

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee held by video conference on Wednesday, 3 February 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Gail Casey, Karen Conaghan, Ian Dickson, Diane Docherty, Caroline McAllister, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Iain McLaren, Marie McNair, John Millar, John Mooney and Sally Page.

Attending: Peter Barry, Chief Officer – Housing and Employability; Angela Wilson, Chief Officer – Supply, Distribution and Property; John Kerr, Housing Development and Homelessness Manager; Edward Thomas, Housing Operations Manager; Martin Feeney, Building Services Manager; Janice Rainey, Finance Business Partner; Sally Michael, Principal Solicitor; Alan Young, Housing Asset and Investment Manager; Michelle Lynn, Asset Coordinator; Lynn Straker, Committee Officer.

Also Attending: Chief Superintendent John Paterson, Police Scotland; Group Commander Gregg McKearney, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor Diane Docherty in the Chair

STATEMENT BY CHAIR – AUDIO STREAMING

Councillor Docherty, Chair, welcomed everyone to the February meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee which was being held remotely, in terms of Section 43 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Accordingly, the Chair advised that a process/procedure had been developed for the meeting (a copy of which had previously been circulated to Members). Thereafter, the Committee agreed to note the procedure in place for the conduct of the meeting and the meeting then continued by video conferencing.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee held on 4 November 2020 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

OPEN FORUM

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

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY (PRIVATE SECTOR) 2021-2024

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability seeking approval for the Empty Homes Strategy (Private Sector) for the period 2021-2024.

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) to note the progress and achievements made in implementing the previous Empty Homes Strategy for the period 2016-2019 including the positive impact of the Council's dedicated Empty Homes Officer; and
- (2) to approve the new Empty Homes Strategy to cover the period 2021-2024.

RAPID RE-HOUSING TRANSITION PLAN AND NEW APPROACHES TO HOMELESSNESS UPDATE REPORT

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability providing the Committee with an update in terms of Scottish Government funding received to deliver the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP), "Home at the Heart" and providing an update on the local response to the new recommendations made by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG).

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) to approve additional funding allocation that had been awarded for 2020/21 (£156k), and the funding awarded for 2021/22 (£234k), to meet the objectives of the West Dunbartonshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan;
- (2) to note the ongoing review of RRTP year 2 activities and some of the priority workstreams highlighted within section 4.7 of the report;

- (3) to note the progress being made in developing a local response to the new HARSAG recommendations;
- (4) to note the developments in relation to the proposed changes to the “local connection” provisions within the homelessness legislation;
- (5) to note the current position in terms of the new Unsuitable Accommodation Order; and
- (6) to note that an annual update and progress report would be provided to the next Housing and Communities Committee in May 2021, including an updated Year 3 plan.

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

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

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

- (1) 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 including the first handovers of the new homes at the Haldane development; and
- (2) to note that the report and the delivery of the Council's ambitious plans to deliver new homes to meet housing need would include significant Elected Member involvement in its delivery and as such a regular update report would be provided to each Housing and Communities Committee.

“INVOLVING YOU”, WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL'S TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2021-2024

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability highlighting the Council's statutory obligations in relation to tenant participation and seeking approval for the new Tenant Participation Strategy for the period 2021-2024.

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) to note the progress and achievements made in relation to the implementation of the previous Tenant Participation Strategy 2017– 2020, including the key role played by tenant representatives;

- (2) to approve the draft West Dunbartonshire Tenant Participation Strategy 2021-2024 and associated action plan, developed in conjunction with tenants; and
- (3) to invite the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability to ensure the effective implementation of the Strategy and associated action plan and provided an annual update report to the Housing and Communities Committee.

BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT – P9 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

A report was submitted by the Chief Of Officer – Resources providing an update on the financial performance to 31 December 2020 (Period 9) of the Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets for 2020/21.

After discussion and having heard the Finance Business Partner in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that the revenue account currently showed a projected annual favourable variance of £1.911m (4.33% of the total budget), of which £2.029m was COVID related; and
- (2) to note the net projected annual position in relation to relevant capital projects which highlighted an in-year variance of £13.945m (23.28%) due to projected slippage of £14.928m (24.92%) and an overspend of £0.983m (-1.64%).

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT FOR P9 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing the Committee with an update on the financial performance to 31 December 2020 (Period 9) of those services under the auspices of the Housing and Communities Committee.

After discussion and having heard the Finance Business Partner in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report which showed the revenue budget forecast to overspend against budget by £0.434m (8.56%) at the year-end. The adverse variance due to COVID-19 was £0.471m therefore the underlying variance after COVID-19 was £0.037m favourable;
- (2) to note the net projected annual position in relation to relevant capital projects which was showing no projected variance; and
- (3) to note the progress on efficiencies incorporated into budgets for 2020/21.

SCRUTINY REPORTS

(A) Police Scrutiny Report

A report was submitted by the Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland providing Members with an update on Quarter 3 2020/21 performance against the Local Police Plan.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Superintendent in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the update given on progress against the Local Police Plan.

(B) Fire and Rescue Scrutiny Report

A report was submitted by the Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service providing the Committee with appropriate performance data measured against priorities in the West Dunbartonshire Local Fire and Rescue Plan for the period 01 October 2020 – 31 December 2020.

After discussion and having heard the Local Senior Officer in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed that to note the contents of the attached Scottish Fire and Rescue Service West Dunbartonshire Council Year to Date Report.

The meeting closed at 4.35 p.m.