

Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee

ABERDEEN, 11 March 2025. Minute of Meeting of the COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Radley, Convener; Councillor Henrickson, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Bouse, Cross, Davidson, Graham, McLellan, Tissera (as substitute for Councillor Watson for item 12) and Watson (for all items except item 12).

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be located [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.

DEPUTATION REQUESTS - ITEM 11.1 - REINFORCED AUTOCLAVED AERATED CONCRETE (RAAC)

1. The Committee received two deputation requests in relation to item 11.1 on the agenda (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) - Phasing of Demolition and Landscaping).

The first deputation request was from Mr John Meiklejohn, who represented the Torry Community RAAC Campaign Group. Mr Meiklejohn explained that he would like the Council to reverse the opinion that planning permission did not require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) before demolition of the properties and asked that this be re-evaluated and also asked that there be involvement of an established environment agency such as SEPA. Mr Meiklejohn felt that by not having an EIA, it would then skip a major part of the planning process for this development. Mr Meiklejohn highlighted that the proposal was to demolish 372 buildings and that would have an impact on the environment.

Mr Meiklejohn also highlighted that he wished to thank the Council for agreeing to explore alternatives to support homeowners and he felt this was a big step forward and felt that it was leeway to get both sides out of the messy situation. He also indicated that he did appreciate the Council's record of trying to balance professionalism with empathy however he felt that section 7 of the report (legal implications) undermined that. He felt that it was a blatant threat and an attempt to intimidate people into accepting the voluntary acquisition process and also an attempt to remove the need for the CPO? process by simply threatening to evict homeowners from their properties.

Mr Meiklejohn highlighted he felt there was conflicting information on whether RAAC was defective and he felt there was a strong parallel with the cladding scandal in terms of the information that had not been provided. He felt that this would be made clear through a statutory public enquiry. He advised that he felt the only way to get a fair, true and transparent process to determine not only the responsibilities but the root cause of this scandal and get it properly resolved in a fair and equitable manner, was to have a public enquiry.

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Mr Meiklejohn advised that they had specialists in the area of structural engineering and structural architects who all stated that homeowners had been put in a position of facing huge bills, financial difficulties and possibly homelessness through no fault of their own.

Mr Meiklejohn spoke about the health impact the situation was having on privately owned residents who were affected by RAAC and asked that private owners be awarded a fair settlement. Mr Meiklejohn indicated that owners did not want to go through a long legal battle and sought a fair resolution. He advised that he would not accept the valuation that had been offered from the Council.

Members then had the opportunity to ask Mr Meiklejohn questions on his deputation.

The Committee then received a deputation from Mr Wilson Chowdhry. Mr Chowdhry began his deputation by asking if the Council believed that due diligence had been adequately undertaken in regards to the RAAC home owners' situation and whether the correct financial model had been followed. He noted that at a previous meeting, officers explained that only desktop reviews had been conducted in regards to cost repairs across Scotland and noted that thorough cost assessments had led to significant reductions in estimated replacement costs.

In regards to the Environmental Impact Assessment, Mr Chowdhry asked for clarity on why the Council believed an EIA was not required for this project.

Mr Chowdhry explained that in regards to exploring viable alternatives, section 2.1 of the report stated that the plans could still be adapted and that engagement with homeowners would continue. He indicated that Dundee City Council were set to announce a 40% grant to all owners, for RAAC replacement costs.

Mr Chowdhry asked that the Council provide a fair solution for affected homeowners and felt that if this was the case, it would cost the Council less overall than demolition and redevelopment, and also reduce the loss of crucial housing stock.

In regards to the demolition programme at 2.4 of the report, Mr Chowdhry advised that the Council acknowledged that the demolition programme was subject to interdependencies which could delay proceedings, and he urged the Council to recognise that a significant majority of home owners were refusing to accept the voluntary acquisition offers.

Mr Chowdhry indicated that it was widely recognised that the current situation was not the homeowners' fault, but rather a consequence of past cost saving measures, during the construction of these properties. In relation to the acquisition processes, Mr Chowdhry formally requested an amendment to reinstate verbal reporting on rehoming numbers at future Committee meetings.

In relation to section 3.3 of the report, Mr Chowdhry advised that it was acknowledged that some properties within the wider site were privately owned and that affected

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homeowners could pursue their own solutions. He felt the Council had failed to inform these homeowners that they could submit group applications for available financial assistance including loans, shared funding or grants for remedial works to their properties.

Mr Chowdhry highlighted that it was worth noting that none of the properties classified as medium to high risk had progressed to critical risk and felt that it suggested that the Council's actions thus far had been premature and rushed. He called on the Council to pause its current demolition and acquisition plans and instead focus on properly exploring all viable alternatives, as other local authorities had done.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask Mr Chowdhry questions on his deputation.

The Committee resolved:-

to thank Mr Meiklejohn and Mr Chowdhry for their deputations.

MINUTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF 14 JANUARY 2025

2. The Committee had before it the minute of the previous meeting of 14 January 2025, for approval.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

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

At this juncture, Councillor Graham, seconded by Councillor Watson, moved a procedural motion:-

to continue to receive verbal updates in regards to items 13, 18, 27 and 35 and not to remove them from the planner, all of which related to RAAC.

On a division, there voted – for the procedural motion (3) – Councillors Cross, Graham and Watson – against the procedural motion (5) – the Convener, the Vice Convener and Councillors Bouse, Davidson and McLellan.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to reject the procedural motion and therefore agree to remove items 13, 18, 27 and 35 (all related to verbal updates in regards to RAAC);
- (ii) to note that item 5 (Residential Caravan Licensing) was transferred to this Committee from the Licensing Committee;

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- (iii) to note the reasons for delay for items 29 (Cost Neutral Environmental Enforcement) and 36 (Review of the Non Traditional Housing Stock); and
- (iv) to otherwise note the committee business planner.

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE THEMATIC REPORT - SPECIAL SERVICE GAINING ENTRY INCIDENTS IN ABERDEEN CITY - SFR/25/068

4. The Committee had before it a report by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), which presented the current figures for Special Service Gaining Entry Incidents in Aberdeen City and to highlight the additional work now undertaken by the SFRS within Aberdeen City in line with the current objectives contained within the Aberdeen City Local Fire and Rescue Plan.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee consider and note the performance data provided within the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service Thematic Report, Special Service Gaining Entry Incidents in Aberdeen City, at appendix A.

The Committee heard from Andrew Wright, Local Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, who spoke in furtherance of the report and answered various questions from Members.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the report.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP SYSTEM AWARENESS - CORS/25/039

5. The Committee had before it a report by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance, which provided the Committee with an update on the current efforts undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership to manage antisocial behaviour in the city centre, as well as to enhance the wider system's awareness. The report also detailed the existing operational framework and functions of the Community Safety Partnership. By outlining the mechanisms and strategies in place, the report aimed to offer a comprehensive understanding of the partnership's role in promoting community safety and public protection.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee notes the update from the Community Safety Partnership including the multi agency governance model and the collaborative approach between various agencies and stakeholders.

The Committee heard from Mark Wilson, Community Safety and City Warden Manager, who spoke in furtherance of the report and answered questions from Members.

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The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to commend Council officers for advising on and raising awareness of the multi-agency governance model operating in Aberdeen and for highlighting insights into the collaborative approach taken between various agencies and stakeholders in the city;
- (ii) to agree that information could usefully be provided to Members on which agencies and organisations made up the Community Safety Partnership, how often they met, and what their current over-arching combined strategic priorities were;
- (iii) to note efforts to formalise a Community Safety Partnership Board, made up of representatives from public, private and 3rd sector organisations, tasked with agreeing high level strategic goals, an action plan, and using the operational framework and functions already in place as outlined in this report and ask for input from partners involved in Community Planning Aberdeen to this process; and
- (iv) to instruct the Interim Chief Officer – Governance to report back to the most relevant meeting of the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee on the outcome from 3 above.

RESILIENCE ANNUAL REPORT - CORS/25/014

6. The Committee had before it a report by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance, which provided the annual assurance report on the Council's resilience arrangements in fulfilment of its duties as a Category one responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee -

- (a) notes the progress made in further embedding the Council's resilience arrangements during another busy year for emergency response; and
- (b) notes the updated Generic Emergency Plan which had received minor alterations under the relevant delegated powers.

The Committee heard from Fiona Mann, Emergency Plan, Resilience and Civic Lead, who spoke in furtherance of the report and answered various questions from Members.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

JUSTICE SOCIAL WORK SERVICE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24 - ACHSCP/25/040

7. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership, which presented the Justice Social Work Service Annual Performance Report for 2023-24 in line with the Communities, Housing & Public Protection Committee's remit.

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The report recommended:-

that the Committee notes the Justice Social Work Service Annual Performance Report 2023-24 (at Appendix 1), which provided assurance about progress made over the period.

The Committee heard from Val Vertigans, Strategic Service Manager, who spoke in furtherance of the report and answered questions from Members.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the report.

PERFORMANCE REPORT - CORS/25/033

8. 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) to note that information on written off debt in regards to rent would be included in the next Housing Bi Annual report;
- (ii) to note that the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord would liaise with colleagues in Waste Management in regards to campaigns currently being run regarding fly tipping and if anything further could be done to help prevent fly tipping, as well as further engagement with residents in multi storey blocks; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the Performance Report.

REINFORCED AUTOCLAVED AERATED CONCRETE (RAAC) - PHASING OF DEMOLITION AND LANDSCAPING - CR&E/25/057

9. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Officers – Capital, Housing and Corporate Landlord, which advised that at the Council meeting of 21 August 2024, the Council considered the findings from an options appraisal of various RAAC mitigation actions and agreed that the optimum option was the demolition and rebuild of homes on site. There was an instruction for the Chief Officer - Capital to proceed with the demolition aspect of this, and report back to the next appropriate meeting of the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee on the proposed initial phasing of demolition and landscape details. This report outlined the proposed initial phasing of demolition and landscaping.

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Council also instructed the Chief Officer - Capital, following consultation with the Convener of the Finance and Resources Committee, and the Chief Officer - Procurement, to procure appropriate works and services, and enter into any contracts necessary for the delivery of the demolition, masterplanning and landscaping works without the need for further approval from any other Committee of the Council subject to due diligence, consistency with the financial model and affordability and regular update on progress of project delivery to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee. This report provided an update on that instruction.

Finally at the meeting of 5th February 2025, Council noted the alternative options proposed by the Torry RAAC Campaign Group Management Committee and instructed officers to explore the feasibility, benefits and risks associated with each option, alongside any other identified opportunities to support owners, and report the findings to a future meeting of the Communities Housing and Public Protection Committee. The recommendations in this report reflected the flexibility required to both respond to the instruction from the 21st August 2024 around demolition and landscaping and fully explore the viability of options with the Torry RAAC Campaign Group Management Committee.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee

- (a) note that officers continue to try and find the balance between applying our professionalism to the workstreams associated with the Council's response to the discovery of RAAC in properties and our empathy for those tenants and homeowners, in particular affected by the discovery of RAAC in their homes. The proposed plans included within this report will continue to adapt in light of changing circumstances. Throughout the process officers will continue to endeavour to respond to the needs of residents and homeowners wherever possible;
- (b) note that AtkinsRéalis have been procured to manage and deliver the demolition phase;
- (c) approve the indicative demolition proposals and sequence of phases, noting that only vacant terraces/blocks will be demolished;
- (d) agree that to deliver the demolition in the indicative sequence there are interdependencies on items such as utility disconnections, property ownership and asbestos surveys. As a result, the indicative sequence may be subject to change and will not commence until all interdependencies are resolved;
- (e) note the budget in relation to RAAC at Balnagask forms part of the Council budget held on Wednesday 5 March 2025;
- (f) agree that any changes to the indicative phases of demolition be shared with Elected Members via a Service Update and of course, with the affected communities;
- (g) approve the 'Demolition Engagement Plan' as shown in Appendix F;
- (h) note the landscaping options available in Appendix E and instructs the Chief Officer Capital to engage with the community on the landscaping options;
- (i) instruct Chief Officers Housing, Capital and Corporate Landlord to consider the landscaping options more fully when they report back to Committee on the

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- outcomes of the viability of the alternative options presented by the Torry RAAC Campaign Group Management Committee; and
- (j) agree that no more verbal reports are required to be presented by the Chief Officer – Housing at this Committee, regarding rehoming numbers, given the current stage of delivery.

The Convener moved, seconded by the Vice Convener:-
that the Committee approve the recommendations contained in the report.

Councillor Watson, seconded by Councillor Graham, moved as an amendment:-
that the Committee

1. note that officers continue to try and find the balance between applying our professionalism to the workstreams associated with the Council's response to the discovery of RAAC in properties and our empathy for those tenants and homeowners, in particular affected by the discovery of RAAC in their homes. The proposed plans included within this report will continue to adapt in light of changing circumstances. Throughout the process officers will continue to endeavour to respond to the needs of residents and homeowners wherever possible;
2. note that Atkins Réalis have been procured to manage and deliver the demolition phase and calls for future works / contracts to be procured through an open tender procurement process;
3. instruct that no further work is progressed on the indicative demolition proposals and sequence of phases, until:
 - The Committee are satisfied as to the health and safety implications
 - A full Environmental Impact Assessment is carried out and reported back to this Committee.
 - There is a full report to this Committee on the RAAC campaign group's proposals
 - All cost implications of the full demolition process are presented to this Committee.
 - the Chief Officer – Capital investigates whether any damage was caused to the existing roofs when the 'Mansard Roof' works were carried out and what (if any) contractual liabilities exist, and reports back to this Committee with his findings.
 - A legal opinion is provided or obtained, as detailed below;
4. note the funding mechanism in relation to RAAC at Balnagask formed part of the Council budget agreed on Wednesday 5 March 2025;
5. note the 'Proposed Demolition Engagement Plan' as shown in Appendix F;
6. note the landscaping options available in Appendix E and instructs the Chief Officer - Capital to engage with the community on the landscaping options;
7. instructs the Chief Officers Housing, Capital and Corporate Landlord to consider the landscaping options more fully when they report back to this Committee on the outcomes of the consideration of the viability of the

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- alternative options presented by the Torry RAAC Campaign Group Management Committee;
8. instruct the Interim Chief Officer - Governance to provide or obtain a legal opinion on any legal duty the Council may have had to disclose the presence of RAAC or problems associated with RAAC when the council houses were sold by the Council under Right to Buy;
 9. instruct the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Convener of the Finance and Resources Committee, to write to the Scottish Government requesting they obtain permission from the UK Government around fiscal flexibility in order that the Council may have the option of being able to borrow for revenue purposes to fully compensate RAAC owners; and
 10. agree that written reports are to be presented by the Chief Officer – Housing at each meeting of this Committee, regarding rehoming numbers, given the current stage of delivery.

On a division, there voted – for the motion (5) – the Convener, the Vice Convener and Councillors Bouse, Davidson and McLellan – for the amendment (3) – Councillors Cross, Graham and Watson.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Chief Officer – Housing was currently working on literature in regards to the establishment of a local service for assisting individuals affected by RAAC and this would be shared with the Torry Community RAAC Campaign Group in due course;
- (ii) to note that an update would be circulated to Members via the clerk from the Chief Officer – Finance in relation to any update with the request for fiscal flexibility from the UK Government;
- (iii) to note that details on acceptable level of vibrations during demolition would be included in the tender documents;
- (iv) to request that the Executive Director – Families and Communities, provide an update to Members via the clerk in regards to the workshop to be held with affected residents; and
- (v) to adopt the motion, therefore approve the recommendations in the report.

RESIDENTIAL CARAVAN SITE LICENSING RENEWAL - CORS/25/034

10. The Committee had before it a report by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance, which noted that at the Council meeting on 17 April 2024, it was agreed to instruct the Interim Chief Officer - Governance to report back to the Licensing Committee outlining additional site licence conditions as necessary and required, as a result of residential caravan site licence renewal inspections. However it was felt that the report fell under the Terms of Reference for this Committee rather than Licensing Committee.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee -

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- (a) note the work carried out by Environmental Health officers regarding the renewal of the site licenses of seven residential caravan sites within Aberdeen City;
- (b) note that these seven residential caravan sites have successfully had their licenses renewed for the next five years; and
- (c) note the additional site license conditions in the renewed licenses.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

DRAFT ABERDEEN LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY - F&C/25/043

11. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Housing, which sought permission to consult with the public and key stakeholders on the draft Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy as found in Appendix 1 to the report.

It was noted that as per the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, when required to do so by the Scottish Ministers, a local authority must prepare a Local Housing Strategy (LHS). The LHS set out the strategy, priorities and plans for the delivery of housing and related services over a 5 year period.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the draft Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy in Appendix 1;
- (b) approve the minor changes made to the seven strategic priorities following further analysis of data, consideration of research, and engagement with partners and stakeholders as outlined at paragraph 3.8;
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer - Housing to consult with the public and key stakeholders on the draft Local Housing Strategy between 24 March 2025 and 18 May 2025, as outlined at paragraphs 3.11 – 3.20, including academics linked to the Health Determinants Research Collaboration; and
- (d) instruct the Chief Officer - Housing to report the findings of the consultation, alongside a revised Local Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan which would be updated to incorporate any necessary changes following the review of the consultation responses, to the August meeting of the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee for formal approval and implementation.

The Committee heard from Mel Booth, Senior Housing Strategy Officer, who spoke in furtherance of the report and answered questions from Members.

The Convener moved, seconded by the Vice Convener:-

That the Committee approve the recommendations contained in the report.

Councillor Graham, seconded by Councillor Watson, moved as an amendment:-

That the Committee -

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1. instructs the Chief Officer – Housing to include a section in the draft Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy on the housing emergency declared by Aberdeen City Council, detailing actions being taken and Smart Targets;
2. agree a key component missing from the draft Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy was how the Council worked in association with the Council acting as the Planning Authority and instructs the Chief Officer – Housing to include a section to reflect this;
3. agree that, if the Council wishes to move forward on its agenda of prevention and early intervention, it must fully grasp the need to be flexible on planning considerations especially for housing for those with disabilities or mental health problems and for bariatric care;
4. instructs the Convener of the Communities Housing and Public Protection Committee to write to the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning, informing him of the Committee's view that the only way in which the objectives outlined within the draft Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy will become reality is if we all work together to bring the strategy to fruition;
5. instructs the Chief Officer - Housing to consult with the public and key stakeholders on the draft Local Housing Strategy between 24 March 2025 and 18 May 2025, as outlined at paragraphs 3.11 – 3.20, including academics linked to the Health Determinants Research Collaboration; and
6. instructs the Chief Officer - Housing to report the findings of the consultation, alongside a revised Local Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan which will be updated to incorporate any necessary changes following the review of the consultation responses, to the August meeting of the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee for formal approval and implementation.

On a division, there voted – for the motion (5) – the Convener, the Vice Convener and Councillors Bouse, Davidson and McLellan – for the amendment (3) – Councillors Cross, Graham and Watson.

The Committee resolved:-

to adopt the motion and therefore approve the recommendations.

At this juncture, Councillor Watson was replaced by Councillor Tissera.

RESETTLEMENT DELIVERY PLAN - F&C/25/050

12. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Housing, which sought approval for the Resettlement Delivery Plan as found in Appendix B.

The report recommended:-

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that the Committee –

- (a) note the analysis of Resettlement in Appendix A has informed the development of the draft Resettlement Delivery Plan;
- (b) approve the draft Resettlement Delivery Plan in Appendix B;
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer - Housing to seek feedback from key stakeholders including academics linked to the Health Determinates Research Collaboration in advance of refreshing the Resettlement Delivery Plan in 2026 and undertaking a wider analysis in 2027; and
- (d) instruct the Chief Officer - Housing to report progress against the Plan, and any proposed changes to the Plan in light of changing circumstances, to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee on a yearly basis.

The Committee heard from Gill Strachan, Intervention Hub Manager, who spoke in furtherance of the report and answered questions from Members.

The Convener moved, seconded by the Vice Convener:-

that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report.

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

that the Committee –

- 1. note the analysis of Resettlement in Appendix A had informed the development of the draft Resettlement Delivery Plan;
- 2. approve the draft Resettlement Delivery Plan in Appendix B; where reasonably possible excluding the term “New Scots” which was not an inclusive term but a derogatory term given many, if not the majority, of people living in Scotland who had been forcibly displaced or were making a claim that they have a well-founded fear of persecution don’t see themselves as “New Scots” but come to and look to the United Kingdom to seek refuge; and
- 3. agree using the term “New Scots” detracts from the benefits which those from a culturally diverse society bring to Aberdeen, given the freedom of movement right across the UK, the clue being these refugees were here under the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme, noting the Ethical Standards Commissioner found the use of the term in a particular context to be racist but on a hearing the Standards Commission found it was not.

On a division, there voted - for the motion (5) – the Convener, the Vice Convener and Councillors Bouse, Davidson and McLellan – for the amendment (3) – Councillors Cross, Graham and Tissera.

The Committee resolved:-

to adopt the motion and therefore approve the recommendations.

- **COUNCILLOR MIRANDA RADLEY, Convener**