

THE FIFE COUNCIL - CABINET COMMITTEE - BLENDED MEETING

Council Chamber, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes

26 June 2025

10.00 am - 2.45 pm

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

ATTENDING: Ken Gourlay, Chief Executive; Donnie MacLeod, Executive Director (Education); Michael Enston, Executive Director (Communities), John Mills, Head of Housing Services, Gavin Smith, Service Manager (Housing Access), Mhairi Mullen, Service Manager (Private Sector Housing), Sarah Roxburgh, Community Manager and Zahida Ramzan, Policy Co-ordinator (Equalities), Communities and Neighbourhoods Service, Communities Directorate; Eileen Rowand, Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services), Elaine Muir, Head of Finance, Lindsay Thomson, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Sharon McKenzie, Head of Human Resources, Fiona Allan, Service Manager, Kirsty McElroy, Service Manager, Nicola Harris, Team Manager and Caroline Murphy, Lead Officer, Human Resources and Michelle McDermott, Committee Officer, Legal and Democratic Services, Finance and Corporate Services.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Altany Craik, Sarah Neal and Jan Wincott.

391. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

392. MINUTE

The committee considered the minute of the Cabinet Committee meeting of 29 May 2025.

Arising from consideration of the minute, it was noted that at para. 382 - Proposed Disposal and Change of Use of Common Good Land at East Bents, St. Andrews - decision (4) should read "or for disposals where the asset value is less than £750,000" rather than "is more than £750,000" as detailed in the minute.

Decision

The committee approved the minute.

393. REVENUE MONITORING PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 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 the provisional outturn for 2024/25.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the high level outturn 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) approved the suspension of the carry forward scheme (with the exception of Devolved School Management and Local Community Planning budgets);
- (4) noted that detailed monitoring reports would be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Committees; and
- (5) requested that Scrutiny Committees ensured appropriate level of support and challenge in relation to financial reports.

Councillor Allan Knox joined the meeting during consideration of the above item.

394. CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN - PROVISIONAL 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) noted the provisional outturn position and that the level of financial risk continued to be heightened due to the impact of inflation and supply chain challenges;
- (2) instructed services to plan projects within the approved resource within the Capital Investment Plan;
- (3) noted that more detailed capital outturn reports for 2024/25 would be submitted to relevant Scrutiny Committees of the council;
- (4) noted that budget variances would be managed by the appropriate Directorate in conjunction with the Investment Strategy Group; and
- (5) noted the updated prudential indicators detailed within the report.

395. BUDGET 2026-29 UPDATE

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services) providing an update on the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2026-29 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 the planning assumptions; and

- (3) the planned approach to achieve a sustainable and balanced budget for 2026-27 onwards.

396. WORKFORCE STRATEGY AND WORKFORCE PLANNING

The committee considered a report by the Head of Human Resources reporting on the delivery of the council's Workforce Strategy "Our People Matter (OPM)" 2022-2025 and its position at the close of its third and final year. The report also presented the People Plan and Workforce Strategy 2025-2028 (OPM) which was placed within the context of a wider corporate approach to workforce planning.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the work progressed at the close of the OPM 2022-2025 as set out within Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (2) agreed Fife Council's People Plan and Workforce Strategy 2025-2028 (OPM) as detailed within Appendix 2 of the report.

397. CHANGE PLANNING

The committee considered a report by the Chief Executive providing an update on change planning which built on recent work to develop three year forward plans for change and improvement in line with the medium-term financial position and Plan for Fife ambitions.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) confirmed the direction of travel for ongoing reform and the ambitions articulated in section 2 of the report;
- (2) noted the contribution of the three year Directorate Change Plans to those reform ambitions as outlined in section 3 and Appendix 1 of the report;
- (3) agreed the shape and focus of enabling programme work designed to enhance digital, data and workforce skills capabilities as described in section 4 of the report;
- (4) agreed the proposals for future reporting and oversight detailed in section 5 of the report;
- (5) acknowledged the commitment to full engagement with staff relating to the implementation of the Change Programme;
- (6) agreed that there would be an ongoing assessment and review of the Cowdenbeath pilot by the Cabinet Committee which would inform the future roll out of the No Wrong Door Programme; and
- (7) agreed that elected member workshops, both by the Area and Cabinet Committees, would form part of the monitoring and review process.

The meeting adjourned at 12.00 pm and reconvened at 12.30 pm.

398. COST OF LIVING UPDATE

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Communities) proposing continued Cost of Living support through 2025/26, reporting on proposed changes to welfare benefits and providing an update on work undertaken to analyse repeat applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) agreed the proposed projects totalling £1.053m for Cost of Living support 2025/26 as detailed in section 2 and Appendix 2 of the report;
- (2) noted the funding challenge beyond the current year together with work to sustain provision as part of the move from crisis to preventative support and the development of the No Wrong Door model; and
- (3) noted the level of uncertainty around proposed changes to welfare benefits including UK Government proposals and additional funding for the Scottish Welfare Fund and arrangements for keeping these under review.

399. ALLOTMENT AND COMMUNITY GROWING STRATEGY 2024-2029 RESOURCE UPDATE

The committee considered a report by the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods Service identifying current and investment options for the delivery of the Allotment and Community Growing Strategy 2024-2029 (A&CS).

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted current resources delivering the Allotment and Community Growing Strategy; and
- (2) agreed the total of £0.320m until 2029 to deliver community grants and training to support the strategy and the use of £0.064m recurring funding from existing service budgets to support a permanent staff resource.

Councillors James Calder and Mary Lockhart left the meeting following consideration of the above item.

400. HOUSING EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN: STRATEGIC STATEMENT

The committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services presenting the next iteration of the Housing Emergency Action Plan (HEAP), fourteen months since the declaration of the housing emergency.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) agreed to use Fife's Housing Emergency Strategic Statement as the basis for consultation and further development of the suggested actions as detailed in Appendix 1 with an addition under the "Declaring an Emergency" heading within the Executive Summary to add a reference to the cost of living crisis and the impact of inflation within the construction industry;

- (2) agreed that the final wording of the draft Strategic Statement would be determined in consultation with the Service Manager (Housing Access), the Housing and Building Services Spokesperson and Councillor Goodall prior to wider consultation; and
- (3) noted that further work would be undertaken around the resource implications in particular.

Councillor Mary Lockhart rejoined the meeting during consideration of the above item.

The meeting adjourned at 1.25 pm and reconvened at 2.00 pm.

401. FIFE HOUSING EMERGENCY - REDUCING PRIVATE SECTOR EMPTY HOMES

The committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services providing an update on the work and progress being made to bring empty homes back into use to assist with the current housing emergency.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) endorsed the Empty Homes Strategy (2024-2029), approved by the Fife Housing Partnership in May 2024, with the five key objectives to bring empty homes back to use;
- (2) noted the progress being made to bring empty homes back to use including exceeding the target as set out in the Local Housing Strategy;
- (3) noted the ongoing work with the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership (SEHP) and the Scottish Government to explore further opportunities within Fife to help bring empty homes back to use; and
- (4) agreed to progress work to take forward a bid through SEHP for additional funding for a local initiative to bring empty homes back for affordable housing.

Councillor David Barratt joined the meeting during consideration of the above item.

402. GRENFELL INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS AND FIFE RESPONSE

The committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services outlining the main recommendations of the Grenfell Part 2 Inquiry, the Scottish Government's response to those recommendations and next steps for the council in continuing to improve health and safety arrangements for the tower blocks, sheltered housing and homeless hostels in Fife.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) agreed the Fife response to the Grenfell Part 2 Inquiry;
- (2) agreed the council's proposed next steps to prepare a 5-10 year programme of improvement works to continue to enhance the fire safety of the council's housing stock; and

- (3) agreed that a Commissioning Strategy for enhanced fire risk assessment and mitigations works be agreed by the council's Procurement Review Board to action Stage 2 improvements.

403. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PRIORITIES 2025-2029

The committee considered a report by the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods Service providing an update on the council's Equality and Diversity outcomes 2023-2025 and seeking approval for the next four year priorities from 2025-2029.

Decision

The committee approved the priorities for the next four years covering the period 2025-2029 as detailed within Appendix 1 of the report.

404. CABINET COMMITTEE - OUTSTANDING REMITS FROM COMMITTEES

The committee noted:-

- (1) the list of outstanding remits from committees; and
- (2) that the Fife Bus Network Review report due to be submitted in August 2025 would now not be submitted until later in the year due to further work required to complete the study and a shortage in key staff resources.

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.

405. ACQUISITION OF 9 NEW BUILD HOUSES IN 2 LOCATIONS OF A DEVELOPMENT - 4 IN KIRKCALDY AND 5 IN MARKINCH (PRIVATE REPORT)

The committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services, as part of the Affordable Housing Programme (Property Acquisitions) and the Housing Emergency Action Plan response, detailing the proposed acquisition of nine new build houses in Kirkcaldy and five properties in Markinch.

Decision

The committee authorised the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to enter into legally binding agreements on terms to their satisfaction for the acquisition of the houses built on plots in Kirkcaldy and Markinch.