

SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held via Confero and the Council Chamber on 8 March 2023

Chair:

Provost Margaret Cooper

Councillors Present:

Councillor Alex Allison, Councillor John Anderson, Councillor Ralph Barker, Councillor John Bradley, Councillor Walter Brogan, Councillor Robert Brown, Councillor Archie Buchanan, Councillor Mathew Buchanan, Councillor Janine Calikes, Councillor Andy Carmichael, Councillor Maureen Chalmers, Councillor Ross Clark, Councillor Gerry Convery, Councillor Poppy Corbett, Councillor Andrea Cowan, Councillor Margaret Cowie, Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Colin Dewar, Councillor Mary Donnelly, Councillor Joe Fagan, Councillor Allan Falconer, Councillor Grant Ferguson, Councillor Gladys Ferguson-Miller, Councillor Elise Frame, Councillor Alistair Fulton, Councillor Ross Gowland, Councillor Celine Handibode, Councillor Graeme Horne, Councillor Mark Horsham, Councillor Martin Hose, Councillor Cal Johnston-Dempsey, Councillor Gavin Keatt, Councillor Susan Kerr, Councillor Ross Lambie, Councillor Martin Lennon, Councillor Richard Lockhart, Councillor Eileen Logan, Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Hugh Macdonald, Councillor Julia Marrs, Councillor Ian McAllan, Councillor Catherine McClymont, Councillor Kenny McCreary, Councillor Lesley McDonald, Councillor Elaine McDougall, Councillor Mark McGeever, Councillor Davie McLachlan, Councillor Richard Nelson, Councillor Norman Rae, Councillor Mo Razzaq, Councillor Kirsten Robb, Councillor John Ross, Councillor Dr Ali Salamati, Councillor Graham Scott, Councillor David Shearer, Councillor Bert Thomson (Depute), Councillor Helen Toner, Councillor Margaret B Walker, Councillor David Watson

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Geri Gray, Councillor Lynsey Hamilton, Councillor Monique McAdams, Councillor Carol Nugent

Chief Executive's Service

C Sneddon, Chief Executive

Community and Enterprise Resources

D Booth, Executive Director

Education Resources

T McDaid, Executive Director

Finance and Corporate Resources

P Manning, Executive Director; N Docherty, Administration Assistant; G McCann, Head of Administration and Legal Services; S Somerville, Administration Manager

Housing and Technical Resources

S Gibson, Executive Director

Social Work Resources/Health and Social Care

S Sengupta, Director, Health and Social Care

Minute's Silence

At the Provost's invitation, all present observed a minute's silence to mark a year since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

1 Sederunt and Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of South Lanarkshire Council held on 7 December 2022 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Council decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3 Minutes of Previous Special Meetings

The minutes of the special meetings of South Lanarkshire Council held on 18 January and 22 February 2023 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Council decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

4 Minutes of Risk and Audit Scrutiny Committee

The minutes of the meeting and the special meeting of the Risk and Audit Scrutiny Committee held on 27 September and 25 October 2022 were submitted for noting.

The Council decided: that the minutes be noted.

5 Notice of Motion – Space to Play South Lanarkshire

In terms of Standing Order No 20, a motion proposed by Councillor Robb, seconded by Councillor McGeever, was submitted as follows:-

“This council believes that South Lanarkshire should be the best place for children and young people to grow up in. Our children deserve a play-positive environment where the importance of play to children and families, health, well-being, local communities and the environment is valued and understood. Access to high quality spaces for play is one of the building blocks of childhood and brings multiple benefits to the child and local communities, and is more important than ever for post covid recovery and cost of living concerns.

The Council welcomes the commitment by the Partnership Administration to “introduce a Play Strategy to make South Lanarkshire more play-positive, with upgraded play parks, accessible play equipment and safe outdoor spaces” and notes the cross party recognition of the importance of improving play facilities and shared support for the preparation of a play strategy for South Lanarkshire.

The Council further welcomes the intentions in the National Planning Framework 4 (policy 21) to encourage, promote and facilitate spaces and opportunities for play, recreation and sport in local development plans.

The Council affirms its support for both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Scotland’s Play Charter; recognising that all children have the right to have fun, creative, fulfilling and development-rich play experiences throughout their childhoods.

Therefore, South Lanarkshire Council:-

1. Welcomes ongoing work on Open Space Strategies, the Play Sufficiency Assessments and Children’s participation duties made under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, requiring local authorities to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in their area

2. Agrees that the results of these assessments and engagement with a wide range of partners, including Community Planning, be used to inform the South Lanarkshire Play Strategy leading to South Lanarkshire becoming a play positive place where the value of play is fully recognised, comes higher up everyone's agenda and wider action is taken
3. Develops proposals to consider the implications of signing up to Play Charter (<https://www.playscotland.org/get-involved/membership/scotlands-play-charter/>)
4. Will ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard on decisions that affect them, including on play, by implementing the relevant regulations and the council's own planning guidance on "community involvement in greenspaces".
5. Will work with local people to enhance local greenspaces and woodlands for play, improving access, removing hazardous waste and increasing biodiversity.

Council notes:-

- a. The work being done to assess the condition and inclusiveness of South Lanarkshire's playparks and ensure effective spend of the Playpark Renewal Fund, but regrets that the Fund falls considerably short of requirements to ensure the programme has enough resources and funding to complete its work, with the council now seeking funding from a range of sources to top up the fund to complete the programme
- b. The opportunities to make parks as inclusive and as accessible as possible, in line with the Play Park Renewal Fund principles, particularly 'destination parks', and that these should be informed by quality engagement and partnership with local groups; and
- c. that the Play Strategy will drive forward improvement actions such as:
 - i. costing up solutions responding to the conclusions of the Play Sufficiency Assessments, including consideration of low, no cost and community action to enhance play
 - ii. working with partners, including community-led initiatives, to assess the opportunities and benefits to open up more play assets in a managed way
 - iii. exploring opportunities to leave suitable natural loose parts material from Grounds operations for play.
 - iv. work with communities and agencies to address any anti-social behaviour affecting play at a local level, bringing local people together to find solutions.

Council requests that a full report be made to Committee on the progress of the Play Strategy, following conclusion of work on Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments".

Councillor Robb, in moving her motion, acknowledged that several parties in the Chamber, as well as organisations, had made a commitment in terms of the issue of play as part of their manifestos or aims. She highlighted the importance of seeking out and listening to children's voices in making decisions around play and how play was key to children's development. She considered that having a variety of play spaces, well planned communities and a play positive culture was an investment in the learning, health and wellbeing of children. She also welcomed the fact that the National Planning Framework 4 placed a strong emphasis on play spaces and that the Council would be involving children in assessing local play opportunities to inform a play strategy.

Councillor McGeever, in seconding the motion, referred to this matter being a priority shared by colleagues across the Chamber and how the intention was that action would be taken to build on the existing excellent work and efforts that had been undertaken by officers to date. He echoed Councillor Robb's sentiments that a play positive culture was required.

Councillor Loudon, seconded by Councillor Clark, moved the following as an amendment:-

“After point 4, “community involvement in greenspaces”, insert;

There will be specific engagement with young people via the South Lanarkshire Youth Council, and other appropriate bodies such as the Regen:fx Youth Trust; to recognise the importance of safe and welcoming spaces for unstructured play for older children and young people, to challenge perceptions of play as being an activity for younger children, and to embed their priorities and perspective – including the use of language – in emerging policy.

After point 5, insert;

6. As policies on play emerge, Councillors will be provided with further specific guidance on how to evaluate developers' plans to include play areas and equipment within new housing developments against best practice guidelines on play. This will include information on accessible and inclusive equipment, and on future maintenance and development to ensure ongoing play value.

Supporting statement

The Play Charter asks us to enshrine children and young people's right to play “from the moment they are born until they become adults”. There can be preconceptions around the meaning and importance of ‘play’ for older children and young people, even around whether or not they use the word ‘play’ to describe their outdoor activities. Section 1 of the amendment is designed to strengthen the motion's intent to embed the voices of older children and young people into emergent policy.

Across South Lanarkshire, many children and young people access play equipment and areas built by developers as part of new housing developments. These areas can be of variable quality, and maintained to a variable standard. Although the Council has no responsibility for their upkeep, we have the opportunity to ensure that they are built according to best practice guidelines on play, and that their upkeep and development has been considered, via the planning process. The second section of the amendment aims to strengthen the motion by ensuring that Councillors are empowered with the information they need to evaluate proposals in new developments.”

Councillor Loudon advised that her amendment was in 2 parts, both of which were designed to strengthen the motion. The first related to play for older children and young people, with the other relating to planning and development. She referred to today being International Women's Day and to the research report compiled by the organisation ‘Make Space for Girls’ on teenage girls' use of public space for play. This showed that, as girls got older, there were barriers which prevented them from accessing public spaces for play. She considered that was why sensitive and specific consultation with older children and young people was so important in order to understand the barriers to outdoor activity. In terms of the second part of the amendment, she referred to many children and young people accessing play equipment and areas built by developers as part of new housing developments and, although the Council had no responsibility for their upkeep, councillors had the opportunity to ensure that they were built according to best practice guidelines on play. Councillor Clark seconded the amendment and highlighted the importance of consultation with older children and young people to help shape the Council's approach in this matter.

Following discussion, Councillors Robb and McGeever confirmed that they accepted the contents of the amendment as an addendum to their motion.

The Council decided: that the motion, as amended, be agreed and, following conclusion of work on Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments, a full report be made to committee on the progress of the Play Strategy.

Councillors Brogan and Ross joined the meeting during this item of business

6 Item of Urgent Business – South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Board Decision on Savings

In terms of Standing Order No 4(c), the Provost decided that consideration be given to a request from Councillor Allison, seconded by Councillor Nelson, to hold a members' awareness session on asset appraisal, on or before 24 March 2023, following a decision taken by the South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Board to make savings, in order to achieve a balanced budget, which meant the handover of some premises back to the Council.

The Council decided: that arrangements be made for a members' awareness session to be held, on or before 24 March 2023, on asset appraisal.