

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Town House,
ABERDEEN, 2 October 2024

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
KATE BLAKE
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
GORDON GRAHAM
ROSS GRANT
MARTIN GREIG
DELL HENRICKSON

RYAN HOUGHTON
MICHAEL HUTCHISON
MICHAEL KUSZNIR
GRAEME LAWRENCE
SANDRA MACDONALD
NEIL MacGREGOR
ALEXANDER McLELLAN
KEN McLEOD
CIARAN McRAE
M. TAUQEER MALIK
DUNCAN MASSEY
JESSICA MENNIE
ALEX NICOLL
MIRANDA RADLEY
MRS JENNIFER STEWART
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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ADMISSION OF BURGESSES

1. (A) The persons undermentioned were admitted into the presence of the Council and passed as Burgesses of Guild in respect of their respective Acts of Admission in the Guild Burgess Book:-

Professor Mervyn John Bain, University Professor, Aberdeen
Colin Lawson, Company Director, Aberdeen

(B) The persons undermentioned were admitted into the presence of the Council and passed as a Burgess of the Burgh of Aberdeen of their own craft only:-

Robert Bain, Shoemaker, Aberdeen
Katie Elder, Shoemaker, Aberdeen
Graham Gray, Flesher, Aberdeen
Lynne Hocking, Weaver, Aberdeen
Nick Sangster, Wright & Cooper, Aberdeen

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

2. Councillor Kuszniir advised that he had a connection in relation to item 7.2 (Denominational Primary Schools) by reason of his employment by a law firm which did a lot of work for catholic organisations , however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Yuill advised that he had connections in relation to item 9.4 (City Centre Transport Measures) as a member of Cycling UK and as a member of the AA (Automobile Association), however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting. Councillor Yuill further advised that he had a connection in relation to item 9.7 (North East Population Health Alliance: End of Year One Progress Report) as the Council's appointed member of the Board of NHS Grampian, however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillors Greig, Mrs Stewart, Henrickson and Fairfull advised that they had a connection in relation to item 9.8 (Annual Performance Reports - 2023/2024 for all Tier 1 ALEOs) as Council appointed Directors to the Board of Aberdeen Performing Arts, however having applied the objective test they did not consider that they had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Cllr McLellan advised that he had a connection in relation to item 9.4 as a Council 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.

Councillor Brooks advised that he had a connection in relation to item 7.2 as a member and elder at a non-denominational church in Aberdeen, however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

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Councillor Cooke advised that he had a connection in relation to item 9.8 as a Council appointed observer to the Board of Sport Aberdeen, however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Blake and the Lord Provost advised that they had a connection in relation to item 9.8 as Council appointed Directors to the Board of Aberdeen Sports Village, however having applied the objective test they did not consider that they had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Ali advised that he had a connection in relation to item 7.2 as a trustee and active member at Aberdeen Mosque and Islamic Centre, however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Grant declared an interest in relation to item 9.4 by reason of his employment by Aberdeen Inspired and advised that he would leave the meeting for the duration of that item. Councillor Grant advised that he had a connection in relation to item 9.6 (Council Delivery Plan, Annual Review Report 2023-24) by reason of his employment by Aberdeen Inspired, however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

DEPUTATIONS

3. (A) The Council received a deputation from John Murray in relation to agenda item 7.2 - Denominational Primary Schools.

Mr Murray thanked the Lord Provost and the Council for agreeing to hear him in relation to such an important matter. He explained that when he spoke at the Education and Children's Services Committee on 17 September, he made the point that Catholic education in the city could only be successful if it was a joint enterprise based on mutual trust and respect between the Council and the Catholic Church, and he had moved an amendment on that basis in an attempt to work together to plan Catholic education for the benefit of all of the people of Aberdeen.

Mr Murray highlighted his positive experiences as an external member on the Education Committee for the past seven years, and acknowledged the expertise of officers and the great support he had received during that time. He therefore found it surprising and disappointing in terms of how this matter had been handled and responded to. He emphasised that the Partnership had lost the vote at the Education and Children's Services Committee, and they had lost the argument because the facts in the report did not support the recommendations. He added that all of the external members voted for his amendment - he had not canvassed them before or during the meeting, however the Partnership had failed to persuade them to vote for the motion.

Mr Murray stated that the position of the Catholic Church was that what was in place in Aberdeen in terms of Catholic schools was inadequate, especially compared to what was in place in almost every other part of the country. He stated that Aberdeen was an international city, yet there were limited opportunities for families in terms of Catholic

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education, particularly with there being no Catholic secondary school, which was impossible to justify. He added that although there were three excellent Catholic primary schools in Aberdeen, this paled into insignificance compared to what was in place in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee, and all three cities had Catholic secondary schools as well.

Mr Murray emphasised the need for mutual co-operation, which was the basis of his amendment - to use the 12-month pause to put people's heads together to agree an appropriate level of provision and plan accordingly. He argued that a proper consultation needed to be carried out, particularly in terms of the possibility of a Catholic secondary school for Aberdeen, from the whole community. He stated that the figures from the last consultation should not be used as the questions were only put to parents; young people must be consulted too and the views of people from Aberdeenshire had also been excluded. Despite this, Mr Murray highlighted that 82% of respondents said they would put their children to a Catholic secondary school, yet this had been completely rejected which he found remarkable.

Mr Murray concluded that the Council could and should do much better. He noted that there was cynicism in the community, which was only added to with the views of the external members being ignored. Lastly, in response to a point that had been made at the Education and Children's Services Committee that there was no funding for a Catholic secondary school, he explained that the Catholic Church was not proposing an additional school, however re-provision of the existing secondary school estate should not be ruled out.

The Council asked questions of Mr Murray and thanked him for his deputation.

(B) The Council next received a deputation from Elizabeth Spencer, also in relation to agenda item 7.2.

Ms Spencer advised that she headed a social enterprise called Aberdeen Ethnic Minority Women's Group and had been working as a community researcher in Aberdeen for the past two years. She stated that she had started a petition online for the need for a secondary Catholic school as well as for more funding for additional primary Catholic schools in Aberdeen.

Ms Spencer stated that she represented women from across a number of different nationalities and faiths in the city and further afield. She noted that Aberdeen was a beautiful city, there was no sectarianism and people were inclusive, with so many different faiths mixed together. She stated that she had recently taken part in a radio debate on Good Morning Scotland with the National Secular Society, and had been taken aback when her opponent claimed that Roman Catholic primary schools were controlled by the Catholic Church. She emphasised that this represented an outdated view and she obviously had not heard of the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland - it was not about Catholic versus state schools.

Ms Spencer underlined the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion and noted that lots of pupils of other faiths attended Catholic schools - they were very inclusive with the split almost 50/50 between Catholic and non-Catholic pupils. She added that she also represented the Travelling community, where many children had experienced

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bullying in state schools. Ms Spencer emphasised that they were not against anyone - they were inclusive and all they were asking for was a safe space.

Ms Spencer concluded that when people had faith it gave them hope and that she was here out of love for the children she taught at Sunday School and for her own daughter, and she hoped that the Councillors found it in their own hearts to make her dreams become a reality.

The Council asked questions of Ms Spencer and thanked her for her deputation.

(C) The Council next received a deputation from JJ Welsh, Chair of the Parent Council of St Joseph's RC Primary School, also in relation to agenda item 7.2.

Mr Welsh reiterated the points that he had made at the Education and Children's Services Committee with regard to the feasibility study and how it had been put together - the layout was poor, it was not user friendly and it was very misleading. He noted that it was important to get the facts correct, and he was pleased to see that the report highlighted the mistakes and the errors that were made. He felt that if there had been better engagement with the community in general and in the three denominational schools, the wording of the feasibility study could have been changed to alleviate a lot of the concerns, and he believed there was a lesson to be learned from that by the schools and by the Council.

Mr Welsh underlined the importance of free choice - St Joseph's had a high percentage of non-Roman Catholic pupils. He noted many people from different places had chosen to put their children to a faith-based school, no matter their own religion, because they believed in the interests of their child and what they felt they would get from the school. He added that it was important to highlight that the catchment area for the denominational schools was west of Peterculter and south of Portlethen, which meant it extended into Aberdeenshire, but Aberdeenshire did not have any Roman Catholic primary schools. Therefore, there were parents who drove from Stonehaven each day to take their children to school as they were outwith the area. Mr Welsh added that this highlighted the importance of denominational schools and for people to have a choice and for it to be available for them. Mr Welsh also drew comparisons with Dundee and Perth; although Perth had a much smaller population than Aberdeen, it had two Catholic primary schools and one Catholic secondary school, with a new school benefitting from a combined layout and joint campus.

Mr Welsh emphasised that St Joseph's was a fantastic school and quoted from a recent HMIE report, however it was at bursting point and parents were very anxious at the prospect of mergers or closures. He welcomed that the school was part of the Victorian Schools review - the gym hall was extremely outdated, and he hoped the Council would honour its promise to St Joseph's from 2015 with regarding to spending.

Mr Welsh referred to the amendment which had been successful at the Education and Children's Services Committee in September and highlighted the proposal to establish a working group to look at data and hold proper discussions rather than relying on out of date figures. With regard to politics, he felt there was democratic right to uphold the result of the original vote and that he could understand the right to veto if the outcome put pressure on budgets, however this was not the case and he felt it had been done

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purely for political reasons. On that basis, he had looked into the duties of a Councillor and quoted the principles and duties from the Councillor's Code of Conduct. Mr Welsh underlined that party politics should never have been put in front of the interests of democracy - the people of Aberdeen had elected them to represent their views and interests, not the interests of their political parties.

Mr Welsh implored Councillors to invest in the children as they are the future. He underlined that the proposal contained within the amendment would not cost the Council a penny and did not force the Council to make any decisions at this stage. He concluded by calling on Councillors to vote openly and without party politics in mind.

The Council asked questions of Mr Welsh and thanked him for his deputation.

(D) Lastly, the Council received a deputation from Tony Steppie, Chair of Holy Family RC School Parent Council, also in relation to agenda item 7.2.

Mr Steppie stated that he wanted to take the opportunity to highlight how brilliant Holy Family RC School was - part of the reason why it was so brilliant was that they had pupils from every faith, it did not matter who you were or where you came from, it was one community. He emphasised that he was a person of faith, and that he had attended Holy Family, as had his older children, his grandchildren and his younger children - it was such a great school and meant a great deal to him and his family.

Mr Steppie advised that since he had become Chair of the Parent Council the school estate and consultation had come to the fore. He was not reassured that it was only a consultation; the Council was clearly looking at Catholic schools which caused concern. He reminded members that he had made a deputation at the Education and Children's Services Committee and that the Administration had been defeated, with the amendment having been successful which was perfectly reasonable. He was shocked to discover that the matter had been referred to Full Council and could be overturned. He reminded Councillors that they were there to represent the public, not to ignore them, and that there were 50,000 people of faith in the city who would potentially be ignored if the decision was overturned. He added that the creation of a working group to look at Catholic education would cost nothing, therefore there was nothing to lose.

Mr Steppie underlined that Aberdeen was the best city in Scotland - faith was irrelevant in Aberdeen and it did not have the scourge of sectarianism that other cities experienced, however the Council seemed to be making faith a big deal which he could not understand. He explained that he was struggling explain the situation to families he had dealings with, and these were families from all over the world. He noted that GB Energy was due to establish its headquarters in Aberdeen and many new people and their families could be moving to the city as a result, however this situation meant there was now a question mark hanging over faith based schools in the city which could put people off moving to the city.

Mr Steppie questioned if this was democracy and that there should be a free vote on the issue, Councillors should not be voting along party lines. He cautioned that if the Council voted to overturn the original decision, they were not just sending out the wrong message to the people of Aberdeen but to people all over the world.

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The Council asked questions of Mr Steppie and thanked him for his deputation.

MINUTE OF MEETING OF ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL OF 21 AUGUST 2024

4. The Council had before it the minute of meeting of Aberdeen City Council of 21 August 2024.

The Council resolved:-

to approve the minute.

MINUTE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL OF 2 SEPTEMBER 2024

5. The Council had before it the minute of the special meeting of Aberdeen City Council of 2 September 2024.

The Council resolved:-

- (i) to approve the minute; and
- (ii) to note that the Chief Officer - Commercial and Procurement would issue an update on the performance of the Generation Aberdeen branding as had been requested.

ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP - COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE OF 5 SEPTEMBER 2024

6. With reference to Article 7 of the minute of meeting of the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee of 5 September 2024, the Council had before it a referral seeking approval to establish a working group to monitor the progress of the Housing Emergency Action Plan.

The Council resolved:-

to approve the establishment of a cross-party working group to monitor the progress of the Housing Emergency Action Plan, to be chaired by the Convener of the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee.

The Lord Provost advised that he was bringing forward agenda item 8.1 to this point.

COUNCIL BUSINESS PLANNER

7. The Council had before it the business planner as prepared by the Chief Officer - Governance.

With regard to item 10 (City Centre Transport Measures) on the business planner, Councillor Malik asked whether the Council would be given a copy of the legal advice

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relating to the report. The Interim Chief Officer - Governance (Legal) advised that the legal advice was summarised within the report and that the advice was legally privileged, therefore it was not standard practice to share it in its entirety as there would be increased risk. Following an adjournment, it was agreed that the legal advice would be circulated via hard copy, once the Council reached the relevant point on the agenda, however the hard copies would have to be returned to officers.

The Council resolved:-

- (i) to remove items 7 (Beach Connectivity Project - Full Business Case), 15 (Beach Masterplan Phase 2 Development Framework) and 23 (Aberdeen Market Project Update) from the business planner;
- (ii) to note that the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning would circulate an update with regard to item 30 (Beachfront Masterplan - Castlegate);
- (iii) to note that item 32 (Energy Transition Zone - Land Options) was likely to be reported at the end of the year, or early next year;
- (iv) to note that item 33 (North East of Scotland Investment Zone Proposal) would be reported to the next Council meeting;
- (v) to note that item 36 (RAAC - Compulsory Purchase) was likely to be reported to Council in early 2025; and
- (vi) otherwise to note the business planner.

DENOMINATIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS - FEASIBILITY STUDY - EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE OF 17 SEPTEMBER 2024

8. With reference to Article 13 of the minute of meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee of 17 September 2024, the Council had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities, which had been referred to it by seven members of the Committee in accordance with Standing Order 34.1, and which provided a summary of the outcomes of a recent feasibility study to assess the options for the long term future of denominational primary school provision in the city, and sought approval of the next steps. The report also detailed the findings of a stakeholder engagement exercise carried out to support the feasibility study.

The report recommended:-

that the Education and Children's Services Committee note the contents of the report, and instruct the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to continue to monitor forecast pupil numbers for the three denominational primary schools, and to include recommendations in next year's annual school estate plan update report on any required actions to be taken to ensure that the city's denominational primary school provision continued to be appropriate to meet the expected demand for pupil places.

At this juncture, Councillor Greig advised that he had a connection in relation to the item as an elder and reader with the Church of Scotland, however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Mrs Stewart advised that she had a connection in relation to the item as a practicing Roman Catholic, however having applied the objective

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test she did not consider that she had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Alphonse advised that she had a connection in relation to the item as a member of St Machar Cathedral and as a practicing member of the Church of Scotland, however having applied the objective test she did not consider that she had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Yuill advised that he had a connection in relation to the item as he was baptised as a member of the Scottish Episcopal Church, he then attended Church of Scotland Sunday School and attended mass with his daughter who was Catholic, and she was educated at Catholic primary and secondary schools, however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Cooke advised that he had a connection in relation to the item as a practicing Episcopalian, however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Greig moved, seconded by Councillor Mennie:-

That the Council approve the recommendation contained within the report.

Councillor Blake moved as an amendment, seconded by Councillor McLeod:-

That the Council -

- (a) notes the content of the report;
- (b) regrets the lack of a proper and open consultation with all the people of Aberdeen on the possibility of establishing a Catholic Secondary School in Aberdeen;
- (c) welcomes the pause in recommending any changes to the Roman Catholic school estate;
- (d) instructs the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to establish a working group consisting of representatives from Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, representatives from the Catholic Church, parent representatives and staff representatives. This group would work in a spirit of co-operation and partnership to explore what is an appropriate level of provision of Catholic schools in the city and produce a costed plan as to how this level of provision might be realised;
- (e) instructs the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to continue to monitor pupil numbers at all three primary schools and report back on this and the findings of the above working group to the Education and Children's Services Committee in September 2025;
- (f) decides to take the opportunity provided by this pause to instruct the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to engage with all the people of Aberdeen on the possibility of establishing a Catholic secondary school in the city; and
- (g) agrees that the pause proposed in the paper will in no way delay the urgently needed work to provide for the refurbishment of St. Peter's School.

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During the course of seconding the amendment, Councillor McLeod advised that he had a connection in relation to the item as he was born and brought up in Glasgow, which he believed was one of the most sectarian cities in the country, and that he was a member of the Church of Scotland, however having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

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 (18) - Councillors Ali, Blake, Bonsell, Brooks, Crockett, Cross, Graham, Grant, Houghton, Kuszniir, Lawrence, Macdonald, McLeod, Malik, Mrs Stewart, Tissera, Thomson and Watson.

Absent from the division (2) - Councillors Boulton and Massey.

The Council resolved:-

- (i) to adopt the motion; and
- (ii) to note that the Executive Director - Corporate Services would work with colleagues to look at whether the budget consultation platform could be used for other consultations.

In terms of Standing Order 32.8, Councillors Ali, Blake, Bonsell, Brooks, Crockett, Cross, Grant, Houghton, Lawrence, Malik, Mrs Stewart, Thomson, Tissera and Watson intimated their dissent against the foregoing decision.

Councillor Radley moved as a procedural motion, seconded by Councillor Greig:-

That the Council suspend Standing Order 40.2 to enable the meeting to continue beyond six hours upon the conclusion of the Special Council meeting.

On a division, there voted:-

For the procedural 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.

Against the procedural motion (18) - Councillors Ali, Blake, Bonsell, Brooks, Crockett, Cross, Graham, Grant, Houghton, Kuszniir, Lawrence, Macdonald, McLeod, Malik, Mrs Stewart, Tissera, Thomson and Watson.

Absent from the division (2) - Councillors Boulton and Massey.

The Council resolved:-

to reject the procedural motion as it failed to attract the necessary two-thirds of those present and entitled to vote in terms of Standing Order 41.1.

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The Lord Provost advised that the meeting was being adjourned in terms of Standing Order 40.3 and that the remainder of the business would be considered at a future date which would be confirmed in due course.

- DAVID CAMERON, Lord Provost.

DRAFT