

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE** held remotely on Tuesday 21 February 2023 at 2.00 pm.

Present: Councillors MARK McDONALD, KENNY BRAES, BRIAN BOYD, LINDA CLARK, SERENA COWDY, LYNNE DEVINE, BILL DUFF, DAVID FAIRWEATHER, CRAIG FOTHERINGHAM, IAN McLAREN, GEORGE MEECHAN, LLOYD MELVILLE, LOUISE NICOL, RONNIE PROCTOR MBE, JILL SCOTT and TOMMY STEWART.

Councillor McDONALD, Convener, in the Chair.

Prior to the commencement of business, the Convener, advised that John Morrow, Service Leader – Housing was retiring from the Council and on behalf of the Committee, he paid tribute to his professionalism, expertise, support and leadership over the many years and wished him well in his retirement.

1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies intimated.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND STATEMENTS OF TRANSPARENCY

Councillor Stewart made a statement of transparency in relation to Item 5, Report 39/23 as he was a tenant of a council lock up garage. He indicated that he would take part in any discussion and voting on the item.

Councillor Fairweather made a statement of transparency in relation to Item 5, Report 39/23 as his partner was a registered social landlord. He indicated that he would take part in any discussion and voting on the item.

Councillor Boyd made a statement of transparency in relation to Item 5, Report 39/23 as he was a registered social landlord. He indicated that he would take part in any discussion and voting on the item.

Councillor Melville made a statement of transparency in relation to Item 5, Report 39/23 as he was a tenant of a Council house. He indicated that he would not participate in any discussion and voting on the item and would leave the meeting.

Councillor Cowdy made a statement of transparency in relation to Item 5, Report 39/23 as she rented a small lock-up from the council. She indicated that she would take part in any discussion and voting on the item.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(a) Previous Meeting

The minute of meeting of this Committee of 24 January 2023 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

(b) Arbroath Harbour Joint Consultative Committee

The Committee agreed: -

- (i) to note the minute of the Arbroath Harbour Joint Consultative Committee meeting of 25 November 2022 (**APPENDIX I**); and
- (ii) to approve the Review of Annual Charges at Arbroath Harbour for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, as endorsed by the Arbroath Harbour Joint Consultative Committee on 25 November 2022, and attached to that minute as Appendix I.

4. HOUSING CAPITAL AND REVENUE BUDGET PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23

With reference to Article 3 of the minute of special meeting of this Committee of 8 February 2022, there was submitted Joint Report No 38/23 by the Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth and the Director of Finance, setting out the actual Capital and Revenue spend to 31 December 2022, together with projected outturns for the year to 31 March 2023, and any required updated capital funding proposals.

The Report advised that the actual spend on the overall Housing Capital Programme 2022/23 achieved to 31 December 2022 was £5.862 million equating to 46.1% of the monitoring budget of £12.703 million. It was projected at the current time, that by the end of the financial year 2022/23, net expenditure would total £12.273 million, representing a potential underspend of 3.4%, the main reasons for which were contained in Section 6 of the Report.

The Service Leader - Housing provided an overview of the Report and answered members' questions. It was noted that the volatile economic environment continued to have an impact on the HRA Revenue Budget. Tenants' household incomes were under pressure as high domestic energy costs added to the cost of living difficulties being experienced, making it harder for some to keep up with rent payment responsibilities. There also continued to be challenges in repairs and maintenance as contractors were not only working hard to catch up with the backlog from the previous supplier failure, but also as a result of materials and component supply difficulties and staff shortages.

Having considered the contents of the Report, the Committee agreed to note the projected year end positions on capital and revenue expenditure as indicated in Appendices 1 and 2 of the Report; and the indicative funding proposals for the programme.

Having made a statement of transparency at Article 2 above, Councillor Melville left the meeting during consideration of the following item

5. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT RENT SETTING AND BUDGET STRATEGY 2023/24 – 2026/27

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of special meeting of this Committee of 8 February 2022, there was submitted Joint Report No 39/23 by the Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth and the Director of Finance, setting out estimated income and expenditure for 2023/24, capital investment proposals, affordability assessment, and the recommendation of a continued programme of investment in new and existing stock.

Having heard a number of members, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to approve the revenue budget for 2023/24 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report;
- (ii) to approve an average rent increase of 4.1% for Council houses and associated service charges for sheltered, retirement and dispersed accommodation as detailed in Appendix 2 to the Report;
- (iii) to approve a rent increase of 4.1% for St Christopher's Travelling People Site, garages and garage sites as also set out in Appendix 2 to the Report;
- (iv) to approve the HRA Capital Plan for the financial year 2023/24 based on the rent strategy adopted as well as the indicative level of programme for the financial years 2024/25 to 2026/27 as detailed in Appendix 3 to the Report;
- (v) to note that, based on the assumptions made, and the affordability assessment undertaken, the 2023/24 – 2026/27 Housing Revenue Account Capital Plan was considered to be affordable, prudent and sustainable as required by the Prudential Code, and as detailed in Section 8 and Appendix 4 to the Report;
- (vi) to approve the prudential indicators as shown in Appendix 5 in compliance with Prudential Code requirements; and

- (vii) to note that rent rises below the Consumer Price Index (CPI) were not sustainable as this would not facilitate a balanced HRA revenue budget or permit the necessary investment through the capital budget, and that a return to above CPI rent rises would be necessary in future budget setting exercises.