

Union Street Fire Recovery - Motion as adjusted, approved.

5 Councillor Aitken, seconded by Councillor Millar, moved that:-

“Council notes with sadness the recent fire that took place at the Union Corner building at Union Street and Gordon Street in Glasgow City Centre and acknowledges both the significant impact that this has had for affected businesses and people using Central Station, and the strong emotional response this loss has triggered for Glaswegians. Council commends the swift and professional response of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland, Network Rail and Council officers in managing a rapidly evolving situation and protecting public safety, which ensured there were no fatalities or injuries resulting from the devastating incident. Council notes that in addition to saving lives, the SFRS's efforts saved neighbouring buildings including the Central Hotel and Glasgow Central Station.

Council wishes to place on record its heartfelt thanks to Glaswegians for the generosity shown in the wake of this incident, including the many offers of alternative premises to help displaced businesses keep trading, and the remarkable financial contributions made through crowdfunding efforts. Council believes that this reflects the compassion, solidarity and community spirit that define our city.

Council understands that the Union Corner building was home to many businesses, including vibrant small businesses in the heart of the city centre. Council further notes that many businesses have been left without access to their premises as a result of the public safety cordon instituted while demolition and clearance are taking place and recognises the significant disruption and financial impact experienced by businesses in and around Union Street, Gordon Street and the wider Glasgow Central area.

Council therefore welcomes the confirmation by the First Minister of a £10million Scottish Government recovery fund which will support the city's recovery efforts and provide a support scheme for affected businesses, which is now open for applications. Council further notes that officers from its Economic Development section have been engaging directly with affected businesses from the outset to provide a single point of contact and signpost support and information. Council also acknowledges the complex and difficult work carried out by the demolition contractors, who have worked round-the-clock to protect public safety and facilitate the early reopening of Central Station, which is critical for so many commuters and the wider Glasgow city centre economy. Council further acknowledges and welcomes the First Minister's commitment to support Glasgow City Council with the additional costs necessitated by our statutory responsibilities in relation to building and public safety and notes the Scottish Government's intention to trigger the Bellwin Scheme.

Council recognises the importance of the Union Street area to Glasgow's history and expresses its sadness at the loss of a heritage building in the heart of the Glasgow Central Conservation area. Council further acknowledges the role of the Union Street/Gordon Street area as a key gateway to the city for many and believes that the recovery of this area is vital to the wider city centre experience.

Council welcomes the establishment by the Council Leader of a new strategic Union Street Fire Recovery Group, which brings together key partners from the public and private sector, as well as the city's heritage community, to chart a way forward for the Union Corner site and the recovery of the wider area.

Council notes that the Recovery Group will review existing planned activity in the area, including planned public realm improvements at Gordon Street and Argyle Street Avenue, and the ongoing exploration of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for the Egyptian Halls building. Council further notes that the Recovery Group will provide a strategic leadership role in considering further interventions, including the potential purchase of the Union Corner site and options for recovery and rebuilding on the site that are worthy of its importance to the city centre and the area's historic character.

Council further acknowledges concerns around the origins of this incident, including the possibility that vape products may have contributed to the fire. Council notes that it currently holds no regulatory, licensing or planning role in relation to vape products, other than those tobacco control functions which apply to the sale of all nicotine products. Council further acknowledges fire safety concerns regarding the storage of such products in historic buildings and residential areas, notes that Glasgow City Council has already worked to raise public awareness of the fire risks posed by vapes and other lithium ion battery products through its ongoing campaign for their safe disposal, and believes that MSPs should pay close attention to any conclusions that emerge from the SFRS investigation and consider whether future legislation or regulation of such products is required.

Council believes that responding to this fire and promoting the recovery of Glasgow city centre will require a sustained cross-sectoral and multi-agency response, with powers and resources required to chart a way forward. Council further believes that, while the SFRS investigation is yet to conclude, appropriate lessons must be learned and action taken in response to this tragic incident.

As such, Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a new masterplan for the Central Station quarter, incorporating existing planned activity as well as identifying further projects to support the recovery of this area;
- Write to the Secretary of State for Scotland to ask him to seek funds from the UK Treasury to match those already committed by the Scottish Government, and to both Governments to reiterate existing advocacy positions as set out by the City Centre Task Force, such as the removal of VAT for the maintenance and development of heritage buildings;
- Ensure that the learning from the multiagency operational response is reported to the Safe Glasgow Partnership and opportunities to further strengthen joint working between the Council, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland, Network Rail and Scotrail are considered;

- Write to the Scottish Government, and all MSPs in the city, to ask them to explore bringing forward legislation on the greater regulation of vape products and the storage of lithium ion batteries;
- Instruct updates on this work to the appropriate Committee in due course."

Councillor Hussain, seconded by Councillor Brown, moved as an amendment that:-

- (1) in paragraph 1, at "acknowledges both the significant impact that this has had for affected businesses and people using Central Station" delete "for" and replace with "on";
- (2) in paragraph 5, at the end of the paragraph, insert
 "Council agrees that representation from affected businesses should be included within the Union Street Fire Recovery Group.";
- (3) in final paragraph,
 - (a) delete:
 "Write to the Secretary of State for Scotland to ask him to seek funds from the UK Treasury to match those already committed by the Scottish Government, and to both Governments to reiterate existing advocacy positions as set out by the City Centre Task Force, such as the removal of VAT for the maintenance and development of heritage buildings;" and
 - (b) insert:
 "Agrees that officers should seek to maximise available funding from all levels of government to support recovery and regeneration activity.";
 and
- (4) insert a final bullet point at the resolve section, which should read as;
 "Agrees to establish a cross-party working group to oversee progress on recovery activity, with regular update papers submitted to the relevant Policy Development or Scrutiny Committees."

Bailie Mearns, seconded by Councillor Gallagher, moved as an amendment that:-

- (1) at the end of paragraph 2, add:
 "Council also commends the intense and proactive work carried out by officers across the Council family to keep the general public, elected members, and other relevant parties informed during a period of great disruption.";

- (2) in paragraph 4, after sentence ending "...city centre economy.", insert additional sentence in paragraph:

"Council notes that a laser scan of the remains of the façade was carried out before demolition took place and that stonework has been retained and will be assessed for possible reuse, recognising the severe impact that fire damage is likely to have had.";

- (3) in paragraph 5, after sentence ending "...city centre experience.", insert additional sentences in paragraph:

"Council believes that this incident provides an opportunity to act as a turning point for Union Street and the surrounding area. Recognising constraints around ownership of key sites and buildings, Council nonetheless commits to working with communities, businesses, and partners to ensure that recovery is not only swift but transformative, delivering a greener, safer, and more inclusive city centre. This should include advancing a programme of high-quality regeneration and strategic master-planning focused on sustainable development, improved public realm, support for local enterprise, and the long-term resilience of Glasgow's city centre."

- (4) in paragraph 7, in the final sentence, after "safe disposal, and", remove text and replace with:

"therefore calls on the Scottish and UK Governments to review and strengthen regulations governing the sale, storage, and safety standards of such products, ensuring they are appropriate for high street settings and that risks are minimised to prevent incidents of this scale from occurring again."

- (5) In paragraph 8, after sentence ending "...a way forward.", insert additional sentence in paragraph:

"Council recalls its motion from September 2025 on improving support for displaced residents and businesses affected by similar incidents and awaits the forthcoming report to committee which will illustrate how the principles of greater coordination and responsiveness were put into practice during the multi-agency response to the Union Street fire."

- (6) in final paragraph, remove list of resolutions at end of document and replace with:

"Council therefore resolves to:

- (1) Call on the Scottish Government to review the adequacy of existing regulatory regimes and to consider the introduction of strengthened measures - including enhanced Licensing and Planning, enhanced fire safety requirements, and clearer guidance on storage and quantities of vaping products - to reduce risks to the public and to buildings;

- (2) Call on the Scottish Government for additional resource in the immediate term to enable the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to target engagement with premises selling vaping products, and other products containing lithium-ion batteries, to provide fire safety advice;
- (3) Consider if there are opportunities to better integrate and share information across different regulatory and departmental 'silos' in respect of businesses who are not complying with their legal and financial responsibilities, such as Planning, Licensing and Non-Domestic Rates;
- (4) Ensure that the Recovery Group is widened out to include all local Elected Members and members of the Glasgow Built Heritage Commission;
- (5) Explore whether any stonework from the facade is retained as much as possible to ensure that future opportunities for retention and re-use are maximised;
- (6) Develop a masterplan for Union Street and the surrounding area to accelerate public realm improvements and ensure wider positive benefits can be secured for this key part of the city centre. This should include:-
 - (a) Bringing forward options, in line with recent traffic modelling exercises, for pedestrianisation of surrounding streets (e.g. Mitchell Street, Renfield Lane, Drury Street) to improve these areas and support businesses;
 - (b) Pausing public realm design work for Gordon Street until a masterplan is completed, and more is known about future rebuild options and consider options for temporary animation of the gap site;
 - (c) Considering opportunities for future-proofing the NCP multi-storey carpark site on Mitchell Street to bring forward a more positive use, such as affordable housing or open space in line with the City Centre Strategy;
 - (d) Developing and implementing a design code and guidance for shopfronts in the area and carry out Planning enforcement of unauthorised signage within the Central Conservation Area.

During the debate, Councillor Aitken, Councillor Hussain and Bailie Mearns, with the approval of their seconders, agreed to combine their motion and amendments resulting in the following adjusted motion:-

“Council notes with sadness the recent fire that took place at the Union Corner building at Union Street and Gordon Street in Glasgow City Centre and acknowledges both the significant impact that this has had for affected businesses

and people using Central Station, and the strong emotional response this loss has triggered for Glaswegians. Council commends the swift and professional response of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland, Network Rail and Council officers in managing a rapidly evolving situation and protecting public safety, which ensured there were no fatalities or injuries resulting from the devastating incident. Council notes that in addition to saving lives, the SFRS's efforts saved neighbouring buildings including the Central Hotel and Glasgow Central Station.

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Council therefore welcomes the confirmation by the First Minister of a £10million Scottish Government recovery fund which will support the city's recovery efforts and provide a support scheme for affected businesses, which is now open for applications. Council further notes that officers from its Economic Development section have been engaging directly with affected businesses from the outset to provide a single point of contact and signpost support and information. Council also acknowledges the complex and difficult work carried out by the demolition contractors, who have worked round-the-clock to protect public safety and facilitate the early reopening of Central Station, which is critical for so many commuters and the wider Glasgow city centre economy. Council notes that a laser scan of the remains of the façade was carried out before demolition took place and that stonework has been retained and will be assessed for possible reuse, recognising the severe impact that fire damage is likely to have had. Council further acknowledges and welcomes the First Minister's commitment to support Glasgow City Council with the additional costs necessitated by our statutory responsibilities in relation to building and public safety and notes the Scottish Government's intention to trigger the Bellwin Scheme.

Council recognises the importance of the Union Street area to Glasgow's history and expresses its sadness at the loss of a heritage building in the heart of the Glasgow Central Conservation area. Council further acknowledges the role of the Union Street/Gordon Street area as a key gateway to the city for many and believes that the recovery of this area is vital to the wider city centre experience. Council believes that this incident provides an opportunity to act as a turning point for Union Street and the surrounding area. Recognising constraints around ownership of key sites and buildings, Council nonetheless commits to working with communities, businesses, and partners to ensure that recovery is not only swift but transformative, delivering a greener, safer, and more inclusive city centre. This should include

advancing a programme of high-quality regeneration and strategic master-planning focused on sustainable development, improved public realm, support for local enterprise, and the long-term resilience of Glasgow's city centre.

Council therefore welcomes the establishment by the Council Leader of a new strategic Union Street Fire Recovery Group, which brings together key partners from the public and private sector, as well as the city's heritage community, to chart a way forward for the Union Corner site and the recovery of the wider area.

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Council believes that responding to this fire and promoting the recovery of Glasgow city centre will require a sustained cross-sectoral and multi-agency response, with powers and resources required to chart a way forward. Council recalls its motion from September 2025 on improving support for displaced residents and businesses affected by similar incidents and awaits the forthcoming report to committee which will illustrate how the principles of greater coordination and responsiveness were put into practice during the multi-agency response to the Union Street fire. Council further believes that, while the SFRS investigation is yet to conclude, appropriate lessons must be learned and action taken in response to this tragic incident.

As such, Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a new masterplan for the Central Station quarter, incorporating existing planned activity as well as identifying further projects to support the recovery of this area, noting that officers are already incorporating thinking about wider pedestrianisation and potential opportunities such as the NCP car park in Mitchell Street;

- Establish a Political Oversight Group with cross-party representation, to enable elected members to be sighted on the work of the expert Union Street Fire Recovery Group;
- Write to the Secretary of State for Scotland to ask him to seek funds from the UK Treasury to match those already committed by the Scottish Government, and to both Governments to reiterate existing advocacy positions as set out by the City Centre Task Force, such as the removal of VAT for the maintenance and development of heritage buildings;
- Agrees that officers should seek to maximise available funding from all levels of Government to support recovery and regeneration activity;
- Consider if there are opportunities to better integrate and share information across different regulatory and departmental 'silos' in respect of businesses who are not complying with their legal and financial responsibilities, such as Planning, Licensing and Non-Domestic Rates;
- Ensure that the learning from the multiagency operational response is reported to the Safe Glasgow Partnership and opportunities to further strengthen joint working between the Council, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland, Network Rail and Scotrail are considered;
- Call on the Scottish Government to review the adequacy of existing regulatory regimes and to consider the introduction of strengthened measures - including enhanced Licensing and Planning, enhanced fire safety requirements, and clearer guidance on storage and quantities of vaping products - to reduce risks to the public and to buildings; and
- Instruct updates on this work to the appropriate Committee in due course."