

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

HYBRID MEETING, 30 JUNE, 2022

Present: Councillors J Adams, S Adams, W Agnew, D Aitchison, N Baillie, D Beagrie, D Black, G Blackett, S Brown, A Buchan, L Carnie, G Carr, R Cassie, Y Chou Turvey, J Cox, J Crawley, G Crowson, I Davidson, E Durno, A Evison, M Ewenson, M Findlater, A Forsyth, J Gifford, J Goodhall, M Grant, A Hassan, M James, P Johnston, F Joji, D Keating, A Kloppert, L Knight, G Lang, S Logan, D Lonchay, David Mair, Doreen Mair, T Mason, L McAllister, R McKail, L McWhinnie, R Menard, C Miller, J Nicol, G Owen, S Payne, G Petrie, H Powell, G Reid, G Reynolds, D Ritchie, A Ross, A Simpson, C Simpson, H Smith, S Smith, K Stelfox, A Stirling, M Sullivan, I Taylor, A Turner, C Victor, I Walker, J Whyte and R Withey.

Apologies: Councillors A Bell, S Burnett, S Dickinson and G Hall.

Officers: Chief Executive, Director of Business Services, Director of Education and Children's Services, Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services, Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership, Head of Legal and People, Head of Finance, Head of Customer & Digital Services and Principal Committee Services Officer.

CHAIR

Councillor J Whyte, Provost of the Council, presided.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prior to commencement of the business of the meeting, the Provost congratulated (1) Aberdeenshire recipients honoured in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, Dr Jenna Ross (OBE), Hannah Miley (MBE), Dr Kenneth Simpson (MBE), Rev. James Falconer (MBE), Stanley Morrice (MBE), Neil Simpson (MBE), Andrew Simpson (MBE), David Stewart (MBE), and Roy Young (MBE), (2) Fay Cunningham and Emma Petrie, who had placed Aberdeenshire back in the Guinness World Record Book after running 106 marathons in 106 days, and (3) Fraserburgh's 2021 Conservation Scheme having been awarded the Royal Town Planning Institute's Scotland Best Project as well as the overall award for Planning Excellence.

The Provost also paid tribute to former Aberdeenshire Councillor Alan Cameron who passed away earlier in the month.

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Provost asked Members if they had any interests to declare in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. The following declarations were intimated –

- (1) Item 10 – Councillor Evison made a transparency statement by virtue of having a family connection with Scarf social enterprise and having applied the objective test concluded that she had no interest to declare; and

- (2) Item 11 – Councillor Joji made a transparency statement by virtue of being a board member of Grampian Regional Equality Council and having applied the objective test concluded that she had no interest to declare.

2. STATEMENT ON EQUALITIES

In making decisions on the following items of business, the Council **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 of 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.
- (2) where an Integrated Impact Assessment was provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching their decision.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL OF 19 MAY, 2022

There had been circulated and was **approved** as a correct record the Minute of Meeting of Aberdeenshire Council of 19 May, 2022.

4. CLOSURE OF LONGHAVEN SCHOOL, STATUTORY CONSULTATION

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee of 9 June, 2022 (Item 7), there had been circulated a report dated 9 June, 2022 by the Director of Education and Children's Services on the outcome of the statutory consultation process regarding the proposed closure of Longhaven School, Peterhead and seeking approval to permanently close the School. The report (1) explained that any change to the school estate, in terms of opening or closing establishments was subject to a statutory consultation exercise in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, (2) incorporated the formal consultation report at Appendix 1 together with feedback from the Buchan Area Committee of 19 April, 2022 and recommendations from the Education and Children's Services Committee of 9 June, 2022, and (3) advised that officers had carefully considered all responses to the consultation and recommended that Longhaven School be closed and its catchment area be reassigned to create a dual zone between Boddam Primary School and Port Erroll Primary School.

The Council heard from the Director of Education and Children's Services and having noted Members comments on the proposed relocation of the school play equipment and the potential use of the school building for community benefit, **agreed** to approve the officer recommendation within the consultation report to close Longhaven School and reassign its catchment area to create a dual zone between Boddam School and Port Erroll School.

5. AREA WORKING

With reference to the Minutes of Meetings of the Council of 24 June, 2021 (Item 4) and 13 January, 2022 (Item 10) there was circulated a report dated 16 June, 2022 by the Director of Education and Children's Services providing an overview and update on practices being undertaken or to be undertaken supporting the mainstreaming and embedding of the ethos of Area Working. The report set out the committee structure and governance framework, operational arrangements and ongoing operational and strategic activity supporting Area Working and advised that a final report would be submitted to Council on 19 January, 2023.

The Chief Executive introduced the report and discussion took place on the need for further consultation with Area Committees and opportunities to consider and review the terms of reference and membership of local community planning groups.

Thereafter, the Council **agreed** to acknowledge the ongoing work to mainstream Area Working and that a final report on this matter be presented to Area Committees for discussion and comment prior to being presented to Council on 19 January 2023.

6. ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT 2022/23

There had been circulated a report dated 24 May, 2022 by the Director of Business Services seeking consideration and comment on the key findings of the Aberdeenshire Strategic Assessment 2022/2023. The report advised that the Strategic Assessment 2022/23 builds on the foundations of the Community Impact Assessments undertaken in September 2020 and November 2021 and considered those against the backdrop of the National Performance Framework, the Programme for Government and local manifesto pledges.

The Head of Customer and Digital Services introduced the report and discussion took place on future plans for a new Council Plan, refreshed priorities, challenges to be faced in coming years, the current cost of living crisis and recruitment and retention of teaching staff.

Members then commented on the key messages and risks and opportunities as identified in the Strategic Assessment as follows –

- (i) noted plans to focus efforts on where greater impact could be achieved and funding being targeted for maximum benefit across communities,
- (ii) that it was essential that the needs of communities were understood and to work with them to problem solve and support more local resilience,
- (iii) there was a need to acknowledge risks identified and ensure action was taken to mitigate those risks, including reporting back to the appropriate committee where required,
- (iv) that significant challenges were being faced by communities and residents including the increase in day to day household costs,
- (v) highlighted the economic position of towns and villages, acknowledging regeneration work ongoing with some statistics falling below the regeneration level and the need for this to be reviewed to identify where areas of most

need were now and for more regular reviews to be carried out to allow targeted action to be taken,

- (vi) that the cost of living crisis was impacting on all areas and where the Council can help it should be doing so and working with communities to ensure they felt included,
- (vii) acknowledged the change in working practices as a result of COVID and requested that work continue through the Office Space Strategy Working Group to ensure efficient and fair practices were put in place for future,
- (viii) that the document lacked in focus in terms of the immediate crisis in respect of cost of living increases,
- (ix) that the document should include reference to the Laurencekirk flyover, and
- (x) that different protected groups were experiencing increased inequalities and there was a need for wider issues and context to be considered as part of the strategic assessment process.

Thereafter, the Council **agreed**:

- (1) to acknowledge the Aberdeenshire Council Strategic Assessment 2022/23 and the key findings as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (2) to note that Members comments on the key messages and risks and opportunities as identified in the Strategic Assessment would be taken in to account when formulating priorities in the forthcoming Council Plan.

7. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2021/22: REVENUE BUDGET

A report by the Director of Business Services had been circulated setting out the unaudited financial outturn position for the revenue budget for year ended 31 March 2022. The report (1) explained that the draft outturn position was £0.388 million over budget, (2) outlined progress in achieving approved corporate and cross service savings as part of the approved Revenue Budget for 2021/22, and (3) sought approval of a number of virements as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, and (4) detailed the value of reserves held by the Council and drawdowns from those reserves as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

The Council **agreed**:

- (1) to acknowledge the year end position for 2021/22 as set out in the report;
- (2) to approve the budget virements set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (3) to approve the transfers to and from Reserves set out in Appendix 2 of the report;
- (4) to approve the draw down from the Pay Award Reserve to fund the overspend of £0.388 million for 2021/22; and
- (5) that a briefing note be issued to Members providing further information on COVID related income and expenditure.

8. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - GENERAL SERVICES CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AS AT 31 MARCH 2022

A report dated 31 May, 2022 by the Director of Business Services had been circulated setting out the provisional outturn capital expenditure for 2021/22 and summarising the financial implications of capital spending decisions and performance for the financial year, subject to audit. The report explained (1) that the financial year end position was a primary source of information to produce the Statement of Accounts and all figures were provisional and might be subject to further amendment following the statutory audit process, (2) that the capital budget was set in March 2021 at £121.316 million, with a further £24.226 million included which accounted for rolled forward budget from 20/21 and additional grant awarded during the financial year, taking the revised 21/22 capital budget to £145.542 million, (3) that the actual expenditure incurred on capital projects in 2021/22 was £91.255 million, which was £54.287 million below the revised budgeted capital expenditure position or 37% lower than had been planned, (4) that a cross service group of officers continued to meet on a regular basis to assess the impact of COVID-19 on projects assessing prolongation periods, potential uplift in costs and claims from contractors, (5) variations by Policy Committees (Appendix 1), the position for individual projects (Appendix 2) and variances of £100,000 and above which were considered significant (Appendix 3), and (6) that there was expenditure reflected as revenue costs which could more accurately be classified as capital expenditure once it was incurred, and therefore appropriate movements between the revenue and capital budgets could occur at year end as detailed in Appendix 4.

The Council **agreed**:

- (1) to acknowledge the year end position for 2021/22 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) to note the variances between the revised budget and the final outturn shown in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- (3) to note the significant variance explanations shown in Appendix 3 of the report.

9. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2021/22: HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

There had been circulated a report dated 31 May, 2022 by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services on the year end position, subject to audit, of the 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue and capital accounts. The final outturn for the year to 31 March, 2022 was showing a breakeven position for the revenue account and an under budget position for capital of £34.025 million, the majority of which related to the Housing Improvement Plan, Smart Solar and the New Build Programme.

The Council **agreed** to note the HRA provisional revenue and capital outturn as at 31 March 2022 as detailed in the report.

10. LOCAL AUTHORITY COVID ECONOMIC RECOVERY FUND

There had been circulated a report dated 31 May, 2022 by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure seeking approval for the allocation of funding from the Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery (LACER) Fund to specific projects and initiatives. The report advised that (1) the Aberdeenshire Council allocation of LACER funding of £3.665 million was currently held in reserves, (2) the funding was intended to support individuals and businesses to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, (3) a range of projects which would provide support to households and businesses had been identified, evaluated and prioritised by a cross Service Officer Panel and their recommendations for allocation of funding were included in the report, and (4) additional resources had been identified from uncommitted Discretionary Business Funds to enhance the number of projects which could be supported.

The Council **agreed** to:

- (1) note the award of £3.665m of funding from the Scottish Government through the Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery (LACER) fund;
- (2) award funding from the Council's LACER allocation and remaining Discretionary Business Fund to the following projects subject to a review of the Help to Heat and Eat, Aberdeenshire Loves Local Giftcard Boost and Alleviation of Food and Fuel Poverty projects and to delegate accordingly to the Director of Environment and Infrastructure following consultation with Group Leaders; and

Project	Grant Amount £
Wellbeing Hub Pilot Peterhead & Fraserburgh	500,000
Setting up and Sustaining Tenancies	50,000
Alleviation of Food and Fuel Poverty	50,000
Help to Heat and Eat	209,642
Aberdeenshire Heat Decarbonisation Supply Chain and Skills Feasibility	35,000
LINA Plus Just Transition	100,000
E3: Next Steps	319,949
Business Gateway Re-ignition Aberdeenshire	296,300
Start-up Business Support Grant	374,000
Business Recovery and Growth Scheme (BRAGS) – working title only	454,909
Business Rates Relief (Discretionary)	400,000
Scotland Loves Local Aberdeenshire Gift Card – Year 2	55,200
Aberdeenshire Loves local Giftcard Boost	1,330,000
Business Engagement Research	50,000
Protective Services COVID Recovery Program	140,000
Total	4,365,000

- (3) delegate authority to the Head of Service (Planning and Economy) to vire funds between the supported projects following consultation with Group Leaders.

11. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES – UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 19 May, 2022 (Item 11), there was circulated a report dated 26 May, 2022 by the Director of Business Services (1) providing an update on responses received from Grampian Regional Equalities Council and the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland on the requirement for nomination to those bodies, (2) seeking consideration of a request from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to nominate a member to the Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees (SJC), and (3) advising of the honorary ex officio appointment of the Provost as President/Vice President of the Grampian Houston Association.

The Council heard from the Head of Legal and People and **agreed:**

- (1) to nominate Councillor Walker to the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland in a decision-making capacity and to delegate authority to the Infrastructure Services Committee to nominate a member to that body should a replacement be required during the current Council term;
- (2) to note the current working arrangements with Grampian Regional Equality Council as outlined in the report and that nomination of an elected member to that Body was not required at this time;
- (3) to nominate Councillor Findlater, as substantive member, and Councillor Stirling, as substitute member, to the Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees (SJC); and
- (4) to note that the Constitution of the Grampian Houston Association included automatic appointment of the Provost in an honorary ex officio position of President or Vice President shared with the Civic Head of Aberdeen City Council and alternating on an annual basis.