

THE FIFE COUNCIL - CABINET COMMITTEE – BLENDED MEETING

22nd September, 2022.

10.10 a.m. – 1.50 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors David Ross (Convener), David Alexander, Lesley Backhouse, David Barratt, John Beare, James Calder, Fiona Corps, Altany Craik, Dave Dempsey, Linda Erskine, Derek Glen, David Graham, Peter Gulline, Judy Hamilton, Cara Hilton, Gary Holt, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, Jonny Tepp, Ross Vettraino, Craig Walker and Jan Wincott.

ATTENDING: Steve Grimmond, Chief Executive; Eileen Rowand, Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services), Lindsay Thomson, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Laura Robertson, Finance Operations Manager, Calum Ross, Solicitor, Legal Services, Michelle McDermott, Committee Officer and Lesley Robb, Lead Officer, Legal and Democratic Services, Finance and Corporate Services; Michael Enston, Executive Director (Communities), John Mills, Head of Housing Services and Mhairi Mullen, Service Manager (Income, Poverty and Private Housing), Housing Services; Ken Gourlay, Executive Director (Enterprise and Environment), Gordon Mole, Head of Business and Employability Services, Nigel Kerr, Head of Protective Services, Pamela Stevenson, Service Manager (Economic Development) and John Rodigan, Senior Manager (Environment and Building Services); and Shelagh McLean, Head of Education and Children's Services (Early Years and Directorate Support), Education and Children's Services.

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE: Reverend Brian Blanchflower, Religious Representative.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted in terms of Standing Order No. 7.1.

20. MINUTE

The Committee considered the minute of the Cabinet Committee meeting of 25th August, 2022.

Decision

The Committee agreed to approve the minute.

21. REVENUE MONITORING 2022-23

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services) providing members with a strategic overview of Fife Council's finances and the current forecast position for 2022-23.

Decision/

Decision

The Committee noted:-

- (1) the ongoing financial impacts arising from recovery from the pandemic which continued to be managed using one off additional funding and from underspends;
- (2) the high level financial position as detailed in the report; and
- (3) that detailed monitoring reports would be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Committees.

22. CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN UPDATE - PROJECTED OUTTURN 2022-23

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services) providing members with a strategic financial overview of the Capital Investment Plan and the projected outturn for the 2022-23 financial year.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) approved the proposed Capital Investment Plan re-profiling, as contained within Appendix 1 of the report, which dealt with carry forward budgets from 2021-22 into later years of the Plan;
- (2) noted the projected outturn position, that the level of financial risk appeared to be increasing and also noted the mitigating actions for the major projects within the Capital Investment Plan;
- (3) noted that more detailed capital outturn reports for 2022-23 would be submitted to relevant Scrutiny Committees of the Council, in accordance with agreed financial reporting arrangements; and
- (4) noted that budget variances would be managed by the appropriate Directorate in conjunction with the Investment Strategy Group.

23. HELP WITH COST OF LIVING: EXTENDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Communities) proposing an extension to existing community support provision and the delivery of a co-ordinated programme of targeted support to help vulnerable people and communities through the cost of living crisis over the coming winter months. The report also proposed criteria for the delivery of the Community Recovery Fund agreed at the previous Cabinet meeting.

Motion

Councillor David Ross, seconded by Councillor Linda Erskine, moved as follows:-

“In/

“In addition to agreeing recommendations 1 and 2, the Committee also agrees the following:-

1. To increase the school clothing grant this year by £50 per pupil for those eligible, as a ‘winter coat’ supplement funded from workforce change cost balance at a cost of approximately £870k
2. Directs officers to undertake further work:
 1. To continue monitoring the uptake of the various hardship grants administered by the Council and bring reports back to the Committee on pressures and the possible need to allocate further additional funding to such grant schemes;
 2. To review the practicality and cost of extending eligibility for free school meals, in particular to those families in receipt of Council Tax Reduction;
 3. To undertake an urgent rapid review of the Council’s support for mental health, particularly for young people through schools, and bring a report back to the Committee as soon as possible;
 4. In preparation for Council budget setting for 2023/24, to consider and bring forward options for a full or partial freeze of the Council Tax next year, taking account of the financial settlement from the Scottish Government and the impact on Council finances;
 5. In preparation for Council budget setting for 2023/24, to consider options and implications for a full or partial freeze on Council house rents next year, and to incorporate such options in the annual tenant consultation on rent levels.

Amendment 1

Councillor David Alexander, seconded by Councillor Craig Walker, moved as follows:-

“In addition to the motion proposed by Councillor Ross we wish to add "and UK Government" to the motion recommendation 4 after Scottish Government and to add a new number 6 - "to look at the example of the Levenmouth Academy project where the cost of the school day has been eliminated with a view to implementing this model elsewhere in Fife, subject to local leadership agreement.”

Amendment 2

Councillor Craig Walker, seconded by Councillor David Alexander, proposed a further amendment as follows:-

“We wish to add the following additional recommendation to the report:

Officers will liaise and engage with all Councillors at Area Committee level in relation to the Community Recovery Fund”.

The mover of the motion agreed to conjoin the amendments and the conjoined motion was agreed as follows:-

The/

The Committee:-

- (1) noted the current provision and agreed plans to extend this into a co-ordinated winter programme of targeted support for vulnerable individuals and families;
- (2) agreed the allocation and criteria for the £10m Community Recovery Fund;
- (3) agreed to increase the school clothing grant this year by £50 per pupil for those eligible, as a 'winter coat' supplement funded from workforce change cost balance at a cost of approximately £870k; and
- (4) directed officers to undertake the following additional work:
 1. To continue monitoring the uptake of the various hardship grants administered by the Council and bring reports back to the Committee on pressures and the possible need to allocate further additional funding to such grant schemes;
 2. To review the practicality and cost of extending eligibility for free school meals, in particular to those families in receipt of Council Tax Reduction;
 3. To undertake an urgent rapid review of the Council's support for mental health, particularly for young people through schools, and bring a report back to the Committee as soon as possible;
 4. In preparation for Council budget setting for 2023/24, to consider and bring forward options for a full or partial freeze of the Council Tax next year, taking account of the financial settlement from the Scottish Government and UK Government and the impact on Council finances;
 5. In preparation for Council budget setting for 2023/24, to consider options and implications for a full or partial freeze on Council house rents next year, and to incorporate such options in the annual tenant consultation on rent levels;
 6. To look at the example of Levenmouth Academy project, where the cost of the school day has been eliminated, with a view to implementing the model elsewhere in Fife, subject to local leadership agreement; and
 7. Liaise and engage with all Councillors at Area Committee level in relation to the Community Recovery Fund.

Decision

The Committee agreed the amended motion unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 11.40 a.m. and reconvened at 11.50 a.m.

24. LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY (LHS) 2022- 2027

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services seeking agreement of the final draft Local Housing Strategy 2022-2027 which was provided as a five year strategy to meet the requirements of the housing legislation and Scottish Government guidance.

Decision/

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) agreed the content of the draft Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2022-2027 including the actions embedded in the outcome plan;
- (2) delegated final approval of the LHS to the Executive Director (Communities) following Fife Housing Partnership approval after public consultation and the Scottish Government review was completed; and
- (3) approved the 2022 Scheme of Assistance.

25. LICENSING OF SHORT-TERM LETS

The Committee considered a joint report by the Head of Housing Services, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Head of Protective Services seeking approval of the Short-Term Let Licensing Policy for implementing the licensing scheme for short-term lets under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Short-term Lets) Order 2022 which came into effect on 1st March, 2022.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) approved the Short-term Let Licensing Policy for implementation on 1st October, 2022;
- (2) agreed the 2022/23 proposed fees for Short-term licences as detailed in section 6.3 of the report;
- (3) noted that a review was scheduled for November 2023 but agreed that a provisional review be undertaken by March 2023 to allow for an earlier view on the operation of additional conditions; and
- (4) agreed that a full review be completed on the initial implementation of the policy and operation of the scheme with a report to the relevant scrutiny Committee in November, 2023, pending a full review after three years of operation in 2025.

Councillor Craig Walker left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

26. FORTH GREEN FREEPORT BID – FIFE COUNCIL AND FORTH PORTS JOINT WORKING FOR ROSYTH AND BURNTISLAND

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Business and Employability Services advising members that a Forth Green Freeport (FGFP) designation submission had been made by Forth Ports with the support of Fife Council. Endorsement of this, and the continued Fife Council involvement in the prospective FGFP designation, was sought if the submitted bid was successful. The/

The report also sought agreement of the proposed governance arrangements for the FGFP including noting that detailed arrangements would be subject to outline and full business planning processes.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) endorsed and approved Fife Council involvement in the prospective Forth Green Freeport (FGFP) designation;
- (2) approved, in principle, the proposed FGFP designation governance arrangements;
- (3) noted that the Council was subject to a Memorandum of Understanding signed on behalf of the Council by Legal Services, requiring commercial confidentiality of the FGFP Bid document to reflect the competitive nature of the Green Freeport bidding process; and
- (4) noted that two Scottish locations would be announced in Autumn, 2022 with outline and full business planning then required to occur.

27. DOMESTIC WASTE OPERATIONS - BULKY UPLIFTS – FREE OF CHARGE SERVICE

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Enterprise and Environment) to consider the removal of charges for bulky uplifts across Fife.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) agreed to remove the charge for bulky uplifts from April, 2023, subject to the consideration of additional resources being funded through the budget process; and
- (2) noted that a review of the current criteria for the bulky uplift service would be undertaken prior to April 2023 to assess recycling and landfill implications and qualifying criteria for uplifting goods. Any proposed changes to the current policy would be brought to the Cabinet Committee for approval.

Councillor Craig Walker re-joined the meeting during consideration of the above item.

28. DOMESTIC WASTE SERVICE - SINGLE SHIFT PATTERN

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Enterprise and Environment) outlining the potential benefits of returning to a single shift system for domestic waste collection.

Decision

The Committee supported the consideration of an alternative shift pattern for the Domestic Waste Service and agreed to allow management to develop proposals and engage with the Trade Unions accordingly.

29. STATUTORY CONSULTATION FOR PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE SCHOOL ESTATE AND CATCHMENT AREAS

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) which presented the statutory consultation proposal papers relating to the proposals to: close Milton of Balgonie Primary School and to rezone the catchment areas of Coaltown of Balgonie, Pitteuchar East and Thornton Primary Schools; rezone the secondary catchment areas of Bell Baxter High School and Madras College; rezone the catchment areas of Carnegie Primary School and Touch Primary school; to seek approval of their content and to authorise officers to proceed to statutory consultation.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) agreed to defer a decision on the Statutory Consultation Proposal paper, in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, relating to the proposed closure of Milton of Balgonie Primary School and rezoning of the catchment areas of Coaltown of Balgonie, Pitteuchar East and Thornton Primary Schools until the next scheduled meeting of the Cabinet Committee on 20th October, 2022 and that, in relation to the proposed closure of Milton of Balgonie Primary School, agreed that the report would outline the legal position regarding the previous decision to mothball the school and would clarify the position regarding any previously approved planning applications;
 - (2) approved the content of the Statutory Consultation Proposal paper, in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, relating to the proposed rezoning of the catchment areas of Bell Baxter High School and Madras College;
 - (3) approved the content of the Statutory Consultation Proposal paper, in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, relating to the proposed rezoning of the catchment areas of Carnegie Primary School and Touch Primary School;
 - (4) authorised officers to proceed to statutory consultation in terms of each Consultation Proposal;
 - (5) authorised officers to make such amendments to the Consultation Proposal papers (including the timeline) as may be necessary; and
 - (6) noted that the Consultation Reports would be brought forward to a future Committee of the Council.
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