

**ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL****COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE****SKYPE MEETING, 17 DECEMBER, 2020**

**Present:** Councillors A Stirling (Chair), D Mair (Vice Chair), A Allan, G Blackett, M Buchan, P Gibb, V Harper, A Hassan, C Pike, G Reynolds, A Ross, I Walker and J Whyte.

**Apologies:** Councillor S Wallace.

**Officers:** Director of Business Services, Head of Service (Housing), Interim Head of Service (Lifelong Learning and Leisure), Head of Property and Facilities, Corporate Finance Manager, Chief Superintendent MacDonald, Police Scotland, Business Strategy Manager (Customer and Digital Services), Housing Manager (Housing and Building Standards), Strategic Procurement Manager, Housing Manager (Housing), Team Leader (Housing and Building Standards), Team Manager (Property and Facilities), Principal Solicitor (Governance) (Lauren Cowie), and Senior Committee Officer (N David).

**1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

The Chair asked members if they had any interests to declare in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in Item 11 as a member of the North Marr Community Safety Group. Having applied the objective test she concluded that it was so remote and insignificant that she would remain and participate.

Councillor Allan declared an interest in Item 11 as a member of the Buchan Community Safety Group. Having applied the objective test she concluded that it was so remote and insignificant that she would remain and participate.

No other interests were declared.

**2. RESOLUTIONS****A. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY**

In taking decisions on the undernoted items of business, the Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
  - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
  - (b) advance equality and opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and

- (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
- (2) to consider, where an equality impact assessment has been provided, its contents and to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

## B. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the items specified below so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the classes described in the undernoted paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Item No	Paragraph No of Schedule 7A
14	8 and 10
15	8 and 11
16	8
17	8 and 9

### 3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 5 NOVEMBER 2020

The Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 5 November, 2020 had been circulated and was **approved** as a correct record to be signed by the Chair.

### 4. PROGRESS WITH OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

There was circulated a report, which updated members on the progress made, against outstanding actions agreed at the meeting of the Communities Committee held on 5 November, 2020. The report also detailed the actions completed since the last meeting.

The Committee **agreed** to acknowledge the position with regard to the progressing of actions from previous meetings and those which had now been completed.

### 5. CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRESENTATION

The Acting Team Leader, Sustainability and Climate Change made a presentation to the Committee on the Circular Economy – Forward Plan.

The detailed presentation included information on: the sustainability context; Council duties and policies; “smarter purchasing”; better resource management; and the framework of the forward plan.

There followed a question and answer session.

The Committee concurred with the Chair in thanking the Acting Team Leader, Sustainability and Climate Change for an informative presentation.

### 6. ABERDEENSHIRE’S DIGITAL STRATEGY

There was circulated a report dated 2 December, 2020, by the Director of Business Services which requested that the Committee consider Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy as part of the consultation process in shaping the Strategy.

The report explained that Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy 2021-2025 built on the achievements resulting from 'Innovate Aberdeenshire' 2015-2020, for example the investment in O365, the ease at which staff and councillors moved to working from home in response to Covid-19 and the council's ability to maintain governance throughout. The Strategy was to be considered by all Area and Policy Committees, with final approval being sought from Business Services Committee in January 2021.

The draft strategy was being shared with Area and Policy Committees between November 2020 and January 2021 to consider and provide comment to Business Service Committee as part of the consultation process. A copy of the draft Strategy formed an appendix to the report.

Following discussion, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to acknowledge Aberdeenshire's draft Digital Strategy in relation to the council's priorities and provide comment to Business Services Committee;
- (2) that the Director of Business Services report to each Area Committee with information in respect of the Digital Strategy specifically relevant to each Area Committee;
- (3) that the Director of Business Services report back to the Communities Committee in respect of monitoring of the implementation of the Digital Strategy, specifically in relation to matters within the remit of the Communities Committee; and
- (4) that the Director of Business Services ensure that the Digital Strategy adequately took account of "well being" issues, including those of internal partners/officers and external customers.

## **7. THEMATIC REPORT: CONTACT ASSESSMENT MODEL (CAM)**

There was circulated a report dated 16 November, 2020, by the Director of Business Services which advised members on the progress of the Contact Assessment Model(CAM) in North East Division.

The report explained that CAM was a new way of managing all 101 and 999 calls to the Police. It was built on three elements: risk assessments; resolution teams; and local policing appointments.

The public still called Police Scotland in exactly the same way on 101 or 999, but the prioritisation of their call and different options available depended on the level of risk or harm involved, identified through an assessment. CAM was brought into North East Division on 21 April 2020 and had been operating since that time.

The Committee **agreed** to acknowledge the progress of the Contact Assessment Model (CAM) in the North East Division.

## 8. HOUSING RENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION

There was circulated a report dated 22 November, 2020, by the Director of Infrastructure Services which provided a summary of outcomes following a review of Housing Rent Strategy in light of Covid 19 and an overview of work undertaken by a Member Officer Working Group and Tenant Consultation on the options available.

The report explained that the Rent Strategy Member Officer Working Group commenced discussions in July 2020 and agreed a number of objectives as outlined in Appendix I to the report. The concluding Report considered by the Group was included as Appendix 2. The Group concluded, based on the financial modelling undertaken and economic projections at its disposal, that Committee should consider proposals for the implementation of a revised Rent Strategy for a three-year term commencing 2021/22. The Strategy should reflect an upward only rent increase in year one with an annual review ahead of years 2 and 3, designed to reflect the economic conditions in a post Covid 19 environment.

Following discussion, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) acknowledge the outcome and recommendations of the Rent Strategy Member Officer Working Group;
- (2) consider the outcome of Tenant Consultation on future rent strategy; and
- (3) recommend Option B to Full Council, with an RPI only increase for the 2021/22 financial year, with an annual review for 2 years thereafter.

## 9. COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY

There was circulated a report dated 16 October, 2020, by the Director of Infrastructure Services which requested members discuss and provide comment on a review of the governance arrangements for Community Safety in Aberdeenshire, which would be reported bi-annually to the Communities Committee, with an annual report to all six Area Committees to allow for their input to the scrutiny process.

The report explained that the Aberdeenshire Community Safety Executive (now known as the Community Safety Partnership) and Aberdeenshire Council Communities Committee had agreed to undertake a review of community safety arrangements in Aberdeenshire. Community Safety Partners agreed to establish a review board who had initiated discussions with key stakeholders across Aberdeenshire to inform arrangements in the future.

The purpose of this review was to: review the governance of Community Safety following changes to the Community Planning Partnership (CPP); and consider how the Community Safety Partnership was contributing to Community Safety work across Aberdeenshire. The outcomes expected from the review were: to develop a functioning partnership governance agreement; and to ensure that there was partnership agreement to a clear outcome focused Community Safety Strategy and that all partners agreed to input appropriately.

Following discussion, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to endorse the Governance arrangements as outlined in paragraph 4.15 of the report;
- (2) to endorse the Aberdeenshire Community Safety Strategy (Appendix 1) following consultation with Area Committees; and
- (3) that a briefing note on Violence Against Women be provided to the Committee, as well as a link to the ALDO training.

## 10. HOUSING SERVICE PLAN

There was circulated a report dated 3 December, 2020, by the Director of Infrastructure Services for consideration and approval of the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan 2020 – 2022, which detailed the actions the Service would undertake in support of the Strategic Priorities set out in the Council Plan 2020 – 2022.

The report reminded members that at the meeting of Aberdeenshire Council on 23 July, 2020 (Item 4) a report set out the findings of a review of the existing Council Priorities. These priorities had been approved by Council on 23 September 2017 and formed the basis of the Council Plan 2017 – 2022.

However, because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Council services the report had recommended that the existing Council Plan and associated priorities be formally closed down and a new Council Plan be developed around the following three pillars and six strategic priorities:- Education; Health and Wellbeing; Infrastructure; Resilient Communities; Economy and Enterprise; and Estate Modernisation.

Following discussion, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to approve the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan 2020 – 2022 and associated priorities attached as Appendix 3 to the report;
- (2) to delegate to the Director of Business Services, following consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Group Spokespersons, reporting, by exception, to Committee quarterly on performance measures against service objectives and six monthly on progress in delivering all aspects of the service plan; and
- (3) that a workshop session be organised.

## 11. CLIMATE CHANGE DECLARATION CONSULTATION

There was circulated a report dated 4 December, 2020, by the Director of Infrastructure Services which consulted with the Committee regarding its views on how Aberdeenshire Council should work towards its Climate Change Declaration targets and commitments. Feedback would be incorporated into a report to the Sustainability Committee on 19 May, 2021 and subsequently to Full Council.

The report highlighted that success in addressing the targets and commitments in Aberdeenshire Council's Climate Change Declaration and maximising the potential

benefits on offer would not come quickly or easily. Achievement relied on the targets, commitments and associated thinking and skills being deeply embedded across the whole organisation and wider region. Success in years and decades to come would depend on the strategic foundations built here and now.

Following discussion, the Committee **agreed** to acknowledge Aberdeenshire Council's Climate Change Declaration and to note that a report would be submitted to Sustainability Committee on 19 May 2021, and subsequently to Full Council, on how to work towards the Declaration's targets and commitments.

## **12. LIVE LIFE ABERDEENSHIRE – BUSINESS PLAN 2021 -2023**

There was circulated a report dated 30 November, 2020, by the Director of Education and Children's Services which presented for consideration the draft Business Plan for Live Life Aberdeenshire 2021-2023.

The report explained that the revised Live Life Aberdeenshire Business Plan actions were aligned to the new Aberdeenshire Council Plan Priorities, and reflected the changed context for the delivery of services to build on the positive aspects of innovative and flexible practice introduced during 2020.

The Draft Business Plan was included as an appendix to the report. It had been kept deliberately high level and short, to aid accessibility and promote ease of use by staff and other stakeholders as a live and useful tool, to support understanding and ownership. Data and evidence supporting the actions to be undertaken were available through hyperlinks embedded within the Business Plan. The finalised Business Plan would contain targets and measures which would support robust scrutiny of the operational and financial performance of Live Life Aberdeenshire.

The Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) the replacement of the original LLA Business Plan with the revised draft at Appendix A to the report;
- (2) acknowledge the Draft Business Plan Actions at Appendix B to the report; and
- (3) acknowledge proposed targets and performance measures relating to actions within the Draft Business Plan, and in addition, that a workshop session will be arranged to finalise performance indicators and confirm how frequently these should be reported to Committee.

## **13. CHIEF SOCIAL WORK ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020**

There was circulated a report dated 30 November, 2020, by Chief Social Work Officer which introduced the Chief Social Worker Officer (CSWO) Annual Report for the financial year 2019/2020.

The preparation of an annual report was not mandatory but was a recommendation in Scottish Government Guidance on the role of the CSWO. A copy of the Annual Report was appended. The covering report explained that Council Committees and the Integration Joint Board (IJB) received reports throughout the year on the performance of Social Work as measured against a range of national and local indicators, and also received reports on particular initiatives and issues. In order to

add value, the CSWO Report attempted to avoid duplicating this information. Rather, it drew on these reports to highlight particular overarching themes and trends, and also reported on key areas concerning the proper discharge of the Social Work function that may not have been addressed elsewhere, including those areas of decision making that require CSWO input.

In summary the Annual Report report described a Service that was performing well in most of the key areas upon which the report was focussed. In those areas where improvement was required, timely and effective remedial measures had been put in place. Currently there were no specific areas that required additional scrutiny of planning beyond that provided by Service, Council and IJB processes.

The Committee **agreed** to acknowledge:-

- (1) the Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report for the 2019/2020 (Appendix 1) financial year in relation to Social Work Services;
- (2) the level of investment by the Council in Adult Social Work Services for the residents of Aberdeenshire; and
- (3) the commitment of social work staff in the consistent delivery of high performing services.

#### **14. HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN (HIP) UPDATE**

There was circulated a joint report dated 19 November, 2020, by the Directors of Business Services and Infrastructure Services which provided an update on the progress of the delivery of the Housing Improvement Programme for Year 2 and the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on the programme.

The report reminded members that the Committee had received a report on the Housing Improvement Programme at the meeting on 4 June 2020 along with a briefing note which gave details of the Re-start Plan Model for the phased resumption of the Housing Improvement Plan, and members had previously requested quarterly update reports to the Communities Committee.

The report provided information on the four contractors who were on site undertaking the four year Housing Improvement Programme of works which consisted of multiple upgrades to be undertaken at a property, in one programme.

The report highlighted that, as part of the broad range of actions to support the public health response to the pandemic, activity paused in the four areas from 23 March 2020 until restrictions were lifted by the Scottish Government on 10 June 2020.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to endorse the current position with regards to progress on the delivery of the Housing Improvement Programme for Year 2;
- (2) to acknowledge the forecast expenditure for the Financial Year 2020/2021 on the Housing Improvement Programme;

- (3) to endorse the current position with regard to the current impact the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and the subsequent UK and Scottish Government shutdown of non-essential construction work, had and would have on the future progress of the Housing Improvement Programme; and
- (4) to endorse the Call-off Contracts for HIP Year 3, for all 4 contractors, as detailed in the report; and
- (5) that briefing notes continue to be issued to the Committee, as appropriate

## **15. HOUSING SUPPORT REVIEW**

There was circulated a report dated 1 December, 2020, by the Director of Infrastructure Services which explained that the Housing Support Service was currently being reviewed, and provided an update of the progress of the review and the future direction of travel in relation to the delivery of Housing Support.

The report highlighted that the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan had a number of actions included in the action plan. The provision of housing support was key to tenancy sustainment and now that Local Authorities were working towards rapidly rehousing those who were homeless into permanent accommodation it was crucial that support needs were identified and met at an earlier stage in the homeless process, and that clients were provided with support immediately they were housed should they require it, as this was key to tenancy sustainment.

The Committee **agreed** to acknowledge:-

- (1) the information included in the report; and
- (2) that the items detailed in the report would be added to the Annual Housing Work Plan that would be considered at the meeting of the Communities Committee on 18 February 2021.

## **16. LIVE LIFE ABERDEENSHIRE FINANCIAL WORKPLAN 2021-2022**

There was circulated a report dated 18 November, 2020, by the Director of Education and Children's Services which set out Live Life Aberdeenshire's annual procurement plan of anticipated procurements that were £50,000 and over for the year ahead, specifying estimated costs for each item.

The report sought approval in order to proceed with the procurement of items detailed in the Plan.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to acknowledge Live Life Aberdeenshire's Annual Procurement Plan, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) to approve the items in the plan identified as falling within the remit of the Committee;



- (3) not to reserve approval of the Procurement Approval Form (PAF) for any item on the Procurement Plan where the value of the matter is between £50,000 and £1,000,000; and
- (4) to note the Chief Officer had delegated authority to approve the Procurement Approval Form (PAF) where the Contract Value was between £50,000 and £1,000,000, following consultation with the relevant service management team.

## 17. PROCUREMENT 2020-21 PAYMENT CARDS

There was circulated a report dated 19 November, 2020, by the Interim Chief Officer, Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership on the contract between Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) and Prepaid Financial Services (PFS) for the provision of prepaid cards which would expire in February 2021.

The Committee **agreed** Aberdeenshire Council be directed to approve the Direct Award of a contract to Prepaid Financial Services for three years, using the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) framework, as detailed in the Supplementary Procurement Plan, on behalf of the Integration Joint Board, which Education and Children's Services (ECS) had already agreed to for their part of the contract award.