

## ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of HYBRID MEETING of the **COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Tuesday 26 November 2024 at 2.00pm.

**Present:** Councillors MARK McDONALD, KENNY BRAES, SERENA COWDY, JACK CRUICKSHANKS, LYNNE DEVINE, BILL DUFF, IAIN GALL, IAN McLAREN, LLOYD MELVILLE, LOUISE NICOL, RONNIE PROCTOR MBE, JILL SCOTT, MARTIN SHEPHERD, LOIS SPEED, TOMMY STEWART and BETH WHITESIDE.

Councillor McDONALD, Convener, in the Chair.

### 1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Craig Fotheringham, with Councillor Iain Gall substituting.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND STATEMENTS OF TRANSPARENCY

Councillor Melville made a statement of transparency in relation to Item 5, Report No 348/24, Item 6, Report No 349/24, Item 7, Report No 350/24 and Item 8, Report No 351/24 in that he was a council tenant.

### 3. MINUTES

#### (a) Previous Meeting

The minute of meeting of this Committee of 1 October 2024 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

#### (b) Arbroath Harbour Joint Consultative Committee

The minute of meeting of the Arbroath Harbour Joint Consultative Committee of 13 September 2024, a copy of which is appended hereto, was submitted and noted (**APPENDIX I**).

### 4. REQUESTS TO SPEAK

The Convener intimated that Requests to Speak had been received from Mr M Cameron, Mr T O'Brien and Mrs V Laing in relation to Report No 348/24 on Tenant Participation Strategy 2025-2028. Mrs Laing had also requested to address the Committee in relation to Report No 349/24.

The Committee agreed to hear the Requests.

Mr Cameron addressed the Committee thanking the Committee for the opportunity to speak. He requested that more help be provided to help tenants participate and to make sure tenants were supported by Housing Officers. He advised of his own personal experience and that the Housing Officer had been professional and efficient and made him feel valued as a tenant. In 2023 a group of tenants interacted with the Tenant Participation Officer. The real priorities were considered and ensured that the community knew when issues had been reported and what the plan was. The Housing Officer offered to meet the group regularly, and the Tenant Participation Officer started attending regularly. The group had started to review how things had been going and found that the perception of the housing department had improved, with simplified communication having been seen in the last 6 months.

Mr O'Brien addressed the Committee advising that a small group had been working on the Tenant Participation Survey with council officers and he felt it was important that it was approved. The HRA was run by tenants for tenants and a way was needed to get more people involved. Mr O'Brien felt that if a new Housing Committee was established there should be tenant participation directly to the Committee as their priorities may differ from those of both Scottish and UK Governments.

The Convener thanked Mr Cameron and Mr O'Brien for their presentation and following questions from Members, they withdrew to the public benches.

Mrs Laing addressed the Committee requesting better investment in sheltered housing in Angus. She thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak and advised that she had been a member of the Steering Group for a long time. She would like help for those that do want to participate and support from officers for the Tenant Participation Officer.

The Convener thanked Mrs Laing for her presentation and following questions from Members, she withdrew to the public benches.

## **5. TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2025-2028**

There was submitted Report No 348/24 by the Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth, seeking approval for the proposed Tenant Participation Strategy 2025-2028, designed to improve communication and enhance tenant engagement and involvement in the decision-making processes affecting housing services.

The Report indicated that the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 set out the legal requirement for social landlords to actively develop and support Tenant Participation. The legislation introduced requirements for landlords to implement a Tenant Participation Strategy, register tenant and resident groups who met prescribed criteria, and provide financial and practical support for tenant engagement. The Act also gave tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations rights to be consulted and involved in landlords' decision making on housing and associated services.

The Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth introduced the Report with Members' questions being responded to by officers.

Thereafter, Councillor Cruickshanks gave notice of an amendment, the contents of which were circulated.

*The Committee agreed at 2.36pm to adjourn for 30 minutes to allow the Convener to take advice from officers.*

*The meeting resumed at 3.12pm.*

COUNCILLOR MCDONALD, SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR MELVILLE, MOVED THAT THE COMMITTEE AGREES:-

- (i) TO APPROVE THE ANGUS COUNCIL TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2025-2028 AND DELIVERY PLAN, AS DETAILED IN APPENDIX 1 OF THE REPORT; AND
- (ii) TO APPROVE THE ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF THE TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY, DURING THE LIFETIME OF THE STRATEGY.

Councillor Cruickshank, seconded by Councillor Scott moved, as an amendment, that the Committee agrees:-

- (i) to approve the Angus Council Tenant Participation Strategy 2025-2028 and Delivery Plan, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the Report;
- (ii) to approve the ongoing development of the Tenant Participation Strategy, during the lifetime of the Strategy; and
- (iii) that the Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth provide biannual Tenant Performance Reports to this Committee that will:
  1. Quantify specific impacts of tenant feedback on housing services;
  2. Provide transparent evidence of how tenant input transforms service delivery;
  3. Detail engagement strategies with diverse tenant groups.

On a vote being taken, the members voted:-

For the motion:-

Councillors McDonald, Braes, Cowdy, Devine, Duff, Melville, Shepherd and Whiteside (8).

For the amendment:-

Councillors Cruickshanks, Gall, McLaren, Nicol, Proctor, Scott, Speed and Stewart (8).

There being an equality of votes the Convener used his casting vote in favour of the motion whereupon the motion was declared carried and became the finding of the meeting.

As this stage in the meeting, and prior to consideration of Report No 349/24, Mrs Laing addressed the Committee requesting better investment in all sheltered housing complexes in Angus, informing Members that there was investment required in the complex she was resident in, there was no maintenance plan, and it was requiring a lot of work.

The Convener thanked Mrs Laing for her presentation and following questions from Members, she withdrew to the public benches.

## **6. HOUSING CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT – 2024/25**

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 21 November 2023, there was submitted Report No 349/24 by the Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth, relating to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital performance to date in 2024/25 and setting out the actual Capital spend to 30 September 2024 together with projected outturns for the year to 31 March 2025 and any required updated Capital funding proposals.

The Report indicated that the HRA capital monitoring budget for 2024/25 was £12.323m as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report. It was expected that there would be no changes allowed to this monitoring budget during the year, resulting in this being the budget against which HRA capital monitoring would be carried out for the remainder of the financial year.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report, in particular the projected year end positions on Capital expenditure, and the indicative funding proposals for the programme; and
- (ii) to note the projected outturn underspend position described at Section 6.1 of the Report.

## **7. STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN 2025/26 – 2029/30**

There was submitted Report No 350/24 by the Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth, informing members on the Strategic Housing Investment Plan for 2025/26–2029/30 and proposals for the use of resources from the Affordable Housing Revenue Account.

The Report indicated that 2023/24 coincided with the launch of the Local Housing Strategy 2023-28. During this period, 66 new build units were delivered across Angus, representing an increase of 40% from the previous financial year. However, despite this increase in new builds delivered, the total return was still lower than target. This shortfall could be recognised as a direct consequence of the several factors outlined within the Strategic Context sections of last and this year's Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

The Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth introduced the Report informing that the Strategic Housing investment plan was refreshed annually and set out investment priorities for Angus over a 5-year period.

Thereafter, Councillor Cruickshanks gave notice of an amendment, the contents of which were circulated.

*The Committee agreed at 4.00pm to adjourn for 30 minutes to allow the Convener to take advice from officers.*

*The meeting resumed at 4.30pm.*

Councillor Cruickshanks provided an overview of the amendment which requested that the Committee note the significant 38% reduction from previous projections in affordable housing unit delivery and that the Chief Executive write to Scottish Government regarding funding model issues. He also requested that the Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth provide a further report to a future meeting of this Committee detailing alternative funding and delivery strategies to mitigate projected housing shortfalls.

Following discussion, the Committee resolved to unanimously agree to accept the additional recommendations proposed by Councillor Cruickshanks.

Therefore, the Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the content of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2025/26 – 2029/30 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the Report;
- (ii) to approve the ongoing development of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan, and its associated programme plans and procedures, with the Council's partners during the lifetime of the Plan;
- (iii) to note the significant 38% reduction from previous projections in affordable housing unit delivery and requests the Chief Executive write to Scottish Government regarding funding model issues, which have -
  - Cut Affordable Housing Supply Programme grants by 26% nationally.
  - Failed to provide a multi-year Resource Planning Assumption.
  - Introduced benchmark rate changes without corresponding funding increases; and
- (iv) to request that the Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth provide a further report to a future meeting of this Committee detailing alternative funding and delivery strategies to mitigate projected housing shortfalls.

## **8. TENANT ALLOWANCE, COMPENSATION AND REDRESS POLICY**

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 11 June 2024, there was submitted Report No 351/24 by the Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth, seeking approval of the Tenant Allowance, Compensation and Redress Policy for the Housing Service. The policy aimed to standardise the application of redress and compensation within the Housing Service, as well as enhance customer satisfaction and reduce the number of complaints.

The Report indicated that there was no formal policy covering compensation, payment of tenant allowances and financial redress for customers, leading to an inconsistent approach within the Housing Service. Compensation payments were handled on a case-by-case basis, without a standardised procedure. Additionally, there was no formal system for recording compensation and financial redress, which limited the ability to gather and analyse data on these payments.

The Tenant Allowance, Compensation and Redress Policy set out the Housing Service's approach to managing redress, compensation, and tenant allowances. The policy applied to all Angus Council housing tenants, as well as homeowners (in cases of home loss payments) and provided clear guidance to housing staff on administering financial redress, compensation, and allowances. It covered tenant redress, allowances, home loss and home loss disturbance payments, compensation for improvements, and the right to repair.

The Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth introduced the Report with Members' questions being responded to by officers.

The Committee agreed to approve the Tenant Allowance, Compensation and Redress Policy as attached as Appendix 1 to the Report.

## 9. BRECHIN RECOVERY AND REGENERATION – NEXT STEPS

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of Angus Council of 7 November 2024, there was submitted Report No 352/24 by the Director of HR, OD, Digital Enablement, IT and Business Support, providing a high-level overview of the next steps to progress a shortlist of options for the future of Brechin and the Brechin River Street Area. Regular progress updates would be reported to future meetings of the Communities Committee. The Report set out some of the current challenges in preparing a detailed project and engagement programme and therefore sought agreement to form an elected member and officer steering group to provide oversight of the next steps.

The Report indicated that Angus Council, at its meeting on 7 November 2024 had considered a report which set out the activity undertaken to date following the impacts of Storm Babet to the Brechin River Street Area in October 2023. Section 6 of the Report outlined next steps, including the development of future options for the Brechin River Street Area.

The Director of Director of HR, OD, Digital Enablement, IT & Business Support provided an overview of the Report.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the next stage of work required to develop the shortlist of options and that the Director of HR, OD, Digital Enablement, IT and Business Support in their role as Chair of Brechin Recovery Committee report regular progress updates to future meetings of this Committee; and
- (ii) to agree the formation of an elected member and officer Steering Group, to provide oversight of the options appraisal process and approach to engagement, and the appointment of the Convener of the Communities Committee and the three Brechin and Edzell Ward Members to the Steering Group and officer representatives as outlined in Paragraph 6.6 of the Report.