

STIRLING COUNCIL

MINUTES of MEETING of the ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING COMMITTEE held as a VIRTUAL MEETING via MICROSOFT TEAMS on THURSDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2021 at 10.00 am

Present

Councillor Jim THOMSON (Convener)

Councillor Neil BENNY (Substitute)	Councillor Ross OXBURGH
Councillor Martin EARL	Councillor Alasdair TOLLEMACHE
Councillor Danny GIBSON	Councillor Evelyn TWEED
Councillor Alasdair MACPHERSON	

In Attendance

Kevin Argue, Transport Development Team Leader - Infrastructure
Carol Beattie, Chief Executive
Stephen Clark, Chief Officer - Housing
Christina Cox, Service Manager - Planning & Building Standards
Carlyn Fraser, Roads & Land Services Team Leader
Charlie Haggerty, Legal Manager - Governance
Dan Hartles, Team Leader - Safer Communities
Mark Henderson, Senior Media Officer - External Communications
Linda Hill, Regulatory Service Manager (Secondment) - Housing and Environment
David Hopper, Sustainable Development Manager - Environment & Place
Drew Leslie, Service Manager - Infrastructure
Gillian McKenzie, Accountant - Accounting Operations
Isabel McKnight, Chief Operating Officer - Communities & Performance
Kevin McCormick, Waste Services Manager - Environment & Place
Bruce Reekie, Senior Manager - Environment & Place
Brian Roberts, Chief Operating Officer - Infrastructure & Environment
Alexa Scrivener, Team Leader - Property Management Operations, Environment Services
Jean Houston, Governance Officer - Governance (Clerk)
Michelle MacDonald, Governance Officer - (Clerk)
Mary Love, Committee Officer - Governance (Minutes)

Recording of Meeting started

Prior to the commencement of business, Councillor Thomson, as Convener of the Environment & Housing Committee, welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the meeting via MS Teams. A statement was read to the meeting, providing detail on the procedures related to MS Teams and the protocols that both Members and Officers should adhere to throughout the meeting.

The Convener asked the Clerk to carry out a roll call of all Members participating in the meeting.

EH235 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Alastair Majury. Councillor Neil Benny was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Majury.

EH236 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

EH237 URGENT BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CONVENER

There were no items of urgent business.

EH238 MINUTES OF MEETING – 3 DECEMBER 2020

The Minutes of the Environment & Housing Committee Meeting held on 3 December 2020 were submitted for approval.

Decision

Committee approved the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020 as a correct record, subject to an amendment in EH216 to reflect that Councillor Martin Earl was a Board Member of Rural Stirling Housing Association.

EH239 ROLLING ACTION LOG

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the Rolling Action Log. The following actions were also agreed:-

EH198 – Report on Pollinator Strategy - Expected completion date April 2021. Remove actual completion date.

EH219 – Members to be updated monthly on deaths in council properties to ensure reporting is sufficient.

EH240 PERFORMANCE & STRATEGIC PRIORITIES PROGRESS REPORT

A report by the Senior Manager, Infrastructure presented the latest information on the performance indicators overseen by the Housing & Environment Committee.

The Senior Manager, Infrastructure introduced the report and responded to a number of questions from Members.

In response to a particular question on the increased figure regarding the average length of time in temporary accommodation, it was noted that there had been an increase due to the lack of turnover in social housing. However, the number of dispersed units had been increased and it was hoped that the significant number of new build properties would also assist with the reduction of this figure within the next twelve months. It was also noted that this situation was the same across Scotland.

Discussion took place regarding the number of complaints associated with food businesses and updated figures were provided at the meeting for quarters 1-3 which were: Q1-51, Q2 -74 and Q3 - 48. There had been 628 separate enquiries relating to COVID-19 since March 2020, with a number of changes relating to the control of allergens. Compliance with the service across Stirling was good and all enquiries to the service were being followed up.

It was agreed that the table detailing Average Time (Weeks) to Process Local Planning Applications would be made more reader-friendly.

Decision

Committee agreed to note performance of reported indicators within the Committee Scorecard, as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report.

(Reference: Report by Chief Operating Officer, Communities & Performance, dated 18 January 2021, submitted).

EH241 SAFER COMMUNITIES – ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

A report by the Senior Manager, Infrastructure provided an update to the Committee on enforcement action undertaken by the Safer Communities Team (SCT) between 1 October 2020 and 30 November 2020.

The Regulatory Service Manager (Secondment), Housing and Environment introduced the report and responded to a number of questions from Members. A review of resources of work patterns was currently taking place. Cases of anti-social behaviour continued to rise, with increases of around 20 each week. It was noted that recruitment of staff had commenced, which would increase the resources of the team. Additional HRA funding had also been secured, which would provide more resource to deal with the increased demand to the service.

Officers were concluding issues around cardless parking payment security prior to finalising the preferred option and progressing towards procurement. It was agreed that a briefing note would be sent to Members with an update on the commencement date for a cardless payments process and regulations on how cardless payments would be managed.

Discussion took place on how best to report data on penalty charge notices (PCN's) appended to the report, and it was agreed that information on PCN's by location would be presented in a different format for ease of noting and the terminology for "income" per location would be amended.

In response to a Member question regarding ongoing working practices of enforcement officers, particularly in relation to weekend and evening patrolling, it was noted that negotiations were underway with staff on revised shift patterns, with trade union involvement. The service was close to an agreement and the revised shift patterns would allow a good range of flexibility over the weekends. It was the intention of the service to send a briefing note to Members regarding an update on staffing and noted that all new staff recruited would work with the revised shift patterns.

In response to a Member question on the costs to the service associated with fly tipping, it was noted that cross service work would be required to provide this

information and agreed that this data would be provided to Members regarding operational costs associated with fly tipping.

Decision

Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager, Infrastructure, dated 14 January 2021, submitted)

EH242 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – PROJECTED OUTTURN 2020/21

Housing Revenue Account

A report by the Chief Officer, Housing noted that the projected outturn for 2020/21 showed expenditure of £22.303M against a budget of £22.760M. The level of balances retained by the Housing Revenue account would remain at £986,000.

Housing Investment Programme

The 2020/21 Housing Investment Programme showed expenditure of £21.114M against a budget of £18.360M. The level of new borrowing required for the current year was £1.375M over budget at £8.282M.

The Chief Officer, Housing introduced the report and responded to various questions from Members. In response to a particular Member question around repairs and maintenance costs, which were projected to be £500k, it was noted that due to an underspend in capital works, salary costs of trades had gone towards this. Trades staff had been deployed to work on a variety of other work such as voids, emergency repairs and homeless accommodation. The service would be taking advice from External Audit regarding the costs, from a reporting and statutory point of view.

Members conveyed their thanks to the Chief Officer, Housing with regard to the work associated with the new build programme.

Decision

Committee agreed to note that:

1. expenditure on the Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21 was projected to be £22.303M;
2. the year-end retained balances were projected to remain at £986,000;
3. expenditure on the Housing Investment Programme was projected to be £21.114M; and
4. the borrowing requirement for 2020/21 was projected to be £8.282M.

(Reference: Report by Chief Officer, Housing, dated 14 January 2021, submitted).

EH243 STIRLING COUNCIL HOUSEHOLD WASTE AND RECYCLING COLLECTION POLICY

A report by the Senior Manager, Environment & Place was provided to seek approval of the proposed Household Waste and Recycling Collection Policy to be implemented

from April 2021, which was appended to the report. A Waste and Recycling Guidelines document for the public had also been produced and was also attached to the report for Members' information.

At a Special Meeting of the Environment & Housing Committee on 20 January 2021, it was agreed that information on changes to current waste and recycling practice be identified within the submitted policy before consideration of Household Waste and Recycling Policy at the next scheduled Committee. All Members agreed to defer decision to the next Meeting of Environment & Housing Committee on 11 February 2021.

The Senior Manager, Environment & Place provided an in depth overview of the report detail and responded to various questions. Continued engagement with the community would take place throughout the phases of the changes, in order for the public to understand the waste proposals in totality. This would include liaising with community councils and local development groups and hosting council led online forums to explain the service and transformation programme.

For clarity, the Convener confirmed that Members were being asked to approve the changes to the policy because of the four elements being introduced to the policy, which were both custom and practice or changes that were being introduced on the back of the new service.

The Senior Manager, Environment & Place also advised Members that over the years, certain practices had been adopted but were not contained within a policy document, therefore the service was seeking approval for this document. The service had stated within the report the changes that were being sought and whether it was standard service, whether it was a modification or whether it was something that had been previously agreed by Council in 2020.

The Legal Manager, Governance highlighted that it was not open for Committee to amend a policy to change a decision already taken by Council, as only Council could revisit this.

Discussion took place around the collection of non-hazardous waste and it was confirmed that the Council would continue to approach residents who previously had this additional service.

Following a discussion around minimum service standards and the length of time residents require to wait for replacement containers, it was agreed minimum service standards would be included in Service Level Agreement (SLA) for bin deliveries.

Some Members noted concerns that the document had not gone out to consultation and that Committee were being asked to make a decision without consulting the public in the first instance, with the intention of consulting if the policy was approved, and questioned the reasoning behind this. The Senior Manager, Environment & Place replied that a formal exercise had not been undertaken, however, the service had committed to engaging with communities in terms of the transformation programme and services that would be provided going forward. The service had also carried out an information gathering exercise with other local authorities to look at the services they were providing and their service standard, which had helped to shape and form part of this policy. Following Council decision in June 2020, feedback received from residents and communities in Stirling was taken into consideration when forming the policy.

In response to a Member's question around the concession for bulky waste for people over sixty years of age and whether it would remain in place once the policy was adopted, it was confirmed that this would remain and the service could consider including it within the policy. Concerns were also noted that this concession did not take peoples' circumstances into consideration and if a consultation had taken place, this matter could have been discussed with the public. The Senior Manager, Environment & Place noted that the bulky waste service remained unchanged and work would be carried out on how the service could be reviewed.

*At 12.30pm the Committee agreed to adjourn
in terms of Standing Order 74
Recording of meeting was stopped*

*The Meeting reconvened at 12.45pm
with all Elected Members (previously noted) present.
Recording of the meeting recommenced.*

Discussion took place around Council's decision to approve the introduction of a chargeable garden waste service in April 2021. Following a Member query on the cost to the service for providing a concession regarding garden waste, it was agreed that an update on the Garden Waste Concession Scheme would be provided to Members.

The removal of provision of caddy liners was also discussed and the proposed provision within the policy noted that residents could put food waste in their caddy loose or could line their caddy with newspaper or kitchen roll. In response to a Member query on the savings this would make to the service, it was agreed that Members would be provided with costs in relation to the previous issue of caddy liners.

It was also noted that road end collection for some un-adopted roads was a concern and that the un-adopted road network area would need to be reviewed, in order for the service to make a decision going forward.

Motion

"Committee agrees to:

1. approve the proposed Household Waste and Recycling Collection Policy;
2. note the associated Waste and Recycling Guidelines; and
3. note that public engagement will continue through 2021 on the changes to the household waste collection arrangements."

Moved by Councillor Jim Thomson, seconded by Councillor Danny Gibson.

Councillor Neil Benny, seconded by Councillor Martin Earl, moved the Direct Negative.

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

For the Motion (4)

Councillor Danny Gibson
Councillor Alasdair MacPherson
Councillor Jim Thomson
Councillor Evelyn Tweed

Against the Motion (4)

Councillor Neil Benny
Councillor Martin Earl
Councillor Ross Oxburgh
Councillor Alasdair Tollemache

There being an equality of votes, the Convener cast his casting vote in favour of the Motion.

Decision

Committee agreed to:

1. approve the proposed Household Waste and Recycling Collection Policy;
2. note the associated Waste and Recycling Guidelines; and
3. note that public engagement will continue through 2021 on the changes to the household waste collection arrangements;

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager, Environment & Place, dated 1 February 2021, submitted)

Councillor Alasdair MacPherson left the meeting at this point in the proceedings.

EH244 A811 – STATION ROAD JUNCTION, GARGUNNOCK UPDATE

A report by the Senior Manager, Environment & Place provided an update for members of the Environment & Housing Committee on the options for providing road improvements at the junction of Station Road and the A811, at Dasherhead near Gargunnoch.

The Senior Manager, Environment & Place introduced the report and was accompanied by the Roads and Land Services Team Leader.

Members raised concerns around road safety, following a report on a recent alleged accident at the junction, although at this stage, no further details were available. Concerns were also noted from Gargunnoch Community Council around road safety and it was agreed that the report should be deferred until the next meeting of the Environment & Housing Committee to allow further consultation with Gargunnoch Community Council to take place.

Decision

Committee agreed to defer the report until the next meeting of the Environment & Housing Committee to allow officers to liaise with Gargunnoch Community Council around road safety concerns and options detailed in the report and provide feedback to Members.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager, Environment & Place, dated 18 January 2021, submitted)

EH245 DECORATION AND DISTURBANCE ALLOWANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES 2021

A report by the Chief Officer, Housing amalgamated two existing policies and allowed for the publication of decoration and disturbance allowance rates on the Council

website. For those tenants with outstanding debts to the Housing Service, the revised policy and procedures also established a priority order for payment of such debts from any disturbance or decoration allowance payment.

The Chief Officer, Housing introduced the report and informed Committee that the guidance was considered at a recent meeting of the Housing Advisory Group (HAG) and requested that Committee agree to the following amendments, which were to;

1. amend the report title to read Decoration and Disturbance Allowance Policy, as there were no procedures included in the policy;
2. remove 'average' from the policy when referring to the Council's weekly rent;
3. note that the table listing order of priority, in terms of repayment of debts, would be added into the finalised policy.

The Team Leader, Property Management Operations provided an overview on inspections and external repairs to properties and how compensation on these works was dealt with.

Decision

Committee agreed to approve the revised Decoration and Disturbance Allowance Policy and Procedures and relevant amendments to report outlined by the Chief Officer – Housing, which were to:-

1. amend report title to read Decoration and Disturbance Allowance Policy;
2. remove 'average' from the policy when referring to the Council's weekly rent; and
3. note that the table listing order of priority, in terms of repayment of debts, to be added into the finalised policy.

(Reference: Report by Chief Officer, Housing, dated 14 January 2021, submitted).

EH246 CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN - UPDATE

In line with the decision made by Stirling Council in March 2020, a report by the Senior Manager, Infrastructure provided an update to the Environment & Housing Committee regarding the progress being made with respect to development of the Climate Emergency Plan and its associated activities.

The Sustainable Development Manager introduced the report and advised Members that there had been a delay in sending the document out for consultation, with the principal reason being that, as a coincidence to the service's intended timescale for putting the consultation out, the Scottish Government published their climate change update plan, which was noted to be a significant document. The service took time to look at the relevance of this document in relation to their own draft document to ensure both were fully aligned. The aim of the service was to have the document on the Council's Engage portal the following week. It was also noted that the Scottish Government had ongoing consultation around public engagement, in relation to climate change.

It was agreed that the Climate Emergency Plan issued by the Scottish Government would be circulated to Members along with Stirling Council's Climate Emergency Plan.

Members noted that they were very keen for this document to go out for consultation. The aim of the service was for the document to go to Council either in April or June this year for decision, depending on the level of interaction received from consultees.

Decision

Committee agreed to note the progress that has been made in regard to developing the Climate Emergency Plan and the timeline of future actions.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager, Infrastructure, dated 1 February 2021, submitted)

EH247 CORNTON ROAD LEVEL CROSSING BARRIER REPLACEMENT

The purpose of a report by the Senior Manager, Infrastructure was to update Committee on Network Rail's ongoing works to upgrade the level crossing at Cornton Road, Bridge of Allan.

The Transport Development Team Leader introduced the report and responded to various questions from Members.

It was noted that Network Rail did not share its communication plans for the amended programme with officers and that officers were only made aware that Network Rail was promoting this within the community when residents brought this matter to their attention. Officers noted that this was unacceptable and raised the matter with Network Rail, who subsequently apologised.

Discussion took place around the planning application brought to Council in 2016 and in response to a Member's query on whether all parties involved understood the consequences at this time, if the bridge was not built, the Transport Development Team Leader noted that this event predated officers currently attending today's meeting. However, he added that it was understood that Network Rail did inform the community at this time that an alternative was made clear to them. It was also noted that 30 minutes downtime were mentioned as the best case scenario regarding the barriers, however worst case scenario could be 49 minutes.

Conversations between officers and Network Rail had taken place over the past 18 to 24 months over the replaced infrastructure. Officers highlighted concerns that this might lead to an increased activity on the pedestrian part of the crossing and have a negative impact on the road network, which may lead to the Council being forced in to spending money on mitigation in rerouting traffic. Network Rail were noted to be committed to working with community and local schools on promoting risks and improving safety. Officers had been contacted by constituents who were concerned around the proposals and were mistakenly under the belief that Stirling Council had authority over decisions being made by Network Rail. However, it was highlighted that Network Rail had delegated authority to proceed with this work. Officers had pressured Network Rail to communicate with residents to ensure information around timescales was circulated.

In summary, Members noted their dissatisfaction with Network Rail's communication with the officers and the work being undertaken and noted that they were aware of the imminent changes and that the Council would do its best to monitor this, in order to protect its citizens.

Decision

Committee agreed to note the content of this report

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager, Infrastructure, dated 21 January 2021, submitted).

The Convener declared the Meeting closed at 2pm.