD LOTHIAN

Will the Administration support a call to the UK Government to review the criteria for cold weather payments? Payments can amount to £25 for each seven-day period of very cold

weather but, in the cold weather between November and March each year. Large parts of central Fife are currently missing out on payments because the temperatures are based on a weather station in Leuchars which is 20 miles away from Glenrothes and other parts of central Fife. There is therefore a need for the present arrangements to be reviewed.

Answer

Valid point, happy to progress.

QUESTION 9 FROM COUNCILLOR JANE ANN LISTON

I would like to congratulate all staff who helped to deal with the snow and ice conditions over the last two weeks. These, however, will have further exacerbated problems on our roads. What is the current position in relation to the number of potholes on roads in Fife? How many of these have not been filled within the target five-day timetable. What steps does the Council have for catching up on the backlog.

Answer

The position as of 23 February 2021, is that there are currently 509 high risk defects (potholes) awaiting repair of which 438 are out with the targeted 5-day response period. This volume of potholes and resulting backlog, is directly due to a prolonged period of bad weather, which brought about the onset of this defect type more rapidly, coupled with resources being unavoidably diverted to attend to the greater risks presented by snow and ice.

In addition to stepping up resources devoted to pothole repairs during normal working hours, the Service had an additional 10 repair teams out last weekend, who reduced the backlog by some 250 repairs. The same level of activity is planned this weekend and if the weather remains favourable, we expect the backlog to be completely cleared by week commencing 8 March.

Supplementary

How do our response rates compare to other local authorities and other countries with a similar climate?

Answer

I don't have this information to hand but will follow up with the Head of Service.

QUESTION 10 FROM COUNCILLOR DONALD LOTHIAN

What has been the average number of applications for Primary School head teacher posts over the last 2 years. Is there any difference in the number of applications for joint headships ie where the head is covering 2 schools?

Answer

Since August 2018, the average number of applications for Primary Headteacher posts is 4.05. The average number of applications for joint Headteacher posts in Primary schools is 4.83.

QUESTION 11 FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA HOLT

How many children and young people did not engage with online learning last week (or the most recent week you have figures for) in Fife? Please give an absolute number and a percentage.

Answer

See response to Q3.

QUESTION 12 FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA HOLT

How many children and young people in Fife are not regularly receiving live interactive video contact with their teachers? Please give an absolute number and a percentage.

Answer

See response to Q3.

QUESTION 13 FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA HOLT

How many children and young people in Fife are still without a laptop or tablet with a browser that can access Glow and Teams, or without an internet connection? Please give an absolute number and a percentage.

Answer

See response to Q3.

QUESTION 14 FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA HOLT

The Courier recently reported concerns that S4 leavers have become so disengaged from education that they may never return to school and are doomed to leave with no qualifications. How many S4s in Fife are not participating in online learning?

Answer

See response to Q3.

QUESTION 15 FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA HOLT

In his letter of 15 January 2021 to Kate Forbes, Steve Barclay of HM Treasury named two funds, which will shortly become available: the Levelling Up Fund which "will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery", and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which "will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need".

What shovel-ready projects does Fife Council have in its purview for applying to these funds?

Answer

The UK Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 2020 was published on 25 November 2020. The UK Government had previously stated that it would announce full details on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as part of the CSR, but unfortunately, this was not the case. Instead the UK Government announced it will launch a series of pilot projects in 2021/22, worth £220 million, in order to help local areas prepare for the introduction of the SPF.

Further details of this were initially to be published in January and are now expected in March 2021 at the Budget. The Chancellor confirmed that total domestic UK-wide funding would at least match EU receipts, on average, reaching around £1.5 billion a year.

The proposals for the UKSPF included a focus on three spending areas:

- People -including training, workforce skills, supplementing existing national programmes such as early years provision;
- Place-based, including regeneration and housing improvement, community-based initiatives, town centres, green, rural and digital infrastructure;
- Business-focused, local tailored support for businesses including green and technology adoption

On 15th January, Stephen Barclay MP wrote to Kate Forbes MSP, outlining the proposed approach for Shared Prosperity funding, noting that:

“The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need. It will operate UK-wide, using the new financial assistance powers in the UK Internal Market Act. We will ramp up funding so that total domestic UK-wide funding will at least match EU receipts on average reaching around £1.5bn a year. We will confirm multi-year profiles at the next Spending Review. On top of this, to help local areas prepare over 2021-22 for introduction of the UKSPF, we will provide additional funding to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches. We will work closely with the Scottish Government on how best to use this to prepare for the introduction of the UKSPF and will provide detail on allocations for 2021-22 in a prospectus soon.”

The Council currently operates a number of programmes funded through European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF), which are funded until March 2022. These include the Opportunities Fife Partnership employability programme and Business Gateway Fife business support programmes. It is envisaged that, subject to Scottish and UK Government agreement, successors to these programmes would be eligible for future Shared Prosperity Fund allocations.

In addition, the CSR announced a new Levelling Up Fund of £4 billion for England, that will attract up to £0.8 billion funding for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Fund currently sets out investment opportunities across English regions, noting the investments made by UK Government in City Region and Regional Growth Fund programmes in Scotland.

The aim of the fund is to invest in regional infrastructure that has a visible impact on local communities. The types of projects that could be funded include local road schemes, bus lanes, railway station upgrades, regenerating eyesores, upgrading town centres and community infrastructure, and local arts and culture. These activities were not eligible for EU funding in the last programme but had been prior to 2014. It is not yet known how this will operate in Scotland. The Council’s Local Transport Strategy, Mid Fife Economic Action Plan and refreshed Economic Strategy, together with projects developed through local place leadership approaches, will inform potential investment approaches for this Fund. UK Government would expect to link investments to existing arrangements through City Regions and Regional Growth Funds.

Officers will update on both the Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund as more detail becomes known and the prospectus published, following announcements expected at the next UK Budget.

QUESTION 16 FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA HOLT

The Westminster government allocated £200 million to Holyrood for Brexit preparedness under the Barnett formula. How much money did Fife Council receive from the Scottish Government to prepare for Brexit, how much has it spent and on what?

Answer

In 2019/20, the Scottish Government provided £1.6m nationally for Brexit Preparedness. Fife's allocation of the funding was £0.050m. We incurred £5,500 additional costs in 2019/20.

In 2020/21, the Scottish Government provided £0.1m for Scottish Fishing Vessel Inspections. Fife claimed £3,000.

Supplementary

So little money to Fife, what pressures are Fife Council expecting?

Answer

No profit from Brexit, need more money not less.

QUESTION 17 FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA HOLT

The East Neuk has the highest proportion of over-85s in Scotland and we know that older people are more likely to suffer from digital exclusion than younger age-groups. Has Fife Council checked that it is not in breach of the Equality Act by insisting on an exclusively online booking system for its recycling sites?

Answer

Yes. I will go on to say, however, that the operation of the Recycling Centre booking system complies with the Law, as the site rules and conditions apply equally to everyone, irrespective of their protected characteristic in terms of the Equality Act. The Council has no control over any national changes to policy and will apply changes locally as they consider appropriate.

Supplementary

Would you consider accepting Bookings by phone?

Answer

Throughout Fife, not just in the East Neuk, there are people with no Internet access. The good news is that in the part of Fife, which I represent, those people have family, friends, neighbours, a Community Council and local Councillors, who do have access to the Internet and who are pleased to make Bookings on their behalf. I'm confident that the people in the East Neuk are no less fortunate. I would venture the view, Provost, if there is a problem, that it is not a large one, as I have only had two people seeking my help and one of those subsequently called me back to say that he had learned that his son had Internet access, so would not require my help again in that regard. Perhaps Councillor Holy would drop me a line to say how many people in the Ward she represents have sought her help.

When the Local Offices reopen, I will be looking to them assist anyone without Internet access to make Bookings. Meantime, any Fife resident, who has no family, friends, neighbours, a Community Council or local councillors with Internet access, can make Recycling Centre Bookings by telephone via the Call Centre. I understand that that facility is rarely used, which seems to support my view, if there is a problem, that it is not a large one.

QUESTION 18 FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA HOLT

How many requests for deferral with consequent funding of a nursery place for an extra year did Fife Council grant last year? How many of these funded places were at a nursery run by a private or third sector provider?

Answer

There were 64 approved **discretionary** deferrals for session 20/21. No discretionary deferral placements are provided within a nursery run by a private or third sector provider.

Supplementary

Does the Convener think that it is fair that people who live in rural areas are disadvantaged?

Answer

No I don't think anyone is disadvantaged.

QUESTION 19 FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA HOLT

How many times have potholes in St Monans been reported to Fife Council since December 1st (a) via the website and (b) via other means (eg. phone, email)? How many potholes have been filled in St Monans since then, and how many potholes remain outstanding?

Answer

Since December 1st we have received 38 reports of potholes in St Monans via the website and 9 reports via email to officers. As a result of these 47 reports a total of 10 defects were identified, 1 'critical risk' defect, which was repaired within 24 hours of observation, 5 'high risk' defects, 2 of which have been repaired and 3 are programmed to be repaired within the 5-day intervention deadline. The remaining 4 defects are medium and low risk defects that will be repaired during programmed patching within the coming 3-month period. Over the same period 2,878 surface defects were identified across Fife as a whole.

Supplementary

Roads are worse than ever been. When will Fife Council change its policy to acknowledge this?

Answer

Don't recognise that roads are worse than they have ever been. Road strategy was changed to a fix it once approach last year. Staff currently working 7 days to clear the backlog due to the recent adverse weather.