

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee held by Zoom Video Conference on Wednesday, 2 September 2020 at 10.05 a.m.

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

Attending: Peter Barry, Strategic Lead - Housing and Employability; Jim McAloon, Strategic Lead – Regeneration; John Kerr, Housing Development and Homelessness Manager; Edward Thomas, Housing Operations Manager; Martin Feeney, Building Services Manager; Gillian McNeilly, Finance Manager; Sally Michael, Principal Solicitor; Stephen Daly, Citizen and Digital Manager; Alan Young, Housing Asset and Investment Manager; and Craig Stewart and Lynn Straker, Committee Officers.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Gail Casey and John Millar.

Councillor Diane Docherty in the Chair

STATEMENT BY CHAIR – AUDIO STREAMING

Councillor Docherty, Chair, welcomed everyone to the September 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 5 February 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.

NEW APPROACHES TO HOMELESSNESS UPDATE REPORT – “MORE THAN A ROOF 2017-20” FINAL REPORT AND “HOME AT THE HEART 2019-24” YEAR 1 UPDATE ON OUR RAPID RE-HOUSING TRANSITION PLAN

A report was submitted by Strategic Lead – Housing and Employability providing a final report in relation to achieving the aims and objectives of “More than a Roof”, West Dunbartonshire Council’s Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Strategy for the period 2017-20, and a Year 1 update on “Home at the Heart”, West Dunbartonshire Council’s Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan (RRTP) for the period 2019-24.

After discussion and having heard the Strategic Lead – 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 ‘More Than A Roof’ strategy;
- (2) to note the progress made in Year 1 of “Home at the Heart”, which informed upon an update report submitted to the Scottish Government at the end of June 2020;
- (3) to note that the revised Year 1 underspend outlined at 4.17 was used to help cover the shortfall of funding to deliver Year 2 of the RRTP as detailed at 4.19 of this report;
- (4) to approve the main objectives for Year 2, including the lets required for homeless households in order to meet the targets outlined in the RRTP and the trialling of some new pilot projects aimed at preventing homelessness;
- (5) to note the Housing Solutions Partnership would develop the local response to those Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) recommendations that required to be delivered locally and provide a quarterly update to the Housing and Communities Committee thereon; and
- (6) that the Strategic Lead, Housing and Employability be requested to develop a response to the Scottish Government’s current Local Connection consultation inclusive of the involvement of the members of the Housing and Communities Committee.

MORE HOMES – WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ‘BUILDING BACK BETTER’ – WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLY PROGRAMME

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

After discussion and having heard the Strategic Lead – 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 content of the report and the progress made to date in the delivery of the Council’s More Homes West Dunbartonshire approach;
- (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 member involvement in its delivery and, as such, a regular update report would be provided to each meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee; and
- (3) to note that a number of issues discussed in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic would be more fully detailed at future meetings of the Housing and Communities Committee due to the emerging nature of the impacts.

SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER UPDATE REPORT

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Housing and Employability providing West Dunbartonshire Council’s annual progress report on meeting the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

After discussion and having heard the Strategic Lead – Housing and Employability and relevant officers in further explanation and in answer to Members’ questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report and recognised the ongoing improvements within housing and homelessness services in West Dunbartonshire;
- (2) to note the new regulatory requirements detailed within the report and, in particular, the consultation being carried out by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) on the future regulatory approach in response to the Covid-19 pandemic; and
- (3) that a further progress report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter would be submitted to the November 2020 meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee. This report would include detailed benchmarking information and the Council’s Annual Assurance Statement.

“INVOLVING YOU” WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL’S TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2017/2020 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Housing and Employability providing the final annual progress report on the implementation of “Involving You”, West Dunbartonshire Council’s Tenant Participation Strategy for the period 2017-2020.

The Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the progress and achievements made in implementing the third year of “Involving You”, including the key role played by tenant representatives;
- (2) to note that consultation had begun on a new Tenant Participation Strategy which was planned to be developed over the coming months and a report provided to the meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee in February 2021 for approval; and
- (3) to approve the extension of the current strategy to cover the period up until February 2021 when a new strategy would be presented to the Housing and Communities Committee covering the period 2021-24.

RENT COLLECTION POLICY

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Resources seeking approval of the revised Rent Collection Policy.

After discussion and having heard the Strategic Lead – Housing and Employability and the Housing Operations Manager in further explanation and in answer to Members’ questions, the Committee approved the revised rent collection policy.

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING: ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT ANNUAL UPDATE (2019/2020)

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – People and Technology providing detailed analysis on employee wellbeing and attendance from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 for the Strategic Lead areas covered by the Housing and Communities Committee and an annual update on Council wide attendance for the same period.

The Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the decrease of 40.21 full time equivalent (FTE) days lost (approx. 6.2%) in service area covered by this report compared to the same period last year as outlined in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report; and
- (2) to note the decrease in Council wide sickness absence of 3147 FTE days lost (approx. 6.4%) compared to 2018/19 as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 31 JULY 2020 (PERIOD 4)

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Housing and Employability providing an update on the financial performance to 31 July 2020 (Period 4) of the HRA revenue and capital budgets for 2020/21.

After discussion and having heard the Strategic Lead – Housing and Employability and relevant officers in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report which showed the revenue budget forecast to underspend against budget by £1.002m (2.38%) at the year-end; and
- (2) to note the net projected annual position in relation to relevant capital projects which was highlighting an in-year variance of £12.622m (21.07%) due to projected slippage.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2020/21 AS AT PERIOD 4 (31 JULY 2020)

A joint report was submitted by the Strategic Leads – Housing and Employability and Regeneration providing an update on the financial performance to 31 July 2020 (Period 4) of those services under the auspices of the Housing and Communities Committee.

After discussion and having heard the Strategic Lead – Housing and Employability in further explanation 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 £1,839m (62%) at the year-end;
- (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.

The meeting closed at 11:47 a.m.