

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Town House,
ABERDEEN, 16 July 2024

MINUTE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Sederunt:

Lord Provost David Cameron;
Depute Provost Steve Delaney, Chairperson; 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
DEREK DAVIDSON
EMMA FARQUHAR
GORDON GRAHAM
ROSS GRANT
MARTIN GREIG

DELL HENRICKSON
MICHAEL HUTCHISON
MICHAEL KUSZNIR
GRAEME LAWRENCE
SANDRA MACDONALD
NEIL MacGREGOR
ALEXANDER McLELLAN
KEN McLEOD
M. TAUQEER MALIK
DUNCAN MASSEY
JESSICA MENNIE
ALEX NICOLL
MIRANDA RADLEY
JENNIFER STEWART
KAIRIN VAN SWEEDEN
LYNN THOMSON
SIMON WATSON
and
IAN YUILL

Depute Provost Steve Delaney, 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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DECLARATION OF INTERESTS AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

1. Councillor Grant declared an interest in relation to the item of business by virtue of his employment by Aberdeen Inspired and withdrew from the meeting.

Councillor McLellan advised that he had a connection in relation to the item as the Council's appointed observer to the Board of Our Union Street, however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

WRITTEN REQUEST FOR SPECIAL MEETING

2. The Council had before it the wording of the written request for this special meeting which had been signed by 14 members in accordance with Standing Order 8.2.2:-

"The business to be transacted relates to the business regarding THE ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL (CITY CENTRE, ABERDEEN) (TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT) (EXPERIMENTAL) ORDER 2023 - STATUTORY PUBLIC CONSULTATION."

With reference to Article 15 of the minute of meeting of the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee of 11 June 2024, the Council had before it a report by the Executive Director of City Regeneration and Environment, which had been referred to it by three members of the Committee in accordance with Standing Order 34.1.

The report recommended:-

that the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee -

- (a) note the benefits highlighted, to date, by the bus operators, and recognise the measures would support continuing improvements. Similarly, noting the measures supported active travel by way of walking or cycling. Collectively, the measures were a vital component of the City Centre Masterplan for establishing an attractive and vibrant city centre, with an environment that was conducive to encouraging footfall. Furthermore, choice remained in terms of access, with car parks and on-street parking capacity unaffected, and a network of appropriate distributor roads available, whether for access or through traffic;
- (b) approve the making of "The Aberdeen City Council (City Centre, Aberdeen) (Traffic Management) Experimental Order 2023" as a permanent Order, albeit with continued monitoring in terms of the ongoing City Centre Masterplan; and
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer - Operations to commence the procedure for the Order to be made permanent.

The Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee resolved:-

- (i) to agree the recommendations subject to (ii) and (iii) below;
- (ii) in the context of the ongoing construction works on Union Street and around the New Market development, to instruct the Chief Officer - Operations to introduce a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) to suspend the Bus Gates on Union Street (westbound only) / Market Street (southbound only), between its junctions with Adelphi and Hadden Street; this allowing all classes of vehicle to turn left

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- from Union Street onto Market Street, thereafter restricting general traffic to a left only turn at the bottom of Market Street onto Trinity Quay (Virginia Street), this to aid continued access and servicing of the businesses on Market Street and Shiprow throughout the remaining period of construction; and
- (iii) to instruct the Chief Officer - Operations to report to this Committee in 18 months' time on the operation and impact of this city centre traffic management regime and to make any recommendations for modifications he considers appropriate.

Following the conclusion of questions to officers, Councillor Yuill advised that he had a connection in relation to the item, in response to the Michie family having been mentioned, having worked for the Michie family many years ago and having maintained contact with them since then, however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Malik moved, seconded by Councillor Watson:-

That the Council -

- (1) note that the Press and Journal's Common-Sense Compromise campaign was only possible thanks to Aberdeen Labour referring the matter to Full Council;
- (2) agree that businesses right across the city are angry and disappointed with the SNP Administration at Aberdeen City Council for killing footfall in our city by introducing bus gates without introducing pedestrianisation of the central part of Union Street;
- (3) agree that the report in June 2022 initiated by the previous Administration brought forward the economic impact assessment for pedestrianisation of Union Street middle section as noted [here](#);
- (4) agree that the SNP Administration chose to amend the recommendations and in doing so never brought forward an impact assessment of their proposals which has resulted in Union Street becoming a ghost town;
- (5) agree that the confidence of business is at rock bottom thanks to the inadequacy of the SNP Administration who once again have spectacularly failed our city;
- (6) agree with Bob Keiller, Chair of Our Union Street, who said in a letter to the Council *"From our discussions this afternoon (15.07.24), it is now clear that there is no legal obstacle to adopting the proposal; it simply requires political will. To be clear status quo will result in footfall further dwindling and business closing. We need significant change, and we need it quickly"*;
- (7) agree that pedestrianisation of the central section of Union Street is the way forward for our city;
- (8) instruct the Chief Officer - Operations to rescind The Aberdeen City Council (City Centre, Aberdeen) (Traffic Management) Experimental Order 2023, as soon as practicable, with budget of £100,000 for removing and reinstating roads infrastructure to come from the General Fund Capital Programme contingency;
- (9) note there is a risk that the specific grant funding of c.£8m, from the Bus Partnership Fund for the roads infrastructure on and around South College Street, may have to be returned to Transport Scotland. If this were to happen, that the Council will fund any repayment from the Uncommitted General Fund reserves; and

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- (10) thereafter instruct the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning to bring a report to the October Council meeting on setting up a connectivity Commission like Glasgow and the Clyde Valley to look at the following:-
- Phase One - report focuses on recommendations for Aberdeen City Council to improve connectivity within the city centre of Aberdeen.
 - Phase Two - outlines recommendations to reshape the strategic road network so as to improve connectivity in the Aberdeen City Region over the coming decades.

Councillor Yuill moved as an amendment, seconded by Councillor Allard:-

That the Council -

- (1) welcome the Co-Leaders' hosting of a round table meeting of business groups, bus operators, and others to discuss the city centre bus priority measures;
- (2) reaffirm the City Centre Masterplan objective of turning Union Street into a destination rather than a through route;
- (3) agree that successful businesses are vital to the future of Aberdeen city centre;
- (4) note that any changes to city centre traffic management arrangements would require equality impact assessments;
- (5) in the context of the ongoing construction works on Union Street and around the New Market development, instruct the Chief Officer - Operations to introduce a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) to suspend Bus Gates on Union Street (westbound only) / Market Street (southbound only), between its junctions with Adelphi and Hadden Street; this allowing all classes of vehicle to turn left from Union Street onto Market Street, thereafter restricting general traffic to a left only turn at the bottom of Market Street onto Trinity Quay (Virginia Street), this to aid continued access and servicing of the businesses on Market Street and Shiprow throughout the remaining period of construction, with the cost of this being met as part of the Capital budget for "City Centre & Beach Masterplans : Market Redevelopment";
- (6) instruct the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning, using funding from the Bus Lane Enforcement reserve, to report as soon as possible on:
 1. the feasibility and impact of reopening Bridge Street to all vehicles in one or both directions.
 2. the feasibility and impact of removing the ban on right turns from Union Terrace onto Rosemount Viaduct; and
- (7) recognise the importance of consistent messaging about Aberdeen's city centre being open for business and instruct the Chief Officer - City Development and Regeneration to work with partner organisations to promote this.

Councillor Brooks moved as a further amendment, seconded by Councillor Kuszniir:-

That the Council -

- (1) note that the findings of the bus operators are over a short period of time and do not show long term trends and are skewed by advertising campaigns, ticketing discounts, seasonal factors and emergence from the Covid downturn;

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- (2) acknowledge emerging trends in footfall decline with recent studies highlighting significant footfall decline with local businesses especially suffering customer decline and reduced sales;
- (3) acknowledge that the feedback in the form of public petitions and business surveys overwhelmingly rejects the current measures and requests that they are reversed;
- (4) acknowledge the Common Sense Compromise that has been proposed by the business community:
 - Keep the Guild Street bus gates, along with restrictions on Schoolhill and Upperkirkgate
 - Remove the bus gates at the Adelphi and Market Street, allowing access in both directions through Market Street
 - Remove the bus gates on Bridge Street, allowing full access in both directions
 - Remove the right turn ban on Union Terrace
 - Issue a warning rather than a fine to first offenders
 - Use fines to help city-centre businesses via transport initiatives;
- (5) agree that this is a pragmatic compromise that is the minimum requirement for business;
- (6) instruct the Chief Officers of Operations and Strategic Place Planning to use Bus Lane Enforcement monies to investigate the implications of the proposals listed in (4) above, including a legal review of the South College Street funding and financial impact, and report progress back to Full Council within 2 cycles and to keep business groups, the relevant community council and elected members regularly updated on progress; and
- (7) whilst the full review at (6) is undertaken, and in the context of the ongoing construction works on Union Street and around the New Market development, instruct the Chief Officer - Operations, using funding from the General Fund Capital Programme Contingency budget to introduce a TTRO to suspend:
 - the bus gates at the Adelphi and Market Street, allowing access in both directions through Market Street
 - the bus gates on Bridge Street, allowing full access in both directions
 - the right turn ban on Union Terrace

There being a motion and two amendments, the Council first divided between the two amendments.

On a division, there voted:-

For the amendment by Councillor Yuill (21) - Lord Provost; Depute Provost; and Councillors Allard, Alphonse, Bouse, Hazel Cameron, Clark, Cooke, Copland, Cormie, Davidson, Greig, Henrickson, Hutchison, MacGregor, McLellan, Mennie, Nicoll, Radley, van Sweeden and Yuill.

For the amendment by Councillor Brooks (7) - Councillors Boulton, Brooks, Crockett, Kuszniir, McLeod, Massey and Mrs Stewart.

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Declined to vote (8) - Councillors Ali, Bonsell, Graham, Lawrence, Macdonald, Malik, Thomson and Watson.

Absent from the division (3) - Councillors Al-Samarai, Farquhar and Grant.

The Council then divided between the motion and the amendment by Councillor Yuill.

On a division, there voted:-

For the motion (10) - Councillors Ali, Bonsell, Crockett, Graham, Lawrence, Macdonald, Malik, Mrs Stewart, Thomson and Watson.

For the amendment by Councillor Yuill (20) - Lord Provost; Depute Provost; and Councillors Allard, Alphonse, Bouse, Hazel Cameron, Clark, Cooke, Copland, Cormie, Davidson, Greig, Henrickson, Hutchison, McLellan, Mennie, Nicoll, Radley, van Sweeden and Yuill.

Declined to vote (5) - Councillors Boulton, Brooks, Kuszniir, McLeod and Massey.

Absent from the division (3) - Councillors Al-Samarai, Farquhar and Grant.

The Council resolved:-

- (i) to adopt the motion; and
- (ii) to note that the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning would confirm how much had been spent to date on Aberdeen Rapid Transit.

In terms of Standing Order 32.8, Councillor Mrs Stewart intimated her dissent against the foregoing decision.

- STEVE DELANEY, Depute Provost.