



City of Douglas

City Hall,
Douglas,
14th February, 2024

At a MEETING of the COUNCIL of the CITY OF DOUGLAS, duly convened and holden at 2.30 p.m. on WEDNESDAY, the 14th day of FEBRUARY, 2024, in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, within the CITY HALL, at which Meeting the following Members were present, that is to say: -

The Mayor

COUNCILLOR MRS NATALIE BYRON-TEARE, JP

Councillors

Mr S.R. Pitts

Mrs C.L. Wells

Mr J.E. Skinner

Mr F. Horning

Mr D.R. Watson

Mr P.J. Washington

Mr F. Schuengel

The Chief Executive, Director of Environment and Regeneration, Director of Housing and Property and the Assistant Chief Officer (Finance) were in attendance.

Apologies for absence were submitted by Mr Councillor I.J.G. Clague, MBE, Mr Councillor A.J. Bentley, Mr Councillor S.R. Crellin and Councillor Ms J. Thommeny.

1. **Minutes – 10th January, 2024**

The minutes of the monthly Council meeting held on Wednesday, 10th January, 2024, were approved and signed.

2. **Minutes – 31st January, 2024**

The minutes of the special Council meeting held on Wednesday, 31st January, 2024, were approved and signed.

3. **Standing Order 39 – Question – Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts**

Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts asked the Chair of the Environmental Services Committee:

1.1 *What was the cost to fit the Christmas lights/decorations in Douglas for 2023?*

1.2 *How many hours were worked?*

1.3 *How many hours were booked as overtime?*

1.4 *What percentage of lights/decorations were not fitted this year compared to 2022?*

1.5 *What was the cost of lights fitted after the official switch on date?*

Reply by the Chair of the Environmental Services Committee:

1.1 *The Council does not use timesheets therefore it is not possible to accurately separate out Christmas decoration work from other electrical works. Finance has estimated this to cost £60,764.*

1.2 *The Council does not use timesheets therefore it is not possible to accurately separate out Christmas decoration work from other electrical works. Based on the work programme, it is estimated that 1,500 hours normal time were worked plus 498 overtime hours. Total hours worked is estimated at 1,998.*

1.3 *498 hours.*

1.4 *Approximately 15%-20% were not completed.*

1.5 *The Council does not use timesheets therefore it is not possible to accurately separate out Christmas decoration work from other electrical work. Based on the work programme, it is estimated that 86.5 hours were worked (including 28 hours of overtime) estimated to be £2,523.*

Supplementary Question:

What contingency/plans are in place to make sure all features/decorations will be in place before the official switch on for Christmas 2024?

Reply by the Chair of the Environmental Services Committee:

Ensuring all decorations will be in place will necessitate full establishment of staff. There are currently no contingency plans as other staff or those outside of the Council do not have the necessary skills or knowledge to undertake this work. Five out of six electrical positions are currently filled which is better than a few months ago.

4. **Standing Order 39 – Question – Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner**

Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner asked the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

The rents for public sector housing are set to rise by 7.5%. The Minister for Infrastructure was asked in the House of Keys on 23rd January 2024 by way of an oral supplementary question if he felt this percentage increase was fair. Does the Chair of the Housing and Properties Committee think that 7.5% is a fair increase?

Reply by the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

The 7.5% rise closely aligns with the Housing and Property Committee's response to the Department of Infrastructure, corresponding to CPI plus 2%, as a result of the yearly consultation with all local authorities.

Supplementary Question:

Does the Chair feel that a 7.5% rent increase (2024/25) for public housing is appropriate?

Reply by the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

Yes. Essentially all the resources that we receive from additional rent will be reinvested back into the communities that they come from. If we want better social housing, if we want better maintenance and repair, it is absolutely essential that we have the resources to do so. I would ask that anyone who struggles

to pay their rent to reach out to the Housing team and they can be put in touch with finance officers who may be assisting with rent or if they do struggle with arrears they can be put onto a payment plan. We take a considerate humane approach to our tenants and ultimately we are investing in properties for the benefits of the tenants.

5. Standing Order 39 – Question – Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner

Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner asked the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

Since an email sent by the Director of Housing and Property on 30th January 2024, what steps have been taken to prevent further damage, deterioration and water ingress to the roofs of the kiosks on Loch Promenade following the recent and current spells of bad weather?

Reply by the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

Following a more detailed assessment, it has been confirmed that the damages to the roof are beyond repair, making it difficult to install any further temporary coverings without the risk of them coming loose and possibly causing further structural issues, and/or creating safety risks for members of the public. A number of options were considered including a ‘top hat’ scaffolding structure.

The existing roof structure has been secured by removing any loose or at-risk boards. While there has been some water ingress into the main part of the building, it has been contained and managed.

The team are planning for remedial works, and a report with appropriate recommendations will be presented to the February Housing and Property Committee.

Supplementary Question:

What safety precautions were put in place in order for appropriate staff to carry out an assessment of the damage caused to the roof and was a full risk assessment produced beforehand?

Reply by the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

The work was assessed by the Property officer. Tower scaffolding was used to remove any risks in relation to working from height and the team was supervised throughout the entire process.

6. Standing Order 39 – Question – Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner

Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner asked the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

For what reason did the Housing and Properties Committee not meet in January 2024?

Reply by the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

There were no reports that required for a Committee or Council decision in January 2024. The only report remaining was for noting and this information is now being submitted to the February Housing and Property Committee. There was consultation between the Director of Housing and Property with the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee, and then with the Chief Executive.

It is not a common occurrence for a Committee to not go ahead, however running a committee with only one report for noting was considered unnecessary.

7. Standing Order 39 – Question – Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner

Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner asked the Chair of the Regeneration and Community Committee:

Given that programmed improvements and repair work in the Centenary Gardens (Queen’s Park) were due to be completed by September 2023 when is this work now likely to commence and what is the new anticipated date for completion?

Reply by the Chair of the Regeneration and Community Committee:

The same response is provided as previously; the programme of works are reliant upon contractors submitting tenders to undertake the work. To date, no tenders have been received each time the work has been tendered. Officers have split the work into different phases to encourage responses, so far to no avail. A timeframe for completion cannot be given until the work has been successfully awarded.

8. Executive Committee – 25th January, 2024

Motion moved by Councillor Mrs C.L. Wells, seconded by Mr Councillor F. Horning, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Executive Committee, as contained in report of meeting held on Thursday, 25th January, 2024, be received by the Council.”

Question put on Motion, a vote was taken electronically, and the Motion was carried unanimously.

9. **Regeneration and Community Committee – 16th January, 2024**

Motion moved by Mr Councillor F. Schuengel, seconded by Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Regeneration and Community Committee, as contained in report of meeting held on Tuesday, 16th January, 2024, be received by the Council.”

Question put on Motion, a vote was taken electronically, and there voted **For** the Motion, Councillors: Mr D.R. Watson, Mr F. Schuengel, Mrs C.L. Wells, Mr F. Horning, Mr P.J. Washington, the Mayor – **6**

Against – Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts and Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner – **2**

10. **Environmental Services Committee – 15th January, 2024**

Motion moved by Mr Councillor F. Horning, seconded by Mr Councillor P.J. Washington, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Environmental Services Committee, as contained in report of meeting held on Monday, 15th January, 2024, be received by the Council.”

Question put on Motion, a vote was taken electronically, and there voted **For** the Motion, Councillors: Mr J.E. Skinner Mr D.R. Watson, Mr F. Schuengel, Mrs C.L. Wells, Mr F. Horning, Mr P.J. Washington, the Mayor – **7**

Against – Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts – **1**

11. **Adjournment and Resumption**

The meeting adjourned at 3.10pm and resumed at 3.30pm with the same Members and officers present.

IN PRIVATE

12. **Executive Committee – 25th January, 2024**

Motion moved by Councillor Mrs C.L. Wells, seconded by Mr Councillor F. Horning, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Executive Committee, as contained in private report of meeting held on Thursday, 25th January, 2024, be received by the Council.”

Question put on Motion, a vote was taken electronically, and there voted **For** the Motion, Councillors: Mr J.E. Skinner, Mr D.R. Watson, Mr F. Schuengel, Mrs C.L. Wells, Mr F. Horning, Mr P.J. Washington, the Mayor – **7**

Against – Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts – **1**

13. **Environmental Services Committee – 15th January, 2024**

Motion moved by Mr Councillor F. Horning, seconded by Mr Councillor P.J. Washington, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Environmental Services Committee, as contained in private report of meeting held on Monday, 15th January, 2024, be received by the Council.”

Question put on Motion, a vote was taken electronically, and the Motion was carried unanimously.

The Council rose at 3.40pm.



Town Clerk & Chief Executive