

# MORAY COUNCIL

## Minute of Meeting of the Housing and Community Safety Committee

Tuesday, 07 May 2024

Council Chambers, Council Office, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX

### **PRESENT**

Councillor James Allan, Ms Alison Angus, Ms Jane Bartecki, Councillor Neil Cameron, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Amber Dunbar, Councillor Jérémie Fernandes, Councillor Donald Gatt, Councillor David Gordon, Councillor Sandy Keith, Councillor Scott Lawrence, Councillor Marc Macrae, Councillor Paul McBain, Ms Elizabeth McKnockiter, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor Derek Ross, Councillor John Stuart

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Head of Housing and Property Services, Acting Head of Economic Growth and Development, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, Property Services Manager, Housing Services Manager, Housing Strategy and Development Manager, Housing Needs Manager, Building Services Manager, Ms D Murray, Senior Housing Officer, Mrs G Anderson, Senior Solicitor and Mrs L Rowan, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the Committee.

#### **1 Chair**

Councillor Dunbar, being Chair of the Housing and Community Safety Committee, chaired the meeting.

#### **2 Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests**

In terms of Standing Order 21 and 23 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from Group Leaders or Spokespersons regarding any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda.

Councillor Dunbar declared an interest in Item 10 "Moray Affordable Housing Investment Programme" stating that she could potentially have a future interest in the Acquisitions Programme and stated that she would leave the Chamber during consideration of this item and that Councillor Gatt would assume the role of Chair.

There were no further declarations of Member's interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

#### **3 Resolution**

The Committee resolved that under Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the public and media representatives be excluded from the meeting for the items of business detailed below, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the relevant Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Paragraph Number of Minute	Paragraph Number of Schedule 7a and Reason
10	9 - Information on terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the Authority.

#### **4 Minute of meeting dated 13 February 2024**

The Minute of the meeting of the Housing and Community Safety Committee held on 13 February 2024 was submitted and approved.

#### **5 Written Questions**

The Committee noted that no written questions had been submitted.

#### **6 Community Safety Strategy Annual Report 2023**

The Committee had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) providing information on the Community Safety Annual Report 2022/23.

During discussion surrounding the identified hotspots of antisocial behaviour in Elgin, it was noted that the Annual Report listed these as the Town Centre, Cooper Park, and Alexandra Road. It was presumed that Alexandra Road referred to the Bus Depot, and there was a request for this to be clearly stated in the report to reassure the public about the targeted efforts of the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Task and Finish Group in these areas.

In response, the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager agreed to this request.

During further discussion, it was noted that the root of antisocial behaviour often stems from poverty, and it was queried whether a representative from the Income Maximisation Team or the Benefits Team could be included in the Moray Community Safety Strategic Group (CSSG).

In response, the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager advised that she would extend an invitation to both the Income Maximisation Team and the Benefits Team to join the CSSG.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

- i) note the findings of the annual report subject to references to Alexandra Road being changed to the Bus Depot;
- ii) approve the recommendations within the report as set out in paragraph 3.7; and
- iii) that a representative from the Income Maximisation Team and the Benefits Team be invited to join the Moray Community Safety Strategic Group.

## **7 Evaluation of Tenancy Sustainment Fund**

The Committee had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) detailing the review and evaluation of the Tenancy Sustainment Fund (TSF), which was active during the rent campaign in March 2024, and is now seeking approval to establish it on a recurring basis.

During discussion, Councillor Gatt raised concern that 1 in 6 tenants appeared to be in rent arrears and encouraged further engagement with tenants to establish any underlying reasons. Councillor Gatt supported the use of the Tenant Sustainment Fund as a positive way to reduce rent arrears however moved that recommendation 2.1 iii) be amended to "approve the establishment of a TSF for financial year 2024/25 with a review in the next financial year, in line with the principles set out in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.9". This was unanimously agreed.

Thereafter, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

- i) note the review and evaluation of the Tenancy Sustainment Fund (TSF) as detailed in Section 4 of the report;
- ii) note the reduction in rent arrears achieved in March 2024 as detailed in paragraph 4.7 of the report;
- iii) approve the establishment of a TSF for financial year 2024/25 with a review in the next financial year, in line with the principles set out in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.9 of the report; and
- iv) delegate authority to the Head of Housing and Property to extend protections under the rent harmonisation approach for adversely impacted tenants and for discretion in applying a further rent-free period in 'week 53', as set out in paragraph 4.10 of the report.

## **8 Tenant Participation Strategy 2024-2029**

The Committee had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) presenting the revised draft Tenant Participation Strategy (2024-2029) for approval, following a recent consultation with tenants.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

- i) note the feedback received during the consultation period;

- ii) approve the revised draft Tenant Participation Strategy 2024-2029 for implementation as set out in Appendix I of the report; and
- iii) note that there were no changes made to the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) at Appendix II of the report, following the consultation.

## **9 Housing Investment 2024-25**

Under reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of the meeting of Moray Council dated 28 February 2024, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informed the Committee of the planned investment work included within the Housing Investment Programme 2024-25, for which budget had been approved.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

- i) note the planned works which will improve the Council's Housing stock;
- ii) approve the improvement actions detailed in Appendix II of the report; and
- iii) delegate authority to the Head of Housing and Property, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and Chair of this Committee, to bring forward budgetary provision from future years in line with capacity to deliver per paragraph 4.2 of the report.

## **10 Moray Affordable Housing Investment Programme**

Councillor Dunbar, having declared an interest in this item, left the meeting at this juncture and Councillor Gatt, being Depute Chair of the Committee, assumed the role of Chair.

Under reference to paragraph 9 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee dated 13 February 2024, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informed the Committee of progress on the Affordable Housing Investment Programme in Moray.

During discussion surrounding the new phases of the Banff Road Development in Keith, it was queried whether the Elected Members could visit the site near completion to better understand modern technologies being used in homes such as air source heating.

In response, the Housing Strategy and Development Manager agreed to arrange for Elected Members to attend a site visit to the Banff Road Development in Keith near completion of the development.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed:

- i) to note the resource planning assumption received from the Scottish Government and its implications for the development programme;
- ii) to note progress on the Moray Affordable Housing Investment Programme;

- iii) to note progress on delivery of housing at Bilbohall, Elgin;
- iv) to note progress on the delivery of the Council's new build and acquisition programme; and
- v) that arrangements be made for Elected Members to attend a site visit to the Banff Road Development in Keith near completion of the development.

Councillor Dunbar re-joined the meeting at this juncture.

## **11 Building Services Trading and Operation Budget 2024-25 - Annual Budget [Para 9]**

Under reference to paragraph 9 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee dated 9 May 2023, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) presented the Building and Services Trading Operation Budget for 2024/25.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

- i) approve the proposed Building Services Trading Operation Budget for 2024/25, as detailed in section 5 and Appendix I of the report;
- ii) approve the service development proposals at a cost of £235k as detailed in section 6 of the report;
- iii) note the 2024/25 Building Services business priorities highlighted in section 7 of the report; and
- iv) note the Building Services anticipated key performance outputs for 2024/25, as set out in section 8 of the report.