

## Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 14 May 2024

### Present

Councillors Meagher (Convener), Bennet (items 1-9) Bruce, Caldwell (items 10-23) (substituting for Councillor Bennett), Dobbin, Flannery, Fullerton (substituting for Councillor Key), Hyslop (items 1- 19) (substituting for Councillor Biagi), Jones (except item 20), Mumford (substituting for Councillor Rae), Munro (substituting for Councillor Jones, item 20 only), Nols-McVey (substituting for Councillor Hyslop, items 19-23), Parker and Pogson.

### 1. Deputations

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**a) Living Rent Edinburgh (Lochend Branch) in relation to Item 8 – 2024/25 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme and Item 20 - By Councillor Dobbin – Property Acquisitions with Existing Tenants**

The deputation spoke about their experiences of the repair and retrofitting scheme that was currently underway. They thought the scheme was very important in tackling the housing and climate emergencies, in communities that desperately needed warmer homes and whose buildings had suffered decades neglect. However, the scheme was causing fear in communities, and the deputation urged the council to look at it again, improve it, and work with communities to ensure it was fair to everyone. There were concerns that people could go into debt to fund initial estimates for works or be forced from their homes.

**(See Items 8 and 20 below)**

**b) Living Rent Edinburgh in relation to Item 14 – Housing (Scotland Bill) – summary and potential impacts**

Living Rent had been campaigning for rent controls for the past decade and welcomed that the Scottish Government was serious about implementing them. The deputation spoke about the everyday reality of the housing system, from ever-rising costs of rents, the state of repair of homes, the lack of energy efficiency, and the constant threat of eviction. They argued that this was borne out of political choice. They stated that delivering affordability in the private rented sector through rent controls was fundamental and were disappointed that the report, in their view, did not give sufficient consideration and support to this. They asked for the Council to support rent controls and push the government to ensure rent controls were robust, and offered to work with councillors and officers on this.

**(See Item 14 below)**

**c) Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC), Feniks and the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (Edinburgh) in relation to Item 13 – Ukraine Support Service – Grant Awards for continuation of services under Urgency Provisions for Feniks Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services Ltd and Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (Edinburgh Branch)**

The deputation spoke about their work in supporting the Ukrainian community in Edinburgh. Edinburgh had a thriving and vibrant third sector located in communities which was working to support some of the most vulnerable people. Two years ago, the Council had put out a call to the third sector, businesses, council departments to see what support could be provided to those arriving in the city. There was a huge response, and to date, Edinburgh had welcomed 11,500 Ukrainians through Edinburgh Airport and the Welcome Hub. However, there were 800 Ukrainians still residing in temporary accommodation, including hotels and self-catering apartments commissioned by Scottish Government, and over a thousand people living with hosts. There was a risk of a mass-homelessness crisis associated with this, as hosts could step back from the programme at any time. The deputation endorsed the grant proposals but saw this as the start of a vast range of work they would do with council officers on funding.

**(See Item 13 below)**

## **2. Minutes**

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### **Decision**

To approve the minute of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee of 27 February 2024 as a correct record.

## **3. Work Programme**

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The Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee Work Programme was presented.

### **Decision**

To note the work programme.

(Reference – Work Programme, submitted.)

## **4. Rolling Actions Log**

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The Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee Rolling Actions Log was presented.

### **Decision**

- 1) To agree to close the following actions:
  - Action 11(3) – Heating Emergency Action Plan
  - Action 13 – Waste and Cleansing Services on Housing Land
  - Action 17 – Motion by Councillor Hyslop – Discretionary Housing Payments

- Action 19 – Capital City Partnership Service Level Agreement
  - Action 20 – UK Shared Prosperity Fund Update
  - Action 24(4) – Responding to the Housing Emergency Declaration
  - Action 25(3) – Support for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Displaced People
  - Action 27 – Internal Audit reports Management of Ad hoc Mixed Tenure Works (PL2302), Housing Stock Condition – Tenant Safety, Damp and Mould (PL2303), Repairs Right First Time (PL2306) and service area responses for (PL2303) and (PL2306) – referral from the Governance Risk and Best Value Committee
- 2) To note Action 12 – Strategy for purchasing land and homes to meet affordable housing need would remain open.
  - 3) To otherwise note the remaining outstanding actions.

(Reference – Rolling Actions Log, submitted.)

## 5. Business Bulletin

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The Business Bulletin was presented.

### Decision

To note the Business Bulletin.

(Reference – Business Bulletin, submitted.)

## 6. No One Left Behind – ASN Provision

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Details were provided of work undertaken by the Council and the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) to put in place a Stage 1 additional support needs employability service, funded by the Scottish Government under the No One Left Behind (NOLB) strategy, for funding for 2024/25.

### Decision

- 1) To note the findings of the Additional Support Need (ASN) employability provision mapping exercise in Edinburgh, carried out by the Local Employability Partnership (LEP).
- 2) To note the findings of the co-production process, highlighting the specific additional support requirements of ASN young people in the city, at stage 1 of the employability pipeline.
- 3) To agree to launch a grant bidding process, using the specification in Appendix 1 of the report by the Executive Director of Place, for a specific citywide Additional Support Needs Stage 1 provision.
- 4) To delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place to award a grant of £100,000, to the LEP's recommended provision following the scoring process.
- 5) To note that the outcome of the scoring process will be reported to Committee in August.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

## **7. Employers Recruitment Incentives to Support Fair Work**

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Details were provided of the way in which Edinburgh’s Employer Recruitment Incentives (EERI) offer was currently delivered and changes to the offer based on Scottish Government’s Fair Work First policy.

### **Motion**

- 1) To note the updated Fair Work First criteria as established by Scottish Government.
- 2) To note the resulting change to Edinburgh’s Employer Recruitment Incentives (EERI) criteria, where employers must now pay the real Living Wage (RLW) or above to all employees, including apprentices, to be eligible.
- 3) To note the potential consequences of ceasing funding for apprenticeships where the RLW is not being paid.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

### **Amendment**

- 1) To note the updated Fair Work First criteria as established by Scottish Government.
- 2) To note the resulting change to Edinburgh’s Employer Recruitment Incentives (EERI) criteria, where employers must now pay the real Living Wage (RLW) or above to all employees, including apprentices, to be eligible.
- 3) To note the potential consequences of ceasing funding for apprenticeships where the RLW is not being paid.
- 4) To note that there are many reasons why businesses were currently experiencing economic difficulty, including macroeconomic factors which are unrelated to changes to the Scottish Government’s “Fair Work First” criteria.

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Mumford

In accordance with Standing Order 22(13), the amendment was accepted as an addendum to the motion.

### **Decision**

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Meagher:

- 1) To note the updated Fair Work First criteria as established by Scottish Government.
- 2) To note the resulting change to Edinburgh’s Employer Recruitment Incentives (EERI) criteria, where employers must now pay the real Living Wage (RLW) or above to all employees, including apprentices, to be eligible.
- 3) To note the potential consequences of ceasing funding for apprenticeships where the RLW was not being paid.

- 4) To note that there were many reasons why businesses were currently experiencing economic difficulty, including macroeconomic factors which were unrelated to changes to the Scottish Government's "Fair Work First" criteria.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

## **8. 2024/25 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme**

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The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme of £136.193 million for 2024/25 was presented. The work underway throughout 2023/24 on the design and planning for delivering a whole house retrofit (WHR) programme, combined with the successful approach to working with owners piloted at Murrayburn (now in its final stages in 2024/25) would see investment in existing stock scaled up in 2024/25 to work towards the ambitious Council business plan priorities around net zero carbon.

### **Motion**

- 1) To agree the 2024/25 planned Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme for investment of £136.193 million in Council homes and estates.
- 2) To note the significant design and development work progressed throughout 2023/24 to transition towards a holistic whole house retrofit (WHR) approach and also the additional pipeline of design and development work that would continue to be progressed throughout 2024/25.
- 3) To note the significant risks to programme delivery as set out in Appendix 5 of the report by the Executive Director of Place are reductions in grant funding, increasing capital investment costs, contractor capacity and owner and tenant engagement.

### **Amendment**

- 1) To agree the 2024/25 planned Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme for investment of £136.193 million in Council homes and estates
- 2) To note the significant design and development work progressed throughout 2023/24 to transition towards a holistic whole house retrofit (WHR) approach and also the additional pipeline of design and development work that would continue to be progressed throughout 2024/25.
- 3) To note the significant risks to programme delivery as set out in Appendix 5 of the report by the Executive Director of Place are reductions in grant funding, increasing capital investment costs, contractor capacity and owner and tenant engagement.
- 4) To note that in Appendix 5 of the report, under the risk "owner and tenant engagement", mitigations were listed for owner-occupiers, council tenants and private landlords, but not private tenants, despite this group also being impacted by Mixed Tenure Improvement Service (MTIS) works.
- 5) To note that following a request of committee, in June 2023 a briefing note was produced to outline what financial support was available to owners as part of MTIS, including benchmarking against other Local Authorities, and note that the briefing note explained that additional funding schemes would be developed

through the Scottish Government's "Green Heat Finance Taskforce" report which was published on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 (with a second report due to follow in 2024).

- 6) To note that the original 3-year pilot programme for the MTIS is due for completion in June 2024.
- 7) Therefore, agrees it would be appropriate to bring an updated report to committee on the MTIS strategy to cover:
  - i) An evaluation of the MTIS programme from the first pilot, including lessons learned around communication and engagement with residents.
  - ii) What specific support is available for private tenants throughout the process.
  - iii) An analysis / comparison of the different assistance schemes and repayment terms from other Local Authorities against the Council's offer, and reflections on if / how the Council's offer could be improved for future works, in line with a climate justice approach and with a view to scaling up the programme, if that is appropriate.
  - iv) Possible revisions to the scheme of assistance available following the publication of the Green Heat Finance Taskforce
- 8) To further agree that this report would also set out governance arrangements for the MTIS works, including via the Whole House Retrofit / MTIS dashboard which features in the Cyclical Assurance on Service Performance report, heard at each committee meeting.

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Mumford

In accordance with Standing Order 22(13), the amendment was accepted as an addendum to the motion.

### **Decision**

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Meagher:

- 1) To agree the 2024/25 planned Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme for investment of £136.193 million in Council homes and estates
- 2) To note the significant design and development work progressed throughout 2023/24 to transition towards a holistic whole house retrofit (WHR) approach and also the additional pipeline of design and development work that would continue to be progressed throughout 2024/25.
- 3) To note the significant risks to programme delivery as set out in Appendix 5 of the report by the Executive Director of Place were reductions in grant funding, increasing capital investment costs, contractor capacity and owner and tenant engagement.
- 4) To note that in Appendix 5 of the report, under the risk "owner and tenant engagement", mitigations were listed for owner-occupiers, council tenants and private landlords, but not private tenants, despite this group also being impacted by Mixed Tenure Improvement Service (MTIS) works.

- 5) To note that following a request of committee, in June 2023 a briefing note was produced to outline what financial support was available to owners as part of MTIS, including benchmarking against other Local Authorities, and note that the briefing note explained that additional funding schemes would be developed through the Scottish Government's "Green Heat Finance Taskforce" report which was published on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 (with a second report due to follow in 2024).
- 6) To note that the original 3-year pilot programme for the MTIS is due for completion in June 2024.
- 7) To therefore agree it would be appropriate to bring an updated report to committee on the MTIS strategy to cover:
  - i. An evaluation of the MTIS programme from the first pilot, including lessons learned around communication and engagement with residents.
  - ii. What specific support was available for private tenants throughout the process.
  - iii. An analysis / comparison of the different assistance schemes and repayment terms from other Local Authorities against the Council's offer, and reflections on if / how the Council's offer could be improved for future works, in line with a climate justice approach and with a view to scaling up the programme, if that is appropriate.
  - iv. Possible revisions to the scheme of assistance available following the publication of the Green Heat Finance Taskforce.
- 8) To further agree that this report would also set out governance arrangements for the MTIS works, including via the Whole House Retrofit / MTIS dashboard which featured in the Cyclical Assurance on Service Performance report, heard at each committee meeting.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee 9 May 2023 (item 8); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

## **9. Update: Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024/25 – 2028/29**

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An update was provided on the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024/25 – 2028/29. Delivery of affordable housing remained a priority for the Council and its partner Housing Associations. However, the cost of construction, borrowing and delivering services to existing tenants had all increased at a time when rents had been frozen or had been increased less than overall inflation, making delivery increasingly difficult. Based on current grant funding commitments from pre-approved projects and uncertainty around 2025/26 grant levels, it was unlikely that any new grant funded approvals would be brought forward this year. There would be a small number of non-grant funded approvals brought forward this year. However, the Scottish Government's Open Market Shared Equity scheme that enabled first time buyers to get on the property market was also likely to be impacted by funding cuts from Financial Transactions monies. The full impact of the cut was still to be announced.

## **Motion**

- 1) To note the 24% reduction in affordable housing grant funding from the Scottish Government against expected Resource Planning Assumptions in 2024/25; going from £45.2m to £34.2m.
- 2) To recognise the challenge that this placed on officers, across the housing and planning service, to deliver agreed housebuilding and approvals targets.
- 3) To note that based on the current affordable housing grant funding commitment for already approved projects and uncertainty in the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme 2025/26 budget, Edinburgh was unlikely to be able to approve any new grant funded affordable homes this year, and there was uncertainty about potential commitments next year
- 4) To note the wider impacts this cut in funding has had on the Affordable Housing Policy, Affordable Housing Supply Programme, the Council's own house building programme and HRA Business plan.
- 5) To note that despite the delivery challenges, it was of the utmost importance that committee did all it could to deliver affordable homes, as the present situation risked exacerbating the housing emergency.
- 6) To refer the report by the Executive Director of Place to the Planning Committee and request that it consider the use of affordable housing commuted sums on a citywide basis where individual legal agreements did not restrict this.
- 7) To further request that Officers prepare a report on new financial approaches which could help mitigate the challenge of the budget cut with key risks, and pathways to implementation, clearly set out.
- 8) To request this in one cycle with referral to the following Finance and Resources Committee.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

## **Amendment 1**

- 1) To note the 24% reduction in affordable housing grant funding from the Scottish Government against expected Resource Planning Assumptions in 2024/25; going from £45.2m to £34.2m.
- 2) To note that based on the current affordable housing grant funding commitment for already approved projects and uncertainty in the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme 2025/26 budget, Edinburgh was unlikely to be able to approve any new grant funded affordable homes this year, and there was uncertainty about potential commitments next year.
- 3) Note the wider impacts this cut in funding has had on the Affordable Housing Policy, Affordable Housing Supply Programme, the Council's own house building programme and HRA Business plan



- 4) To refer this report to Planning Committee and request that it consider the use of affordable housing commuted sums on a citywide basis where individual legal agreements did not restrict this.
- 5) To note with concern the outcome of this report in relation to the development of affordable housing, with the 24% in reduction to grant funding from £45.2m to £34.2m.
- 6) To note that affordable housing was the key cornerstone in addressing the Housing Emergency Crisis in the long term, and the need for social housing in the short-term, recognised by Shelter, Housing for Scotland and the Emergency Housing and Homelessness Taskforce.
- 7) To note that lack of funding for housing and social housing development put a significant strain on the positive outcome of the long-term SHIP strategy, and reinforce point 1.1.2 of the recommendations in the report by the Executive Director of Place:  
*‘That based on the current affordable housing grant funding commitment for already approved projects and uncertainty in the Scottish Government’s Affordable Housing Supply Programme 2025/26 budget, Edinburgh is unlikely to be able to approve any new grant funded affordable homes this year.’*
- 8) To note the wider impacts this cut in funding would have on the Affordable Housing Policy, Affordable Housing Supply Programme, the Council’s own house building programme, HRA Business plan, and the City Plan.
- 9) To therefore urge the Scottish Government to review its Housing funding priorities, review its stance on the Edinburgh Housing Emergency, and ask the Convener to convey this to the Scottish Government in the strongest and most robust terms.

- moved by Councillor Flannery, seconded by Councillor Bennett

At this point in the meeting the following Amendment 2 was proposed:

### **Amendment 2**

- 1) To note the 24% reduction in affordable housing grant funding from the Scottish Government against expected Resource Planning Assumptions in 2024/25; going from £45.2m to £34.2m.
- 2) To recognise the challenge that this placed on officers, across the housing and planning service, to deliver agreed housebuilding and approvals targets.
- 3) To note that based on the current affordable housing grant funding commitment for already approved projects and uncertainty in the Scottish Government’s Affordable Housing Supply Programme 2025/26 budget, Edinburgh was unlikely to be able to approve any new grant funded affordable homes this year, and there was uncertainty about potential commitments next year

- 4) To note the wider impacts this cut in funding has had on the Affordable Housing Policy, Affordable Housing Supply Programme, the Council's own house building programme and HRA Business plan.
- 5) To note that despite the delivery challenges, it was of the utmost importance that committee did all it could to deliver affordable homes, as the present situation risked exacerbating the housing emergency.
- 6) To refer the report by the Executive Director of Place to the Planning Committee and request that it consider the use of affordable housing commuted sums on a citywide basis where individual legal agreements did not restrict this.
- 7) To further request that Officers prepare a report on new financial approaches which could help mitigate the challenge of the budget cut with key risks, and pathways to implementation, clearly set out.
- 8) To request this in one cycle with referral to the following Finance and Resources Committee.
- 9) To note with concern the outcome of this report in relation to the development of affordable housing, with the 24% in reduction to grant funding from £45.2m to £34.2m.
- 10) To note that affordable housing was the key cornerstone in addressing the Housing Emergency Crisis in the long term, and the need for social housing in the short-term, recognised by Shelter, Housing for Scotland and the Emergency Housing and Homelessness Taskforce.
- 11) To note that lack of funding for housing and social housing development put a significant strain on the positive outcome of the long-term SHIP strategy, and reinforce point 1.1.2 of the recommendations in the report by the Executive Director of Place:  
  
*'That based on the current affordable housing grant funding commitment for already approved projects and uncertainty in the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme 2025/26 budget, Edinburgh is unlikely to be able to approve any new grant funded affordable homes this year.'*
- 12) To note the wider impacts this cut in funding would have on the Affordable Housing Policy, Affordable Housing Supply Programme, the Council's own house building programme, HRA Business plan, and the City Plan.

- moved by Councillor Dobbin, seconded by Councillor Hyslop

In accordance with Standing Order 22(13), Amendment 1 was accepted as an addendum to the motion.

### **Voting**

The voting was as follows:

- |                              |   |         |
|------------------------------|---|---------|
| For the motion (as adjusted) | - | 8 votes |
| For Amendment 2              | - | 3 votes |

(For the motion (as adjusted) – Councillors Bennett, Bruce, Flannery, Jones, Meagher, Mumford, Parker and Pogson

For Amendment 2 – Councillors Dobbin, Fullerton and Hyslop.)

### **Decision**

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Meagher:

- 1) To note the 24% reduction in affordable housing grant funding from the Scottish Government against expected Resource Planning Assumptions in 2024/25; going from £45.2m to £34.2m.
- 2) To recognise the challenge that this placed on officers, across the housing and planning service, to deliver agreed housebuilding and approvals targets.
- 3) To note that based on the current affordable housing grant funding commitment for already approved projects and uncertainty in the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme 2025/26 budget, Edinburgh was unlikely to be able to approve any new grant funded affordable homes this year, and there was uncertainty about potential commitments next year
- 4) To note the wider impacts this cut in funding has had on the Affordable Housing Policy, Affordable Housing Supply Programme, the Council's own house building programme and HRA Business plan.
- 5) To note that despite the delivery challenges, it was of the utmost importance that committee did all it could to deliver affordable homes, as the present situation risked exacerbating the housing emergency.
- 6) To refer the report by the Executive Director of Place to the Planning Committee and request that it consider the use of affordable housing commuted sums on a citywide basis where individual legal agreements did not restrict this.
- 7) To further request that Officers prepare a report on new financial approaches which could help mitigate the challenge of the budget cut with key risks, and pathways to implementation, clearly set out.
- 8) To request this in one cycle with referral to the following Finance and Resources Committee.
- 9) To note with concern the outcome of this report in relation to the development of affordable housing, with the 24% in reduction to grant funding from £45.2m to £34.2m.
- 10) To note that affordable housing was the key cornerstone in addressing the Housing Emergency Crisis in the long term, and the need for social housing in the short-term, recognised by Shelter, Housing for Scotland and the Emergency Housing and Homelessness Taskforce.
- 11) To note that lack of funding for housing and social housing development put a significant strain on the positive outcome of the long-term SHIP strategy, and reinforce point 1.1.2 of the recommendations in the report by the Executive Director of Place:

*‘That based on the current affordable housing grant funding commitment for already approved projects and uncertainty in the Scottish Government’s Affordable Housing Supply Programme 2025/26 budget, Edinburgh is unlikely to able to approve any new grant funded affordable homes this year.’*

- 12) To note the wider impacts this cut in funding would have on the Affordable Housing Policy, Affordable Housing Supply Programme, the Council’s own house building programme, HRA Business plan, and the City Plan.
- 13) To therefore urge the Scottish Government to review its Housing funding priorities, review its stance on the Edinburgh Housing Emergency, and ask the Convener to convey this to the Scottish Government in the strongest and most robust terms.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

## **10. Review of Missing Share Scheme and Emergency Building Safety Fees**

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Committee was asked to consider the appropriateness of both the upper threshold of £20,000 for Missing Share applications to the Council where a Dangerous Building Notice has been served on the property, and of the 10% fee applied to emergency make safe building works costs.

### **Decision**

- 1) To note the report.
- 2) To agree to hold a briefing session with Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee members and Finance and Resources committee members to explore issues relating to missing share scheme thresholds and emergency building safety work fees, including guidance on the competency of amending Council fees and charges within 6 months of the budget decision made in February 2024.
- 3) To note that a revised version of the report would be submitted to the Finance and Resources Committee of 25 June 2024.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

## **11. Cyclical Assurance on Service Performance**

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A summary was provided of service performance, with a deep dive into void Council Property Management. It was agreed at Committee on 27 February 2024 such updates with be presented at each Committee meeting.

### **Motion**

- 1) To note this first cyclical service performance report.
- 2) To note performance is below target in the following areas:
  - Void Property

- Homelessness
  - Damp and mould
- 3) To note progress in developing the data culture within the Housing and Homelessness service.
  - 4) To note the developing work in tracking preventative spend and action across the Housing and Homelessness service.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

#### **Amendment 1**

- 1) To note this first cyclical service performance report.
- 2) To note performance is below target in the following areas:
  - Void Property
  - Homelessness
  - Damp and mould
- 3) To note progress in developing the data culture within the Housing and Homelessness service.
- 4) To note the developing work in tracking preventative spend and action across the Housing and Homelessness service.
- 5) To note the importance that cyclical updates play in regards to transparency and to thank officers for this new direction.
- 6) To request officers include 'Social Rent Home completions' in future Appendix 8 of the report by the Executive Director of Place (Completions and approvals of new build property).

- moved by Councillor Caldwell, seconded by Councillor Flannery

#### **Amendment 2**

- 1) To note this first cyclical service performance report.
- 2) To note performance is below target in the following areas:
  - Void Property
  - Homelessness
  - Damp and mould
- 3) To note progress in developing the data culture within the Housing and Homelessness service.
- 4) To note the developing work in tracking preventative spend and action across the Housing and Homelessness service.
- 5) To agree that a workshop would be arranged with Committee members prior to recess to review the structure / format of this first Cyclical Assurance on Service

Performance report, including discussion about how (relevant) KPIs from the HSIP will be reflected in these going forward.

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Mumford

In accordance with Standing Order 22(13), Amendments 1 and 2 were accepted as addenda to the motion.

### **Decision**

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Meagher:

- 1) To note this first cyclical service performance report.
- 2) To note performance was below target in the following areas:
  - Void Property
  - Homelessness
  - Damp and mould
- 3) To note progress in developing the data culture within the Housing and Homelessness service.
- 4) To note the developing work in tracking preventative spend and action across the Housing and Homelessness service.
- 5) To note the importance that cyclical updates played in regards to transparency and to thank officers for this new direction.
- 6) To request officers include 'Social Rent Home completions' in future Appendix 8 of the report by the Executive Director of Place (Completions and approvals of new build property).
- 7) To agree that a workshop would be arranged with Committee members prior to recess to review the structure / format of this first Cyclical Assurance on Service Performance report, including discussion about how (relevant) KPIs from the HSIP would be reflected in these going forward.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee of 27 February 2024 (item 12); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

## **12. Housing Service Improvement Plan**

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An update was provided on the Housing Service Improvement Plan (HSIP) over the most recent six-monthly period.

### **Motion**

- 1) To note the progress made with the Housing Service Improvement Plan (HSIP) over the previous six months.
- 2) To note that work had been undertaken to review the remaining ongoing and outstanding projects within the HSIP and to map those into the Housing Emergency Action Plan (HEAP).

- 3) To agree that this will be the final HSIP update report to Committee, with future reporting on housing improvement projects and performance being through the HEAP and the Cyclical Performance reports to avoid duplication and ensure consistent governance and efficient use of project resources.
- 4) To note that a separate report would be provided to the next Committee with updates on progress on audit actions. Committee had previously agreed that the monitoring of audit management actions should be included in future HSIP reports.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

#### **Amendment 1**

- 1) To note the progress made with the Housing Service Improvement Plan (HSIP) over the previous six months.
- 2) To note that work had been undertaken to review the remaining ongoing and outstanding projects within the HSIP and to map those into the Housing Emergency Action Plan (HEAP).
- 3) To agree that this will be the final HSIP update report to Committee, with future reporting on housing improvement projects and performance being through the HEAP and the Cyclical Performance reports to avoid duplication and ensure consistent governance and efficient use of project resources.
- 4) To note that a separate report would be provided to the next Committee with updates on progress on audit actions. Committee had previously agreed that the monitoring of audit management actions should be included in future HSIP reports.
- 5) To note that recent increased awareness of possible RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete) in social rent housing across the country means it continues to be a concern to residents and to note that the City of Edinburgh Council is named in the Scottish Housing Regulator RAAC Update (published 28th March 2024) as a landlord which identified RAAC within part of the estate.

Therefore requests:

that both RAAC surveying and engagement with residents is added to future HSIP updates, formatted at officers' discretion.

- moved by Councillor Flannery, Seconded by Councillor Caldwell

#### **Amendment 2**

- 1) To note the progress made with the Housing Service Improvement Plan (HSIP) over the previous six months.
- 2) To note that work had been undertaken to review the remaining ongoing and outstanding projects within the HSIP and to map those into the Housing Emergency Action Plan (HEAP).
- 3) To agree that this will be the final HSIP update report to Committee, with future reporting on housing improvement projects and performance being through the

HEAP and the Cyclical Performance reports to avoid duplication and ensure consistent governance and efficient use of project resources.

- 4) To note that a separate report would be provided to the next Committee with updates on progress on audit actions. Committee had previously agreed that the monitoring of audit management actions should be included in future HSIP reports.
- 5) To welcome the work ongoing to embed circular economy principles into voids / repairs work.
- 6) To note that during the Circular Economy roundtable hosted by the Council, Circular Communities Scotland explained their work in providing local authorities and housing associations with the opportunity to purchase more sustainable and affordable alternatives when buying furniture and white goods for tenants.
- 7) To agree that officers would engage with Circular Communities Scotland to explore if they could support a pilot in Edinburgh with updates on progress reported to Committee via the Business Bulletin (or other means).

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Mumford

In accordance with Standing Order 22(13), Amendments 1 and 2 were accepted as addenda to the motion.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

### **13. Ukraine Support Service – Grant Awards for continuation of services under Urgency Provisions for Feniks Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services Ltd and Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (Edinburgh Branch)**

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An update was provided on the approval given under urgency provisions to award ringfenced Ukraine Support grant funding for the continuation of Mental Health provision and support provided to displaced Ukrainian nationals by Feniks Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services Ltd, and for the continuation of youth work services provided by the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (Edinburgh Branch).

#### **Decision**

- 1) To note that the following grants were awarded as an urgent decision, in accordance with section 4.1 of the Council's Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions, by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Convenor:
  - i. Continuation of Mental Health provision and support provided to displaced Ukrainian nationals from Feniks Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services Ltd.
  - ii. Continuation of services to provide youth work provided by the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (Edinburgh Branch).
- 2) To note that this arrangement covered the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2026, to the value of £371,264.89.



(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

## **14. Housing (Scotland) Bill – summary and potential impacts**

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Details were provided of the Housing (Scotland) Bill, which had been presented on 26 March 2024 and was now subject to scrutiny and debate by the Scottish Parliament. Given the breadth of content covered in the Bill, this was likely to be a lengthy process which would then require secondary legislation to be developed. Should the Bill pass in its current form, it would bring about a number of significant changes for tenants, landlords, local authorities and partner organisations. A summary of the Bill was provided, including potential impacts for the Council and for Edinburgh’s housing market.

### **Motion**

- 1) To note that the Housing (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 26 March 2024 and would now progress through the Scottish Parliament.
- 2) To note that, should the Bill be passed and receive royal assent, it is likely to be implemented in late 2025 / early 2026.
- 3) To note the summary of the Bill provided in the report by the Executive Director of Place, including the potential risks and impacts if the Bill is passed in its current form.

- moved by Councillor Meagher, seconded by Councillor Pogson

### **Amendment 1**

- 1) To note that the Housing (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 26 March 2024 and would now progress through the Scottish Parliament.
- 2) To note that, should the Bill be passed and receive royal assent, it was likely to be implemented in late 2025 / early 2026.
- 3) To note the summary of the Bill provided in the report by the Executive Director of Place, including the potential risks and impacts if the Bill is passed in its current form.
- 4) To note that this summary does not contain any information regarding the potential benefits of the Bill.
- 5) To note that while it is important that Committee is informed about the potential risks of the Bill which will have widespread impacts on our housing service, it is also important to note that many of the risks that are highlighted are highly contested.
- 6) To reaffirm the Council’s commitment to implementing rent controls in Edinburgh at the earliest possible opportunity.

- moved by Councillor Dobbin, seconded by Councillor Fullerton

### **Amendment 2**

- 1) To note that the Housing (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 26 March 2024 and would now progress through the Scottish Parliament.

- 2) To note that, should the Bill be passed and receive royal assent, it was likely to be implemented in late 2025 / early 2026.
- 3) To note the summary of the Bill provided in the report by the Executive Director of Place, including the potential benefits, risks and impacts if the Bill is passed in its current form.
- 4) To welcome the broad aims and direction of travel within the Bill, particularly in terms of raising standards and offering greater protections and support for tenants, including moves to improve affordability within the PRS, recognising that housing should exist as a social good to provide homes for people, and not as an instrument of financial speculation.
- 5) To note the concerns around resourcing within Local Authorities for data collection for rent assessments, but also note the multitude of benefits this will bring for tenants, landlords and housing practitioners, and therefore agree that the Council should work constructively through COSLA and with the Government to find a workable solution to this, recognising that reliable data on the city's broader housing stock will be to the ultimate benefit of all.
- 6) To consider that most PRS lets are not new builds and therefore any perceived impact on housing supply through rent controls might be overstated as homes can revert to alternative tenures as opposed to disappearing from the market entirely. To further consider that evidence shows that actions to raise standards within the PRS lead to the consolidation of housing with professional landlords which is consistent with this aim.
- 7) To consider that the number of empty or underused homes, and homes used for short term lets, also impact on housing supply in the city.
- 8) To note concerns around the potential costs of compliance around homelessness prevention duties and agree that the Council should continue to raise these concerns through COSLA and with the Government.

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Mumford

At this point in the meeting, the following Amendment 3 was proposed:

### **Amendment 3**

- 1) To note that the Housing (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 26 March 2024 and would now progress through the Scottish Parliament.
- 2) To note that, should the Bill be passed and receive royal assent, it was likely to be implemented in late 2025 / early 2026.
- 3) To note the summary of the Bill provided in the report by the Executive Director of Place, including the potential benefits, risks and impacts if the Bill is passed in its current form.
- 4) To welcome the broad aims and direction of travel within the Bill, particularly in terms of raising standards and offering greater protections and support for tenants, including moves to improve affordability within the PRS, recognising

that housing should exist as a social good to provide homes for people, and not as an instrument of financial speculation.

- 5) To note the concerns around resourcing within Local Authorities for data collection for rent assessments, but also note the multitude of benefits this will bring for tenants, landlords and housing practitioners, and therefore agree that the Council should work constructively through COSLA and with the Government to find a workable solution to this, recognising that reliable data on the city's broader housing stock will be to the ultimate benefit of all.
- 6) To consider that most PRS lets are not new builds and therefore any perceived impact on housing supply through rent controls might be overstated as homes can revert to alternative tenures as opposed to disappearing from the market entirely. To further consider that evidence shows that actions to raise standards within the PRS lead to the consolidation of housing with professional landlords which is consistent with this aim.
- 7) To consider that the number of empty or underused homes, and homes used for short term lets, also impact on housing supply in the city.
- 8) To note concerns around the potential costs of compliance around homelessness prevention duties and agree that the Council should continue to raise these concerns through COSLA and with the Government.
- 9) To note that this summary does not contain any information regarding the potential benefits of the Bill.
- 10) To note that while it is important that Committee is informed about the potential risks of the Bill which will have widespread impacts on our housing service, it is also important to note that many of the risks that are highlighted are highly contested.

- moved by Councillor Bruce, seconded by Councillor Munro

In accordance with Standing Order 22(13), Amendment 1 was adjusted and accepted as an addendum to the motion, and Amendment 2 were accepted as an amendment to the motion.

### **Voting**

The voting was as follows:

For the motion (as adjusted) - 9 votes

For Amendment 3 - 2 votes

(For the motion (as adjusted) – Councillors Bennett, Dobbin, Flannery, Fullerton, Meagher, Mumford, Nols-McVey, Parker and Pogson.

For Amendment 3 – Councillors Bruce and Munro.)

### **Decision**

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Meagher:

- 1) To note that the Housing (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 26 March 2024 and would now progress through the Scottish Parliament.
- 2) To note that, should the Bill be passed and receive royal assent, it was likely to be implemented in late 2025 / early 2026.
- 3) To note the summary of the Bill provided in the report by the Executive Director of Place, including the potential benefits, risks and impacts if the Bill was passed in its current form.
- 4) To note that this summary did not contain sufficient information regarding the potential benefits of the Bill.
- 5) To note that while it was important that Committee was informed about the potential risks of the Bill which would have widespread impacts on our housing service, it was also important to note that many of the risks that were highlighted were highly contested.
- 6) To reaffirm the Council's commitment to implementing rent controls in Edinburgh at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 7) To welcome the broad aims and direction of travel within the Bill, particularly in terms of raising standards and offering greater protections and support for tenants, including moves to improve affordability within the PRS, recognising that housing should exist as a social good to provide homes for people, and not as an instrument of financial speculation.
- 8) To note the concerns around resourcing within Local Authorities for data collection for rent assessments, but also to note the multitude of benefits this would bring for tenants, landlords and housing practitioners, and therefore agree that the Council should work constructively through COSLA and with the Government to find a workable solution to this, recognising that reliable data on the city's broader housing stock would be to the ultimate benefit of all.
- 9) To consider that most PRS lets were not new builds and therefore any perceived impact on housing supply through rent controls might be overstated as homes could revert to alternative tenures as opposed to disappearing from the market entirely. To further consider that evidence showed that actions to raise standards within the PRS lead to the consolidation of housing with professional landlords which was consistent with this aim.
- 10) To consider that the number of empty or underused homes, and homes used for short term lets, also impacted on housing supply in the city.
- 11) To note concerns around the potential costs of compliance around homelessness prevention duties and agree that the Council should continue to raise these concerns through COSLA and with the Government.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

### **Declaration of interests**

Councillors Hyslop and Jones declared financial interests in the above item as private tenants, and took no part in consideration of this item.

## **15. Discretionary Housing Payments**

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An update provided on Discretionary Housing Payments, following a request by committee in December 2023 to provide further details on the potential for an increase in homelessness and associated costs to the council if DHP's were withdrawn.

### **Decision**

To note the information provided on Discretionary Housing Payments.

(References – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 5 October 2023 (item 19); report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

## **16. Local Government Benchmarking Framework – Housing and Economic Development**

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An overview was provided of the 2022/23 benchmarking data provided by the Scottish Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF). This reflected the recovery of Housing and Economic Development post Covid-19.

### **Decision**

To note the detailed analysis of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) dataset regarding Housing and Economic Development for the 2022/23 financial year.

(References –report by the Executive Director of Place, submitted.)

## **17. Internal Audit Update Report: Quarter 4 2023/2024 – Referral from the Governance, Risk, and Best Value Committee**

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### **Decision**

To continue the report to the next meeting of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee.

(References – referral from the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee, submitted.)

## **18. By Councillor Dobbin – Rent Rebates related to Extended Damp and Mould**

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The following motion was submitted by Councillor Dobbin in terms of Standing Order 17:

“Committee:

Welcomes the progress being made by the newly formed Dampness team in addressing the backlog of severe damp and mould cases in Council properties.

Further recognises the need to take early action on newly reported cases to ensure these are addressed quickly, thereby minimising costs of repair and maintenance and in particular also avoiding the potential of physical and mental health harms to residents associated with living with damp and mould.

However, notes that there long term cases still outstanding, and that there have been cases, now resolved, that were unresolved for extended periods of time.

Believes that living in a safe, dry home should be the basic expectation of a Council tenant under their rental agreement.

And that any tenant living with damp and mould for an extended period from their reporting the problem should be subject to rent rebate if the issue is not resolved to their satisfaction within a specified period of time.

Committee therefore asks officers to:

- prepare a report on how such a scheme would work, including costs
- include an assessment of rebate that might be applicable to tenants who have previously had extended periods of living with damp and mould

To report back within one cycle.”

### **Decision**

To approve the motion by Councillor Dobbin.

## **19. By Councillor Dobbin – Compensation for Tenants (personal effects ruined by dampness)**

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The following motion was submitted by Councillor Dobbin in terms of Standing Order 17:

“Committee:

Welcomes the progress being made by the newly formed Dampness team in addressing the backlog of severe damp and mould cases in Council properties.

Understands that extended living with damp and mould can damage or destroy personal belongings, including clothes, toys, bedding, furniture etc.

Further notes that this places additional financial hardship on families already struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.

Believes that if such damage occurs as a result of resolution of damp and mould being delayed beyond a reasonable time to repair, then tenants should be able to claim compensation.

Committee therefore asks officers to investigate:

- Proposing a compensation process that is simple to engage with and quick to provide recompense for current and new cases.
- Proposing a retrospective compensation process for cases that previously were unresolved for extended periods and where the tenant has suffered significant financial loss.

Committee requests a report in two cycles.”

### **Decision**

To approve the motion by Councillor Dobbin.

## **20. By Councillor Dobbin – Property Acquisitions with Existing Tenants**

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The following motion was submitted by Councillor Dobbin in terms of Standing Order 17:

“Committee:

Welcomes the progress being made whereby the Council is seeking to consolidate its ownership of flats within blocks.

Notes that opportunities arise when owner landlords seek to sell their flat to the Council, either as a result of increased mortgage costs or as a result of being unwilling to invest in the costs associated with a shared repairs project.

Further notes that typically these properties require remedial investment to bring them up to the Council letting standard upon purchase by the Council.

The current scheme of assistance enables owner occupiers to sell their home to the council and remain as a tenant. Understands that in these cases, the Council will work with the new Council tenant in order to gain access to the property in order to facilitate repairs and/or refurbishment.

The current scheme of assistance does not enable landlords to sell their homes to the Council with a sitting tenants.

Committee believes that as a Council, we should not be making families homeless and potentially uprooting them from their neighbours, schools etc and requests that Officers prepare a report that allows a policy to be considered whereby ex-private tenants could be able to maintain continuity of tenure.

Committee requests a report in two cycles.”

### **Decision**

To approve the motion by Councillor Dobbin.

## **21. By Councillor Flannery – Council Tax Exemptions for PHD students**

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### **Decision**

To note that Councillor Flannery had withdrawn the motion.

## **22. By Councillor Flannery – HHFW Meeting Timings for 2024 - 2025**

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The following motion was submitted by Councillor Flannery in terms of Standing Order 17:

“Committee recognises that:

The current timings of HHFW meetings can be detrimental to efficient business, timeous reports, and decision-making, directly affecting local communities.

Notes that the committee will have had only two meetings since November 2023 and the Summer recess, July 2024, and Council have declared a Housing Emergency.

Notes that, within the approved Council Diary, the next planned HHFW HRA budget meeting, 2025, will fall after the HRA budget is submitted, which will be for two consecutive years in a row.

Therefore requests:

A review of the HHFW future meeting dates to consider those that fall around recess times, which contributes to an undue length between one meeting and the next.

To mitigate against Spring meetings, falling after the submission of the HRA Budget in February.

Asks:

For the HHFW leads to meet and discuss the potential future alignment of HHFW and HRA Budget decision-making process.”

### **Motion**

To approve the motion by Councillor Flannery.

- moved by Councillor Flannery, seconded by Councillor Caldwell

### **Amendment**

Deletes:

“A review of the HHFW future meeting dates to consider those that fall around recess times, which contributes to an undue length between one meeting and the next.”

- moved by Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Mumford

In accordance with Standing Order 22(13), the amendment was accepted as an amendment to the motion.

### **Decision**

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Flannery:

- 1) To recognise that the current timings of HHFW meetings could be detrimental to efficient business, timeous reports, and decision-making, directly affecting local communities.
- 2) To note that the committee had had only two meetings since November 2023 and the Summer recess, July 2024, and Council have declared a Housing Emergency.
- 3) To note that, within the approved Council Diary, the next planned HHFW HRA budget meeting, 2025, would fall after the HRA budget is submitted, which would be for two consecutive years in a row.
- 4) Therefore to request to mitigate against Spring meetings, falling after the submission of the HRA Budget in February.



- 5) To ask for the HHFW leads to meet and discuss the potential future alignment of HHFW and HRA Budget decision-making process.

### **23. By Councillor Caldwell – Drugs in Communal Stairwells**

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The following motion was submitted by Councillor Caldwell in terms of Standing Order 17:

“Committee recognises that:

Drug use continues to present a serious health issue affecting thousands of residents across Edinburgh and Council has on numerous occasions has supported measures aimed at mitigating the public health crisis, including the advocacy of Safe Consumption Rooms, needle exchanges as well as supporting policies within the Edinburgh Drug and Alcohol Partnership Strategic Plan.

The uncontrolled injection of drugs and discarded paraphernalia including Sharps in common stairwells poses a health risk to both the individuals consuming the drugs and everyone accessing the stairwell.

Further improper disposal of Sharps (i.e. without a Sharps Box) into waste streams further risks the welfare of Council Waste and Cleansing officers.

The Council currently do not collect Sharps from common stairwells which do not have Council Housing, either as a Minority or Majority.

Ensuring all Edinburgh residents know about the services available for those struggling with addiction is a key component of tackling this public health crisis.

Therefore requests:

That Housing, Edinburgh Drug and Alcohol Partnership, and Waste and Cleansing departments (liaising with stakeholders such as, but not limited to, Crew, LEAP and AdvoCard) review the policy of Sharps collection from common stairwells, and the financial and practical implication of enabling collections of Sharps reported in common stairwells without Council Housing present.

This includes a review of awareness and appropriate materials such as posters that tenants and residents can access, print out, and display in common stairwells to signpost individuals to help, and overall ensure stairwells remain safe spaces.

This is reported back to via a briefing to both Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work and Policy and Sustainability committees, and that the ‘Common Stairwells Sharps Disposal Policy’ is taken into account in further development of the Council’s public health-based approach to tackling the drug death public health crisis.”

#### **Decision**

To approve the motion by Councillor Caldwell.