

STIRLING COUNCIL

MINUTES of MEETING of the ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBERS, OLD VIEWFORTH, STIRLING on THURSDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2016 at 10.30am

Present

Councillor Danny GIBSON (Convener)

Councillor Neil BENNY

Councillor Margaret BRISLEY

Councillor Alasdair MacPHERSON

Councillor Mark RUSKELL

Councillor Jim THOMSON

Councillor Violet WEIR

In Attendance

Richard Callender, Planning Officer, Corporate Operations
Susan Darroch, Transport Planning Officer, Housing & Environment
Kenny Donaldson, Asset Co-ordinator, Housing & Environment
Elaine Fleming, Performance & Improvement Adviser, Chief Executive's Office
Emma Fyvie, Principal Planning Officer, Corporate Operations
Jacqueline Gibb, Safer Communities Team Leader, Communities & Partnerships
Carol Hamilton, Tenant Service Manager, Housing & Environment
Dorothy Irvine, Planning Officer, Corporate Operations
John Macmillan, Housing Property Manager, Housing & Environment
Jim McGregor, Network Management Team Leader, Housing & Environment
Peter Morgan, Chief Planning Officer, Corporate Operations
Brian Roberts, Senior Manager – Infrastructure Delivery, Corporate Operations
Robert Steenson, Director of Housing & Environment
Margaret Wallace, Communities Manager, Communities & Partnership
Jamie Wright, Roads & Transport Manager, Housing & Environment
Iain Wynne, Accountant, Corporate Operations
Jean Houston, Committee Officer, Corporate Operations (Clerk)

EH231 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Martin Earl.

EH232 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

EH233 URGENT BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

EH234 MINUTES OF MEETING

Environment & Housing Committee – 19 November 2015

Decision

The Committee approved the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 November 2015 as a correct record of proceedings.

EH235 ROAD ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN (RAMP) FOR STIRLING

This report sought adoption of the Road Asset Management Plan (RAMP) for Stirling. There were a number of specific reasons why Stirling Council was required to adopt the new asset management approach to the management and maintenance of its road network. These included:-

- Audit Scotland and the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) recommended the adoption of an updated Road Asset Management Plan to support investment in roads maintenance;
- The requirement to prepare Whole of Government (WGA) accounts to explicitly value and depreciate all road assets over life cycles;
- The requirement to capture performance information for SCOTS/APSE reporting of Performance Indicators;
- The results of Stirling Council's Residents' Surveys and National Highways & Transport Public Satisfaction Survey which demonstrated that perceived satisfaction with the Council in maintaining roads was low; and
- The requirement to maintain a methodology and plan that provided Members and the public with consistent, accurate and meaningful information that illustrated the effect of current and future planned investment on the road network and its condition.

In response to Members' questions, the Roads & Transport Manager confirmed that the Service wished to reduce the number of different IT systems currently in place to manage assets. One particular system was being trialed in Land Services and, if successful, it was proposed to roll this out across services.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

1. to approve Stirling Council's Updated Road Asset Management Plan (2016-2020), RAMP; and
2. to instruct Officers to publish an annual status and options report detailing the effectiveness of current and future investment in the road asset.

(Reference: Report by Director of Housing & Environment dated 5 January 2016, submitted)

EH236 PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES PROGRESS REPORT

The report presented the latest information on the performance indicators, and on progress in implementing the strategic priorities and projects overseen by the Environment and Housing Committee.

Performance Indicators currently below target included: Void Housing properties re-let within 28 days; Absence for Housing and Environment; Building warrant determinations made within 6 working days of receipt of satisfactory information; and percentage of customer satisfaction with Housing repairs.

Officers responded to questions from Members on performance. The Housing Property Manager confirmed that staff recruitment should ensure that there was an improved sample size in future satisfaction surveys and the level of satisfaction was expected to increase by the next report.

Members expressed concerns about the level of tenants' arrears, the number of cases going to Court, and number of evictions. Members requested a report on court actions and evictions as a result of rent arrears be submitted to the Housing Advisory Group for discussion and that any substantial findings be reported back.

Officers provided clarification on performance for dealing with Building Warrants and advised that there had been a significant increase in volume and demand for staff site inspections at the end of 2015. It was anticipated that performance would improve.

The Director of Environment & Housing advised that absence in Waste Services had slightly decreased and that any redesign of Waste Services should help reduce down time. He confirmed that there were a wide range of measures in place to support the workforce and assist attendance.

The Safer Communities Team Leader confirmed that staff across services had now transferred to the Enforcement Team and had attended training courses. The change in approach would not directly impact on the current workforce, who transferred to their same shift arrangements. Night shift hours would be covered by any new staff recruited.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

1. to consider the performance of reported indicators (Appendix 2 – Section 1 and 2); and
2. to consider progress on the Service Objectives through which the Strategic Priorities and projects overseen by the Environment and Housing Committee were being delivered (Appendix 2 – Section 3).

(Reference: Joint Report by Director of Communities & Partnerships, Director of Corporate Operations and Director of Housing & Environment dated 29 January 2016, submitted)

EH237 PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2014/15

All planning authorities prepared a Planning Performance Framework (PPF) report on an annual basis and received feedback from the Scottish Government. PPF reports contained both qualitative and quantitative elements of performance and set out proposals for service improvement. They also reported on a set of Performance Markers which had been agreed between Heads of Planning Scotland and the Scottish Government.

Stirling Council's Planning Performance Framework was attached to the report along with the feedback received from the Scottish Government. The PPF document highlighted a range of activities and initiatives undertaken by the planning service during 2014-15 and outlined service improvements for the following year. The Scottish Government's feedback to the PPF overall had been positive.

The Planning Service had performed well with only one key marker scored as 'red'. This was attributed to one particular major development application which had exceeded the timescale for determination and completion of an associated legal agreement.

The Chief Planning Officer confirmed the way in which feedback relating to Local Reviews and Appeals was given to planning staff.

In response to comments on Housing in the Countryside, the Chief Planning Officer agreed to look at any specific examples on request.

The Chief Planning Officer provided some clarification on the Local Development Plan process and also regarding the timescales involved in getting legal agreements concluded. Members commented that it would be helpful to have fuller explanation of the complexity of some cases and that this might help the decision making process.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

1. to note the content of the Planning Performance Framework and the Scottish Government's feedback; and
2. to acknowledge that the planning service was performing well against national targets.

(Reference: Report by Director of Corporate Operations dated 29 January 2016, submitted)

EH238 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – PROJECTED OUTTURN 2015/16

Housing Revenue Account

The projected outturn for 2015/16 showed expenditure of £19.71m against a budget of £19.48m. This was a result of additional income being generated and therefore increasing the value of the transfer to the investment programme. The level of balances retained on the Housing Revenue Account would increase to £486,000.

Housing Investment Programme

The 2015/16 Housing Investment programme budget was £14.53m. The net spend on the programme was £16.87m. The level of new borrowing required for the current year was £1.23m over budget, at around £5.71m.

In response to questions from Members, the Housing Property Manager provided clarification regarding the level of staff turnover, increased income from feed-in tariffs, the level of receipts from house sales, output from renewable technology and the mortgage to rent scheme.

The Housing Property Manager agreed to circulate Members of the Committee with details of Investment Programme other costs for 'Environmental Projects' which were shown in the report to amount to £23K.

In response to one Member's question, the Accountant offered to provide additional information on prudential borrowing separately.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

1. to note that expenditure on the Housing Revenue Account was £19,712,000 for 2015/16;
2. to note that the borrowing requirement for 2015/16 was £5,713,000; and
3. to note that year end retained balances were £486,000.

(Reference: Report by Director of Housing & Environment dated 18 January 2016, submitted)

EH239 PLANNING & GUIDANCE: SOUTH STIRLING GATEWAY MASTERPLAN

The adopted Stirling Local Development Plan (LDP) allocated a site to the south of Bannockburn for mixed use development, comprising 800 homes, retail development and business use. One of the Key Site Requirements identified within the Plan in respect of the site was the production of a Masterplan, intended to provide a strategic vision and direction for development, and provide guidance against which detailed proposals could be formulated and assessed.

Consultation on the draft Masterplan had been carried out between 3 August 2015 and 25 September 2015 inclusive, and had attracted comment from a variety of parties.

Members of the Committee expressed concerns that they had not been consulted on some aspects of the Masterplan. Members requested the opportunity to have a more detailed discussion with officers prior to considering this report and taking a decision. Members proposed that this discussion should include Ward 5 and Ward 7 Elected Members in addition to Environment & Housing Committee Members.

Councillor Margaret Brisley, seconded by Councillor Violet Weir proposed that the Committee defer consideration of this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Environment & Housing Committee on 14 April 2016.

Motion

“That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the item to the next meeting of the Environment & Housing Committee, on 14 April 2016”.

Moved by Councillor Margaret Brisley, seconded by Councillor Violet Weir.

Councillor Alasdair MacPherson, seconded by Councillor Jim Thomson, moved the Direct Negative.

On the roll being called, the Members present voted as follows:-

<u>For the Motion</u> (4)	Councillor Neil Benny Councillor Margaret Brisley Councillor Danny Gibson Councillor Violet Weir
<u>Against the Motion</u> (2)	Councillor Alasdair MacPherson Councillor Jim Thomson
<u>Not Voting</u> (1)	Councillor Mark Ruskell

The Motion was carried by 4 votes to 2 and accordingly the Committee agreed to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting of the Environment & Housing Committee, on 14 April 2016.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

1. to defer consideration of the item to the next meeting of the Environment & Housing Committee, on 14 April 2016.

(Reference: Report by Director of Corporate Operations 18 January 2016, submitted)

EH240 PLANNING POLICY: WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENTS SG33 WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENTS SPATIAL FRAMEWORK & SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

The meeting of the Environment and Housing Committee on 17 September 2015 was advised of the outcome of a public consultation, which commenced Monday 11 May and concluded Monday 6 July 2015, in relation to:-

- i) Draft Supplementary Guidance SG33 Wind Energy Developments Spatial Framework and Supplementary Advice and Guidance;
- ii) Updated Stirling Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study for Wind Energy Development; and
- iii) the associated Environmental Report.

The Committee had approved the proposed responses and agreed that SG33 be amended accordingly. The Committee also had agreed that the amended SG 33 be submitted for the consideration of Scottish Ministers, and that the views of Scottish Ministers be reported to the next available meeting of the Environment and Housing Committee.

By letter dated 5 November 2015 the Scottish Government advised that Scottish Ministers did not propose to issue a 'call-in' Direction and, accordingly, the Council might therefore proceed to adopt the supplementary guidance in accordance with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

Some Members expressed concerns that SG 33 was too prescriptive. Councillor Mark Ruskell stated that he found the amended SG 33 as supplementary guidance forming part of the Stirling Local Development Plan to be unacceptable. He did not move any amendment but in terms of Standing Order No 66, Councillor Ruskell requested that his dissent be recorded.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

1. to adopt the amended SG 33, as approved by the Committee at its meeting on 17 September 2015, as supplementary guidance forming part of the Stirling Local Development Plan.

(Reference: Report by Director of Corporate Operations 18 January 2016, submitted)

Eh241 REPORT BACK ON INTRODUCTION OF CHARGES FOR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT EVENT SUPPORT

Stirling Council had previously supported various events by providing and meeting the costs for the associated Traffic Management and any necessary Temporary Restriction Applications.

The priority based budget saving ENV051 – Reduce Road Improvement and Development Budget by 15% (£18,000) – had been approved by Council on 20 February 2014. The impact of this on the then Traffic Management Improvement Budget of £42,740 had been a reduction of £6,250. The saving was to be partially offset by fully withdrawing the event support previously provided by the Council of around £3,600 annually.

The proposed savings and full withdrawal of support were not well received by event organisers and at the Committee meeting held on 5 June 2014 it had been agreed to review this and to introduce charges for traffic management event support in line with Option 2 set out in the report of 5 June 2014 – Incremental Charging Structure. It was also agreed that Officers should monitor the situation and report back to Members. This report provided an update on the situation.

Members expressed concerns that there appeared to be lack of consistency in defining events as “charitable” or “community” events. The Network Management Team Leader confirmed that the Service would be contacting organisers for more detailed information to confirm the status of events. He also stated that should a refund be due as a result of incorrect definition, this would be arranged.

The Network Management Team Leader also confirmed that the practice of supplying cones to some event organisers could be extended and officers would make event organisers aware that cones could be made available in appropriate circumstances for events, with suitable controls in place.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

1. that further work was required on how the council chose to define charitable events, community events and commercial events within the terms of the Policy; and that officers should contact all known event organisers to seek clarity on their event status (charitable, community or commercial) so that the Council might properly identify event type and the support agreed;
2. to the full implementation of the 5 June 2014 Committee decision with immediate effect, with a further review in 24 months' time to fully ascertain the impacts of any withdrawal of Police support; and
3. to note that the impact on the Roads Traffic Management budget had been minimised through other Services sharing some costs for staging events.

(Reference: Report by Director of Housing & Environment 18 January 2016, submitted)

EH242 STIRLING STATION GATEWAY: CONSULTATION RESULTS

The City Development Framework set an economic baseline for Stirling and identified a range of issues that would impact on the city's future performance and development. The key challenges facing Stirling were to grow the economy, building added value and productivity, and to increase the city centre attraction to create a more vibrant and assertive location for business investment.

The Framework responded to the economic challenges by setting out a number of signature projects that would address key aspects of Stirling's competitiveness profile and an associated package of transport improvements to enable the signature projects to be delivered. The bulk of the transport package was already contained within the Stirling City Strategic Investment Plan.

These proposals related to the 'Stirling Station Gateway Project' and covered the area of Murray Place, Station Road, Goosecroft Road, Maxwell Place, and Stirling Station Forecourt. The proposals included: enhanced pedestrian footway spaces; a one-way traffic system on Murray Place and Station Road; new and improved bus and taxi stances; and a new station forecourt arrival space.

Traffic movements and access arrangements in the city centre had been reviewed and consulted on in 2013. The results of the consultation had been used to refine the proposals and, in addition, conceptual designs had been developed for the Stirling Railway Station forecourt and surrounding area which had not been previously included.

The latest proposals, under the heading 'Stirling Station Gateway', had been promoted for consultation in November/December 2015, to determine the public's opinion on the suggested improvements, and to ensure that all sectors of the community could provide input to the project.

Following on from this, a further consultation specifically relating to Maxwell Place had been requested and was undertaken between 22 January and 8 February 2016.

The report set out a summary of the proposals for the project; responses to the two consultation exercises that had taken place; and details of the funding mechanisms and anticipated construction programme.

The Senior Manager, Infrastructure Delivery responded to questions from Members and confirmed that an audit of street furniture would be carried out. The Service would review what street furniture was required and where it would be best situated and would also assess existing trees and any landscaping required.

He acknowledged that it had been a challenge in some areas to accommodate the demands of all street users - motorists, commercial vehicles, public transport, cyclists, and pedestrians. He appreciated the demands and needs for cyclists were different and the difficulties that cyclists encountered with different transitions in their journeys. The Senior Manager, Infrastructure Delivery advised that if there had been sufficient space to introduce a contraflow cycle lane, this would have been done. However it was proposed to reduce traffic speed where streets were narrow and cyclists and vehicles needed to share space. It was also planned to remove islands to create more road space, create raised platforms to reduce speed and introduce zebra crossings. The proposals would provide the best balance for all users.

The Senior Manager, Infrastructure Delivery offered to meet with individual Members and provide more specific information on request.

The Committee considered the three options for Maxwell Place set out in the report and agreed that Option A – Maxwell Place to remain closed at bottom (as per existing layout) should be constructed.

Decision

The Environment Committee agreed:

1. to acknowledge the results of the completed consultation exercises and to approve construction of Part One of the project;
2. to note the consultation responses in relation to Maxwell Place, and determined that Option A – Maxwell Place to remain closed at bottom (as per existing layout) - be constructed; and
3. that Officers continue to work with external partners for Part 2 of the project to develop a detailed design and secure funding sufficient to implement the forecourt works.

(Reference: Report by Director of Corporate Operations 2 February 2016, submitted)

The Committee resolved under Section 50A (4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 that the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6, of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

EH243 RAPLOCH SITE 4B – INVESTING IN NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Environment and Housing Committee approved the submission of Stirling's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2015/16–2019/20 to the Scottish Government at its meeting on 20 November 2014. The SHIP had identified a number of specific opportunities to purchase properties from private developers. These were either developments that had stalled as a result of wider market conditions or where the developer was facing problems in completing as a result of low sales expectations or difficulties in accessing finance.

Negotiations had been ongoing for Site 4B in Raploch and had now reached the stage that an 'in principle' agreement had been reached to purchase 20 properties as detailed at paragraph 3.6 of the report.

After full negotiations with the developer and the Council's Estates Surveyor, the purchase price for the properties had been agreed 'in principle' – as detailed in paragraph 3.7 of the report.

The Scottish Government had allocated £920,000 of grant funding for the project in 2017/18 with the potential to purchase some or all of the properties in 2016/17 if the developer's programme showed that completion was achievable by then. It was proposed that the remainder of the costs would be funded through the Council's new build budget.

The properties to be purchased would be held on the Housing Revenue Account and would be available for social rent.

In response to Members' questions, the Housing Property Manager agreed to circulate details of the square meter area of the proposed cottage flats, unit costs for each of the properties, and would confirm any discount negotiated for the purchase of the properties. He confirmed that the mix of properties was based on applicants' needs and demand for the wider area, taking account of the mainstream waiting list and homeless needs.

In terms of Standing Order No 66, Councillor MacPherson moved the direct negative, but having failed to find a seconder, requested that his dissent be recorded.

Decision:

The Committee agreed:

1. to approve the purchase by Stirling Council of 8 flats and 12 houses from the developer at Raploch Site 4B for the total purchase price as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report; and

2. to fund the remainder of the development costs of £1,331,546 from the Council's new build budget.

(Reference: Report by Director of Housing & Environment dated 22 January 2016, submitted)

The Convener closed the Meeting at 12.15 pm