

HOUSING AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held via Confero and in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 24 April 2024

Chair:

Councillor Davie McLachlan

Councillors Present:

Councillor Archie Buchanan, Councillor Mathew Buchanan, Councillor Janine Calikes, Councillor Gerry Convery, Councillor Andrea Cowan, Councillor Margaret Cowie (Depute), Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Colin Dewar, Councillor Geri Gray, Councillor Cal Johnston-Dempsey (*substitute for Councillor Alistair Fulton*), Councillor Martin Lennon, Councillor Julia Marrs, Councillor Ian McAllan, Councillor Kenny McCreary, Councillor Norman Rae, Councillor David Shearer, Councillor Helen Toner (*substitute for Councillor Grant Ferguson*), Councillor Margaret B Walker (*substitute for Councillor Allan Falconer*), Councillor Kirsty Williams

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Walter Brogan, Councillor Margaret Cooper, Councillor Joe Fagan (ex officio), Councillor Allan Falconer, Councillor Grant Ferguson, Councillor Alistair Fulton, Councillor Ross Gowland, Councillor Ross Lambie, Councillor Richard Lockhart

Attending:

Finance and Corporate Resources

G Booth, Finance Manager (Resources); C Cumming, Personnel Adviser; J Davitt, Public Relations Officer; P MacRae, Administration Adviser; L O'Hagan, Finance Manager (Strategy); M M Wilson, Legal Services Manager; L Wyllie, Administration Assistant

Housing and Technical Resources

S Gibson, Executive Director; S Egan, Head of Housing Services; J Forbes, Head of Property Services; G McParland, Property Manager (Assets and Estates); C Mitchell, Strategy and Support Manager

1 Declaration of Interests

The following interests were declared:-

Councillor(s)	Item(s)	Nature of Interest(s)
Devlin, Johnston-Dempsey and McCreary	Bothwell Community Hall, 15 Fallside Road, Bothwell – Lease to Bothwell Futures	Members of Bothwell Futures
Marrs	Community Asset Transfer of 33 Smyllum Road, Lanark – 5 Year Lease to Healthy Valleys	Current and ongoing connection to Healthy Valleys and their activities with associated groups within 33 Smyllum Road
Toner	Low Waters Hall, Hamilton – Community Asset Transfer to Low Waters Community Group	Member of Scout Executive Committee

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Technical Resources Committee held on 7 February 2024 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

Councillor Lennon left the meeting following this item of business

3 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/2024 - Housing and Technical Resources (Excl Housing Revenue Account (HRA))

A joint report dated 27 March 2024 by the Executive Directors (Housing and Technical Resources) and (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted advising of the actual expenditure measured against the revenue budget for the period 1 April 2023 to 26 January 2024 for Housing and Technical Resources (excl HRA) together with a forecast for the year to 31 March 2024.

As at 26 January 2024, there was a breakeven position against the phased budget, as detailed in Appendix A to the report. Following the probable outturn exercise, the forecast to 31 March 2024 was a breakeven position, after approved transfers to reserves.

Virements were proposed to realign budgets and those were detailed in appendices B and C to the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the breakeven position as at 26 January 2024 on Housing and Technical Resources' (excl HRA) revenue budget, and the forecast to 31 March 2024 of a breakeven position, after approved transfers to reserves, as detailed in Appendix A of the report, be noted; and
- (2) that the proposed budget virements be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 7 February 2023 (Paragraph 3) and Minutes of the Executive Committee of 20 March 2024 (Paragraph 3)]

4 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/2024 - Housing and Technical Resources (Housing Revenue Account (HRA))

A joint report dated 27 March 2024 by the Executive Directors (Housing and Technical Resources) and (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted advising of the actual expenditure measured against the revenue budget for the period 1 April 2023 to 26 January 2024 for Housing and Technical Resources (HRA), together with a forecast for the year to 31 March 2024.

As at 26 January 2024, there was a breakeven position against the phased budget, as detailed in Appendix A to the report. Following the probable outturn exercise, the forecast to 31 March 2024 was a breakeven position. This breakeven position included a lower than anticipated transfer from reserves being required in the financial year.

The Committee decided: that the breakeven position on Housing and Technical Resources' (HRA) revenue budget, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, and the forecast to 31 March 2024 of a breakeven position, be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 7 February 2024 (Paragraph 4) and Minutes of the Executive Committee of 20 March 2024 (Paragraph 3)]

5 Capital Budget Monitoring 2023/2024 - Housing and Technical Resources (Excluding Housing Revenue Account (HRA))

A joint report dated 3 April 2024 by the Executive Directors (Housing and Technical Resources) and (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted advising of progress on the capital programme for Housing and Technical Resources (excluding HRA) for the period 1 April 2023 to 26 January 2024.

There had been no change to the budget of £11.488 million for Housing and Technical Resources for the financial year 2023/2024, reported to this Committee on 7 February 2024, as detailed in Appendix A of the report.

As reported previously, the predicted spend position for this financial year for Housing and Technical Resources suggested an outturn of £8.800 million, an underspend of £2.688 million. This mainly reflected the anticipated timing of spend on a number of multi-year projects, resulting in budget required in 2024/2025 rather than 2023/2024.

Funding for projects which would be underspent in 2023/2024 would be carried forward into next financial year.

The year-end position was currently being finalised and this would be reported to the Executive Committee on 26 June 2024. The final position for the Housing and Technical Resources programme would be reported to the Housing and Technical Resources Committee on 18 September 2024.

The anticipated spend to date was £2.402 million and spend to 26 January 2024 amounted to £2.332 million, an underspend of £0.070 million. This mainly reflected the timing of project spend on the demand led Prioritised Urgent Investment Programme.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Housing and Technical Resources' (excluding HRA) capital programme of £11.488 million and expenditure to date of £2.332 million be noted; and
- (2) that the projected outturn of £8.800 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 7 February 2024 (Paragraph 5)]

6 Capital Budget Monitoring 2023/2024 - Housing and Technical Resources (Housing Revenue Account (HRA))

A joint report dated 27 March 2024 by the Executive Directors (Housing and Technical Resources) and (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted advising of progress on the capital programme for Housing and Technical Resources (HRA) for the period 1 April 2023 to 26 January 2024.

The budget was based on the revised capital programme for the year which had been approved by the Executive Committee on 20 March 2024.

The Housing capital programme for 2023/2024 totalled £67.443 million and was detailed, along with the funding sources, in Appendix A to the report.

Actual expenditure to 26 January 2024 was £45.478 million. This was £2.253 million ahead of programme and was due to the number of buy backs through the open market purchase scheme being ahead of programme to date.

Current estimates suggested an outturn of £67.443 million. The Resource was expected to spend to this level and work would continue in the coming months to deliver spend.

The Council had been advised that the Resource Planning Assumption for South Lanarkshire was £22.149 million for 2024/2025, although had yet to receive formal confirmation. This reflected a significant reduction in grant due to the overall funding being made available for affordable housing being reduced. The Council would consider how this impacted progress and would engage with its partner Registered Social Landlords in order to prioritise sites that were already committed to, were cost effective and would resolve housing need in pressurised areas with a view to continue to deliver on the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

The Committee decided: that the revised Housing and Technical Resources' (HRA) capital programme of £67.443 million and expenditure to 26 January 2024 of £45.478 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 7 February 2024 (Paragraph 6) and Minutes of the Executive Committee of 20 March 2024 (Paragraph 4)]

Councillor Cooper joined the meeting during this item of business

7 Housing and Technical Resources – Workforce Monitoring – December 2023 to February 2024

A joint report dated 13 March 2024 by the Executive Directors (Housing and Technical Resources) and (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the following employee information for Housing and Technical Resources for December 2023 to February 2024:-

- ◆ attendance statistics
- ◆ occupational health statistics
- ◆ accident/incident statistics
- ◆ discipline, grievance and Dignity at Work cases
- ◆ analysis of leavers and exit interviews
- ◆ Staffing Watch as at 9 December 2023

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 7 February 2024 (Paragraph 7)]

8 Proposed Partnership with Social Bite

A report dated 8 March 2024 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted:-

- ◆ providing an update on discussions with Social Bite to develop an innovative approach to meeting the accommodation and support needs of single homeless households
- ◆ requesting approval to lease a site at Harriet Street, Rutherglen to Social Bite to establish 15 units of supported accommodation at a nominal rent of £1

Discussions had taken place with Social Bite, a charity organisation which was able to front fund the proposal of a homeless village, to explore the option of a partnership approach to meeting the accommodation and support needs of homeless households. The proposal was based on a model which had operated successfully in Edinburgh since 2017.

Those discussions had coincided with the Council's development of a Temporary Accommodation Strategic Plan. This involved consideration of the optimum portfolio of temporary accommodation in the context of national developments, such as the revised Unsuitable Accommodation Order and updated Code of Guidance for Homelessness, which included new temporary accommodation standards to be achieved.

Housing and Technical Resources had anticipated that Lindsay House would have operated until a replacement Supported Accommodation service had been identified to relocate the service, however, due to repeated flooding and disproportionate costs to continue to operate, the service, it closed earlier than anticipated in December 2023 which left a shortfall in supported accommodation.

Housing Services' Temporary Accommodation Strategic Plan demand analysis, based on the 2022/2023 level of need for supported accommodation, reflected a supply requirement of 64 units of supported accommodation. The current provision was 36 units.

The need for temporary accommodation had significantly increased in line with the spike in homelessness demand, resulting in unprecedented use of unsuitable B&B accommodation, at a projected cost of around £100,000 for 2023/2024, more than double the allocated annual budget. This also contributed to wider issues, including regulatory risk by utilising accommodation considered unsuitable as a response to homelessness, the ongoing risk of breaching the unsuitable accommodation order as well as the ability to accommodate and meet the basic statutory duty.

Following detailed discussions with Social Bite, it was proposed that 15 units of accommodation be developed at Harriet Street, Rutherglen. The site, which was owned by the Council, would be leased to Social Bite based on a 5-year lease agreement, with the option to extend for a further 5 years, at a nominal rent of £1 per annum. It was considered that the project would make a significant contribution to addressing the shortfall of supported accommodation. This approach would also complement other solutions, such as a growing Housing First outreach support model.

Social Bite would provide 15 high quality, carbon neutral cabin homes, which would come with a 60-year lifespan. The Council would have exclusive access for the purpose of using the units to provide temporary accommodation to homeless individuals for a weekly rental fee in line with temporary accommodation rents which would come to the Council. Social Bite would also provide annual grant funding to support the project.

The Council would cover the operational costs related to maintaining, letting, and managing the site, thus minimising the lease costs for the accommodation.

If approved, the Council would appoint a 3rd sector partner to manage the Council's involvement in the project, including the collection of rental income. This income would cover rental costs payable by the Council to Social Bite for use of the accommodation and a percentage would be re-invested in the project to cover running costs, as set out in detail at Appendix 2. As part of the legal agreement between Social Bite and the Council, the arrangements would include opportunities whereby Social Bite would promote employment and educational opportunities, supporting community wealth and connecting the project to local services within the community.

Social Bite would retain ownership of the modular housing units for removal from site at the end of the lease period, in line with the lease agreement.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the principle of the Council granting a 5 year lease, with option to extend for a further 5 years, of the site at Harriet Street, Rutherglen to Social Bite to allow Social Bite to establish 15 units of supported accommodation at a nominal annual rent of £1, as detailed in the report, be approved; and
- (2) that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources), in consultation with the Head of Administration and Legal Services, be authorised to conclude legal agreements relating to the proposed arrangements with Social Bite.

9 Low Waters Hall, Hamilton – Community Asset Transfer to Low Waters Community Group

A report dated 5 March 2024 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted advising of a request for asset transfer, by lease, of Low Waters Hall, Elliot Crescent, Hamilton by Low Waters Community Group and requesting approval of the principal terms and conditions of asset transfer, as detailed in the report.

On 8 December 2021, this Committee had approved the asset transfer, by lease, of Low Waters Hall to the Trustees of Clyde Scouts, however, due to organisational issues, the lease had not concluded. The Trustees of Clyde Scouts had now requested that their interest be transferred to Low Waters Community Group.

It was proposed that Low Waters Hall be leased to Low Waters Community Group, subject to the principal terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the subjects at Low Waters Hall, Eliot Crescent, Hamilton be leased to Low Waters Community Group, subject to the terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report; and
- (2) that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources), in consultation with the Head of Administration and Legal Services, be authorised to conclude all matters in respect of the lease and enter into the necessary legal agreements on terms which were in the best interests of the Council.

[Reference: Minutes of 8 December 2021 (Paragraph 12)]

Councillor Toner, having declared an interest in the above of item business, withdrew from the meeting during its consideration

10 Former Walston Primary School, Elsrickle – Asset Transfer to Biggar and District Men’s Shed

A report dated 11 March 2024 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted advising of a request for asset transfer, by sale, of the former Walston Primary School at Elsrickle to Biggar and District Men’s Shed and requesting approval of the principal terms and conditions of asset transfer, as detailed in the report.

On 29 September 2021, this Committee had approved a 10-year lease of the former Walston Primary School to Biggar and District Men’s Shed. Although, the lease still had over 7 years to run, Biggar and District Men’s Shed was now seeking to purchase the property.

It was proposed that the former Walston Primary School be sold to Biggar and District Men’s Shed, subject to the principal terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report.

In response to a member’s comment on the process involved and time taken, the Head of Property Services advised that circumstances had changed considerably since this proposal had first been introduced, with the CAT lite process now established.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the former Walston Primary School be sold to Biggar and District Men’s Shed, subject to the terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report; and
- (2) that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources), in consultation with the Head of Administration and Legal Services, be authorised to conclude all matters in respect of the sale and enter into the necessary legal agreements on terms which were in the best interests of the Council.

[Reference: Minutes of 29 September 2021 (Paragraph 10)]

11 Community Asset Transfer of 33 Smyllum Road, Lanark – 5 year Lease to Healthy Valleys

A report dated 5 January 2024 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted advising of a request for asset transfer, by a 5 year lease, of 33 Smyllum Road, Lanark by Healthy Valleys and requesting approval of the principal terms and conditions of asset transfer, as detailed in the report.

The subjects at 33 Smyllum Road, Lanark form part of a range of retail units in Council and private ownership. In 2022, Healthy Valleys were granted an annual tenancy of the unit on commercial terms to develop their operations and from which to provide local services.

Healthy Valleys had now requested a 5 year lease of the subjects to enable the facility to further develop.

It was proposed that the subjects at 33 Smyllum Road, Lanark be leased to Healthy Valleys, subject to the principal terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the subjects at 33 Smyllum Road, Lanark be leased to Healthy Valleys, subject to the terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report; and

- (2) that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources), in consultation with the Head of Administration and Legal Services, be authorised to conclude all matters in respect of the lease and enter into the necessary legal agreements on terms which were in the best interests of the Council.

Councillor Marrs, having declared an interest in the above of item business, withdrew from the meeting during its consideration

12 Community Asset Transfer of Former St Leonard's Hall, East Kilbride to East Kilbride Men's Shed - 15 Year Lease

A report dated 13 March 2024 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted advising of a request for asset transfer, for a 15 year lease, of the former St Leonard's Hall by East Kilbride Men's Shed and requesting approval of the principal terms and conditions of asset transfer, as detailed in the report.

In February 2022, a short-term lease was granted to East Kilbride Men's Shed to enable the organisation to build capacity and develop a sustainable business model.

East Kilbride Men's Shed had now requested a 15 year lease of the subjects to enable the facility and the organisation to further develop.

It was proposed that St Leonard's Hall be leased to East Kilbride Men's Shed, subject to the principal terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the former St Leonard's Hall be leased to East Kilbride Men's Shed, subject to the terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report; and
- (2) that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources), in consultation with the Head of Administration and Legal Services, be authorised to conclude all matters in respect of the lease and enter into the necessary legal agreements on terms which were in the best interests of the Council.

13 Tom Craig Centre, 3 Lawhill Road, Law – Lease to Law Boxing Club Limited

A report dated 13 March 2024 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted advising of a request for lease of the Tom Craig Centre, 3 Lawhill Road, Law by Law Bowling Club Limited and requesting approval of the principal terms and conditions of asset transfer, as detailed in the report.

Law Boxing Club Limited had requested an annual lease of the Tom Craig Centre to enable the facility to remain open for community use as quickly as possible. The lease would enable them to operate the facility while testing the viability of a future Community Asset Transfer (CAT).

It was proposed that the Tom Craig Centre be leased to Law Boxing Club Limited, subject to the principal terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the subjects at the Tom Craig Centre, 3 Lawhill Road, Law be leased to Law Boxing Club Limited, subject to the terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report; and

- (2) that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources), in consultation with the Head of Administration and Legal Services, be authorised to conclude all matters in respect of the lease and enter into the necessary legal agreements on terms were in the best interests of the Council.

14 Bothwell Community Hall, Fallside Road, Bothwell - Lease to Bothwell Futures

Prior to consideration of this report, the Property Manager (Assets and Estates) advised that there was a typographical error in the address of Bothwell Community Hall and it should have read as No 15 Fallside Road and not No 8.

A report dated 13 March 2024 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted advising of a request for asset transfer, by lease, of the former Bothwell Community Hall, 15 Fallside Road, Bothwell to Bothwell Futures and requesting approval of the principal terms and conditions of asset transfer, as detailed in the report.

Bothwell Futures had requested an annual lease of Bothwell Community Hall to enable the facility to remain open for community use as quickly as possible. The lease would enable them to operate the facility while testing the viability of a future Community Asset Transfer (CAT).

It was proposed that Bothwell Community Hall be leased to Bothwell Futures, subject to the principal terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that Bothwell Community Hall, 15 Fallside Road, Bothwell be leased to Bothwell Futures, subject to the terms and conditions detailed in paragraph 5 of the report; and
- (2) that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources), in consultation with the Head of Administration and Legal Services, be authorised to conclude all matters in respect of the lease and enter into the necessary legal agreements on terms which were in the best interests of the Council.

Councillors Devlin, Johnston-Dempsey and McCreary, having declared an interest in the above of item business, withdrew from the meeting during its consideration

15 Refugee Resettlement Programme Review

A report dated 21 March 2024 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted:-

- ◆ providing an update on the refugee resettlement programme within South Lanarkshire
- ◆ advising of a name change for the Service

In 2015, the Refugee Resettlement Service was established within Housing and Technical Resources to lead on resettlement in South Lanarkshire, including liaison with all relevant services such as health and education.

On 29 January 2020, the Executive Committee approved a consolidated approach, committing to support up to 10% of the Scottish equivalent of the proposed 5,000 UK wide arrivals per year, which equated to approximately 30 households.

To date, nationals from Afghanistan and Ukraine had been supported by South Lanarkshire partners, details of which were provided in the report.

Home Office funding covered the costs associated with all planned refugee programmes. Currently, there was one hotel in the South Lanarkshire area which was supported by the Home Office as an accommodation hub for asylum seekers who were awaiting a determination of their immigration status. The Refugee Resettlement Team attended on a regular basis to provide information and advice to residents on relevant services available and to provide support when refugee status was awarded, with a view to preventing homelessness as far as possible.

As the Service now encompassed assistance to asylum seekers, it had been renamed as the Asylum and Refugee Resettlement Service, with the team now known as the Asylum and Refugee Support Team.

In response to a member's question in terms of the ongoing support for refugees, the Head of Housing Services advised that once refugees had been through the programme, there was still the opportunity to work with the Resettlement Team.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that it be noted that, on the basis approved by Committee on 29 January 2020, the Refugee Resettlement Programme continued to provide support to up to 30 families per year; and
- (2) that the change in the name of the service from Refugee Resettlement Service to Asylum and Refugee Resettlement Service be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of the Executive Committee of 29 January 2020 (Paragraph 6)]

16 Scottish Government Consultations on the Social Housing Net Zero Standard in Scotland and Heat in Buildings Bill

A report dated 18 March 2024 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted:-

- ◆ providing an overview of 2 recent Scottish Government consultations on the proposed new net zero standard for social housing and the new Heat in Buildings Bill
- ◆ providing a summary of the Council's response to the consultations, submitted to the Scottish Government on 8 March 2024

In 2021, the Scottish Government published a Heat in Buildings Strategy which committed to:-

- ◆ review the existing standards for improving energy efficiency within social housing across Scotland to better align with Scotland's latest net zero targets, as set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, as amended in 2020
- ◆ introduce new legislation to phase out the need to install new or replacement fossil fuel boilers across all domestic and non-domestic buildings in Scotland, while also requiring building owners to improve the energy efficiency of buildings to help achieve net zero targets

Consultations on each of those commitments had been launched by the Scottish Government in early 2024 and an overview of the Council's response to both was provided in Sections 4 and 5 of the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the overview of the consultations on the proposed new net zero standard for social housing and Heat in Buildings Bill be noted; and

- (2) that the summary of the Council's response to each consultation be noted

17 Notification of Contracts Awarded 9 September 2023 – 29 February 2024

A report dated 8 March 2024 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on contracts awarded by Housing and Technical Resources, valued in excess of £50,000, in the period 8 September 2023 to 29 February 2024, as follows:-

- ◆ contracts awarded by Consultancy Services
- ◆ contracts awarded by the Procurement Team
- ◆ sub-contracts awarded by Building Services

Details of the contracts and projects were provided in the appendices to the report.

Officers responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the contracts awarded by Consultancy Services, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) that the contracts awarded by the Procurement Team, as detailed in Appendix B to the report, be noted; and
- (3) that the sub contracts awarded by Building Services, as detailed in Appendix C to the report, be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 8 November 2023 (Paragraph 15)]

18 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.