

Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee

ABERDEEN, 14 January 2025. Minute of Meeting of the COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Radley, Convener; Councillor Henrickson, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Davidson, Delaney (as substitute for Councillor Bouse), Graham, Kuszniir (as substitute for Councillor Cross), Malik (as substitute for Councillor Tissera), McLellan and Mrs Stewart.

In attendance - Councillor Watson for item 7 and Councillor Bonsell for item 9.

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.

MINUTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF 21 NOVEMBER 2024

1. The Committee had before it the minute of the previous meeting of 21 November 2024, for approval.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

2. The Committee had before it the committee business planner, as prepared by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to request that the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord, circulate to members by way of email, the intended timeline for various reports coming to Committee in regards to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC);
- (ii) to note the reason for delay for item 7 (Aberdeen Local Housing Strategy); and
- (iii) to otherwise note the committee business planner.

POLICE SCOTLAND PERFORMANCE REPORT - POL/25/004

3. The Committee had before it a report by Police Scotland, which presented the Police Scotland Performance Report which covered April to September 2024, for Committee scrutiny.

The report advised that Appendix A provided a detailed account of Police Performance in Aberdeen City in support of agreed priorities, both local and national for April to September 2024. Much of the content of the report reflected on the collaborative methods in which Police Scotland operated across the city. The report demonstrated how

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communities could benefit when Community Planning Partners worked within both the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and Locality Plans.

The report also covered a wide range of police activity which included corporate governance, recorded crime, detection rates and operations. It also provided both 5 year and year on year comparisons to allow the Committee to evaluate trends in performance.

The Committee heard from Divisional Commander Kate Stephen and Chief Inspector Andy Scott who provided an overview of the report and answered various questions from Members.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to welcome Divisional Commander Kate Stephen to her new role and to thank Chief Inspector Andy Scott for his work with members over the last 19 months, as he would now be moving on to a new post within Police Scotland;
- (ii) in terms of the number of Hate Crime complaints recorded since the introduction of the Hate Crime Bill, and also information on Proportionate Response to Crime (pilot and implementation) to request that Police Scotland circulate this information to members via the clerk;
- (iii) to note that the Convener would liaise with the Divisional Commander on topics to be reported at future committee meetings, which might include local police officer numbers, the local estate plan and also actions undertaken around mental health and wellbeing support for police officers, with the timeline for reporting to be agreed with the Convener and the Divisional Commander;
- (iv) in regards to information available to members of the public on Acquisitive Crime and measures that could be undertaken to help prevent crime, to request that a Service Update be issued to members of the committee, so members could share the information with constituents; and
- (v) to otherwise note the report.

PERFORMANCE REPORT - CORS/25/003

4. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Data Insights, which presented Committee with the status of appropriate key performance measures relating to services falling within its remit.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee note the report and provide comments and observations on the performance information contained in the report Appendix.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) in regards to re-let figures, to request that the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord, circulate to members by way of email, clarity on NTBR and UTBR figures;

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- (ii) to request that the Chief Officer – Digital and Technology, send information to Councillor van Sweeden by way of email, in regards to any recruitment challenges within the service; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the report.

SPACE WITHIN LIBRARIES FOR POST OFFICES - F&C/25/005

5. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord, which advised that at Council on 21 August 2024 the Executive Director of Families and Communities was instructed to investigate, with urgency, the opportunity for post offices that were closing to be set up in local libraries and to report back to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee as soon as possible.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee note the contents of the report and take no further action at this time.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendation.

RAAC UPDATE - VERBAL UPDATE AT COMMITTEE

6. The Committee heard from the Chief Officer – Housing and the Chief Officer – Capital, who provided a verbal update in relation to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC).

Mrs McKenzie began the update by advising that in terms of offers accepted, 221 leases had now been signed with 27 households outstanding, however 24 out of the 27 were currently under offer. In terms of next steps, the dedicated Housing and Support Team were continuing to engage with those individuals/families yet to be rehomed, to work towards a positive outcome for them and their families. The Housing and Support Officers aligned to a household's new homes would support them in effectively integrating into their new communities. Mrs McKenzie noted that regular visits were being carried out to monitor and respond to any security, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour concerns.

In terms of private owners, Mrs McKenzie explained that engagement between owners and Aberdeen City Council's appointed consultant, Atkins Realis was ongoing and there was initial engagement undertaken with over 70% of owners. Following the initial engagement the Valuation Office Agency had commenced valuation inspections of properties at an owner's request. 50 valuations had been carried out with a further 4 due to be undertaken.

Mrs McKenzie advised that officers were continuing to support owners (and private owners) who wish to seek housing with the Council, and they were working with Scottish

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Action for Mental Health (SAMH) to provide mental health and wellbeing support. There was also ongoing engagement with Torry Community RAAC Campaign Management Committee.

The Committee then heard from the Chief Officer – Capital, who provided an update on the masterplanning and demolition of the site. Mr Wilson intimated that in terms of demolition, they were considering phasing and a preparation programme of demolition, which would be interdependent with vacant properties and they were aiming to report to this Committee in March 2025.

In relation to masterplanning, a feasibility study was underway and onsite survey works, desk based analysis and statutory notifications were also underway. In regards to funding, approaches had been made to both the UK and Scottish Governments, as instructed, however there was no change at this stage to be reported.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the verbal update provided.

NOTICE OF MOTION BY COUNCILLOR WATSON - REFERRED BY COUNCIL ON 11 OCTOBER 2024

7. The Committee had before it a Notice of Motion from Councillor Watson, referred from Council on 11 October 2024, in the following terms:-

That the Council –

Notes that Council passed a notice of motion on 13 December 2023 recognising the importance of holding out a hand to those outwith our direct area. It called for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine/Israel, and for urgent humanitarian relief for the citizens of Gaza.

Since then, nine months have passed and tens of thousands more civilians have died. In March 2024 the United Nations Special Rapporteur found that “There are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating the commission of the crime of genocide...has been met.” In July 2024, the prestigious medical journal The Lancet stated that “it is not implausible to estimate that up to 186,000 [7.9% of the total population in the Gaza strip] or even more deaths could be attributable to the current conflict in Gaza”. Later in July, the International Court of Justice, the United Nations' highest court, ruled that “Israel’s continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful” and that Israel “is under an obligation to bring to an end its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as rapidly as possible” and “is under an obligation to cease immediately all new settlement activities, and to evacuate all settlers from the Occupied Palestinian Territory”.

This Council reaffirms its place as part of the common family of humanity, and:

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1. Reiterates our call for a permanent ceasefire;
2. Calls on the Lord Provost to fly the Palestinian Flag on 29 November 2024, International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;
3. Follows Barcelona and other cities and instructs the Chief Officer - Governance to report to Council by the end of 2024 on any direct or indirect links that Aberdeen City Council have with the State of Israel, with a view to stopping these;
4. Asks the North East Scotland Pension Fund to commission a study to identify any investments in companies that supply arms to Israel, as these investments may be at high risk due to the political instability;
5. Recognises the UK Labour Government's suspension of 30 licences for arms sales to Israel;
6. Endorses the Scottish Government's 2024 call for an arms embargo on Israel, and calls for the Scottish Government to act in all its available capacities to help prevent the production and transfer of weapons components for Israel from arms companies in Scotland; and
7. Instructs the Chief Executive to write to other Scottish Local Authorities informing them of this motion, and encouraging them to take similar actions.

Councillor Watson spoke in support of his Notice of Motion and in accordance with Standing Order 12.16, amended his Notice of Motion with revised dates, namely that 29 November 2024 would change to 29 November 2025 and that point 3 be amended to as soon as possible.

Councillor Watson moved, seconded by Councillor Malik:-
That the Committee approve the Notice of Motion.

The Convener moved as an amendment, seconded by the Vice Convener:-
That the Committee -

- (i) note that this Council was proud of its first mission of serving local people, but also of its international solidarity in holding out a helping hand to those in need elsewhere, and hosting many refugees;
- (ii) note that the conflict in the State of Palestine, the State of Israel and the Republic of Lebanon had caused huge suffering and following the horrific acts of terror by Hamas on 7th October 2023, the escalation of violence in Gaza and Lebanon has led to the death and suffering of many civilians;
- (iii) note that Aberdeen City Council recognises the need for justice to underly a sustainable peace, and the internationally accepted need for a two-state solution to be implemented. All human lives should be valued equally, and human rights respected for all; and
- (iv) call for an immediate cessation of all hostilities in the State of Palestine, State of Israel and Republic of Lebanon, the immediate release of hostages, and for international support for huge and urgent UN-led humanitarian relief for citizens of Gaza.

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On a division, there voted – for the motion (2) – Councillors Graham and Malik – for the amendment (6) – the Convener, the Vice Convener and Councillors Delaney, Davidson, Kuszniir and McLellan – declined to vote (1) – Councillor Mrs Stewart.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the amendment.

NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR KUSZNIR - REFERRED FROM COUNCIL ON 11 DECEMBER 2024

8. The Committee had before it a Notice of Motion from Councillor Kuszniir, referred from Council on 11 December 2024, in the following terms:-

That the Committee:

- (1) notes with regret that new British citizens were not able to bring along guests to group citizenship ceremonies held by Aberdeen City Council;
- (2) understands that group ceremonies were held approximately every 3 weeks in the Grant Room at Marischal College to meet demand, yet individuals' guests cannot routinely attend and need to wait outside due to capacity in the Grant Room, unless they book a private ceremony;
- (3) was aware from Officers that refreshments were no longer provided due to concerns over cost and waste, yet notes the cost is £3.50 per head for tea, coffee and biscuits plus £50 delivery fee per event, and considers this was a small cost as part of welcoming new citizens in Aberdeen;
- (4) considers not allowing guests at group ceremonies nor providing refreshments was a penny-pinching attitude, which failed to properly respect and promote the effort to become a British citizen and presents an unnecessarily unwelcoming attitude to new citizens;
- (5) recognises the contribution of naturalised Brits and believes the small expenditure on recognising their citizenship represents value for money for the City of Aberdeen;
- (6) Therefore, directs the Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services from 2025/26 to:
 - (a) reinstate refreshment of tea, coffee, water and biscuits and provision for any other dietary requirements to ensure inclusion;
 - (b) allow citizenship applicants to invite two guests to group citizenship ceremonies;
 - (c) change the room as required to meet the required increased capacity;
- (7) Confirms that any expenditure (estimated by Officers to be in the region of £5,000 per annum) and loss of income (estimated by Officers to be in the region of up to £20,000 per annum) associated with this change will be referred to the 2025/26 Budget process."

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Councillor Kuszniir spoke in furtherance of his Notice of Motion.

Councillor Kuszniir moved, seconded by Councillor Malik:-
That the Committee approve the Notice of Motion.

The Convener moved as an amendment, seconded by the Vice Convener:-

That the Committee –

- (1) note the Grant Room at Marischal College was used to facilitate civil marriages, civil partnerships and British Citizenship ceremonies by Aberdeen City Council;
- (2) understand that group ceremonies were held approximately every 3 weeks in the Grant Room at Marischal College to meet demand and notes that there was an option for a private ceremony, at cost, which allowed for up to 50 guests to attend; and
- (3) recognise the effort and commitment required to become a British citizen and welcomes the contribution of all who choose to live in Scotland, including naturalised British citizens, to society both locally and nationally.

On a division, there voted – for the motion (4) – Councillors Graham, Kuszniir, Malik and Mrs Stewart – for the amendment (5) – the Convener, the Vice Convener and Councillors Delaney, Davidson and McLellan.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the amendment.

NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR BONSELL - REFERRED FROM COUNCIL ON 11 DECEMBER 2024

9. The Committee had before it a Notice of Motion from Councillor Bonsell, referred from Council on 11 December 2024, in the following terms:-

That the Committee:

- (1) notes with concern that the “A” Listed Building Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, latterly known as Woolmanhill Hospital, had fallen into a state of disuse; and
- (2) instructs the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning to:-
 - (a) identify the current owners;
 - (b) contact the owners to seek assurances in respect of making the buildings safe, secure, and watertight in the first instance;
 - (c) ascertain what were the owners’ plans and timescales for the redevelopment of the site in a manner compatible with its “A” listed status;
 - (d) identify the enforcement powers available to the Council should the owners fail to co-operate;

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- (e) seek the support and advice of Historic Environment Scotland, the Scottish Government and the King's Trust in relation to the restoration of what is a building of national importance; and
- (f) report to the relevant committee(s) in relation to the instructions within no more than two meeting cycles."

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the Woolmanhill Hospital, Skene Street site was not owned by Aberdeen City Council;
 - (ii) to note that planning permission was granted by the planning authority in 2019 (reference: 160801) for residential and hotel development on the site; and
 - (iii) to instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to liaise with the developer around site security and development progress and to provide a service update to this Committee by August 2025.
- **COUNCILLOR RADLEY, Convener**