

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Town House,
ABERDEEN, 13 July 2022

MINUTE OF MEETING OF ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Sederunt:

Lord Provost David Cameron, Chairperson;
Depute Provost Steve Delaney; and

COUNCILLORS

GILLIAN AL-SAMARAI
NURUL HOQUE ALI
CHRISTIAN ALLARD
ALISON ALPHONSE
JENNIFER BONSELL
MARIE BOULTON
DESMOND BOUSE
RICHARD BROOKS
HAZEL CAMERON
DONNA CLARK
JOHN COOKE
NEIL COPLAND
WILLIAM CORMIE
BARNEY CROCKETT
SARAH CROSS
DEREK DAVIDSON
LEE FAIRFULL
EMMA FARQUHAR
GORDON GRAHAM

ROSS GRANT
MARTIN GREIG
DELL HENRICKSON
RYAN HOUGHTON
MICHAEL HUTCHISON
SANDRA MACDONALD
NEIL MacGREGOR
ALEXANDER McLELLAN
CIARÁN McRAE
DUNCAN MASSEY
JESSICA MENNIE
ALEX NICOLL
MIRANDA RADLEY
KAIRIN VAN SWEEDEN
LYNN THOMSON
DEENA TISSERA
SIMON WATSON
and
IAN YUILL

Lord Provost David Cameron, in the Chair.

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be found [here](#).

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

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ABORTIONS - BUFFER ZONES

1. The Council had before it the wording of the written request for this special Council meeting which had been signed by 20 members in accordance with Standing Order 8.2.2:-

“That this Council

- (1) Agree that the decision taken in the Supreme Court of America to overturn the landmark ruling of Roe V Wade is a step backwards for human rights.
 - (2) Agree that this decision in the American Courts does not affect the rights of women in Great Britain it is nevertheless a decision not worthy of the United States of America.
 - (3) Agrees with Dr Edward Morris, president of the UK’s Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists who said: “Limiting access to abortions won’t reduce the number of abortions happening, it will just make abortions less safe.
 - (4) Notes American-based anti-choice group *40 Days for Life* have held a ‘prayer vigil’ at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary hospital earlier this year.
- (1) Therefore, agrees that Council should liaise with the Scottish Government in order to bring forward a byelaw to introduce buffer zones as a short-term measure to prevent fear, harassment or intimidation for any women using clinics that provide abortion services until such time as the Scottish Government legislate on the matter.

With a report coming back to the next Council on progress.”

Councillor Radley moved, seconded by Councillor Fairfull:-

That this Council -

- (1) agrees that the decision taken by the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of Dobbs v Jackson Women’s Health Organisation to overturn the landmark ruling of Roe v Wade, which has now removed access to safe abortion for millions of women in the United States of America, is a step backwards for human rights;
- (2) notes that the decision in Dobbs v Jackson Women’s Health Organisation will not have legal implications beyond the United States of America, but believes that this will embolden those around the world who seek to restrict access to safe abortions;
- (3) agrees with Dr Edward Morris, president of the UK’s Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, who said “Limiting access to abortions won’t reduce the number of abortions happening, it will just make abortions less safe”;
- (4) notes with concern that protests, by groups and individuals who seek to restrict access to safe abortions, have already taken place at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary this year, and further notes that some of these have been organised under the guise of being ‘prayer vigils’;
- (5) understands that protests outside abortion clinics can cause those seeking access to services to feel distressed, alarmed, intimidated and/or harassed;
- (6) agrees that nobody seeking to access abortion services in Aberdeen should be subject to harassment and intimidation;

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- (7) believes that a restriction on protests, within close proximity to abortion clinics, that seek to influence the behaviour of abortion service users and providers, often described as a 'buffer zone', would be a necessary and proportionate measure;
- (8) believes that a 'buffer zone' should be established at any appropriate healthcare sites that provide abortion services in Aberdeen;
- (9) notes the email sent by Councillor Radley, Convener of the Operational Delivery Committee, to Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister; and
- (10) instructs the Chief Officer - Governance to liaise with the Scottish Government and COSLA to explore options to establish protest-free buffer zones including but not limited to potentially implementing a local byelaw, and to report back to the next meeting of Full Council.

From: Miranda Radley
Sent: 01 July 2022 18:04
To: FirstMinister@gov.scot
Subject: Aberdeen Buffer Zone

Dear Nicola,

Like thousands of other women across the country, I am heartbroken at the recent decision of the United States Supreme Court to overturn Roe v Wade, which has denied millions of women access to safe abortion.

While the judgement may not have any legal implications for Scotland, it will embolden those who wish to change our laws, who wish to take away women's access to safe abortions, and who are protesting outside of hospitals to make that happen.

We have already seen, in Aberdeen and across Scotland, protests outside of maternity clinics. These protests intimidate and harass those who are seeking to access safe and legal abortions in Scotland. They cause distress and alarm to those accessing services through our NHS.

We pride ourselves in Scotland that our NHS is free at the point of use, and we need to take all possible steps to ensure that this extends to being free of harassment or intimidation.

I ran on a manifesto which included a pledge to establish protest-free buffer zones around abortion clinics in the city. I appreciate that the journey to doing this is complex and challenging but I am resolute in belief that we need to see a buffer zone established in Aberdeen, by whatever means.

I noted with great interest that the recent summit on abortion access that you suggested a 'test council', or perhaps more than one council, could potentially proceed with a byelaw.

I would be grateful if you could consider Aberdeen City Council to be a 'test council', and I would welcome any support that you could offer to help establish a buffer zone in Aberdeen.

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I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Miranda

Miranda Radley
Convener of Operational Delivery
Aberdeen City Council

Councillor Tissera moved as an amendment, seconded by Councillor Thomson:-

That this Council -

- (1) agrees that the decision taken in the Supreme Court of United States to overturn the Landmark ruling of Roe v Wade is a step backwards for human rights;
- (2) agrees that this decision in the Supreme Court of United States does not affect the rights of women in Great Britain it is nevertheless a decision not worthy of the United States of America;
- (3) agrees with Dr Edward Morris, president of the UK's Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, who said: "Limiting access to abortions won't reduce the number of abortions happening, it will just make abortions less safe";
- (4) notes American-based anti-choice group *40 Days for Life* have held a 'prayer vigil' at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary hospital earlier this year;
- (5) agrees that no person should fear judgement, harassment or intimidation while seeking healthcare services in Aberdeen; and
- (6) therefore, instructs the Chief Officer - Governance to liaise with the Scottish Government in order to bring forward a byelaw to introduce buffer zones as a short-term measure to prevent fear, harassment or intimidation for any women using clinics that provide abortion services until such time as the Scottish Government legislate on the matter, and to report back to the next Full Council meeting on any progress.

On a division, there voted:-

For the motion (24) - Lord Provost; Depute Provost; and Councillors Al-Samarai, Allard, Alphonse, Bouse, Hazel Cameron, Clark, Cooke, Copland, Cormie, Davidson, Fairfull, Greig, Henrickson, Hutchison, MacGregor, McLellan, McRae, Mennie, Nicoll, Radley, van Sweeden and Yuill.

For the amendment (15) - Councillors Ali, Bonsell, Boulton, Brooks, Crockett, Cross, Farquhar, Graham, Grant, Houghton, Macdonald, Massey, Thomson, Tissera and Watson.

The Council resolved:-

to adopt the motion.

- DAVID CAMERON, Lord Provost.