



City of Douglas

City Hall,
Douglas,
12th February, 2025

At a MEETING of the COUNCIL of the CITY OF DOUGLAS, duly convened and holden at 2.30 p.m. on WEDNESDAY, the 12th day of FEBRUARY, 2025, 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 A.J. Bentley

Ms J. Thommeny

Mr D.R. Watson

Mr P.J. Washington

Mr S.R. Crellin

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

Apologies for absence were submitted by Mr Councillor I.J.G. Clague, MBE and Mr Councillor F. Schuengel.

1. **Minutes – 8th January, 2025**

The minutes of the monthly Council meeting held on Wednesday, 8th January, 2025, were approved and signed.

2. **Minutes – 31st January, 2025**

The minutes of the special Council meeting held on Friday, 31st January, 2025, were approved and signed.

3. **Standing Order 33 – Motions without Notice**

Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts moved a Motion that a written question under Standing Order 39, presented to the Council in private, be considered in public. The Mayor drew the Members attention to Standing Order 74, matters affecting persons employed by Council, which should in the first instance be considered in private. The Mayor therefore did not allow the Motion to progress.

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

Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts asked the Leader of the Council:

4.1 *Will nomination papers be available online / council website for the council elections to be held 24th April 2025 to download.*

4.2 *Will guidance notes be available to download regarding the council elections to be held 24th April 2025.*

Reply by the Leader of the Council:

4.1 *Yes, nomination papers will be made available to download from the Council's website from 13th March 2025, which is the date that nominations open.*

4.2 *Yes, a candidate information pack will be made available to download / view on the Council's website. The information pack will provide details about how the Council operates including how decisions are made and will cover the schedule of meetings / appointments to Committees to give candidates an overview of what it entails to become a Councillor. The information pack will also provide guidance about the election process and will set out what is required of the candidate to stand as a local authority member.*

The information pack is due to be published on the Council's website by Friday 21st February, 2025.

Democratic services intend to host open evenings before nominations open so that anyone interested in standing in the upcoming general election can visit the City Hall and speak to officers to find out more information. Following the close of nominations, training will be provided to all candidates who stand nominated in a contested election.

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

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

As at the 31st January 2025 how many cases did the Mayor Aldermen and the Burgesses of the Borough of Douglas have before the Civil Summary and Small Claims Procedures Court for Possession?

Reply by the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

10 Cases had received Court Dates as of the 31st January 2025, all for rent arrears. However, a number of these have now been adjourned due to payment of rent, with only one tenant due in court. To note a tenant who is required to attend Court will have a number of opportunities to pay their rent through Court ordered payment plans. Possession would only be granted by the Courts should the tenant not engage with the process.

Supplementary Question:

At 15.15hrs, 7th February 2025 there were still twelve cases on the Court List despite two being struck off.

If cases for Possession before the courts are found in favour of Mayor Aldermen and Burgesses does possession lead to eviction, if not, why are we paying for and taking prosecutions?

Reply by the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

If the court rules in favour of the Council's Claim and deems that a possession order is appropriate based on the evidence presented by both parties, it will issue a possession order. This order may be either immediate or suspended, up to a maximum of 12 months. The possession order will include a court ordered date by which the tenant must vacate the property and return it to the Council.

The Courts will give the tenant the opportunity to pay the outstanding balance through court ordered payment plans. This is in the best interest of the tenant (not losing their home) and in the interest of receiving the outstanding rent balances.

Only the Court can issue a possession order, if we do not engage in the legal process, tenants will simply not pay their outstanding rental debt and they will remain within the property. This is the only road that we can go down and this is the only way that gives a potential good outcome for both parties.

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

Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner asked the Leader of the Council:

As at the 31st January 2025 how much money is outstanding in respect of:

6.1 Rates.

6.2 Rents.

Reply by the Leader of the Council:

6.1 Rates:

	Amount
Arrears 24/25 to 31/01/25	127,966.25

Of this, there is £61,000 still to pay by instalments (Direct Debit or Standing Order).

6.2 Housing Rent:

	Amount
Outstanding arrears	228,755.81

7. Standing Order 39 – Question – Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts

Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts asked the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

7.1 *What would be the amount of rent that would have been collected on each vacant property in Marathon Drive had they been occupied since they became vacant.*

7.2 *What would be the amount of rates that would have been collected on each vacant property in Marathon Drive had they been occupied since they became vacant.*

Reply by the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

The Marathon Drive properties have remained vacant as they are not currently suitable for rental due to their poor condition and the significant works and investment required to bring them up to VOID standard. A business case for refurbishment was submitted to the Government in September 2021. However, due to ongoing funding constraints, this scheme has not yet received the required support to allow the Council to move forward with the Scheme.

Discussions with the Government have recently progressed, and an updated report with recommendations on the future of these properties is scheduled to be presented at the March 2025 Housing and Property Committee.

The below table details the total amount of rent and rates that would have been collected had each of the properties been occupied since they became vacant.

ADDRESS	VOID DATE	RENT	RATES
11 Marathon Drive	18/08/24	2,897.62	595.54
12 Marathon Drive	07/05/24	4,543.97	1,001.59
15 Marathon Drive	22/11/21	18,539.20	3,603.22
17 Marathon Drive	05/03/18	34,032.03	6,840.06
18 Marathon Drive	30/09/19	26,885.46	5,432.36
19 Marathon Drive	22/08/21	17,815.29	3,784.53
20 Marathon Drive	06/01/25	441.40	93.84
21 Marathon Drive	24/02/20	28,539.23	5,453.87
23 Marathon Drive	12/02/24	5,353.25	1,135.89
24 Marathon Drive	10/09/18	31,757.04	6,394.02
ADDRESS	VOID DATE	RENT	RATES
25 Marathon Drive	20/05/24	3,488.45	821.10
27 Marathon Drive	18/11/24	993.15	211.14

28 Marathon Drive	23/09/19	27,214.22	5,425.26
34 Marathon Drive	05/11/18	30,844.84	6,215.42
TOTALS		233,344.18	47,007.84

Supplementary Question:

What amount of rent would have been available for repairs?

Reply by the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee:

A briefing note will be circulated to Members as the calculation is too complex and cannot be done in the few minutes before Council.

In general this is not how we allocate resources and this is something that we get fairly often with relation to these sets of properties but if we have to make a choice between dedicating resources to getting 1 house repaired in a place like Marathon Drive or getting 10 houses repaired somewhere else obviously we are going to go down the route that gets as many houses repaired for the same amount of resources.

We have been petitioning the DOI to get money to deal with voids, we have received the £700,000, we have allocated 16 houses last Friday, we allocated another 17 today so this process is ongoing. We have had really good discussions with the DOI and Treasury about getting additional funding to deal with these long term problems, these are things that we are aware of and it is not simply the fact that the Council has a bunch of properties that we could repair and we could receive a bunch of money from and we are just deciding to do this, we need to have permission to do this which we are fighting for and we are actioning these sort of properties. So, Marathon Drive is the next main priority that we do want to get dealt with and this is something that we are definitely keen to do. I do need to make it clear that we don't want to leave money on the table and given the decisions we have to make an allocation in meetings between people in dire circumstances. There is no circumstance where we would ever leave a home vacant that we could otherwise be occupied. At the same time we would never allocate a person to a property that is unsuitable to live in and when you have got these multiple competing priorities you have to make tough decisions and this is one of the tough decisions we could have just shoved people in here but we aren't going to do that but I do appreciate the sentiment behind the question and this is something we are going to go out of our way to get dealt with.

8. Standing Order 39 – Question – Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts

Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts asked the Leader of the Council:

8.1 *What is the up-to-date position regarding twinning / friendship agreements with Dublin City Council.*

8.2 *How many meetings / contacts have been discussed since this item was last reported to council.*

Reply by the Leader of the Council:

8.1 *A report is due to go to Executive Committee in February 2025 which covers the various options and answers the previous queries raised in Council.*

8.2 *There has been one informal discussion and a further discussion at COMT.*

Supplementary Question:

Have the Council considered approaching Liverpool who are already twinned with Dublin?

Reply by the Leader of the Council:

No, we haven't. However, I will say that when we had visitors over from Liverpool we did talk about twinning, we talked about all sorts of stuff and one of the things that they informally said when we were having this discussion, not directly asking them if they wanted to, but they said that they were more interested in friendship agreements as opposed to twinning agreements and if that is something that we would like to do in the future then I am sure we can take that on board.

9. Executive Committee – 23rd January, 2025 – Clauses A1 to A18

Motion moved by Councillor Mrs C.L. Wells, seconded by Mr Councillor D.R. Watson, "That the minutes of proceedings of the Executive Committee, as contained in Clauses A1 to A18 inclusive of report of meeting held on Thursday, 23rd January, 2025, be received by the Council."

Question put on Motion, a vote was taken electronically, and there voted **For** the Motion, Councillors: Mr S.R. Pitts, Mr A.J. Bentley, Mr D.R. Watson, Mrs C.L. Wells, Mr S.R. Crellin, Mr F. Horning, Ms J. Thommeny, Mr P.J. Washington, the Mayor – **9**

Against: Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner – **1**

Motion carried.

10. **Executive Committee – 23rd January, 2025 – Clause C19**

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 Clause C19 of report of meeting held on Thursday, 23rd January, 2025, be received, approved and adopted by the Council.”

Question put on Motion, a vote was taken electronically, and there voted **For** the Motion, Councillors: Mr S.R. Pitts, Mr A.J. Bentley, Mr D.R. Watson, Mrs C.L. Wells, Mr F. Horning, Ms J. Thommeny, Mr P.J. Washington, the Mayor – **8**

Against, Councillors: Mr J.E. Skinner, Mr S.R. Crellin – **2**

Motion carried.

11. **Executive Committee – 23rd January, 2025 – Clause C20**

Motion moved by Councillor Mrs C.L. Wells, seconded by Mr Councillor D.R. Watson, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Executive Committee, as contained in Clause C20 of report of meeting held on Thursday, 23rd January, 2025, be received, approved and adopted by the Council.”

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

12. **Housing and Property Committee – 15th January, 2025**

Motion moved by Mr Councillor D.R. Watson, seconded by Mr Councillor P.J. Washington, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Housing and Property Committee, as contained in report of meeting held on Wednesday, 15th January, 2025, 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 A.J. Bentley, Mr D.R. Watson, Mrs C.L. Wells, Mr S.R. Crellin, Mr F. Horning, Ms J. Thommeny, Mr P.J. Washington, the Mayor – **9**

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

Motion carried.

13. **Eastern District Civic Amenity Site Joint Committee – 8th January, 2025 – Clause B1**

Motion moved by Councillor Ms J. Thommeny, seconded by Mr Councillor P.J. Washington, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Eastern District Civic Amenity Site Joint Committee, as contained in Clause B1 of report of special meeting held on Wednesday, 8th January, 2025, be received, approved and adopted by the Council.”

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

Against, Councillors: Mr S.R. Crellin, Ms J. Thommeny, the Mayor – **3**

Motion carried.

14. **Eastern District Civic Amenity Site Joint Committee – 8th January, 2025 – Clause B2**

Motion moved by Councillor Ms J. Thommeny, seconded by Mr Councillor P.J. Washington, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Eastern District Civic Amenity Site Joint Committee, as contained in Clause B2 of report of special meeting held on Wednesday, 8th January, 2025, be received, approved and adopted by the Council.”

Question put on Motion, a vote was taken electronically, and there voted **For** the Motion, Councillors: Mr S.R. Pitts, Mr A.J. Bentley, Mr D.R. Watson, Mr F. Horning, Ms J. Thommeny, Mr P.J. Washington, the Mayor – **7**

Against, Councillors: Mr J.E. Skinner, Mr S.R. Crellin, Mrs C.L. Wells – **3**

Motion carried.

15. **Regeneration and Community Committee – 14th January, 2025**

Motion moved by Mr Councillor A.J. Bentley, seconded by Mr Councillor S.R. Crellin, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Regeneration and Community Committee, as contained in report of meeting held on Tuesday, 14th January, 2025, be received by the Council.”

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

16. **Environmental Services Committee – 13th January, 2025**

Motion moved by Mr Councillor F. Horning, seconded by Councillor Ms J. Thommeny, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Environmental Services Committee, as contained in report of meeting held on Monday, 13th January, 2025, be received by the Council.”

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

17. **Adjournment and Resumption**

The meeting adjourned at 3.45pm and resumed at 4.05pm. Mr Councillor A.J. Bentley submitted his apologies for the remainder of the meeting. All other Members and officers were present.

IN PRIVATE

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

Mr Councillor S.R. Pitts asked the Leder of the Council a written question under Standing Order 39. The response was noted on the minutes.

19. **Executive Committee – 23rd January, 2025**

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, 23rd January, 2025, be received by the Council.”

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

20. **Executive Committee and Housing and Property Committee – 28th January, 2025 – Clause C3**

Motion moved by Councillor Mrs C.L. Wells, seconded by Mr Councillor D.R. Watson, “That the minutes of proceedings of the Executive Committee and Housing and Property Committee, as contained in Clause C3 of private report of special joint meeting held on Tuesday, 28th January, 2025, be received, approved and adopted by the Council.”

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

The Council rose at 4.10pm.



Town Clerk & Chief Executive