

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of HYBRID MEETING of the **HOUSING COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Thursday 30 January 2025 at 2.00pm.

Present: Councillors BETH WHITESIDE, JILL SCOTT, JULIE BELL, KENNY BRAES, LINDA CLARK, JACK CRUICKSHANKS, LYNNE DEVINE, HEATHER DORAN, ROSS GREIG, IAN MCLAREN, GEORGE MEECHAN, LLOYD MELVILLE, GAVIN NICOL, LOUISE NICOL, RONNIE PROCTOR MBE and LOIS SPEED.

Councillor WHITESIDE, Convener, in the Chair.

Prior to the commencement of business, the Convener welcomed all members to the first meeting of the newly established Housing Committee. She indicated that the Committee was established to focus on the housing service, and sought a collaborate approach to build on the work of officers, for the benefit of the tenants of Angus. The Convener also thanked Councillor Braes for all his work during his time as Housing Spokesperson.

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies intimated.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND STATEMENTS OF TRANSPARENCY

Councillors Gavin Nicol and Louise Nicol both declared an interest in relation to Item 7, Report No 31/25 as they both had a family member who had previously undertaken work at Forfar Open Garden and had recently been approached to undertake further work. Both indicated that the interest was a financial interest of a relative and therefore, both indicated that they would not take part in any discussion and voting and would leave the meeting during consideration of the item.

Councillor McLaren made a statement of transparency in relation to Item 7, Report No 31/25 in that he had been involved with Forfar Open Garden a number of years ago.

Councillor Devine made a statement of transparency in relation to Item 7, Report No 31/25 in that she had provided advice to the Committee previously.

Councillor Melville made a general statement of transparency in that he was a Council tenant.

3. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

With reference to Article 11 of the minute of meeting of Angus Council of 19 December 2024, the Committee agreed to note the members appointed to this Committee.

4. HOUSING COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

There was submitted and noted the Terms of Reference of the Housing Committee.

5. APPOINTMENT TO THE EXECUTIVE SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSING COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that the Council's Scheme of Governance, Standing Order 32(1), provided that each Standing Committee was required to appoint an Executive Sub-Committee made up of three members of the Committee.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to appoint the Convener and Vice-Convener of the Housing Committee and Councillor Greig to the Executive Sub-Committee of the Housing Committee; and
- (ii) to note the remit of the Executive Sub-Committee.

Having declared an interest at Article 2 above, Councillors Gavin Nicol and Louise Nicol left the meeting prior to consideration of both Items 6 and 7 as the Request to Speak was directly related to the Item to which they had made their declaration of interest.

6. REQUEST TO SPEAK

The Convener intimated that a Request to Speak had been received from Mrs Maureen Wedderburn and Mrs Elizabeth McLaren, Chair and Secretary and Legal Advisor of Forfar Open Garden in relation to Item 7, Report No 31/25 – Lease of Lochside Road, Forfar Garage and Lock-Up Site to Forfar Open Garden Community Group.

The Committee agreed to hear the Request to Speak.

At this stage in the meeting, Mrs Wedderburn and Mrs McLaren addressed the meeting and provided an overview of the work of Forfar Open Garden, the Groups they worked with and outlined their current situation, including an overview of funding secured toward the required works. They stressed that Forfar Open Garden was a valuable community asset and that by supporting approval of the lease, a much loved garden would be saved.

Following questions, the Convener thanked Mrs Wedderburn, who had joined remotely, and Mrs McLaren for their presentation. Mrs McLaren then withdrew to the public benches.

7. LEASE OF LOCHSIDE ROAD, FORFAR GARAGE AND LOCK-UP SITE TO FORFAR OPEN GARDEN COMMUNITY GROUP

There was submitted Report No 31/25 by the Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth seeking approval to lease Lochside Road, Forfar garage and lock up site to Forfar Open Garden (FOG).

The Report indicated that FOG had successfully operated a community garden in Lochside Road, Forfar for several years. However, they had been given notice by their landlord to vacate the site which would be effective from June 2025. FOG had therefore approached Angus Council with a proposal to move their community initiative to the Lochside Road garage and lock up site which would allow them to remain operating in the area. FOG's vision for the site was provided within Appendix 2 of the Report.

Given the condition of the site in Lochside Road, Forfar which was unpopular and underutilised, officers had explored with current tenant's options which would allow continued access to a garage/lock up in Forfar and also would accommodate FOG. Consultation had taken place with tenants registered on the interested tenants list and the registered tenant groups in Forfar and an overview of the outcome of the responses was included within Appendix 4. Further, the Forfar Horticultural Society occupied a shed on the site however both FOG and Forfar Horticultural Society could be accommodated on the site.

Having heard from a number of members, who welcomed the proposal and were supportive of the excellent work of the Group, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to approve the lease of the Lochside Road, Forfar garage and lock-up site to Forfar Open Garden for an initial period of 15 years and annually thereafter;
- (ii) to approve that the lease would have a break clause of 18 months on Forfar Open Garden's side and five years on the Council's side to allow both sides to end the agreement early;
- (iii) to approve a nominal rent of £1 per annum;
- (iv) to note the ongoing arrangements for existing tenants of the lock ups and garages;
- (v) to note that Forfar Horticultural Society could continue to be accommodated on the site; and
- (vi) that the proposal met the statutory requirements of the Disposal of Land by Local Authorities (Scotland) Regulations 2010.

Councillors Gavin Nicol and Louise Nicol re-joined the meeting.

8. APPROPRIATION OF AREA OF LAND BETWEEN GENERAL FUND AND THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AT NEWTON AVENUE, ARBROATH

With reference to Article 9 of the minute of meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee of 10 December 2024, there was submitted Joint Report No 373/24 by the Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth and the Director of Infrastructure and Environment seeking approval for the area of park at Newton Avenue, Arbroath, which had previously been identified for disinvestment, to be appropriated to the Housing Revenue Account for the delivery of affordable housing on the Fraser Path site.

The Report indicated that statutory consultation had taken place using Engage Angus and no comments had been made regarding the proposals for the appropriation of the land. The development would provide 20 units for social rent with a mix of properties including cottage flats, detached and semi-detached bungalows, and semi-detached and terraced houses.

The Committee agreed to approve the appropriation of the Newton Avenue park site to the Housing Revenue Account for the delivery of affordable housing, in the amount of £16,000.