

FC77. Strategic Property Review Update

With reference to Standing Order 33.5, the Provost referred to three deputation requests received from: Arlene Graham, Bonnybridge Community Education Association; Julia Miller; Polmonthill Snowsports Club, and Karolina Surmacz to be heard in relation to this item. The Provost advised that Ms Surmacz was unable to attend the meeting but had submitted a written representation which was read out to Council.

Council agreed to hear both remaining deputations.

Council adjourned at 11.55am and reconvened at 12.20pm with all members present as per the sederunt, with the exception of Councillor Patrick.

Council considered a report by the Director of Place Services which provided an update on the Strategic Property Review (SPR) following public engagement on the proposed approach.

A significant amount of work had been undertaken previously which had formed a basis for the Strategic Property Review (SPR). The Council had a budget deficit of c£64m and needed to reduce non-core assets and focus on retaining a smaller number of better quality core assets that met the needs of a range of people in communities.

The Community engagement undertaken had enabled the identification of opportunities for community asset transfer and alternative delivery models. In addition, groups or persons who may have a protected characteristic and may be disproportionately affected should buildings close had been identified and appropriate mitigation measures outlined.

For those buildings whereby an asset transfer or alternative delivery model had not been identified, the Service would progress to close the properties on a phased basis and work with users to identify suitable alternative locations. A summary of the properties had been included in appendices to the report by type, ward and phase.

It was recognised that as the SPR progressed, new information may emerge or circumstances may change. As a result, recommendations may be subject to change and Council would be kept updated as appropriate. Through a combination of the SPR, service modernisation and the effective and efficient use of resources deployed in core assets, the Council had a better opportunity to sustain its estate.

The Property Strategy had been approved by Council in May 2021. The vision for the Property Strategy was to achieve:-

- a corporate portfolio that was fit for service delivery, adaptable to a changing climate, energy efficient and sustainable, met the needs & aspirations of citizens and services alike, and was affordable to the Council, and
- shared and effective utilisation of properties to underpin service delivery needs, now and in the future.

An online survey had been undertaken and a total of 3,607 people completed the survey and 3503 of these responses related to a specific property. The key findings included:-

- 23% responded as a resident of the ward where the property was located, 69% as a user of the facility and 7% on behalf of a community group or organisation
- 38 properties received no responses.
- 26 properties received one response.
- 801 people responded that they consider themselves to have a protected characteristic that may result in them being disproportionately disadvantaged.

In relation to asset transfer interest there were interests as:-

- 75 responses confirmed interest in a CAT
- 96 responses, including the foregoing interests above, indicated a local community group could manage the property in the future
- a total of 98 Asset Transfer interests including those prior to the SPR process across 52 buildings.

Eleven public events took place between 10 January and 25 January 2023 with more than 671 people attending these. The events took place across all wards and were held at either 12-2 pm or 7-9 pm with the final one held online. The objective of the events was very similar to the survey objectives, however the public events allowed additional dialogue with communities and this content had been captured as part of the Frequently Asked Questions.

A property asset performance scorecard had been developed for each of the properties within the SPR. A summary of the recommendations was included in appendices to the report.

The next steps outlined in the report for properties within the SPR were:-

- Implement activities to improve the financial performance of the assets/service in advance of other proposals.
- Engage with community groups who had expressed an interest in CAT to develop business cases and progress proposals.
- Engage with national agencies and bodies to identify additional funding support and to consider alternative delivery models for those assets where this was appropriate.
- Evaluate potential alternative locations for providing similar accommodation to relocate service delivery should properties close.
- Undertake appropriate diligence e.g. title checks, Common Good consultation (if required) etc.
- Commence mothballing of assets in the proposed phases.
- Market properties that were subject to surplus property procedures.

Councillor Meiklejohn, seconded by Councillor Garner, moved that Council:-

- (1) notes the findings of the extensive consultation undertaken, the asset performance data available and user information that has been evaluated;
- (2) recognises that there are properties identified where there is opportunities for community asset transfer, alternative delivery model and/or partnership arrangements which may result in them remaining open;
- (3) approves the allocation of £6m of capital investment - to be funded from property savings from within the SPR - to enable community asset transfers and alternative delivery models. The proposed governance arrangements are outlined in the report;
- (4) notes the properties that are being progressed within aligned modernisation programmes, including offices and stores and remain integral to the SPR;
- (5) notes that Town Halls are now considered core properties and not proposed to close as part of the SPR and will be evaluated and reported upon separately;
- (6) agrees that opportunities to implement financial performance improvements to increase income generation and reduce costs, is progressed for all properties where appropriate, aimed at removing Council subsidy;
- (7) notes the potential staff impacts and proposals for mitigation, recognising existing HR and service change requirements and authorise the Chief Executive to issue statutory notice to both trade unions and employees as required;
- (8) agrees that if there is no Community Asset Transfer, no Alternative Business Model or Partnership Arrangement or the property Financial Performance Improvement can't be achieved that the properties will as a last resort close in accordance with the phases set out in the report, and
- (9) agrees the composition of the PDP on the future model of leisure services as 2 SNP, 1 Labour, 1 Conservative and 1 Independent.

As an amendment in substitution for the motion, Councillor Hannah, seconded by Councillor Redmond, moved that Council:-

- (1) notes the findings of the extensive consultation undertaken, the asset performance data available and user information that has been evaluated;
- (2) does not approve the closure of any community building, park building, sports pavilion, sports centre or other miscellaneous sports (see table in paragraph 4.6). Council instructs officers to:-
 - (a) find methods of reducing energy consumption through energy efficiency measures;
 - (b) investigate options for use of renewable energy sources and install where appropriate;

- (c) investigate options for increasing usage of the facilities;
 - (d) review fees and charges to generate increased income;
 - (e) undertake such maintenance and improvement measures as will improve the attractiveness of the facility, thereby increasing success in (b) above;
 - (f) identify relocation plans for staff, equipment, artefacts etc. in stores;
 - (g) provide detailed data on each property and engage with community groups and sports organisations to develop alternative delivery models that are viable and sustainable, and
 - (h) report back to Council on each property or facility for decisions;
- (3) recognises that there are properties identified where there is opportunities for community asset transfer, alternative delivery model and/or partnership arrangements which may result in them remaining open;
- (4) approves in principle the allocation of a fund for capital investment - to be funded from property savings from within the SPR, and increased income from properties - to enable community asset transfers and alternative delivery models. The proposed governance arrangements are outlined in the report. Officers will report back to Council on available funds, taking into account the impact of the proposals at b above;
- (5) notes the properties that are being progressed within aligned modernisation programmes, including offices and stores and remain integral to the SPR;
- (6) notes that Town Halls are now considered core properties and not proposed to close as part of the SPR and will be evaluated and reported upon separately;
- (7) agrees that opportunities to implement financial performance improvements to increase income generation and reduce costs, is progressed for all properties where appropriate, aimed at removing Council subsidy, and
- (8) notes the potential staff impacts and proposals for mitigation, recognising existing HR and service change requirements and authorise the Chief Executive to issue statutory notice to both trade unions and employees as required.

Councillor Bundy gave notice of a further amendment.

Council adjourned at 1pm and reconvened at 1.55pm with all members present as per the sederunt with the exception of Councillor Patrick.

Councillor Hannah, with the consent of the Provost, and Councillor Redmond, as her seconder, adjusted the terms of her amendment to add the words 'public conveniences' in clause (2) of the amendment as follows:-

- (2) does not approve the closure of any community building, park building, public conveniences, sports pavilion, sports centre or other miscellaneous sports (see table in paragraph 4.6). Council instructs officers to:-

In terms of Standing order 22.1, the vote was taken by roll call, there being 27 members present with voting as undernoted:-

For the motion (15) – Depute Provost Balfour and Councillors Binnie, Bouse, Brown, Bundy, Collie, Deakin, Devine, Flynn, Forrest, Garner, Kerr, Meiklejohn, Murtagh and Sinclair.

For the amendment (12) – Provost Bissett and Councillors Anslow, Buchanan, Hannah, Kelly, McCabe, Nimmo, Paterson, Redmond, Ritchie, Spears and Stainbank.

The motion was carried and became the substantive motion against which the further amendment would be considered.

As a further amendment, Councillor Bundy, seconded by Councillor Kerr, moved the terms of the motion subject to the following adjustments:-

(a) add the following word to the end of clause (8):-

but in relation to community halls and community education centres a report will be presented to the Council on whether the actions noted above have been successful and options identified for relocation prior to the implementation dates for Phase 2 and Phase 3.

(b) adjust clause (3) of the motion to read as:-

approves in principle the allocation of a fund for capital investment - to be funded from property savings from within the SPR, and increased income from properties - to enable community asset transfers and alternative delivery models. The proposed governance arrangements are outlined in the report. Officers will report back to Council on available funds, taking into account the approach set out in relation to community halls and community education centres.

Council adjourned at 3.35pm and reconvened at 4pm with all members present as per the sederunt with the exception of Councillor Patrick.

Councillor McCabe gave notice of a further amendment.

Councillor Meiklejohn, as the mover of the motion, with the consent of the Provost and Councillor Garner, as her seconder, adjusted the terms of the motion to incorporate the terms of Councillor Bundy's amendment. Having incorporated its terms into the motion, the amendment accordingly fell.

As a further amendment, in substitution for the motion, Councillor McCabe, seconded by Councillor Spears, moved that:-

Given the very extensive, public concern being expressed. Council recognise the potential impacts on all areas of the Council and postpone any decision today, and refer the SPR to a further Council meeting later this year.

In terms of Standing order 22.1, the vote was taken by roll call, there being 27 members present with voting as undernoted:-

For the motion (15) – Depute Provost Balfour and Councillors Binnie, Bouse, Brown, Bundy, Collie, Deakin, Devine, Flynn, Forrest, Garner, Kerr, Meiklejohn, Murtagh and Sinclair.

For the further amendment (4) – Councillors Buchanan, McCabe, Ritchie and Spears.

Abstentions (8) – Provost Bissett and Councillors Anslow, Hannah, Kelly, Nimmo, Paterson, Redmond and Stainbank.

Decision

Council:-

- (1) noted the findings of the extensive consultation undertaken, the asset performance data available and user information that had been evaluated;**
- (2) recognised that there were properties identified where there were opportunities for community asset transfer, alternative delivery model and/or partnership arrangements which may result in them remaining open;**
- (3) approved in principle the allocation of a fund for capital investment - to be funded from property savings from within the SPR, and increased income from properties - to enable community asset transfers and alternative delivery models. The proposed governance arrangements were outlined in the report. Officers would report back to Council on available funds, taking into account the approach set out in relation to community halls and community education centres;**
- (4) noted the properties that were being progressed within aligned modernisation programmes, including offices and stores and remain integral to the SPR;**
- (5) noted that Town Halls were now considered core properties and not proposed to close as part of the SPR and would be evaluated and reported upon separately;**
- (6) agreed that opportunities to implement financial performance improvements to increase income generation and reduce costs, was progressed for all properties where appropriate, aimed at removing Council subsidy;**
- (7) noted the potential staff impacts and proposals for mitigation, recognising existing HR and service change requirements and authorised the Chief Executive to issue statutory notice to both trade unions and employees as required;**
- (8) agreed that if there was no Community Asset Transfer, no Alternative Business Model or Partnership Arrangement or the property Financial Performance Improvement could not be achieved that the properties**

would as a last resort close in accordance with the phases set out in the report but in relation to community halls and community education centres a report would be presented to the Council on whether the actions noted above had been successful and options identified for relocation prior to the implementation dates for Phase 2 and Phase 3, and

- (9) agreed the composition of the PDP on the future model of leisure services as 2 SNP, 1 Labour, 1 Conservative and 1 Independent.