

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

At a Hybrid Meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee held in the Civic Space, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton on Wednesday, 22 November 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Ian Dickson, Gurpreet Singh Johal, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, James McElhill, Michelle McGinty, Lawrence O'Neill, Lauren Oxley, Martin Rooney, Hazel Sorrell* and Sophie Traynor.

*Arrived later in the meeting

Attending: Peter Hessest – Chief Executive; Peter Barry – Chief Officer, Housing and Employability; John Kerr, Housing Development and Homelessness Manager; Nicola Pettigrew, Housing Operations Manager; Alan Young, Housing Asset and Investment Manager; Martin Feeney, Building Services Manager; Nigel Ettles, Legal Officer; Nicola Moorcroft and Ashley MacIntyre, Committee Officers.

Also Attending: Chief Superintendent Lynn Ratcliff and Chief Inspector Ryan McMurdo, Police Scotland; Group Commander Neil Willerton and Station Commander Anthony Mallon, Argyll and Bute, East and West Dunbartonshire, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Apology: An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor John Millar.

Councillor Gurpreet Singh Johal in the Chair

STATEMENT BY CHAIR – AUDIO STREAMING

Councillor Singh Johal, Chair, advised that the meeting was being audio streamed and broadcast live to the internet and would be available for playback.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

RECORDING OF VOTES

The Committee agreed that all votes taken during the meeting would be done by roll call vote to ensure an accurate record.

OPEN FORUM

The Committee noted that no open forum questions had been submitted by members of the public.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee held on 23 August 2023 (Ordinary) and 25 October 2023 (Special) were submitted and approved as a correct record.

SCRUTINY REPORTS

(A) POLICE SCRUTINY REPORT

A report was submitted by the Divisional Commander, Police Scotland providing Members with an update for Quarter 2 (April to September 2023) on local policing in West Dunbartonshire.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Superintendent and Chief Inspector in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the update provided for Quarter 2.

(B) FIRE AND RESCUE SCRUTINY REPORT

A report was submitted by the Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service providing and update on Quarter 2 performance data measured against priorities in the West Dunbartonshire Local Fire and Rescue Plan.

After discussion and having heard the Group Commander in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the update provided for Quarter 2.

HOUSING AND EMPLOYABILITY DELIVERY PLAN 2023/24 MID-YEAR REPORT

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability, providing the Housing and Employability Delivery Plan for 2023/24 mid-year progress report.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability, the Housing Development and Homelessness Manager, the Housing Asset and Investment Manager and the Building Services Manager in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the progress achieved.

MORE HOMES WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE - WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLY DELIVERY PROGRAMME

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability providing an update on progress with West Dunbartonshire's More Homes Programme, which oversees the delivery of the Council's new home building programme.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability and the Housing Development and Homelessness Manager in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the content of the report and the progress made to date in the delivery of the Council's More Homes West Dunbartonshire approach.

SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER/REGULATION OF SOCIAL HOUSING IN SCOTLAND, UPDATE REPORT

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability providing a mid-year update in terms of how the Council is performing against the Scottish Social Housing Charter indicators and an update into how the Council is meeting the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability in further explanation, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report recognising the mid-year progress in terms of meeting the Outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter;
- (2) to note that, following the approval of the Annual Assurance Statement by the Committee on 25 October 2023, this has now been submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator as per the regulatory requirement;
- (3) to note that the Annual Charter Performance Report has now been published and a summary would be provided to all tenants with the winter edition of the Housing News; and
- (4) to note that a full annual progress report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter will be submitted to the August 2024 meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee, this would include the Annual Assurance Statement.

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2022-27 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability providing a progress report on the West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy 2022 – 2027.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability and the Development and Homelessness Manager in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed the progress made in meeting the aims and objectives of The More Homes Better Homes West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy 2022 - 2027 and notes the contents of the Local Housing Strategy Progress Report – October 2023.

STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN 2024/25 - 2028/29

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability seeking approval for the More Homes West Dunbartonshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) for 2024/25 – 2028/29 which requires to be submitted to the Scottish Government.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability and the Housing Development and Homelessness Manager in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) the draft SHIP 2024/25 - 2028/29 as appended to the report, designed to continue the delivery of an ambitious programme of new affordable homes in compliance with the West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy 2022 -2027 (Approved November 2021); and
- (2) to delegate authority to the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability to implement the investment plan in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

REVIEW OF WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE AFFORDABLE HOUSING DESIGN STANDARD

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability seeking approval for a revision to the current West Dunbartonshire Design Standard for Housing Supported by the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, which has been in place since April 2019, to improve the quality of new affordable homes being built in West Dunbartonshire.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the content of the report which outlined the progress in developing the revised Design Standard;

- (2) in principle the revised West Dunbartonshire Design Standard 2023 as appended to the report;
- (3) that the new Standard be applied to any new projects receiving funding from the Affordable Housing Supply Programme from 1 April 2024; and
- (4) to delegate authority to the More Homes Board to consider any proposed variations to the Design Standard.

HOME AT THE HEART 2019-24 - WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE'S RAPID RE-HOUSING TRANSITION PLAN UPDATE AND NEW APPROACHES TO HOMELESSNESS PROGRESS REPORT

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability providing an update on “Home at the Heart” – West Dunbartonshire’s Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan (RRTP) for the period 2019-24 and new approaches to homelessness.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability, the Housing Development and Homelessness Manager and the Housing Operations Manager, in further explanation and in answer to Members’ questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the progress and challenges made in the first four years of “Home at the Heart”, which will inform a report to the Scottish Government at the end of August 2023 and note the main objectives for Year 5 in paragraphs 4.16 - 4.26 of the report;
- (2) to note that the Council’s housing allocation letting target for homeless households is 69% for 2023/24 as set out in paragraph 4.20 of the report and note the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability, will keep the target under close review based on current modelling projections;
- (3) to note the continued uncertainty around future funding and specifically the risk to the Housing First approach;
- (4) to note and approve that the Scottish Government funding of £251,146 was awarded for 2023/24 for the specific delivery of the West Dunbartonshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan;
- (5) to approve the new Monitoring Template of West Dunbartonshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan including spend, attached as Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (6) to note impact of legislative changes around Local Connection.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET CONTROL REPORT 2023/24 TO 31 AUGUST (PERIOD 5)

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on the financial performance to 31 August 2023 (Period 5) of the HRA revenue and capital budgets for 2023/24.

Having heard the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability, in further explanation, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the revenue analysis shows projected adverse variances of £2.309m; and
- (2) to note the net projected annual position in relation to the capital plan highlighted an in-year adverse variance of £63.776m (51.1%) which is made up of re-profiling of £64.176m (51.4%) and overspend of £0.401m (0.3%) as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

It should be noted that these are the financial projections as at Period 5 which were reported to Council on 25 October 2023. Since they were produced, the Chief Officer for Housing and Employability, in conjunction with the Council's Chief Officer for Resources has progressed work to identify options to reduce the projected revenue overspend. This work is still being progressed however, current indications are that there will be viable options to reduce the in year overspend to the extent that no contribution from the General Fund will be required.

GENERAL FUND HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES FINANCIAL REPORT 2023/24 PERIOD 5 (31 AUGUST 2023)

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on the financial performance to 31 August 2023 (Period 5) of General Fund services under the auspices of the Housing and Communities Committee.

Having heard the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability in further explanation, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report which showed the revenue budget forecast to overspend against budget by £0.070m(2.1%) at the year end.
- (2) to note the net projected annual position in relation to relevant capital projects which is showed no projected variance; and
- (3) to note the progress on efficiencies incorporated into budgets for 2023/24.

The meeting closed at 11.48 a.m.