

**THE FIFE COUNCIL - FIFE COUNCIL - BLENDED MEETING**

**Council Chamber, 6th Floor, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes**

**21 March 2024**

**10.00 am - 1.20 pm**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Jim Leishman (Convener), Tom Adams, David Alexander, Blair Allan, Naz Anis-Miah, Lesley Backhouse, Alistair Bain, David Barratt, Auxi Barrera, John Beare, Aude Boubaker-Calder, Patrick Browne, James Calder, Ken Caldwell, Alistair Cameron, Ian Cameron, Alex Campbell, Rod Cavanagh, Al Clark, Eugene Clarke, Fiona Corps, Altany Craik, Colin Davidson, Dave Dempsey, Sean Dillon, Graeme Downie, Gavin Ellis, Linda Erskine, Derek Glen, Brian Goodall, Peter Gulline, Jean Hall-Muir, Judy Hamilton, Alycia Hayes, Cara Hilton, Stefan Hoggan-Radu, Gary Holt, Andy Jackson, Margaret Kennedy, Louise Kennedy-Dalby, Allan Knox, Robin Lawson, James Leslie, Kathleen Leslie, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, Jane Ann Liston, Mary Lockhart, Donald Lothian, David MacDiarmid, Julie MacDougall, Lea McLelland, Lynn Mowatt, Sarah Neal, Derek Noble, John O'Brien, Nicola Patrick, Gordon Pryde, Bailey-Lee Robb, David Ross, Sam Steele, Alistair Suttie, Jonny Tepp, Ann Verner, Ross Vettraino, Craig Walker, Darren Watt, Daniel Wilson, Jan Wincott and Conner Young.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors John Caffrey, David Graham, Allan Knox and Andrew Verrecchia.

**113 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**114. CIVIC BUSINESS BULLETIN**

**Decision**

The council noted the Civic Business Bulletin.

**115. MINUTE**

The Provost, seconded by Councillor Craik, moved that the minutes of 7 December 2023 and 22 February 2024 be approved.

**Decision**

The council approved the minutes.

**116. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES**

Minutes of the undernoted committees and sub-committees, as contained in the volume of minutes, were submitted for accuracy:-

- (1) West and Central Planning Committee of 6 December 2023, 10 January and 7 February 2024.

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- (2) North East Planning Committee of 15 November and 13 December 2023, 17 January and 14 February 2024.
- (3) Fife Planning Review Body of 11 December 2023 and 26 February 2024.
- (4) Regulation and Licensing Committee of 5 December 2023, 16 January and 13 February 2024.
- (5) Cabinet Committee of 30 November 2023, 11 January and 8 February 2024.
- (6) Standards, Audit and Risk Committee of 9 November 2023 and 18 January 2024.
- (7) Pensions Committee of 14 December 2023.
- (8) Glenrothes Area Committee of 22 November 2023 and 31 January 2024.
- (9) Levenmouth Area Committee of 22 November 2023 and 24 January 2024.
- (10) City of Dunfermline Area Committee of 12 December 2023 and 6 February 2024.
- (11) Kirkcaldy Area Committee of 19 December 2023 and 27 February 2024.
- (12) North East Fife Area Committee of 6 December 2023 and 28 February 2024.
- (13) Cowdenbeath Area Committee of 20 December 2023 and 28 February 2024.
- (14) South and West Fife Area Committee of 13 December 2023 and 14 February 2024.
- (15) Education Scrutiny Committee of 9 January 2024.
- (16) Finance, Economy and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee of 25 January 2024.
- (17) People and Communities Scrutiny Committee of 29 February 2024.
- (18) Environment, Transportation and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee of 28 November 2023 and 23 January 2024.
- (19) Fife Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board of 24 November 2023.

### **Decision**

The council noted the minutes.

## **117. LEADER'S REPORT**

The council considered a report by the Leader of the Council on a number of strategic issues. The Leader provided updates on a number of issues in response to questions from members. The Leader also gave a brief update in relation to Babcock International advising that it had been announced this week that they had won the prestigious MoD Sanctuary Award in the Social Value category and the Leader, on behalf of the Council, congratulated them on this achievement.

### **Decision**

The council noted the Leader's report.

*Councillor Erskine left the meeting during consideration of the above item.*

## **118. QUESTION TIME**

In terms of Standing Order No. 9.3, the following questions were submitted:-

Question 1 from Councillor Sean Dillon

Following a freedom of information request, it has been found that there are currently 77 streets in Fife with streetlights that have outstanding repairs. The first of these was reported in March 2023. Could the Administration update councillors on what progress is being made to resolve this matter and will they commit to putting pressure on Scottish Power to see these repairs resolved as soon as possible?

Answer (Spokesperson for Finance, Economy and Strategic Planning)

The faults highlighted relate to Scottish Power apparatus. Roads and Transportation Services have been liaising with Scottish Power over the past 6-9 months to emphasise the need for improved performance. Following that, Scottish Power appointed a new sub-contractor in November and the level of outstanding faults have begun to reduce. As of mid-March, the number of faults, while still too high, has reduced to 48, these faults relate to single and multiple column networks. Roads and Transportation Services will continue to liaise with Scottish Power and push for improved performance and target time levels of repair.

Supplementary Question

Can the Administration confirm that they will request Scottish Power give a timescale for the 48 outstanding repairs.

Answer (Spokesperson for Finance, Economy and Strategic Planning)

Happy to arrange that. Will provide the detail. If there are specific ones, we can find out the detail.

Question 2 from Councillor Nicola Patrick

On the 4th May 2023 cabinet committee received an update on how services were working together to tackle damp and mould in domestic properties owned by fife council.

When will the service provide an update report to cabinet on the progress made, which will also address: the waiting times for inspections and rectifications, and how many properties have had to be revisited after initial works were undertaken to resolve reoccurring issues/complaints from tenants.

Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

Housing Services are planning to bring an update around the mould and damp to People and Community Scrutiny Committee by Autumn 2024. Since reporting on the subject to both Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees, we have experienced a significant upturn in complaints and are currently working through a 300-complaint backlog. Officers have taken steps to enhance the staff resource. The Staff Team will be moving onto DRS where complaints are directly schedule for appointments through the Contact Centre in April and this will reduce the time spent on administration duties.

The general response to complaints has ranged from initiating repairs to leaking roofs, guttering and windows to providing advice and support Guidance and advice was provided to tenants where evidence of condensation was present. Hydrometers were left with tenants to monitor moisture levels to encourage them to actively ventilate the property more when relative humidity is at risk of causing

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condensation. The Service is also testing 180 Environmental Sensors in the worst affected properties to continually monitor air quality and moisture content in the property. This will assist to provide further assistance measures to tenants with significant condensation issues.

### Supplementary Question

If the fast and effective response from the service was agreed with the spokesperson, why are we having to provide £90,000 to a third party to carry out additional inspections for us?

### Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

It is usual that contractors carry out some of our external work and we do use an external contractor as well as our own service although we are bringing as much of those services back in-house as we can.

### Question 3 from Councillor Sean Dillon

How many dog attacks have Safer Communities responded to over the last 12 months?

### Answer (Councillor Altany Craik in the absence of the Spokesperson for Communities and Leisure Services)

These are the stats for our **Aggressive Dog reports** for the last couple of years (and up to today for 2024):

	<b>Reports</b>	<b>DCNs Issued</b>	<b>Warnings issued</b>
2022	575	34	80
2023	610	33	71
2024	108	4	2

DCNs = Dog Control Notices

Actual dog attacks are normally reported to Police Scotland directly rather than through Safer Communities.

### Supplementary Question

Can the Administration provide the number of attacks involving dogs that have previously been issued with Dog Control Notices?

### Answer (Councillor Altany Craik in the absence of the Spokesperson for Communities and Leisure Services)

Don't have that data but can get that to you.

### Question 4 from Councillor Rosemary Liewald

I am aware that work has taken place in regard to timeframes for Housing Functional Needs Assessments to be carried out.

I am also aware that this work is broken down into priority categories.

Can I ask for a breakdown of each category with timeframes for each.

Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

In relation to Fife Housing Register Housing Functional Needs Assessments, the service does not operate a priority system - all applications are dealt with in date order. We deal with oldest applications first. At present, we are operating to our published target time as outlined within the Housing Allocations Policy and we recently reported to the People and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

The health assessment will be carried out independently of the initial application assessment and will take up to 4 weeks”.

Within this time frame it is possible for some applications to be "fast tracked" by the Housing Options Officer if the applicant has an offer of Housing or is in delayed discharge at Hospital etc. but this is all within the 4-week target time.

There is an ongoing review of the Housing Functional Needs Assessment process and a set of recommendations will be developed around this. This will feature as part of the wider review of the Housing Allocations policy and will be fully consulted on.

Supplementary Question

Can I ask that, once the assessment form is completed and submitted, what is the timeframe for approval of work to completion being carried out and does this require then an additional visit from our OTT? This is in regard to work being carried out as a preventative measure where we wish our clients to remain in their home for as long as possible. So, are these face to face or are these conversations taking place over the 'phone and also, given the fact that this is a ten page questionnaire with approximately 60 questions to fill in and at least 20 of these questions all requiring a statement, can you give me a response to that please.

Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

My understanding is that some of the assessments are done on a desktop and some are done face to face depending - they will be triaged. We do have a variety of people in a team of community OTs and we have housing OTs and we have OT assistants as well so, working across that team, applications are triaged and people will work out then whether they need a desktop assessment or whether they need face to face assessment.

Question 5 from Councillor Rosemary Liewald

- 1) What assessment has the Housing Service made in relation to addressing the energy-inefficient housing ('non traditional/steel framed' homes and those with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of below C)?
- 2) How many council domestic properties fall into the category of being energy-inefficient housing ('non traditional/steel framed' homes and those with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of below C)?
- 3) When will we have a report to Cabinet Committee with a funded programme to address the poor insulation in energy-inefficient housing ('non traditional/steel framed' homes and those with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of below C), including the options of internally insulating these properties?

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### Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

As part of the development of the EESSH2 Delivery Plan, Housing Services have commissioned framework consultant, Changeworks, to carry out an analysis of the 2,500 non-traditional housing stock left to be improved to assess the technical solutions and cost for improving the energy efficiency standards across a range of options for all property architypes.

The non-traditional architypes assessed are Blockwork, Concrete Panel, Brick, Timber, Steel Framed and Precast Re-inforced Concrete.

The analysis for energy efficiency improvements included a range of improvement standards ranging from current baseline condition, EESSH, Net Zero Housing Standard and Enerphit standards.

The range of improvement standards are being assessed against our current stock profile and individual costs and aggregated programme are being quantified. This assessment will be completed by April 2024 with the summary of measures and costs presented to Cabinet Committee by August 2024. Funding for the proposed improvements will be assessed as part of the HRA Capital Plan review and will be timelined over a number of years to complete.

There are 485 steel framed properties that are part of our stock that require to be improved. The minimum EESSH2 / Social Housing Net Zero Standard cost would be approximately £25k per property for a structural external wall insulation solution. Internal wall insulation (IWI) as a technical solution will also cost around £25k per house and £12.5k for flats. These costs do not include applying IWI to kitchens and bathrooms. If kitchens and bathrooms were to be removed and replaced as part of the energy efficiency works the estimated cost would be approximately £37k for a house.

### Supplementary Question

When will this work begin as I have residents who were actually spoken to about this going back at least five years in regard to the ones in the steel framed properties and what do we have in terms of a budget that's been laid out for this work to take place?

### Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

As for when it will begin, there will be a capital plan review and then will be able to see what the budget is and what the costs are going forward so a report will be presented with the measures and the costs by April 2024 and it will depend on approvals of those reports how we can schedule that within the capital plan review.

### Question 6 from Councillor Bailey-Lee Robb

To ask the Leader if he will provide an update on the decentralisation agenda given we are almost two years into his governance arrangements.

### Answer (Leader of the Administration)

The Cabinet Committee has considered a number of reports on progress with decentralisation in 2023 building on previous work around place following the covid pandemic, the most recent in November last year. The Cabinet also agreed in 2022 a £10m Covid Recovery Fund with the majority of funding devolved to area committees.

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In February 2023 Cabinet agreed to undertake reviews of service areas in relation to area committee roles in scrutiny, shaping priorities and potential for varying service levels.

The June 2023 Cabinet Committee further approved a workstream to improve the responsiveness of place-based services and streamline internal processes.

A series of workshops involving area conveners and relevant cabinet spokespersons were held during 2023 to shape the proposals and these were presented back to Cabinet in November 2023.

One of the agreements in the Cabinet Committee was an updated clearer statement of the purpose of area committees and that will be incorporated in The Scheme of Committee Powers when that's updated and comes through the Council. The agreed reforms are being implemented through 2024 and will be reviewed through a further workshop with area conveners.

### Supplementary Question

I would like to ask the Leader if he would outline the current status of decentralisation plans in terms of what specific powers he refers to and when the council will get to scrutinise these proposals, for example, the Scheme of Committee Powers, and what his response is to the concerns that are widely shared about the Cabinet Committee not being fit for purpose as reports have been pulled at the last minute or push backed due to the reported length of the meetings.

### Answer (Leader of the Administration)

The Cabinet Committee is absolutely fit for purpose and is working very well. In terms of the specifics on decentralisation, the five areas that were identified for work are ongoing, in particular area committees, as I understand all area committees are having workshops on green space, street cleansing and priorities regarding maintenance and, as I have said, we have had a very good session in Kirkcaldy on that. I think the second one, particularly around the reinstatement of area housing plans and discussion at ward meetings about that is well underway I believe and work is progressing and reports will be coming forward in due course on property facilities management, capital investment, regeneration and community wellbeing.

### Question 7 from Councillor Sarah Neal

How many potholes assessed as Grade 2 have been repaired within 5 days in the past six months and how many have not been repaired within 5 days in the past six months?

### Answer (Spokesperson for Finance, Economy and Strategic Planning)

3,565 potholes categorised as priority 2 defects were repaired between 1st September 2023 and 8th March 2024. Of these, 1,842 were repaired within 5 days and 1,723 repaired out with 5 days.

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### Supplementary Question

Can I ask when the citizens of Fife will see an improvement in this please.

### Answer (Spokesperson for Finance, Economy and Strategic Planning)

In 2023/24 -v- 2022/23, 10,732 jobs were completed, an additional 1,458 over the year before. 67,474 metres of patching were done which was up 20% on the year before that which was 56,409. In terms of getting better performance, I think we have a scrutiny committee that may want to have a look at this as we go forward. A drop in performance over the winter period particularly is not unusual and it is seasonal by the fact that we use our staff for many other tasks at the same time whether it be flooding. We have diversion of workforce for winter gritting, we have reduced winter working hours as it's dark earlier obviously. An increase in the level of repairs due to weather that is why we have a bump. We have had discussions with the Head of Transportation about how we can be slicker and cleverer with the processes we have in place because that is, ultimately, what drives performance but we are making progress but maybe not as fast as we would all like.

### Question 8 from Councillor Andy Jackson

The council's housing acquisitions policy was adopted in 2020.

When will a revised policy be brought to committee and what input will members have in the development of a revised policy?

### Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

The Property Acquisitions Policy was adopted in 2020 and was last reviewed in March 2022 by the Housing and Communities Sub-Committee. The Head of Housing Service is currently reviewing the policy criteria and will produce a report to Cabinet Committee by August 2024 so it will be reviewed again 2.5 years since it was last reviewed.

### Supplementary Question

The amount of buy backs of former council houses and other acquisitions is shockingly low in Fife. Will the spokesperson make a commitment today to radically increase the amount of buy backs of former council houses as I believe this would address more quickly the housing emergency we are in at the moment.

### Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

The Housing Emergency Action Plan will be brought forward and that will look at everything including acquisitions, new build and all of the options that we have and tenants and members will all be consulted upon that.

### Question 9 from Councillor Lesley Backhouse

#### **Question 1**

How many Homeless families and individuals have been allocated council or RSL homes in each of the last 5 years.

#### **Question 2**



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Given we have around 800 single people at risk of homelessness how many more 1 bedroom properties have we built or purchased over the last 3 years?

### Question 3

The empty homes policy shows that in the last 3 years 39,41 and 62 properties were brought back into use of which 2,5, 19 were bought through using the SG subsidy of £40k per home. How many of these homes are still empty

### Question 4

How many homes purchased using the SG subsidy of £40k have been demolished in each of the last 3 years?

Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

### Question 1

Answer

Number of Applicants Housed  
01/04/2019 – 12/03/2024

Homeless Allocations by FHR Partners:

	<b>Fife Council</b>	<b>Fife Housing group</b>	<b>Glen Housing</b>	<b>Hill-crest Housing</b>	<b>Kingdom Housing</b>	<b>Ochil-view</b>	<b>Ore Valley</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2019</b>	757	36	10	2	127	5	7	<b>944</b>
<b>2020</b>	1063	14	7	1	125	1	11	<b>1222</b>
<b>2021</b>	995	36	12	4	104	5	32	<b>1188</b>
<b>2022</b>	1096	35	9	5	157	6	31	<b>1339</b>
<b>2023</b>	1329	37	7	6	186	3	17	<b>1585</b>
<b>2024</b>	236	4	2	2	22	1	1	<b>268</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5476</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>6546</b>

**Non Homeless Allocations by FHR Partners:**

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	<b>Fife Council</b>	<b>Fife Housing group</b>	<b>Glen Housing</b>	<b>Hill-crest</b>	<b>Kingdom Housing</b>	<b>Ochil-view</b>	<b>Ore Valley</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2019</b>	1071	96	14	2	247	9	22	<b>1461</b>
<b>2020</b>	885	93	24	2	274	5	5	<b>1288</b>
<b>2021</b>	1175	95	31	2	238	7	66	<b>1614</b>
<b>2022</b>	798	88	11	8	321	8	19	<b>1253</b>
<b>2023</b>	819	113	21	8	383	7	18	<b>1369</b>
<b>2024</b>	218	10	5	2	14	3	1	<b>253</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4966</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1477</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>7238</b>

### **Question 2**

#### Answer

In the years 2021, 2022 and 2023, 40 x 1-bed properties have been acquired and no new 1-bed properties built.

### **Question 3**

#### Answer

1 property remains unoccupied. The property was specifically purchased as part of a Housing Regeneration Project and will be demolished in May 2024.

### **Question 4**

#### Answer

Nil for each of the last 3 years.

### Supplementary Question 1

What steps are the coalition taking to get parity of allocation to homelessness with our Fife Homeless Register partners (currently FC is at 68% of allocation and RSLs are around 40%).

#### Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

The policy of the housing associations will be their policy and we do work across the Fife Housing Partnership who do have a lot of smaller stock than ourselves as well. We are reviewing the allocations policy and we hope to involve all our partners in that allocations policy.

### Supplementary Question 2

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Given that we have 800 single people at risk of homelessness and we have only acquired 40 one bed properties in the last three years, what policy are you going to bring forth to ensure that we are building / buying back properties that will meet the needs of our residents who are sofa surfing or who are at risk of homelessness.

### Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

It's not our policy to build one bed roomed properties although we bought 40 in the last three years.

### Supplementary Question 3

Given that the joint Administration in the first five years of when I was elected pushed to get more buy backs, why has that policy not been debated and brought forward?

### Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

That's the same answer that I gave to Councillor Jackson that it has been reviewed and it will be reviewed again in 2024.

### Question 10 from Councillor Louise Kennedy-Dalby

#### Warwick close property purchases Leuchars

Since the purchase of seven homes from the MOD in September 2022 some 18+ months ago. These homes are still empty resulting in over £40k loss in rental income with no date in sight for completion of the renovation works.

Can we have an explanation for the delays and confirmation of when these desperately needed family homes will be ready?

### Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

Since the purchase of the 7 properties from the MOD in 2022, it became clear from the initial survey of the works required were significantly underestimated to bring these properties up to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and modern social housing space standard. I am advised that full internal modernisation works will begin and will be completed by Summer 2024.

In relation to the rental loss, the properties were classified as Major Repair Voids and have been zero rented. In effect, we have not lost any rent on these properties at this time.

### Supplementary Question

Given that this is now a year and a half down the line and not having these properties available for rent is a loss of rental income of over £40,000. How can you say, having four years' prior negotiations to buy these houses, say that it's still 18 months down the line that works are not being properly completed. Can you not say that this has failed to go forward as large scale projects and having them actually getting done as individual homes is much more appropriate and

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getting families into these three bedroom houses in a housing crisis that you are so slow to the party of realising that we are all bringing this forward for the last two years. This is a failure of actual buy backs.

### Answer (Spokesperson for Housing and Building Services)

No, I don't think it is a failure. My understanding is that the significant works to reconfigure the internal dimensions of the house were much more than we had anticipated.

### Question 11 from Councillor Louise Kennedy-Dalby

#### Fife Sports and Leisure Trust

Given the additional funding to FSLT to improve opening hours primarily in North East Fife coming to an end this financial year, can the leader confirm if North East Fife will still have access to these expanded hours?

### Answer (Councillor Altany Craik in the absence of the Spokesperson for Communities and Leisure Services)

The additional funding was for 2023/24. Fife Sports and Leisure Trust will continue towards the restoration of opening hours in line with the Service Level Agreement and the management.

#### Supplementary Question

Can the council say, for this coming financial year, what support is North East Fife getting by Fife Sports and Leisure Trust?

### Answer (Spokesperson for Communities and Leisure Services)

Fife Sports and Leisure Trust was not one year funding, they received funding through the community underspend, they have also got a Letter of Comfort from us about loss of income so, in that respect, they have not been forgotten about. If I can get any further information for you, I will ask Councillor Erskine to do so.

## 119. **FIFE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN EVIDENCE REPORT**

The council considered a report by the Head of Planning presenting the Fife Local Development Plan Evidence Report for approval as required by statute.

### **Decision**

The council:-

- (1) noted the report by the Head of Planning agreed by the Cabinet Committee meeting held on 8 February 2024 for referral to Fife Council; and
- (2) approved the Fife Local Development Plan Evidence Report, as required by statute, for submission to the Scottish Government's Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) to undertake the Local Development Plan Gate Check.

**120. NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

The council considered a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services requiring the council to consider motions submitted in terms of Standing Order No. 10.

Motion 1

Councillor Boubaker-Calder asked to withdraw her motion in terms of Standing Order No. 29.9 and to substitute with fresh text which had been agreed by all political parties.

Councillor Boubaker-Calder, seconded by Councillor Wincott, moved as follows:-

Fostering a Culture of Respect and Inclusivity in Local Government

"Council aspires to promote a culture of respect, inclusivity, and accountability, free from bullying, misogyny, and discriminatory behaviours, ensuring that all staff and elected members are safe to express their opinions without fear of harassment or discrimination.

Council notes:

- That despite progress in recent years, there remains in particular, under representation of women in local government.
- That structural and cultural issues present barriers to women and traditionally underrepresented groups from entering and remaining in local government as councillors as noted by COSLA in its 2022 councillors survey.
- That while progress has been made across society in Scotland and in Scottish local government in tackling discrimination in all its forms, we acknowledge that we are all on a journey and that discrimination and barriers still exist that prevent us from being a fully inclusive profession.
- That while recognising that we are in a political environment where debate and discussion can at times be robust, we must all seek to ensure that we are inclusive in our behaviours and in the words we use, to ensure that every voice is heard with respect.
- The Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee (SLARC) recommendation for fair compensation to attract a more diverse range of candidates underscores the need for systemic change to create a safer and more equitable environment in elected office positions.
- The SLARC Report in February 2024 that notes that councillors are subject to increasing abuse via social media which can be particularly targeted at young female members and that SLARC notes recent correspondence from the Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee to council chief executives saying *"We are aware that the long-standing issue of political culture and at times, the toxicity of debate, both within councils themselves but also across the broader political landscape and wider society as a whole – something that is particularly evident in online discourse – can act as a major barrier to diverse representation"*.

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Council therefore:

- Reaffirms its commitment to diversity, equality, and fair representation in local government and to upholding standards of behaviour and respect amongst all elected members as guided by the Councillors Code of Conduct.
- Calls on the leadership of all political parties to promote clear and consistent messaging that all discriminatory behaviours are unacceptable, especially amongst elected representatives at every sphere of representation.
- Agrees to engage with appropriate organisations to ensure that we are a welcoming organisation where discriminatory behaviours are unacceptable.
- Recommends that the Cross Party Leaders Group considers standards of behaviour and respect as a standing item on its agenda, encourages the development of appropriate training on all forms of discrimination for councillors and directs a review of our policies and procedures to be carried out (including the Member/Officer Protocols) in relation to discriminatory issues and related behaviours with any recommendations to Cabinet Committee or Council as appropriate".

### **Decision**

The council agreed the motion unanimously.

### **Motion 2**

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

### **Housing Emergency**

"Council notes with great concern

- the extreme pressures on housing and homelessness in Fife;
- that despite the approval of a medium term Homelessness Strategy 2024-2027 and the progress made over recent months in reducing void turnaround times, with re-provisioning of temporary accommodation and in increasing the number of properties available for relet, the number of households assessed as homeless and waiting for a tenancy and the number of families with children in temporary accommodation remains worryingly high;
- that like other local authorities across Scotland, Fife faces difficulties in meeting its statutory duties in regard to homelessness;
- pressures on the Housing Revenue Account that required a 5% rent increase;
- that Fife did not receive any of the additional £2m revenue funding for temporary accommodation announced by the Scottish Government prior to December 2023.
- the significant cut of 26% in the national Affordable Housing Programme made by the Scottish Government that will impact on the Council's own new build affordable housing programme, and the lack of additional capital funding as a consequence of the UK Budget.

Council therefore agrees to declare a Housing Emergency and requests the Head of Housing to work with partners to bring forward a Housing Emergency Action Plan to the Cabinet Committee in June, to supplement and accelerate already agreed actions and to address the Housing Emergency in Fife.

Council also calls on the Scottish Government to reverse its decision to cut the affordable housing programme budget by 26%".

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### Amendment

Councillor Alexander, seconded by Councillor Backhouse, moved as follows:-

"Council notes with great concern:

- the extreme pressures on housing and homelessness in Fife:
- that despite the approval of a medium-term Homelessness Strategy 2024-2027 and the progress made over recent months in reducing void turnaround times, with reprovisioning of temporary accommodation and in increasing the number of properties available for relet, the number of households assessed as homeless and waiting for a tenancy and the number of families with children in temporary accommodation remains worryingly high:
- that like other local authorities across Scotland, Fife faces difficulties in meeting its statutory duties in regard to homelessness:

Council also notes the circumstances that have led to the current situation over the last 2 years:

- The significant increases in the cost of construction of new builds due to rampant inflation in the construction sector , and the skill shortages caused by Brexit.
- The court judgment on Temporary Accommodation
- Fife Council voids timescales substantially worsening over the previous 2 years partly due to Court Case but also inefficiencies within Fife Council.
- Delays in Fife Council's new build programme
- The ideological impediments to property acquisitions by the administration particularly the buying back of former Council houses.
- The Housing Service has struggled with large delays in assessing tenants whose Fife Housing register applications require a Housing Functional Needs Assessment.
- Delays in bringing empty homes up to a lettable standard quickly,
- A surge in cases of damp and mould in properties resulting in a backlog of around 300 cases
- The foregoing all have previously influenced the inability of the HRA to balance its books without reducing CFCR.

Council also notes that the Fife Council affordable housing programme has benefited from and investment of more than £100 million over the last 10 years from the Scottish Government and that Housing Associations in Fife will have received grants in excess of £100 million.

Council also notes that the Scottish Government's ability to invest in infrastructure has now faced savage cuts of £1.6 billion from the Westminster Government, that the Scottish Budget has been approved by Holyrood, with no alternative to the housing proposals made by any party or group.

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Council further notes that the Scottish Government is focused on the target of delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032 and to support that target it will bring forward the review scheduled for 2026-27 to 2024, which will concentrate on deliverability.

Council believes that adding a slogan to the current housing situation will achieve little. It also believes that delaying effective action to June is just another example of complacency when the Council had the option to establish a Working Group in May 2022 and chose not to do so.

Council seeks:

- An urgent review of the HRA Capital Plan to maximise the provision of affordable homes using the quickest and most affordable way possible.
- A report from the Chief Executive to the Cabinet Committee asap addressing how Fife Council, Housing Associations, and others can collaborate to make best use of the Scottish Government substantial budget of £556 million for affordable homes the new financial year.
- A report to the Cabinet Committee of 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024 which will follow a review of the Councils Housing Service procedures in relation to housing allocations, repairs, eliminating inefficiency and proving to tenants that the high rent increases they have had to bear in recent years are worth the cost."

### **Roll Call**

#### **For the Motion - 36 votes**

Councillors Tom Adams, Mary Bain-Lockhart, Aude Boubaker-Calder, Patrick Browne, James Calder, Alistair Cameron, Ian Cameron, Alex Campbell, Al Clark, Eugene Clarke, Fiona Corps, Altany Craik, Colin Davidson, Dave Dempsey, Sean Dillon, Graeme Downie, Gavin Ellis, Linda Erskine, Peter Gulline, Judy Hamilton, Cara Hilton, Gary Holt, Robin Lawson, Jim Leishman, James Leslie, Kathleen Leslie, Jane Ann Liston, Donald Lothian, Julie MacDougall, Derek Noble, Gordon Pryde, David Ross, Jonny Tepp, Darren Watt, Jan Wincott and Conner Young.

#### **For the Amendment - 31 votes**

Councillors David Alexander, Blair Allan, Naz Anis-Miah, Lesley Backhouse, Alie Bain, David Barratt, Auxi Barrera, John Beare, Ken Caldwell, Rod Cavanagh, Derek Glen, Brian Goodall, Jean Hall Muir, Alycia Hayes, Stefan Hoggan-Radu, Andy Jackson, Louise Kennedy-Dalby, Rosemary Liewald, Carol Lindsay, David MacDiarmid, Lynn Mowatt, Sarah Neal, John O'Brien, Nicola Patrick, Bailey-Lee Robb, Sam Steele, Alistair Suttie, Ann Verner, Ross Vettraino, Craig Walker and Daniel Wilson.

### **Decision**

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

## **121. BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE PROVOST AS A MATTER OF URGENCY**

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