

MINUTE VOLUME

28 February 2024

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MINUTE
of
APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 9.30am in the Committee Room, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 11 December 2023.

Present:

Councillor Kate Campbell
Councillor Chris Lunday

Councillor Betty Cunningham
Provost Mary Montague

Councillor O'Donnell in the Chair

Attending:

Sharon Dick, Head of HR and Corporate Services and Caitriona McAuley Director of Environment

Apology:

There were no apologies.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

684. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

Resolution to Exclude Press and Public

At this point in the meeting, on the motion of the Chair, the committee unanimously resolved that in accordance with the provisions of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

HEAD OF PLACE

685. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 25 October 2023 (Page 664, Item 651 refers), the committee took up consideration of applications for the post of Head of Place

Following full consideration the committee agreed that 7 candidates be shortlisted for assessment.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Minute of meeting held at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 13 December 2023.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson	Councillor David Macdonald (*)
Councillor Tony Buchanan	Councillor Jim McLean (*)
Councillor Kate Campbell	Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Betty Cunningham (*)	Provost Mary Montague
Councillor Danny Devlin	Councillor Andrew Morrison
Councillor Paul Edlin (*)	Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)
Councillor Annette Ireland	Councillor Katie Pragnell
Councillor Chris Lunday	Councillor Gordon Wallace

Provost Montague in the Chair

Attending:

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Anthony McReavy, Chief Executive of East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust; Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Julie Murray, Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Phil Daws, Head of Environment(Strategic Services); Gill Darbyshire, Chief Executive's Business Manager(*); John Adam, Major Capital Projects Manager; Gerry Mahon, Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Lesleyann Burns, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

(*) indicates remote attendance

Apologies:

Councillors Caroline Bamforth

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

686. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

MINUTE OF MEETING OF COUNCIL – 25 OCTOBER 2023

687. The Council considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 25 October 2023 with a minor typographical change, to correct Councillor Katie Pragnell's name to the correct spelling.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES

The Council considered the Minutes of meetings of the undernoted:-

- (a) Cabinet – 2 November 2023;
- (b) Licensing Committee – 7 November 2023;
- (c) Education Committee – 9 November 2023;
- (d) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 23 November 2023;
- (e) Planning Applications Committee – 29 November 2023;
- (f) Cabinet (Police and Fire) – 30 November 2023;
- (g) Licensing Committee – 5 December 2023; and
- (h) Appeals Committee – 7 December 2023.

The Minutes were approved, subject to the following amendment to the Minute of the Licensing Committee meeting of 5 December, namely that on Page 694, Paragraph 679 ended with the wording “agenda item 3 refers”, this would be amended to read “agenda item 4 refers”.

INTERIM TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR 2023/24 – QUARTER 2

688. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 23 November 2023 (Page 680, Item 667 refers), the Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) on treasury management activities for the second Quarter of 2023-24.

Councillor Morrison gave an overview of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee’s view of the report and commended their recommendation to the Council for consideration.

The Council approved those organisations specified in the report for the investment of surplus funds.

Variation in Order of Business

In accordance with Standing Order 20, and with a view to making the most effective use of officers’ time, Provost Montague agreed to consider Motions (Item 6) at the end of substantive business.

STATEMENTS BY CONVENERS AND REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

The following statements were made:-

(a) **Councillor Anderson – Convener for Education, Culture and Leisure**

Councillor Anderson summarised two significant areas regarding the Culture and Leisure Trust.

Firstly, he referred to a national customer survey for public libraries which had been undertaken by the Scottish Libraries Information Council, which had been conducted both in libraries and online. An overwhelmingly positive response was received within East Renfrewshire, with comments received on how the libraries supported people with their health and wellbeing; social isolation; loneliness; and bringing families and communities together.

Councillor Anderson summarised some of the comments received from customers through the survey.

Secondly, he referred to the Eastwood Theatre as pantomime season was underway. He remarked that the Theatre had performed an incredible turnaround since 2015, summarising the many sell-out shows that had been attracted to perform there. He also praised the currently running pantomime, "Beauty and the Beast" which had received positive reviews.

(b) **Councillor O'Donnell – Leader**

Councillor O'Donnell referred to the recent mini inspection of the Council's Community Learning and Development Partnership, looking at how youth work, adult learning and community capacity building and development services were being delivered by the Council and partners to benefit local people and communities.

The inspection focused on how well the Council was fulfilling its statutory duties in relation to Community Learning and Development (CLD) and examined leadership; effectiveness of CLD work; use of data; strategic focus; and capacity to improve.

The inspection took place in October 2023 and the findings were published in November 2023. East Renfrewshire Council had received the highest of the three possible ratings. Councillor O'Donnell drew attention to the language used in the report to praise leadership at all levels, partnership working, planning, person centred approaches, progression pathways, strategic focus and ambition, use of data, performance monitoring and embedding of self-evaluation. They noted that some of the work had proven to be life changing for local people.

The inspectors highlighted two areas of practice which would be shared nationally: the partnership between CLD staff and Barrhead High School; and the Council's partnership with the Linking Communities Group to oversee the participatory budgeting process.

Councillor O'Donnell praised the hard work of all CLD staff involved in achieving such outstanding results.

(c) **Councillor Pragnell – Convener for Social Work and Health**

Councillor Pragnell provided an update from the last meeting of the Integration Joint Board (IJB) held on 22 November 2023.

She summarised discussion around the financial position of the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), noting that an overspend of £3 million had been reported, however, the situation was reported to have deteriorated since those figures were lodged. An overspend of £5.8 million was now predicted. As a result, there was no choice but to revise the eligibility threshold. HSCP would, therefore, only provide social care support to those with substantial and critical needs. It was noted that while this was not desirable, it was on par with other HSCPs.

The IJB had noted that the Council had indicated some non-recurring support and formal financial recovery planning was now underway. Councillor Pragnell stressed that the situation had not been due to poor financial management, but a combination of increased demand and complexity of demand not covered by existing funding.

An update had been given on the tender evaluation exercise for the replacement case recording system. The magnitude of this work had been recognised by the IJB.

The IJB also approved the refresh of the Strategy for Mental Health Services in Greater Glasgow and Clyde, which had been developed in partnership with all of the other HSCPs in the region.

The IJB had also approved the draft HSCP Winter Plan, received a presentation on delayed discharges, were given an update on actions from the HSCP Workforce Plan, and approved the draft Revised Integration Scheme, which was entering its consultation phase.

Councillor Pragnell thanked all HSCP staff for their hard work during the year under very difficult circumstances.

The Council noted the statements.

PROVOST'S ENGAGEMENTS

689. The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships, which provided details of civic engagements attended and civic duties performed by Provost Montague since the meeting of the Council held on 25 October 2023.

Councillor Morrison indicated that on Page 21 of the papers, there was an error where Deputy Provost Kate Campbell had attended the Showmen's Guild Luncheon and this had erroneously been said to have been the Provost. He asked that the report be amended to reflect this, which was accepted unanimously.

Council noted the report with the amendment that Deputy Provost Kate Campbell had attended the Showmen's Guild Luncheon on 17 November.

REVISION OF CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

690. The Council considered a report by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement seeking approval of revised Contract Standing Orders for the Council.

The report proposed amendments to the existing Contract Standing Orders, which were summarised in Appendix 1 to the report, with a track changed version included as Appendix 2 for comparison.

The Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement responded to members questions around declaration of interests in a procurement exercise and training to promote compliance with Contract Standing Orders.

The Council:

- (a) approved the proposed amendments to the existing Contract Standing Orders, as summarised in Appendix 1 to the report, and adopted the Contract Standing Orders included in Appendix 2 to the report with immediate effect; and
- (b) noted that changes made were to provide further clarity in order to drive greater compliance with procurement governance and best practice.

REVENUE ESTIMATES 2024/25 – ADVANCE SAVINGS PROPOSALS

691. The Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) on further advance savings proposals for 2024/25 in accordance with the Council decision of 1 March 2023, and to provide an update on progress on the 2024/25 savings approved in advance by Council on 1 March 2023.

The report outlined that, due to the complexity of the financial landscape, it had not been possible for officers to complete an assessment of the overall position in time to submit the savings report to Council in October 2023 as had been previously agreed. However, with the details of the temporary reduction in employer pension contributions confirmed, it was clear that significant recurring savings would be required.

Six savings were proposed, which were fully detailed in the report.

There followed a discussion among members around whether it was possible to defer the paper to a later date, however, no proposal to that effect was made. The Chief Executive and Director of Education also provided information, particularly around difficulties in recruiting school crossing patrollers. The Chief Executive also reiterated that the Council's policy was that there would be no compulsory redundancies.

Thereafter, the Council:-

- (a) noted the assessment of the further £1.383m of 2024/25 savings proposals where Council had requested a subsequent report;
- (b) approved savings of £0.842m for implementation in 2024/25 to permit preparatory work to be undertaken, and a further £0.360m in 2025/26, giving a full year total saving of £1.202m, as detailed in Annex A of the report; and
- (c) noted that only £1.267m of the £2.026m savings approved by Council on 1 March 2023 for implementation in 2024/25 are now considered to be deliverable in the next year, as detailed at Annex B to the report, however, at least a further £0.128m would be delivered in 2025/26.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

692. The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships giving an update on progress to develop the Council's long term strategic "Vision for the Future" (VFTF) and seeking agreement on the next steps.

VFTF sat at the top of the Council's strategic planning framework and provided a unifying framework to bring all other plans and strategies together. The first VFTF was published in September 2015, providing a 10-year forward direction for the Council. The document had been changed over time to take account of various landscape changes, as detailed in the report.

An updated VFTF was approved by Council in February 2020, however, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted work in that regard. The report outlined the forward plan for delivery of a revised VFTF from the end of 2023 to Autumn 2024, when it would come into full implementation. The current work being undertaken to develop the strategy was also set out, with particular focus on the "three pillars" of the VFTF, which were "Flourishing Families & Individuals"; "Vibrant Communities and Places"; and "Living Well".

In discussion among members, the proposed inclusion of a Community Conference to seek engagement from local communities about the pillars of the VFTF document was particularly welcomed.

The Council:-

- (a) noted that Vision for the Future was being developed around three pillars: "Flourishing Families & Individuals"; "Vibrant Communities & Places"; and "Living Well", and that work was well underway to map strategies, outcomes and analyse data for key opportunities and issues around the three pillars;
- (b) noted the continued development of the scope of each pillar in order to draft ambitions;
- (c) agreed in principle that work was undertaken to develop proposals for an expert panel to provide critical friend and sounding board support around the three pillars;
- (d) agreed that work was also undertaken to develop proposals for a community conference around Vision for the Future; and
- (e) agreed that a further report would be brought to Council once the work set out in (b), (c) and (d) had been completed.

EASTWOOD LEISURE CENTRE

693. The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment providing an update on progress made in relation to the new Eastwood Leisure Centre and seeking a decision from Council on how the project should progress.

The Head of Environment (Strategic Services) introduced the report to Council, outlining the two options to members for progressing the construction of the Eastwood Leisure Centre. As at the meeting of Council on 14 December 2022, Council had agreed to progress "Option 2", the two options for progress were titled: Option 2A – build the leisure centre within the budget of £55m; and Option 2B – build the leisure centre to the space standard outlined at the Council meeting of 14 December 2022, which would include a library.

Full details on both options were provided to members, both in the report, and in discussion with the Chief Executive of the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust, (ERCLT) the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) and the Major Capital Projects Manager. In particular the subject of the proposed library was discussed and what impact its inclusion

might have on other services, particularly with regard to the Theatre. Explanation was also given around some technical terms within the report, such as “de-risking”.

The Council:

- (a) determined to progress option 2B, at an estimated cost of £59,258,960, that includes a library within the proposed Leisure Centre, with the benefits outlined in the report;
- (b) noted the contingency provision of up to £6.7m was included within the estimated costs and that a further assessment would be made once full construction costs were known in January 2025;
- (c) noted the provision of £55m within the capital programme and a further £700k of Development Contributions was estimated to be available to support the project;
- (d) noted that a cost cutting exercise would be undertaken to reduce estimated costs to within the available budget; and
- (e) approved expenditure not exceeding £1,920,000 for advance works, to enable de-risking of the main contract. This cost was included within the total development costs for both options.

MODERNISATION OF EASTWOOD HEADQUARTERS, GIFFNOCK

694. The Council considered a report by the Chief Executive seeking approval to progress with modernisation works at Eastwood Headquarters, Giffnock.

A decision not to renew the lease of the Spiersbridge Office when it expired in February 2026 was approved by Cabinet at its meeting of 19 June 2023 (Page 553, Item 390 refers). As part of this decision, Cabinet noted the intention to return to Council with more detailed costed options for modernisation of Eastwood Headquarters to facilitate the increase in the number of staff based there following the closure of the Spiersbridge Office.

The report set out a proposal to modernise the Eastwood Headquarters and meet the need to support additional staff on a hybrid working basis. This included details of office accommodation; improvements to the Civic Chambers; and opportunities to build in sustainable technologies to provide opportunities to move toward the Council’s Net Zero commitments.

Following discussion among members, Councillor O’Donnell, seconded by Councillor Pragnell, moved in terms of the report’s recommendations.

Councillor Ireland, seconded by Councillor Macdonald, moved that the recommendations in the report not be approved.

On the roll being called, Councillors Anderson, Buchanan, Campbell, Cunningham, Devlin, Edlin, McLean, Merrick, Provost Montague, Councillors Morrison, O’Donnell, Pragnell and Wallace voted for the motion and Councillors Ireland and Macdonald voted for the amendment. Councillor Lunday abstained.

There being 13 votes for the motion and 2 votes for the amendment, the motion was declared carried and the Council:

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- (a) approved carrying out substantive works to Eastwood Headquarters following the decision to terminate the lease and close the Spiersbridge office in part to deliver future savings;
- (b) approved the proposal to undertake minor adaptive works in relation to progress towards net-zero carbon targets;
- (c) noted the requirement for additional capital funding which would be considered as part of the 24/25 budget process, and
- (d) approved further design work to be undertaken to Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stage 4, acknowledging that this work was undertaken on the assumption that additional capital funding would be made available.

HRA LAND TRANSFER FOR AURS ROAD REALIGNMENT PROJECT

695. The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for the transfer of land on the Housing Revenue Account to the General Account for the purpose of constructing the active travel route as part of the Aurs Road Realignment project.

The Aurs Road Improvement project was progressing towards a site start in early 2024, and details and plans were given in the report and in the annex to the report. The Council had written to tenants in September 2022 to seek permission to transfer the land in question from the Housing Revenue Account to the Council's General Fund to promote active travel in the area, with no objections raised. The Scottish Government had also been consulted and raised no objection.

The Council:

- (a) noted the results of the consultation with tenant representatives and the Scottish Government undertaken; and
- (b) approved the transfer of 1.5 acres of land from the Housing Revenue Account to the Council's General Fund under Section 203(2) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 for the sum of £350,000 for the purposes of constructing an Active Travel route as part of the City Deal funded Aurs Road Realignment Project.

ERC PUBLIC ACCESS DEFIBRILLATOR STRATEGY 2022 – 2027 – UPDATE, DECEMBER 2023

696. The Council considered a report by the Chief Executive on work undertaken in relation to the East Renfrewshire Council Public Access Defibrillator Strategy 2022-2027 and proposals for future work in the area to enhance the provision of public access defibrillators within East Renfrewshire.

The Strategy outlined several actions to support its aim to facilitate an increase in the number of defibrillators in an emergency to the public by working with individuals, community groups, community planning partners, local stakeholders and private sector organisations, fully detailed in the report.

It was noted that there were 82 Public Access Defibrillators located in East Renfrewshire, including 28 owned by the Council. The report outlined the location of public access defibrillators in East Renfrewshire; current costs and options for increasing provision; and proposed future work.

Following a discussion among members around work to establish community owned defibrillators, maintenance costs and the possibility of setting up a charitable trust for the purpose of administrating the funding, the Council:

- (a) noted the work undertaken to date on the East Renfrewshire Public Access Defibrillator Strategy 2022-2027;
- (b) agreed that capital funding of circa £40,000 was identified to allow the purchase of up to 15 additional Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) and to support replacement parts, as required, of existing East Renfrewshire Council owned PADs;
- (c) agreed the proposed general locations for up to 15 additional Public Access Defibrillators set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (d) agreed that revenue funding of a maximum of £20,000 per annum is identified from 2024/25 onwards to allow the ongoing maintenance for up to 14 additional Public Access Defibrillators (in addition to the current 28 existing PADs) which were sited on East Renfrewshire Council properties bringing the total number up to a maximum of 43;
- (e) noted the work undertaken by the Provost, as Community Defibrillators Champion, to work with local communities, faith groups, businesses and interested parties to raise funding for additional PADs, external cabinets and training and to identify suitable locations for the installation of additional PADs within East Renfrewshire;
- (f) noted the proposal with St John's Scotland and ongoing work to empower community groups to purchase, install and maintain Public Access Defibrillators across East Renfrewshire; and
- (g) noted that the Chief Executive and Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) would meet with Councillor Edlin to discuss the implications of establishing a charitable trust to manage PADs.

Adjournment

The Council agreed to a brief adjournment.

NOTICE OF MOTION – DISPOSABLE VAPES

697. In accordance with Standing Order 27, the following notice of motion had been submitted by Councillor Macdonald, seconded by Councillor Ireland:

“East Renfrewshire Council acknowledges that 29 out of 32 councils in Scotland have now publicly supported the campaign for a ban on single use disposable vapes. The Council further acknowledges that both the UK and Scottish Governments are now publicly in favour of a ban on single use disposable vapes and are now actively moving towards creating legislation to ban them.

We move that East Renfrewshire Council now support the campaign for a ban of single use disposable vapes and that the Leader write to the Scottish Government Minister responsible notifying them of our support.”

Councillor Pragnell, seconded by Councillor O'Donnell, moved an amendment in the following terms:

“East Renfrewshire Council notes and welcomes the consultation currently underway by both UK and Scottish Governments considering the health and environmental impacts of disposable vaping, while also acknowledging that vapes can be used to support those trying to quite smoking. As such both Governments are consulting on:

- *Restricting flavours*
- *Regulating point of sale displays*
- *Regulating packaging and presentation*
- *Considering restricting the supply and sale of disposable vapes*
- *Whether regulations should extend to non-nicotine vapes*
- *Taking action on the affordability of vapes*

Council welcomes the cooperation between both Governments on sharing evidence to support appropriate policy interventions and would encourage both Governments to proceed with relevant legislation at pace and to take a ‘single UK market’ approach on their implementation.”

Provost Montague invited Councillor Macdonald to speak in terms of the motion.

Councillor Macdonald pointed out that when this was previously raised at Council, only 6 Councils had called for a ban, but 29 were now publicly supporting a ban. He also stated that one Council was currently considering it. He expressed disappointment that the motion was subject to amendment as it was not a political issue.

He stressed that the terms of the motion were simply to ask the Council to join the many other Councils who backed a ban. He referred to additional information that had come to the fore in the past 7 months, particularly around the health implications for young people. As a result of their ease of use and cost they were causing considerable problems for young people, especially in schools, as well as causing addiction problems for young people getting addicted to nicotine via the use of the vapes.

He indicated that the future direction of travel across the UK and devolved administrations was that a ban would come. He also reference France as having banned disposable vapes. While accepting that they could be helpful to people trying to quit smoking, he stated that the issues for young people more than counterbalanced that.

Seconding the motion, Councillor Ireland expressed her disappointment in the amendment and felt that it stopped short of supporting a ban. She also referenced the support of 29 Councils for a ban, with cross-party support.

She felt that it was vitally important that East Renfrewshire Council aligned itself with calls for a ban as to be the one outlier among Local Authorities would be an embarrassment to the Council.

Councillor Ireland agreed with Councillor Macdonald that the use among young people was endemic and it was wrong for the Council to turn a blind eye to this. Particularly with young people who never smoked picking up disposable vapes. She cited Cancer Research UK, the British Heart Foundation, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and the Royal College of Physicians as having uniformly asserted that vaping was unsafe for children and young people. She called for members to stand alongside 29 other Councils across Scotland and support the motion.

In support of her amendment, Councillor Pragnell stated that the landscape had changed and she felt the scope of the original motion was too narrow and did not include reference to the health impacts. She expressed concerns with the health impacts on young people as well as the environmental impacts and welcomed the UK and Scottish Government consultations into the matter.

Councillor Pragnell indicated that she felt it was prudent to await the findings of those consultations were published in full so that the Council could consider the impacts of any future legislation. She believed that any such legislation would have to be implemented at pace and take a single UK market approach on implementation to avoid any discrepancies between devolved nations.

Councillor O'Donnell, in seconding the amendment, indicated that he was content to continue without further commenting on the amendment.

Councillor Morrison agreed with Councillor Pragnell that the previous motion raised on this subject had been too narrow and that health concerns were paramount. He also cited the recommendations in the Zero Waste Scotland report around restricting flavours and other measures to reduce the use. He pointed out that banning disposable vapes would still allow people to purchase reusable ones and there would have to be a fuller approach to dealing with the problem. He felt that, looking at the nine conclusions of the Zero Waste Scotland report, they were better encapsulated in the terms of the amendment.

Councillor Buchanan expressed his astonishment as he felt that all matters were considered within the motion. He was concerned that there could be delays to implementing any legislation due to the upcoming election. He felt it was vital to act as soon as possible to assure effective action could be taken.

Councillor O'Donnell stated that the debate had moved on considerably in the seven months since the original motion, which focused on the environmental impacts of single use disposable vapes. He felt that the motion was redundant as both Governments were in the process of looking at the matter. He felt that things were moving in the direction in which the amendment were suggesting. He clarified that the single UK market approach would prevent loopholes between administrations.

In summing up, Councillor Macdonald stated that the Council was a national embarrassment. He felt that the matter had been politicised, despite 29 Councils of various party control backing a ban on single use disposable vapes. He stated that there was no issue with administrations not working together, as the Scottish and UK governments were already working together and that he felt the amendment was politically motivated.

On the roll being called, Councillors Buchanan, Ireland, Lunday, Macdonald and Merrick voted for the motion.

Provost Montague and Councillors Anderson, Campbell, Edlin, McLean, Morrison, O'Donnell, Pragnell and Wallace voted for the amendment.

There being 5 votes for the motion and 9 for the amendment, the amendment was declared carried.

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of meeting held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 14 December 2023.

Present:

Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader) Councillor Danny Devlin
Councillor Andrew Anderson (Vice Chair) Councillor Katie Pragnell

Councillor O'Donnell, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Andrew Corry, Head of Environment (Operations); Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Gerry Mahon, Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement; Gillian McCarney, Head of Place; Jamie Reid, Head of Communities and Transformation; Alison Ballingall, Senior Revenues Manager; Gill Darbyshire, Chief Executive's Business Manager; Mary Docherty, Education Resources Senior Manager; Ian McLean, Accountancy Manager, East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership(*); Paul Parsons, Principal Accountant; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Lesleyann Burns, Committee Services Assistant.

(*) denotes remote attendance.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

698. Councillor Anderson noted a potential interest in item 10, however, he was advised by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement that the interest noted did not preclude him from participating in that particular item.

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

690. The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) monitoring expenditure against the approved General Fund Capital Programme as at 30 September 2023 and recommending adjustments where possible.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) advised that the report indicated a shortfall in resource of £0.238m representing 0.5% of the resources available which was within manageable limits.

The report advised of a number of movements in the current year's Capital Programme. These related mainly to the timing of projects and reflected shortages of materials and labour as well as backlogs in tendering and site starts. Other factors affecting the programme included increased energy and fuel prices and increased inflationary costs. Full details of the movements were given in sections 9 and 10 of the report. In particular, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) highlighted transfers from the Improved Learning budget to St John's Primary School to allow works to take place to increase nursery spaces; and works required to allow the introduction of Gaelic Medium Education at Thornliebank Primary School by improving the ventilation.

In addition to the variations listed in the report, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) advised of a variation that had been received from the Culture and Leisure Trust after the report had been submitted. This related to gym improvement works at the Foundry in Barrhead. It was explained that, to allow preparations for those works to be carried out, emergency approval had been sought from Councillors O'Donnell and Anderson by the Chief Executive of the Culture and Leisure Trust. Cabinet was asked to homologate that decision.

The Cabinet recommended to Council:-

- (a) to approve the movements within the 2023/24 programme;
- (b) to approve the transfer of £0.225m from the Education, Improved Learning project to St John's Primary School, Early Learning and Childcare Places;
- (c) to approve the transfer of £0.030m from Property Maintenance, Ventilation Works to Education, Gaelic Medium PS;
- (d) to note the shortfall of £0.238m and that income and expenditure on the programme would be managed and reported on a regular basis; and
- (e) that additional variations for gym improvement works at the Foundry, Barrhead, funded from existing capital provisions and developer contributions be homologated.

HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

691. The Cabinet considered a joint report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) and Director of Environment, monitoring income and expenditure as at 30 September 2023 against the approved Housing Capital Programme 2022/23 and recommending adjustments where required.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) advised that there was a shortfall in the programme of £0.097m representing 1.7% of available resources which was within manageable limits. There had been a number of movements in the programme relating mainly to timing delays due to revised procurement processes. In addition, some sheltered housing works had been delayed until new Scottish Government energy efficiency guidance had been received. Full details were provided in section 9 of the report.

The Cabinet recommended to Council:-

- (a) to approve the movements within the programme; and
- (b) to note the shortfall of £0.097m and that income and expenditure on the programme would be managed and reported on a regular basis.

SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENTAL CHARGING PROPOSALS 2024/25

692. The Cabinet considered the undernoted reports by the appropriate Directors and Chief Officers regarding the outcome of the charging for services carried out in each of the departments and recommended proposed fees and charges for 2024/25.

The reports referred to the range of services reviewed within each department, the outcome of the reviews, proposed changes and associated resource implications:-

- (i) Business Operations and Partnerships Department;
- (ii) Education Department;
- (iii) Environment Department;
- (iv) Health and Social Care Partnership; and
- (v) Licensing.

In discussing the item, the Chair urged officers to consider their 3 or 4 biggest charging areas in their services and look at a more in depth review of recovery rates within the next 3 to 5 years.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:

- (a) approved all new charges being proposed and all changes to the current charging structure as calculated by each department; and
- (b) asked all departments to consider what the 3 or 4 key charging areas in their service were and to look at a more in depth review of recovery rates within the next 3 to 5 years to either recover those costs, or to provide a reason why those costs would not be recovered.

REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO RISK APPETITE – REPUTATIONAL RISK

693. Under reference to the minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 26 September 2023 (Page 645, Item 600 refers), the Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive on the current level of risk appetite as contained in the Risk Management Strategy 2023-2025 approved by Cabinet in February 2023 (Item 334, Page 400 refers) and reflecting discussion on 26 September by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee around the level of risk appetite assigned to “reputational risk” and if this should be revised.

The Cabinet welcomed the recommendations of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee that, given challenging financial circumstances, the need to meet climate change obligations and other additional statutory operational requirements, it was inevitable that difficult decisions would have to be made and that this was likely to continue. Given this, a risk level of 1 for reputational risk no longer reflected the level of risk likely to be required in order for the Council to deliver its outcomes.

The Audit and Scrutiny Committee had recommended that the risk appetite for reputational risk be increased from 1 to 2.

The Cabinet agreed:

- (a) that the risk appetite for “reputational risk” outlined in the report reflected the current approach to risk for East Renfrewshire Council; and
- (b) that the level of risk appetite should be changed from “one” to “two” as recommended by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, to reflect the current approach to risk for East Renfrewshire Council.

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT POLICY

694. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on Discretionary Housing Payments and an updated Discretionary Housing Payment Policy, to be administered by Revenue Services.

The Senior Revenues Manager explained that a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) was an award of additional financial assistance provided to a claimant where a Local Authority considers that further help with housing costs (including rent payments, deposits, advance rental, rent prior to moving in, or removal costs) was required. Claimants of DHP had to be in receipt of Housing Benefit or the Housing element of Universal Credit.

The existing policy for award of DHPs was out of date and last revised on 2013. The updated Policy would provide an appropriate framework and level of guidance when considering a DHP application, taking into consideration the latest information and developments from Scottish Government. It was noted that there was currently no common framework for DHP policies in Scotland and it was for each Council to set its policy.

The key areas of the policy were detailed in the report, with the payments to be reported using the Revenues and Benefits system. The Senior Revenues Manager assured Cabinet that the information provided by the system was under review with the system supplier to allow further data analysis and insight.

The Cabinet approved the revised Discretionary

WELFARE CONTINGENCY BUDGET

695. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on the use of resources from the Welfare Reform contingency budget to support local residents through the Money Advice and Rights Team’s (MART) Financial Wellbeing Project; Revenues and Benefits resiliency and to support partners in the local Citizen Advice Bureau, as well as requesting approval for transfer of a proportion of the Welfare Contingency provision for Scottish Welfare Fund processing.

Since September 2018, all new applicants had been moved to Universal Credit, with the transfer of people on existing benefits or tax credits delayed and planned for completion by the end of 2024/25. The Senior Revenues Manager explained that cases in Scotland would have some differences to the wider UK system, for example, people had the option to be paid twice monthly and have their housing element paid directly to their landlords.

The caseload of MART, the Citizen Advice Bureau and Revenues and Benefits Team suggested that ongoing welfare reform and the roll out of Universal Credit continued to impact residents across East Renfrewshire, particularly the most deprived communities. In prior years, £200,000 of welfare contingency budget had been made available per annum to fund proposals from Revenues and Benefits, MART and the Citizen Advice Bureau.

The Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) processed community care and crisis grants for residents in challenging financial situations. Demand for those grants continued to increase, resulting in a gap in administration funding for the SWF. 2 permanent and 2 temporary members of staff were funded with the existing resource, and a further staff member had been appointed using temporary Local Authority COVID Economic Recovery (LACER) funding. To facilitate permanent resource for an increasing area of work, it was proposed that £70,000 of Welfare Contingency budget be transferred to the Revenues and Benefits team.

In addition, proposals were made for the transfer of funding to support MART, Citizen Advice Bureau and Revenues and Benefits resiliency during a trying time for East Renfrewshire residents.

Cabinet expressed their support for any proposals which would help East Renfrewshire residents during a difficult time.

Thereafter, the Cabinet agreed

- (a) to approve the permanent transfer from the Welfare Contingency Budget of £70,000 to the Revenues and Benefits Team for Scottish Welfare Fund processing from 1 April 2024;
- (b) approved the Money Advice and Rights Team (MART)'s bid for £79,000 of Welfare Contingency Budget to continue the Financial Wellbeing Project to build community capacity and resilience in the area of financial inclusion, by providing a presence in Schools for a further 2 years;
- (c) approved the East Renfrewshire Citizen Advice Bureau bid for £80,000 to continue to fund one full-time member of staff to undertake all aspects of benefit support work for a further 2 years;
- (d) approved that increased resiliency within the Revenues and Benefits Team would continue through an external contract up to a limit of £50,000 over 2 years, where processing can be called off and paid for as required; and
- (e) noted that all bids for Welfare Contingency Budget were being requested in principle and were subject to budgetary provision being confirmed when the Council set the 2024/25 and 2025/26 budgets early in 2024 and 2025.

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS – EMPTY AND SECOND HOMES

696. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on Council Tax discounts relating to empty and second homes in light of the Scottish Government consultation and implications for East Renfrewshire.

East Renfrewshire Council had a statutory duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to bill and collect Council Tax. Discounts and exemptions were applied which reduced the Council Tax bill where applicable, with some examples of those being given in the report.

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In the summer of 2023, the Scottish Government had carried out 2 consultations on proposed changes to Council Tax charges and on second and empty homes and non-domestic rates, with results published on 24 October 2023.

It was noted that discounts for long-term empty and second homes could be removed and, in fact, a number of East Renfrewshire's neighbouring councils had removed such discounts, with some actually charging a premium of up to 100% on such properties after a period of time had elapsed. It was further proposed that an Empty Homes Officer be recruited, funded by the removal of those discounts, to work with Revenue Services and Housing Services to maximise Council Tax recovery and provide a support to owners of empty properties, with the aim of bringing them back into use.

In discussion, members expressed the view that these proposals could help bring more properties into use and help tackle the ongoing issues of homelessness affecting all local authorities in Scotland.

The Cabinet agreed:

- (a) to note the consultation on changes to Council Tax proposed by Scottish Government and the expected impact for East Renfrewshire Council;
- (b) the proposal to remove the 10% discount for long-term empty and second homes;
- (c) the proposal to add a premium of up to 100% for long-term empty properties and second homes from 1 April 2024; and
- (d) agreed the proposal that an Empty Homes Officer be recruited.

COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS UPDATE

697. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on the positive impact of Year One and Two of the 2021-2024 Community Learning and Development (CLD) Plan; seeking approval for developing Year Three of the Plan; setting out the timeline for development of the 2024-2027 Plan; and advising of Education Scotland's recent progress visit.

The Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations (2013) required the production and publication of a 3 yearly plan of how youth work, adult learning and community capacity building/developmental services would be delivered by core CLD services and the wider CLD Partnership.

The development of the 2021-2024 Plan had been complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, however, a number of areas of progress had been made and these were detailed in Annex 1 of the report.

A draft action plan for Year Three of the Plan was included as Annex 2 to the report, which set out the initial targets for the year.

Details were also provided on a three day "progress visit" by Education Scotland which took place in October 2023, with findings published in November 2023. With Youth work in partnership with Barrhead High School and the Linking Communities approach used to oversee the Participatory Budgeting process highlighted as areas of highly effective practice.

East Renfrewshire CLD had received the most positive statement rating from Education Scotland, finding that, “the local authority and their CLD partners are making sufficient progress with their CLD plan and have the capacity to continue to improve. As a result, HM Inspectors will take no further action in relation to this progress visit. During the inspection, we identified aspects of highly effective practice which we would like to explore further.”

Full details were provided in Annex 3 of the report.

During discussion among members, it was asked that the Head of Communities and Transformation provide further information on “Multiply” funded courses and their effectiveness to Cabinet members.

The Cabinet agreed:

- (a) to note the positive impact on communities from Years One and Two of the Community Learning and Development Plan 2021-2024, which had a flexible, tactical focus on pandemic response and recovery work, as detailed in Annex 1 of the report;
- (b) Year Three of the Plan, as detailed in Annex 2 of the report;
- (c) to note the requirement to publish an updated CLD Plan for 2024-2027 by September 2024;
- (d) to note the positive findings from Education Scotland’s progress visit in October 2023, detailed in Annex 3 of the report; and
- (e) that the Head of Communities and Transformation provide further information on “Multiply” funded courses and their effectiveness to Cabinet members.

STRATEGIC MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24

698. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships, providing a summary of Council performance at mid-year 2023-24 based on performance indicators in the Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP) 2023-24. A mid-year complaints report was also included. Details of the performance results, together with information on mid-year complaints appeared as appendices to the report.

The report outlined that 31 indicators in the plan had updated data reported at mid-year, with 20 showing as “On Target”, 3 as “Target to be Achieved” and 2 as “Off Target”. A further 5 were indicators set for monitoring purposes and had no target set against them.

The report went on to highlight areas of progress made at mid-year under each outcome, with full details being provided in Annex 1 to the report. There was also a statutory duty to report on complaints and a mid-year summary was attached as Annex 2 to the report.

The Chief Executive, Director of Education and Director of Business Operations and Partnerships were heard in response to members’ questions on Secondary School exclusion rates, staff leave and staff absence levels.

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The Cabinet:

- (a) scrutinised and commented on the summary of the Council's performance at mid-year 2023-24, as detailed in Annex 1 to the report; and
- (b) scrutinised and noted the mid-year complaints report attached as Annex 2 of the report.

REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS (SCOTLAND) ACT 2000 – COVERT SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITY 2022-23

699. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement on surveillance activity undertaken and authorised by the Council during 2022/23 and the results of the inspection of the Council's surveillance practices undertaken by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Officer during the period.

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 came into effect on 2 October 2000 and required each authority to appoint a Senior Responsible Officer with responsibility for overseeing appropriate practice under the Act. The Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement held this role within East Renfrewshire Council.

The Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement reported that during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, 4 separate targets had been subject of surveillance under one overarching authorisation. This related to online investigations granted as being necessary for the prevention and detection of crime, relating to the sale of counterfeit goods and copyright/trademark infringement. Surveillance had been undertaken by officers of Trading Standards Scotland acting as part of national initiatives.

It was further reported that one application for surveillance had been refused, relating to monitoring of online for a containing complaints regarding rogue traders, as this was judged to be disproportionate.

No use had been made of Covert Human Intelligence Sources during the period.

The Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement also provided details of an inspection carried out in November 2022 by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office of surveillance practice during the period 2019 to 2022. The inspection had concluded that the Council's practice was generally of a high standard and commended the quality of training and authorisations. The full inspection report was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Cabinet:

- (a) noted the use of directed surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources during the period 2022/23; and
- (b) noted the results of the inspection carried out in November 2022 by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office.

MINUTE OF JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (FIRST TIER) HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2023

700. The minute of the Joint Consultative Committee (First Tier) held on 14 September 2023 was submitted for noting.

The Cabinet noted the minute.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 9.00am in the Council Chambers, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 17 January 2024.

Present:

Councillor Kate Campbell
Councillor Chris Lundy

Councillor Betty Cunningham
Provost Mary Montague

Councillor O'Donnell in the Chair

Attending:

Sharon Dick, Head of HR and Corporate Services and Caitriona McAuley Director of Environment.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

701. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

Resolution to Exclude Press and Public

At this point in the meeting, on the motion of the Chair, the committee unanimously resolved that in accordance with the provisions of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

HEAD OF PLACE

702. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 25 October 2023 (Page 664, Item 651 refers), the committee proceeded to interview 2 of the shortlisted candidates who had been selected for interview following the assessment centre exercise that had taken place.

Having conducted the interviews the committee, after discussion, agreed to offer the post to Michaela Sullivan.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 18 January 2024.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Morrison (Chair)
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Vice Chair)
Councillor Paul Edlin

Councillor Annette Ireland
Provost Mary Montague*
Councillor Gordon Wallace

Councillor Morrison in the Chair

(*) indicates remote attendance

Attending:

Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Tom Kelly, Head of Adult Services, Learning Disability & Recovery; Michelle Blair, Chief Auditor; Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Kath McCormack, HR Manager; Barry Tudhope, Democratic Services Manager; Linda Hutchison, Clerk to the Committee; and John Burke, Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Grace Scanlin, Ernst and Young; and Yvonne Douglas, Audit and Compliance Manager, South Lanarkshire Council.

Apology:

Councillor David Macdonald.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

703. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

CHAIR'S REPORT

704. Councillor Morrison reported that he and Councillor Edlin had recently attended an event for Elected Members hosted by The Accounts Commission and Improvement Service on the Commission's recent publication on key lessons for Councils from 20 years of auditing Best Value. At the event there had also been opportunities to hear about what was happening next in terms of auditing for Best Value and discuss Members' roles in ensuring their Councils meet their Best Value obligations.

The Committee noted the position.

INTERIM TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2023/24 – QUARTER 3

705. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 23 November 2023 (Page 680, Item 667 refers), when it had been agreed to note the Interim Treasury Management Report for Quarter 2 of 2023/24 and recommend to the Council that the organisations specified in the report for investment of surplus funds be approved, the Committee considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) on treasury management activities for the third Quarter of 2023/24.

The report explained that, in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Committee was responsible for ensuring effective inspection of the Council's treasury management activities in accordance with which the interim Treasury Management Report for October to December 2023 was provided for consideration.

Whilst highlighting key aspects of the report, the Chief Accountant confirmed that long term borrowing was static, with none having been taken due to the high levels of rates currently offered. The Council continued to adopt a prudent approach to treasury management and, in particular, the percentage of loans with variable interest rates held in the first nine months of the financial year was just over 7% and well below the Council's approved upper limit of 15%.

Having commented on short term investments which had decreased due to cash flows in both capital and revenue, the Chief Accountant highlighted the prudential indicators referred to in the report which helped confirm that capital investment plans and treasury management decisions remained affordable, prudent and sustainable, and indicators 3 and 4 in particular which demonstrated that the Council was operating well within its limits.

Finally, she commented on the Council's list of counterparties which had not changed from the one for Quarter 2, and clarified that all investments were restricted to UK bodies with high credit ratings, with the maximum period of investment, in general, restricted to 6 months.

The Committee, having heard the Chief Accountant confirm the level of interest earned on reserves, agreed:-

- (a) to **recommend to the Council** that the organisations for investment of surplus funds be approved in accordance with Appendix 8 to the report; and
- (b) otherwise, to note the report and related comments made.

MANAGING ABSENCE – 2022/23 ANNUAL REPORT

706. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 29 September 2022 (Page 204, Item 148 refers), when the position on absence management during 2022/23 had been noted, the Committee considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships providing an update on the Council's audited absence Performance Indicator (PI) and sickness and absence trends.

Whilst commenting on the PI data, the report explained that the number of sickness days per full time equivalent (FTE) employee had increased from 8.86 days in 2021/22 to 11.15 days in 2022/23, attributable mainly to local government employee (LGE) absence. Particular reference was made to actions taken to support absence management processes in relation to the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) which included the establishment of weekly

absence panels, recent data having indicated a significant improvement in absence. Overall, whilst absence had increased, Local Government Benchmark Framework (LGBF) data placed East Renfrewshire 5th equal for teaching staff and 11th equal for LGEs, these rates being in the 1st and 2nd quartiles respectively.

Having specified the top ten reasons for both LGE and teacher absence, the report provided statistical information on absence trends reported by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) which indicated that levels had soared to a 10-year high in 2023, that they were considerably higher in the public sector, and that there was evidence of long-term absence due to multiple conditions. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) had also reported that absence was consistently higher in the public sector, reasons for which were outlined.

Further information was provided on the management of sickness absence, including related training available and support provided by HR; actions recently agreed by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) to support absence management improvement; and health and wellbeing issues, including the appointment of a temporary Health and Wellbeing Officer and related actions taken. The importance of maintaining a focus on absence, absence improvement actions and health and wellbeing were highlighted.

The HR Manager commented on key aspects of the report, including reasons which contributed to higher absence levels in the public sector and the role of and initiatives progressed by the Health and Wellbeing Officer.

Councillor Morrison sought clarification on what else could be considered to help address absence issues. Amongst other things, the HR Manager and Director of Business Operations and Partnerships referred to an ongoing review of the managing absence policy, the time involved to fully complete the ill health retirement process, the importance of maintaining dialogue with and supporting employees returning to work, and discussions by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and with senior managers on absence and identifying root causes of it. Also in response to him, the HR Manager confirmed that additional information could be provided, such as on long-term and short-term absence rates, median rates and rates in comparison to the private sector.

Councillor Ireland commended health and wellbeing work being progressed and positive feedback on initiatives progressed by the temporary Health and Wellbeing Officer, seeking confirmation on when the appointment was due to end and also further clarification on LGBF information. The Director of Business Operations and Partnerships confirmed that the possibility of making further financial provision for the post was under consideration, and that LGBF data for 2022/23 was due to be published later in the year and reported to the Cabinet prior to the summer recess.

Councillor Edlin expressed deep concern regarding the rise in absence reported, particularly in some departments and relative to the private sector, suggesting that the Committee become more involved in work on this issue. In response, the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships commented on a range of issues, including a rise nationally in health issues arising from COVID, the importance of absence being a high profile issue, and differences between reasons for absence and related rates in the public and private sectors as substantiated by the CIPD and others, indicating she would be happy to keep the Committee updated further, such as on CMT discussions. She also referred to recent evidence of people being absent for multiple complex reasons, the national issue of longer waiting lists, and value of investment in initiatives such as absence panels which was delivering significant change. Supported by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer), she highlighted the impact on statistics when referring to a department with a smaller number of employees than others. Councillor Buchanan expressed concern regarding comments by some Elected Members at the meeting, supported the work being progressed on health and wellbeing, and referred to a

range of absence related issues, suggesting that a rise in sickness absence linked to the aftermath of COVID was not unexpected such as amongst front-line staff who had been directly involved in addressing COVID-related challenges.

In response to a query from Councillor Morrison regarding the level of confidence that existed that managers were implementing absence procedures timeously, the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships referred to the managing absence policy, HR support available to assist managers implement it, the promotion of various types of support for employees, the extent of employees' commitment to the Council some of whom worked from home when unwell, and the range of difficult circumstances employees now faced including out with work. Having expressed the view that people faced similar circumstances in the private sector, Councillor Wallace anticipated absence levels deteriorating further for a variety of reasons including the financial position of the Council, and emphasised the need for the Committee to consider related issues, including further statistics provided, objectively.

The Committee, having heard Councillor Morrison express disappointment regarding the absence rates referred to in the report and following a brief discussion on the way forward:-

- (a) agreed, given concerns expressed by Elected Members on the levels of absenteeism reported and to provide further clarification, that the HR Manager provide additional information on long-term and short-term absence rates, including median absence rates and in comparison to the private sector, for circulation to members of the Committee;
- (b) agreed that the HR Manager submit a further report on absence in 6 months time;
- (c) noted that the Managing Absence Policy was under review;
- (d) noted that further Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) data was due to be published later in the year and reported to the Cabinet prior to the summer recess; and
- (e) agreed to explore options on how members of the Committee could become more actively engaged in discussions on absenteeism and how it could be addressed with a view to reporting back on this to a future meeting.

SUMMARY OF EARLY RETIREMENT/REDUNDANCY COSTS TO 31 MARCH 2023

707. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 10 November 2022 (Page 295, Item 229 refers), when early retirements/redundancies to 31 March 2022 had been discussed, the Committee considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships summarising the position on early retirement/redundancy costs from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and related issues. Information on the total costs incurred and projected savings was provided.

Whilst commenting on the report, the HR Manager clarified that redundancies continued to be assessed on a financial business case basis, and referred to related costs and savings achievable which depended on the individual circumstances of each employee concerned.

In response to questions, the HR Manager clarified that early retirements often followed organisational change and that any savings identified, which could be due to a lower grade post being established instead, were referred to in the related business case prepared. It was confirmed that in some cases following reorganisations redeployment was considered, that a

relatively low number of people had left the Council due to voluntary redundancy, that it was always attempted to recover the initial outlay of early retirals/redundancies within 3 years, and that it was an option to include comparative annual data in future reports on one off costs divided by savings.

The Committee noted the report, the explanations provided for early retirals/redundancies within the period it covered, and related projected savings.

NATIONAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – ADULT MENTAL HEALTH IN SCOTLAND

708. The Committee considered a report by the Clerk on the publication in September 2023 of a report by Audit Scotland entitled *Adult Mental Health in Scotland*. Under the Committee's specialisation arrangements, Councillor Edlin was leading the review of the report. A copy of feedback on the local position provided by the Head of Adult Services, Learning Disability & Recovery, as submitted to the Performance and Audit Committee of the Integration Joint Board (IJB), was appended to the report.

Issues commented on included recognition by the Mental Health and Recovery Planning Group in East Renfrewshire of quantitative and qualitative data to assist in terms of workforce and service delivery and the particular focus placed on improving patient experience; choice provided to people on accessing mental health services on a remote or face to face basis; integrated and partnership working on mental health and recovery planning; and work being progressed in East Renfrewshire on various priorities aligned to the recommendations made by Audit Scotland, examples of which were provided.

Amongst other things, it was concluded that the Audit Scotland report had provided a useful overview of services across Scotland and key information on which to benchmark East Renfrewshire. It was clarified that the Mental Health and Recovery Planning and Adult Services Governance Groups would take account of the recommendations set out, and that work would continue with Health Board wide colleagues on wider NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde strategy and on the wide range of directives received from the Scottish Government. It was confirmed that this would continue to be put in the context of what matters to people in East Renfrewshire, and that the HSCP Strategic Plan reflected local mental health and recovery priorities based on the needs and priorities of the population.

Councillor Edlin commented that the increase in mental health illness was concerning. Having referred to the extent to which mental health issues had come to the fore in the past 10-15 years and suggestions made by some that medication was being prescribed to address daily life issues that previous generations may have coped with in other ways, Councillor Wallace asked if prescribing was leading to some mental health issues being put on a back burner.

The Head of Adult Services, Learning Disability & Recovery referred to greater awareness of mental health issues in society, increased referrals to mental health teams such as to help address stress, and how referrals to psychological services were encouraged to take advantage of related services provided such as counselling. However, he explained that some people required medication, and referred to an increase in the identification of neurodivergent issues and the need to determine how best to address such issues. Further in response to Councillor Wallace who, supported by Councillor Morrison, queried a statistic he had seen in a report which suggested the use of prescription drugs to address mental health issues had doubled in 20 years and requested feedback on the veracity of this and if such prescriptions were always necessary, the Head of Adult Services, Learning Disability & Recovery undertook to seek and provide additional information for circulation to members of the Committee on this issue, highlighting that medication was avoided where possible.

In response to further queries, he commented that in some cases medication could be prescribed by GPs pending the best way forward being determined for an individual, expressing confidence that a holistic, integrated and creative approach was taken locally. He referred also to pressures on adult mental health services and welcomed additional funding for these whilst stating that further resources would always be welcomed and commenting on related challenges including the ring-fencing of some funds which was challenged when considered appropriate. He also provided further clarification on the Distress Brief Interventions Programme being rolled out across Scotland and its introduction locally in the year ahead and, more generally, on collaboration on services.

The Committee:-

- (a) noted that the Head of Adult Services, Learning Disability & Recovery would provide additional information for circulation to members of the Committee on referrals to GPs and the use of prescription medication to help address adult mental health issues; and
- (b) otherwise, noted the report and related comments made.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC SECTOR INTERNAL AUDIT STANDARDS (PSIAS)

709. The Committee considered a report by the Chief Auditor providing a summary of the outcome of an independent external assessment of the Council's Internal Audit service, a copy of which was attached to the report.

It was explained that the Internal Audit function required to adhere to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) to ensure quality and consistency across the public sector. Having specified that a related independent external assessment required to be carried out at least once every 5 years, the report referred to the outcome of a recent such assessment by the Audit and Compliance Manager of South Lanarkshire Council. This was based on reviews over 14 headings, the findings being that the service was fully compliant in 9 categories and generally compliant in the remaining 5. Having clarified that 6 recommendations made had been accepted, the report referred to the related Action Plan to be implemented. The overall conclusion reached was that the service generally complied with PSIAS.

Councillor Morrison welcomed the Audit and Compliance Manager to the meeting who commented further on the report, the assessment framework, the key findings, recommendations made and the related Action Plan prepared. Councillor Wallace, supported by Councillor Buchanan, considered the outcome exceptional taking account of long-term vacancies within the section. In response to related issues raised, the Audit and Compliance Manager confirmed that the inability to attract people to local authority Internal Audit posts was a recognised problem for which a solution remained to be found. The Chief Auditor added that she was a member of a sub-group of the Chief Internal Auditors' Group which had recently been established to consider this.

The Committee noted the report and the proposed Action Plan.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 25 January 2024.

Present:

Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)	Councillor Danny Devlin
Councillor Andrew Anderson (Vice Chair)	Councillor Katie Pragnell

Councillor O'Donnell, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Andrew Corry, Head of Environment (Operations); Suzanne Conlin, Senior Housing Manager; Michael McKernan, Economic Development and Inclusive Growth Manager; Paul Parsons, Principal Accountant; Erica Roche, Change and Governance Manager; Barry Tudhope, Democratic Services Manager; John Burke, Democratic Services Officer; and Lesleyann Burns, Democratic Services Assistant.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

710. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

ESTIMATED REVENUE BUDGET OUT-TURN 2023/24

711. The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) detailing the estimated projected revenue budget out-turn for 2023/24 and providing details of the expected year-end variances together with summary cost information for each of the undernoted services as at 31 October 2023 and subsequent assessment of pressures arising.

- (i) Education Department;
- (ii) Contribution to Integration Joint Board;
- (iii) Environment Department;
- (iv) Environment Department – Support;
- (v) Chief Executive's Office;
- (vi) Chief Executive's Office – Support;
- (vii) Business Operations and Partnerships Department;
- (viii) Business Operations and Partnerships Department – Support;
- (ix) Other Expenditure and Income;
- (x) Joint Boards;
- (xi) Corporate Contingency;
- (xii) Health and Social Care Partnership; and
- (xiii) Housing Revenue Account.

The Chief Accountant advised that on the basis of the information, and taking account of forecast Council Tax collection, a year end operational underspend of £2,869k was forecast on General Fund services and an overspend of £165k on the Housing Revenue Account. The reasons for departmental variances were set out in the report. She outlined that any such operational underspend at this year-end would assist the Council in meeting future years' budget challenges

It was noted that the above figures reflected that £7,484k of forecast COVID-related pressures would be covered by drawing on the Council's COVID grant resources and as a result did not impact on the operational budget position.

It was noted that the forecast outturn position could still be subject to significant change, for example if COVID pressures increased again. Conversely, it was hoped that management action to avoid any non-essential expenditure could increase the underspend at year end.

In addition, the report sought approval for a number of service virements and operational budget adjustments, details of which were outlined.

Following a brief discussion, the Cabinet agreed:-

- (a) to note the forecast underlying General Fund operational underspend of £2,869k together with the HRA operational overspend of £165k;
- (b) to note the continued financial pressures on operational services arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and that it was expected to cover those from the COVID grant reserve; and
- (c) to approve service virements and operational adjustments as set out in the notes to the tables in the appendices to the report and note the reported probable out-turn position.

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND 2022-2025 – REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

712. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for an additional project under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) award from the UK Government for the period 2023-2025

The SPF supported the UK Government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK by delivering on each of the levelling up objectives. East Renfrewshire Council were awarded £2,722,202 for the 3 year programme for 2022-2025 for Communities and Place, Supporting Local Businesses and People and Skills interventions with £568,227 being awarded for the Multiply intervention.

There had been significant delays in the Multiply programme, the reasons for which were detailed in the report. And, in accordance with the UK Government guidelines, any underspends could be transferred to other interventions within the same categories.

East Renfrewshire Citizen Advice Bureau (ERCAB) were seeking funding for their Volunteer Recruitment and Training in EastRen project. The details of the projects were provided in the report. A non-recurring award of £65,000 had been requested to deliver this project. It had been confirmed that there were sufficient funds in the SPF budget to accommodate the request.

There followed a brief discussion where broad support was given for the project by members, and it was confirmed that any plans to fund this project beyond this initial award would be looked at on its merits and in line with available budget. It was also pointed out that there was a typographical error in terms of the number of people reached by the project on and the Economic Development and Inclusive Growth Manager confirmed that he would circulate the accurate figure to members as soon as possible.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the underspends in the Multiply programme;
- (b) approved the East Renfrewshire Citizen Advice Bureau project detailed in the report for 2023-2025; and
- (c) noted that a possible typographical error on page 44 of the papers relating to the number of people reached being 191,000 would be clarified by the report author.

ROADS ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2024-2029

713. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval of the new Roads Asset Management Plan 2024-2029, a copy of which was attached to the report.

The Roads Asset Management Plan (RAMP) fit into the hierarchy of the Corporate Asset Management Plan and outlined the work being undertaken by the Council in relation to the management of the adopted roads network in the area.

The RAMP provided a policy context and an overview of the approach to management and maintenance of assets for which the Operational Roads Service was responsible.

In response to questions from members, the Head of Environment (Operations) briefly discussed roads adoption and aspects of traffic management on adoption, as well as the administration of Stewart Milne Group and the effect this could have on works being undertaken in East Renfrewshire. He agreed to provide members with a fuller picture of those issues outside of the meeting.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:

- (a) approved the Roads Asset Management Plan 2024-2029; and
- (b) noted that further information would be provided to members on the subjects of traffic management in relation to roads adoption and the bond position in relation to the administration of the Stewart Milne Group on any outstanding works within East Renfrewshire.

LOCAL ACTION PLANS – REGENERATION

714. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the progress of development of new Local Action Plans (LAPs) and how they linked to placemaking approaches to local regeneration.

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The LAPs would inform priorities for future investment linked to placemaking and regeneration across East Renfrewshire. The process of creating LAPs had been started in response to the creation of several new UK and Scottish Government Funds to support place based regeneration with 8 LAPs under development covering Barrhead, Busby, Clarkston (including Netherlee and Williamwood), Eaglesham, Giffnock, Neilston, Newton Mearns and Thornliebank.

The aim of the LAPs was to help identify potential options for future investment that would seek to make town centres and neighbourhoods more vibrant, creative, enterprising and accessible.

A series of consultations had taken place from May to November 2022 to inform the development of the LAPs, generating over 6,000 contributions across the 8 areas. This would allow the LAPs to identify short, medium and long term actions and ambitions that could be delivered when funding opportunities arose. A dedicated LAP would be produced for each of the 8 areas, identifying the collective vision for the area and developing options for future investment.

The first draft of the LAP documents had been produced and was undergoing a verification process which was detailed in the report. The report also outlined the governance arrangements; future funding opportunities; and how the LAPs fit with local, regional and national policies.

In responding to questions from members, the Economic Development and Inclusive Growth Manager confirmed that the LAPs would come back for Cabinet approval once finalised

The Cabinet:

- (a) noted the progress made with the development of Local Action Plans; and
- (b) noted that further reports would be submitted to Cabinet providing an update on the Local Action Plans and projects identified for funding.

DISPOSAL OF LAND (BLACKBURN SQUARE, BARRHEAD)

715. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the proposed disposal of long-term vacant land at Blackburn Square, Barrhead, held on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to support an innovative partnership between the Council and Barrhead Housing Association to develop an exemplar for sustainable social housing.

The land at Blackburn Square, Barrhead was a Council owned site held under title for residential use. The former Arthurlie Community Centre had been located there.

It was estimated that the site could reasonably accommodate 4-6 units of affordable, social rented housing, delivered as flatted units designed to meet enhanced wheelchair or accessible housing standards, comprising lift access. The site was identified for development for social rented housing in the published Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024-2029, approved by Cabinet on 12 October 2023 (Item 634, Page 681 refers).

A plan, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, outlined the proposed site for members' information. The critical need for affordable homes and legal requirement of any approved transfer was detailed in the report.

The Cabinet expressed strong support for the project and commended the proposal. In particular, Councillor Devlin was commended for pushing the project forward. The Senior Housing Manager confirmed that construction was expected to begin in the 2025/2026 financial year. The ambitious use of sustainable technology for the project was also praised.

The Cabinet:

- (a) approved the disposal of a small long-term vacant plot (approximately 798 square metres or 0.2 acres) held on the HRA and located between 8 and 18 Blackburn Square, Barrhead, G78 2NF as indicated on the plan attached as Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (b) approved the proposal to dispose of the site at nil value to Barrhead Housing Association to support the proposed affordable housing partnership project for the site.

ASH DIEBACK DISEASE ACTION PLAN

716. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the Council's current approach to managing Ash Dieback disease and considering proposals for future management of the issue.

Ash Dieback was a significant tree disease affecting all UK Councils and needed to be managed through pro-active intervention. Advanced stage diseased trees were at high risk of collapse with the risk of injuring people and damaging property. Evidence suggested that it could lead to the death and decline of 50 to 75% of ash trees in Scotland within the next 20 years.

The Council had a duty under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and Health and Safety legislation to protect the public from falling trees or branches on council-owned land and could be held liable for any injury or damage caused.

The stages of management of Ash Dieback were outlined in the report and details were given of the sorts of specialist equipment required to carry out the required works on infected trees. It was estimated that approximately 4000 trees across the Council estate were infected. Therefore, to mitigate the negative effects, management of Ash Dieback through monitoring, removing infected trees, promoting biodiversity and researching resistant tree varieties was recommended.

Each Council service was currently dealing with the situation in its own way. However, given the risks outlined in the report, it was considered prudent to take a consistent approach across all Council services in terms of surveys, prioritisation, treatment and remediation. An Action Plan for treating Ash Dieback would be put in place and specific milestones set out over the next 5-8 years to combat the disease and mitigate the associated risks to the Council.

There followed a detailed discussion in which Cabinet highlighted the importance of informing the public of the potential dangers of Ash Dieback, particularly in terms of trees in private gardens. It was also discussed that this was an unfunded budget pressure that would have to be addressed and would be raised at COSLA. There was also discussion round the use of local small and medium Arboricultural enterprises to assist with the work going forward. However, the Head of Environment (Operations) confirmed that many smaller companies did not have the specialist equipment required to carry out the work required.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:

- (a) noted the current approach to managing Ash Dieback and the Interim Action Plan;
- (b) noted the progress to date in tackling the disease;
- (c) noted the significant budget pressure that Ash Dieback represented;
- (d) approved the undertaking of an Ash Dieback Disease Action Plan;
- (e) considered the interim costs (£220,000 set out in Appendix A of the report) within the upcoming budget setting process; and
- (f) noted that a policy for dealing with trees in private ownership would be part of the Ash Dieback Disease Action Plan which would need future Council approval.

CARBON EMISSIONS REPORT 2022/23

717. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet on 26 January 2023 (Page 365, Item 300 refers), the Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment, which provided information on the 2022/23 carbon emissions from the Council's operations and outlined how that information would inform the Get to Zero Action Plan. A full breakdown of East Renfrewshire Council's emissions was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Change and Governance Manager outlined that each year's figures were being measured against the baseline of 2019/2020, which was established in previous reports. Updated guidance had made minor changes to the scope boundaries in 2022/23 compared with those used in the previous report. Any changes as a result of this had been reflected in previous years' figures to ensure consistency and accurate comparison.

The report outlined that the greatest source of Council carbon emissions was from buildings, with a number of reductions being detailed. In total, there had been an 8% reduction in emissions over the year and a 36% reduction against the baseline figure.

The Change and Governance Manager provided an overview of the range of figures in the report to members and explained that possible future actions to be taken to further reduce the Council's emissions would be proposed in the Council's Get to Zero Action Plan.

Having heard the Change and Governance Manager discuss the achievements and challenges of the long term targets on carbon emissions, the Cabinet noted the Council's carbon emissions for 2022/23.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting, held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on Thursday 1 February 2024.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)	Ms Fiona Gilchrist
Councillor Kate Campbell	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Colm Merrick	Mr Des Morris
Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)	Ms Evelyn Yedd
Councillor Katie Pragnell (Vice Chair)	

Councillor Anderson in the Chair

Attending:

Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Performance & Quality Improvement); Joe McCaig, Head of Education Services (Provision); Siobhan McColgan, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Graeme Hay, Senior Manager Leading Change (Education); Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager (Developing People); John Burke, Democratic Services Officer; and Lesleyann Burns, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Fiona Johnston, Head Teacher, Barrhead High School together with pupils from Barrhead High School; Gerry O'Neill, Head Teacher, St Ninian's High School; Ainsley McGoldrick, Senior Educational Psychologist; Leanne Dunnet, Acting Head of Centre, Arthurlie Family Centre.

Apology:

Councillors Danny Devlin and Gordon Wallace.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

718. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON BARRHEAD HIGH SCHOOL

719. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report produced by Education Scotland following their inspection of Barrhead High School.

The inspection had been carried out in October 2023 and Education Scotland had evaluated 4 quality indicators and provided a short report and letter which detailed the strengths and areas for improvement, both of which were attached as appendices to the report.

The Head of Education (Performance and Quality Improvement) explained that two of the aspects of the work there were found to be excellent, namely: leadership of change; and ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Learning, teaching and assessment; and raising attainment and achievement were both found to be very good.

It was highlighted that this was an excellent report, with the evaluations and report matching the department's evaluations, highlighting sector leading practice across Scotland. It also highlighted three areas worth sharing more widely on a national basis which were fully detailed in the report.

The particular strengths and areas for improvement of Barrhead High School were detailed, however, as the school had been judged to be excellent in two indicators, there was no need for an additional action plan to address the areas of improvement.

Education Scotland would make no further reports in connection with the inspection of Barrhead High School and the Education Department recommended that the school be accredited for its achievements. This would mean that the authority would not carry out any formal quality assurance activities in Barrhead High School for a period of 3 years from the date of publication of the report.

Mrs Johnston, Head Teacher, thanked the committee for the opportunity to address the meeting and explained that she was delighted with the report. She was particularly pleased that the school's strong commitment to inclusion and equity had been recognised. She reflected that the report had been achieved through the hard work and commitment of the entire school community and paid tribute to all of the staff and partners, as well as pupils, some of whom spoke to the Committee, providing examples of the good work being done in the school.

Members of the Committee expressed their congratulations on an outstanding report and a commemorative plaque was presented to the Head Teacher and pupils in recognition of their achievement.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- (a) noted the outstanding Education Scotland report on Barrhead High School; and
- (b) commended the school's achievements by awarding it accreditation from October 2023 until October 2026.

SPOTLIGHT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING: READINESS TO LEARN

720. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing a spotlight for the Committee on elements of ongoing work being undertaken by the Education

Department and early learning and childcare settings and schools to support children and young people's wellbeing through readiness to learn.

In order to achieve the Education Department's vision statement of *"Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences"* and Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, East Renfrewshire Council had to ensure that all children and young people were ready and able to learn. The information presented in the report provided detail on how the Education Department were working to achieve that aim. In particular, there was a focus around levels of attendance and emotionally based school avoidance.

The report was supported by three presentations. The first was given by Leanne Dunnet readiness to learn within the Early Years settings. Mrs Dunnet provided information on the work taking place in Arthurlie Family Centre reassuring the Committee that the child was at the centre of every piece of work, with nurturing principles at the heart of practice. Physical activities and opportunities, experiential play opportunities and knowledge, learning and creativity opportunities were highlighted, which all improved the physical and mental wellbeing of children. Information was also provided on the range of activities and supports available for children with additional support needs.

The second presentation was given by Ainsley McGoldrick provided information on the work of the Educational Psychology Service. She stressed that early intervention was a key priority for the Service, working in partnership with Early Learning Centres. She explained how children's progress was tracked and the sorts of supports that could be put in place where required, highlighting that these interventions had seen a significant impact, with children requiring less support in the primary education setting as a result. The work of the Early Years Outreach Service was highlighted as being key in this delivery, providing holistic support to families. Through engagement and consultation with parents, practitioners and carers, the importance of the service had been confirmed and best vital information gained to inform best practice in future years.

Finally, a presentation was given by Gerry O'Neill on attendance and wellbeing in the school setting. Mr O'Neill focused on the Learn Well service, as well as particular schemes that were being conducted in St Ninian's High School such as the "Let Us Flourish" programme, which was assisted by the addition of a wellbeing hub. He also gave details on the support provided to school staff to promote awareness of mental health and emotional support issues with a focus on supporting children and young people to remain in class where they had the best chance of learning. Information on wellbeing was being tracked, with programmes of support for young people available when concerns were raised. He concluded with a round up of the many bespoke groups and courses set up to provide support and opportunities to children and young people.

Members discussed the content of the report and the presentations, with a particular focus on attendance due to ill-health. In particular, Councillor Pragnell expressed a desire to meet with the Learn Well service in order to get an insight into their work.

The committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the spotlight regarding children and young people's wellbeing and readiness to learn; and
- (b) noted that a meeting would be arranged between Councillor Pragnell and the Learn Well service to allow the Councillor to get an insight into their work.

DRAFT STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2022-2023

721. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education on the proposed content of the Education Department's annual Standards and Quality Report for school session 2022-2023.

The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 placed a duty on education authorities to produce and publish a Local Improvement Plan on an annual basis, which detailed how it and its schools and services would continuously improve. Based on that plan, a Standards and Quality Report, detailing how it had sought and achieved improvements in provision, was to be produced.

Education Committee had approved the Local Improvement Plan 2022-2025 at its meeting on 3 February 2022 (Page 1766, Item 1875 refers). This formed the basis for the draft Standards and Quality Report which was included as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Standards and Quality Report highlighted very good and excellent standards and practice achieved by the department, its schools and services and was offered as a public record of some of the activities which were undertaken during the previous school session and their impact on stakeholders.

The report set out details on how evidence was gathered to inform the report via a range of reports, questionnaires and consultation activity. The Education Department planned to make the report available electronically to all parents of children attending an East Renfrewshire school or Early Learning and Childcare setting. A limited number of copies would also be distributed to libraries, education, sports and cultural centres as well as other Council buildings.

Discussion took place among members and officers over the potential inclusion of information relating to bids to the Scottish Government Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP) funding in the report as well as noting of some wording within the document which members found to be potentially confusing for readers. It was pointed out that decisions regarding the bids referred to for LEIP funding were not within the timeframe of the Report, however, reference would be included to locations where parents and other stakeholders could access more current information if they wished to do so. It was also confirmed that the wording identified as potentially confusing would be addressed before publication of the document.

Further discussion took place around the East Renfrewshire Early Years Tracking Tool and it was confirmed that a demonstration of that Tool could be provided to members, alongside other information, as part of the Early Years report due to be submitted to Committee in June 2024.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- (a) noted the content of the annual Standards and Quality Report;
- (b) agreed that a demonstration of the East Renfrewshire Early Years Tracking Tool and an update on the outcomes and measurement framework being developed nationally, be provided as part of the Early Years report that was due to be submitted to Committee in June 2024;
- (c) noted that the wording on page 59 of the papers which referred to an undertaking to deliver a "differently nuanced deposit return scheme" be looked at and amended to be more easily understood; and

- (d) noted that details would be added to inform parents of how they could access the latest information in terms of current issues, such as the outcomes of LEIP funding bids.

DRAFT LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024-2027

722. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the Education Department's draft Local Improvement Plan 2022-2025. A copy of the plan accompanied the report.

The Local Improvement Plan (LIP) gave an indication of the department's key areas for improvement over the next three years and was updated annually to take account of changing priorities. Areas of improvement were outlined and priorities would be developed through self-evaluation and information gathered through external evaluations and the implementation of the plan.

The report highlighted the four key areas of the LIP which were its main drivers: Empowerment and Leadership; Social Justice and Wellbeing; Pedagogy and Learning; and Attainment and Progress. Each of those drivers were closely linked to the National Improvement Framework 2024 and detailed the key outcomes, impact and activities of the department for 2024-2027.

The timescale for the implementation of the plan was school sessions 2024-2025 to 2026-2027 and the department would continue to report on progress made with the plan through the annual Standards and Quality Report.

Following a brief discussion where the LIP was widely welcomed by members, the Committee approved the draft Local Improvement Plan 2024-2027.

2023-2028 LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

723. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the refreshed Leadership Strategy 2023-2028.

In order to achieve the overarching vision of the Education Department, and those set out in the National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (2023) together with the National Discussion on the Future of Scottish Education (2023) and the Hayward Review of Qualifications and Assessment (2023), robust levels of leadership at all levels of education systems had to be ensured. The refreshed Leadership Strategy was attached in three parts, forming the appendices to the report.

The Committee:

- (a) approved the 2023-2028 Leadership Strategy; and
- (b) requested that the Director of Education bring reports to the Committee on the impact of the Strategy's implementation.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
CABINET
(POLICE & FIRE)

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 8 February 2024.

Present:

Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)	Councillor Katie Pragnell
Councillor Andrew Anderson (Vice Chair)	Councillor Gordon Wallace(*)
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	

Councillor O'Donnell in the Chair

Attending:

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Stephen Bell, Community Safety Manager; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Lesleyann Burns, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Superintendent Steven Meikle; Chief Inspector Graeme Gallie, (Area Commander); Chief Inspector Craig Brady; Inspector Michelle Grant, Police Scotland; Area Commander David McCarrey(*); and Group Commander Alan Coughtrie(*), Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

(*) indicates remote attendance

Apology:

Councillor Danny Devlin

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

724. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

POLICE SCOTLAND – PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 3 - 2023-24

725. The Cabinet considered a report by the Divisional Commander, Police Scotland, providing details of the performance of the police over the third quarter of 2023-24. The

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report also provided statistical information in relation to various categories of crimes and offences committed during the reported period together with comparative statistics for the corresponding period in 2022-23.

Superintendent Meikle introduced himself as the replacement to Pat Murphy and thanked the Chair and the Committee, as well as all Police partner organisations, for their contributions to the collaborative approach that had led to the excellent statistics outlined in the report.

Chief Inspector Gallie then reported on the performance of the police against the five local policing priorities contained in the East Renfrewshire Policing Plan 2023-26.

On referring to the report, he recognised the significant impact acquisitive crime and in particular theft by housebreaking, had on communities and was pleased to report a significant decrease in that area. He advised that there had been a 54% reduction in housebreakings or attempt housebreaking offences across the 5 year average and a reduction in 41 offences compared to the previous year's figure of 92. There had also been a reduction in motor vehicle crimes, down 17% from the previous year..

In respect of crimes of dishonesty, it was reported that crimes of this type had decreased by 8% for the year. Theft by shoplifting and fraud had continued in their upwards national trend. Police were working with Retailers Against Crime and this approach had led to 62 detections, 1 in every 3 thefts by shoplifting.

In relation to public protection, it was noted that there had been an increase of 12 in sexual crimes and offences compared to the previous year, bringing the total to 94, which was in line with the 5 year average. Offences of communicating indecently and threatening/disclosure of intimate images had continued to increase. Police Scotland continued to work in partnership with Education colleagues and others to highlight the risk and harm of sextortion and inappropriate communications through social media messaging and Campus Officer inputs.

Commenting on violent crime, Chief Inspector Gallie reported an increase in Non-Sexual Crimes of Violence, with the total number of offences at 68 for the year, up 55 from the same period the previous year. There had been 18 serious assaults recorded during the year, 11% below the 5 year average, with 12 being successfully detected.

In terms of antisocial behaviour and disorder, 416 complaints had been recorded by the end of the quarter, which was 1% lower than the same period in the previous year. Hate crimes and hate incidents were also reported to have continued their downward trend, with hate incidents down 3% and hate crimes down 39%.

It was highlighted that a significant focus continued on wilful fire raisings, with 42 having been reported in the year. A whole systems approach was being taken to addressing the issues around these incidents, working with partners in a trauma informed approach to young people and their families.

In relation to drug dealing and use it was noted that recorded drug crimes had increased by 15% from the previous year, which had been achieved through active policing and intelligence gathering.

Chief Inspector Gallie concluded by giving some examples of the work being done in East Renfrewshire by officers of Police Scotland on all of the areas of focus covered, which were highlighted within the report.

There followed a question and answer session in the course of which Chief Inspector Gallie responded to a number of questions and provided clarification on a range of operational issues within East Renfrewshire and the crime statistics recorded in the report. In particular, there was on bonfire night briefings for members being provided to all Councillors, knife crime, fraudulent ticket sales on social media and the recent legislation on the regulation of XL Bully dogs. Members also referred to some particular incidents that had taken place in East Renfrewshire, receiving assurances from Police Scotland that those were being dealt with efficiently and effectively.

The Cabinet noted the report.

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (SFRS) PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2023-24

726. The Cabinet considered a report by the Group Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), providing details of the performance of SFRS in East Renfrewshire during the first quarter of 2023-24 against the key priorities in their local plan.

Introducing the report, Area Commander McCarrey referred to the work over bonfire night and the festive period in general. He extended his thanks to all partners who had been involved. He discussed a pre-consultation process starting around what SFRS would look like in the future, looking for views from all partners, stakeholders and members of the public. There would then be a 3 month consultation process, and more specific detail would be provided when it was available.

Group Commander Coughtrie then reported on the performance of SFRS on performance over quarter 3.

Firstly, Group Commander Coughtrie highlighted the “Make the Call” campaign run by SFRS to target the carers, family and friends of those at greatest risk of fire, encouraging them to put high risk individuals in touch with SFRS to allow a free home fire safety visit to be carried out and specific advice to be given. All local partners were called upon to assist in this campaign to ensure that it reached as many people as possible.

On engagement activity that had taken place and equipment supplied during the quarter, 42 community activities by the community action team and 78 by operational crews. 204 home fires safety visits were carried out, 106 of those in premises identified as high risk with 104 smoke detectors being fitted.

In relation to accidental dwelling fires a 25% decrease on the year on year figure was reported and an 8% increase against the 3 year figure. It was noted that detection was present in 92% of premises and activated in 82%. Details of some of the ongoing community work that took place was provided, with the high engagement rates in East Renfrewshire being noted. There had been 1 fire related casualty, with an individual taken to hospital as a precaution for slight smoke inhalation, there had been a reduction of 20% in the 3 year average on fire casualties. The Post-Domestic Incident Response Programme was also highlighted.

Group Commander Coughtrie reported that the figures in relation to unintentional injury and harm saw a 50% decrease in the year-on-year average and a small increase against 3 year average figures. However it was clarified that 37% of that activity was assisting other agencies. It was pointed out that the majority of this activity was in response to road traffic collisions. Details were provided on programmes aimed at reducing those incidents, including use of virtual reality technology.

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Deliberate fire setting showed a 78% increase on the year on year indicator. This was reported as being against historically low figures, reflected against the fact that there was no increase in the 3 year average. The Community Action Team and Operational Crews continued to carry out engagement activity to mitigate the risk of this type of activity, working in partnership with Police Scotland and other partners. It was indicated that certain groups had been identified and were being worked with to reduce these figures, alongside ongoing work in schools and other engagement work.

Non-domestic fire safety showed a 43% decrease from the previous year and stable figure against the 3 year average. Details of the incidents were provided.

Group Commander Coughtrie concluded by providing information in relation to UFAS. The year on year figure had decreased by 71%, a decrease of 21% on the 3 year average. It was indicated that the majority of UFAS were within the care setting. UFAS Champions in place at each fire station were working with duty holders for premises to work on those issues.

There followed a question and answer session in the course of which officers McCarrey and Coughtrie responded to a number of questions and comments on a range of issues recorded in the report. Mainly, the discussion focused on any assistance the Council or HSCP could provide to assist with UFAS in care homes and driver education, particularly in terms of driving around schools..

Thereafter the Cabinet agreed to note the report.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock, on 13 February 2024.

Present:

Councillor Paul Edlin (Chair)	Councillor David Macdonald*
Councillor Angela Convery (Vice Chair)	Councillor Andrew Morrison
Provost Mary Montague*	

Councillor Edlin in the Chair

(*) indicates remote attendance

Attending:

Gerry Mahon, Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement); Jillian McGrain, Senior Officer (Private Sector); Brian Kilpatrick, Civic Government Enforcement Officer; Jennifer Graham, Democratic Services Officer; and Lesleyann Burns, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Inspector Michelle Grant and Sergeant Lisa Brown, Police Scotland.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

727. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

Resolution to Exclude Press and Public

At this point in the meeting, on the motion of the Chair, the Committee unanimously resolved that in accordance with the provisions of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

PRIVATE LANDLORD REGISTRATION APPLICATION

728. The committee considered a report by the Director of Environment regarding an application for inclusion on the Register of Social Landlords under the terms of the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended (agenda item 3 refers).

The landlord, having been invited to the meeting, was not present.

The Senior Housing Officer (Private Sector) was heard in respect of the application and in response to questions from Members.

Following discussion the committee agreed:-

- (a) that the applicant was not a “fit and proper” person to be entered upon the register of private landlords;
- (b) to authorise Council officers to draw up Rent Penalty Notices and cause them to be served on the applicant in the event the applicant did not cease acting as private landlord;
- (c) to authorise Council officers to report the applicant to the Procurator Fiscal, in the event that they do not cease acting as a private landlord and to cooperate with the Procurator Fiscal and Police in any criminal investigation and prosecution relating to this matter;
- (d) to authorise Council officers to defend any litigation instituted by the applicant in respect of their registration being refused or against the service of Rent Penalty Notices; and
- (e) otherwise, to note the content of the report.

SHORT TERM LET APPLICATION

729. The committee considered a report by the Director of Environment regarding an application for a Short Term Let Licence under the terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) act 1982 (Licensing of Short-term Lets) Order 2022 (agenda item 4 refers).

The applicant was present.

The Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement) advised that there were four objectors to the application but, due to an oversight, they had not been given sufficient notice to attend the hearing.

The Committee agreed that the application be continued to a future meeting to allow the objectors to be invited to the meeting.

PRIVATE HIRE CAR DRIVER'S LICENCE – APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL

730. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 3 October 2023 (Page 664, Item 618 refers), when it was agreed that the application for renewal of a Private Car Hire Driver's Licence be continued until after the trial date, the Committee considered a report by the Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement) in relation to an application for the renewal of a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (agenda item 5 refers).

The applicant was present.

Inspector Grant and Sergeant Brown, representing the Chief Constable, who had made an out of time objection to the application, were also present.

The report explained that in determining the application it would be for the Committee to decide if it wished to consider the out of time objection submitted by the Chief Constable and, if so, what weight it wished to attach to the objection and its relevance to the type of licence being applied for.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to consider the out of time objection and copies were circulated.

Sergeant Brown was heard in respect of the objection submitted by the Chief Constable and in response to questions from members.

The applicant was then heard in respect of the application and in response to questions.

The Committee agreed to a short adjournment to consider the matter.

On reconvening, the Committee, having taken account of the applicant's previous conviction, its seriousness and relevance to the licence being applied for, and also having taken account of the objection by the Chief Constable, agreed that the application be granted for a period of 1 year subject to standard conditions.

PRIVATE HIRE CAR OPERATOR'S LICENCE (APPLICATION FOR GRANT) AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR DRIVER'S LICENCE (APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL)

731. The Committee considered a report by the Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement) in relation to an application for the grant of a Private Hire Car Operator's Licence and the renewal of a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (agenda item 6 refers).

The applicant, have been invited to the meeting, was not present.

Inspector Grant and Sergeant Brown, representing the Chief Constable, who had made an out of time objection to the application, were present.

The committee agreed to continue consideration of the application to the next meeting to allow the applicant to make a personal appearance.

PRIVATE HIRE CAR DRIVER'S LICENCE – APPLICATION FOR GRANT

732. The Committee considered a report by the Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement) in relation to an application for the grant of a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (agenda item 7 refers).

The applicant was present together with his son.

Inspector Grant and Sergeant Brown, representing the Chief Constable, who had made an out of time objection to the application, were also present.

The report explained that in determining the application it would be for the Committee to decide if it wished to consider the out of time objection submitted by the Chief Constable and, if so, what weight it wished to attach to the objection and its relevance to the type of licence being applied for.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to consider the out of time objection and copies were circulated.

Sergeant Brown was heard in respect of the objection submitted by the Chief Constable and in response to questions from members.

Thereafter, the Committee considered a written submission from the applicant in relation to one of the offences.

The applicant was then heard in respect of the application and in response to questions.

750

The Committee agreed to a short adjournment to consider the matter.

On reconvening, the Committee, having taken account of the applicant's previous convictions, their seriousness and relevance to the licence being applied for, and also having taken account of the objection by the Chief Constable, agreed that the application be refused on the grounds that the applicant was not a fit and proper person to be the holder of such a licence by virtue of his previous convictions.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 14th February 2024.

Present:

Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Betty Cunningham

Councillor Paul Edlin
Councillor Andrew Morrison

Councillor McLean in the Chair

Attending:

Gillian McCarney, Head of Place; Alan Pepler, Principal Planner (Development Management); Derek Scott, Planner; John Burke, Democratic Services Officer; Lesleyann Burns, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies:

Provost Mary Montague and Councillors Annette Ireland and Chris Lunday.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

733. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

734 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Environment on an application for planning permission requiring consideration by the Committee.

It was agreed that the applications be determined as indicated at Appendix 1 accompanying this Minute, particular reference being made to the following:-

- (i) 2022/0719/TP –Erection of residential development of 39 detached dwellings (to include retention of existing listed farmhouse) with associated access roads, landscaping, open space and other required infrastructure at Former Lyoncross Farm, Aurs Road, Barrhead, East Renfrewshire.

The Principal Planner (Development Management) was heard further on the report, in the course of which he summarised the 16 objections that had been received.

He provided further information on the relevant planning policies and assessments and stated that the proposal was considered to not comply with the terms of the development plan, including NPF4 and LDP2.

Concerns were also expressed around the effect the development would have on the Dams to Darnley Country Park.

Following discussion among members around the levels of required housing in the Barrhead area, as well as some of the specific information provided about the site, it was proposed that a site visit take place to allow members to gain a better insight into the location and its suitability.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application pending a site visit to be carried out by those members present at this meeting of the Committee.

- (ii) 2023/0321/TP – Remodelling works to alter existing golf course to 12 holes, erection of new golf clubhouse/pavilion, development of woodland retreat, erection of three dwellinghouses, formation of new access and other ancillary works.

The Principal Planner (Development Management) was heard further on the report, in the course of which he explained that there had been no objections, but 47 representations had been received in support of the application.

He provided further information on the relevant planning policies and assessments and stated that the proposal was considered to be an acceptable departure from the terms of the development plan for the reasons set out.

In discussion, members were broadly supportive of the application.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed to approve planning permission, subject to the conditions identified in the report.

ENFORCEMENT NOTICE REQUIRING THE RE-SITING OF A 15M HIGH TELECOMMUNICATIONS MAST AND WRAPAROUND BASE UNITS ERECTED ON ADDISON ROAD, THORNLIEBANK, EAST RENFREWSHIRE

735. The Committee were asked to consider a report by the Director of Environment requesting the authorisation of the service of an Enforcement Notice under Section 127 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as it appeared that there had been a breach of planning control as defined by Section 123 (1)(a) of said Act at the land described in the report.

The report explained that a complaint had been received on 23 May 2023 in relation to a 5G telecommunications mast being erected on the footpath at Addison Road, Thornliebank. The matter had been investigated and a site visit carried out by officers.

The site had been subject to an application which was subsequently ruled invalid, and the full circumstances of this and a timeline of correspondence was provided in the report. The assessment of the site and action taken to date to resolve the issue with the developer and their agent was also detailed.

In discussion, members expressed their concern that allowing such an unauthorised development to continue would set an unwelcome precedent, and expressed support for any action that would uphold the Council's role as a planning authority.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed to authorise the service of an Enforcement Notice requiring the re-siting of the telecoms mast and base units to a more acceptable location.

SECTION 33A NOTICE – 29 EAST KILBRIDE ROAD, BUSBY, G76 8JY – UPDATE

736. The Committee were asked to consider a report by the Director of Environment on the service of a Notice under Section 33A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, authorised by the Planning Applications Committee on 7 June 2023 (Page 531, Item 470 refers), in respect of unauthorised development at 29 East Kilbride Road, Busby, G76 8JY.

Before consideration of this item, Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor McLean moved that consideration of the item be deferred to allow other colleagues who attended the site visit on 12 February 2024 to participate in the determination of the report.

The Committee agreed that consideration of this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

CHAIR

APPENDIX

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997
AS AMENDED BY THE PLANNING ETC (SCOTLAND) ACT 2006
PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997**

Draft index of applications under the above acts to be considered by Planning Applications Committee
on 14th February 2024.

Reference No: 2022/0719/TP

Ward: 1

Applicant:

Briar Homes
205 St Vincent Street
Glasgow
Scotland
G2 5QD

Agent:

Scott Graham
16 Robertson Street
Glasgow
Scotland
G2 8DS

Site: Former Lyoncross Farm Aurs Road Barrhead East Renfrewshire

Description: Erection of residential development of 39 detached dwellings (to include retention of existing listed farmhouse) with associated access roads, landscaping, open space and other required infrastructure.

Please click [here](#) for further information on this application

Reference No: 2023/0321/TP

Ward: 5

Applicant:

Broom Estates Investments LLP
Tay House
C/o North Planning & Development
300 Bath Street
Glasgow
Scotland
G2 4LH

Agent:

David Campbell
Tay House
300 Bath Street
Glasgow
Scotland
G2 4LH

Site: Eastwood Golf Club Langlee Road Loganswell Newton Mearns East Renfrewshire

Description: Remodelling works to alter existing golf course to 12-holes, erection of new golf clubhouse/pavilion, development of woodland retreat, erection of three dwellinghouses, formation of new access and other ancillary works.

Please click [here](#) for further information on this application

MINUTE
of
LOCAL REVIEW BODY

Minute of meeting held at 2.35pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 14 February 2024.

Present:

Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Paul Edlin

Councillor Andrew Morrison

Councillor McLean in the Chair

Attending:

Mark Brand, Planning Adviser; Gerry Mahon, Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement); John Burke, Committee Services Officer; Lesleyann Burns, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Provost Montague, Councillors Betty Cunningham, Annette Ireland and Chris Lunday.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

737. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

The Chair advised that site visits had been held prior to the meeting.

NOTICE OF REVIEW – REVIEW 2023/10 – ERECTION OF PERIMETER WALL WITH CONTROLLED ACCESS GATES AT 2 BLACKHOUSE GARDENS, NEWTON MEARN, G77 5HS (REF NO:- 2023/0257/TP).

738. The Local Review Body considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted by Mrs Ayesha Ameen against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in respect of the erection of a perimeter wall with controlled access gates at 2 Blackhouse Gardens, Newton Mearns, G77 5HS.

The decision had been made in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation made in terms of Section 43A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

The Local Review Body, having considered the information previously circulated, agreed that it had sufficient information to determine the review without further procedure.

756

The Planning Adviser outlined the planning application and reasons for refusal as determined by the Appointed Officer in the decision notice and the grounds for review.

The Planning Adviser further outlined proposed additional conditions to be attached to any consent in the event the Local Review Body overturned the decision of the Appointed Officer and granted planning permission.

Discussion took place, particularly around the frontage of the site in comparison to other properties around it.

Following the discussion, and having heard from the Planning Adviser, the Local Review Body agreed that the Appointed Officer's decision be upheld and planning permission refused.

NOTICE OF REVIEW – REVIEW 2023/11 – INSTALLATION OF SIDE DORMER AND ROOF EXTENSION TO SIDE TO FORM GABLE AT 15 NETHERCLIFFE AVENUE, NETHERLEE, G44 3UW (REF NO:- 2023/0318/TP).

739. The Local Review Body considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted Ms F O'Donnell against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in respect of the installation of side dormer and roof extension to side to form gable at 15 Nethercliffe Avenue, Netherlee, G44 3UW.

The decision had been made in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation made in terms of Section 43A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

The Local Review Body, having considered the information previously circulated, agreed that it had sufficient information to determine the review without further procedure.

The Planning Adviser outlined the planning application and reasons for refusal as determined by the Appointed Officer in the decision notice and the grounds for review.

The Planning Adviser further outlined proposed additional conditions to be attached to any consent in the event the Local Review Body overturned the decision of the Appointed Officer and granted planning permission.

Discussion took place, particularly around the idea that the proposal was out of keeping with the nature of the surrounding properties.

Following the discussion, and having heard from the Planning Adviser, the Local Review Body agreed that the Appointed Officer's decision be overturned and planning permission granted, subject to the conditions outlined in the report.

NOTICE OF REVIEW – REVIEW 2023/12 – ERECTION OF 2 DWELLINGS, TOGETHER WITH ACCESS, LANDSCAPING AND ASSOCIATED WORKS AT SITE BOUNDED BY SALTERLAND ROAD, GLASGOW ROAD AND A RAILWAY TRACK TO THE SOUTH, BARRHEAD (REF NO:- 2023/0200/TP).

740. The Local Review Body considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted Ms Mackay and Mr Sauvin against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in respect of the erection of 2 dwellings, together with access, landscaping and associated works at a site bounded by

Salterland Road, Glasgow Road and a railway track to the south in Barrhead, East Renfrewshire.

The decision had been made in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation made in terms of Section 43A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

The Local Review Body, having considered the information previously circulated, agreed that it had sufficient information to determine the review without further procedure.

The Planning Adviser outlined the planning application and reasons for refusal as determined by the Appointed Officer in the decision notice and the grounds for review.

The Planning Adviser further outlined proposed additional conditions to be attached to any consent in the event the Local Review Body overturned the decision of the Appointed Officer and granted planning permission.

Discussion took place, particularly around the idea that the proposal was in land currently designated as green belt land, and the associated issues around developments sited on such land. Members heard further from the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement that a decision to develop on established green belt land for purposes outside of the normally permitted developments could result in further challenges to develop such sites in future.

Following the discussion, and having heard from the Planning Adviser, the Local Review Body agreed that the Appointed Officer's decision be upheld and planning permission refused.

NOTICE OF REVIEW – REVIEW 2023/13 – DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDING AND ERECTION OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (PLANNING PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE) AT WEIGHING EQUIPMENT, 37 STAMPERLAND CRESCENT, CLARKSTON, G76 8LH. (REF NO:- 2022/0702/TP).

741. The Local Review Body considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted Mr Scott Langlands against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in respect of the demolition of an existing building and erection of a residential development (planning permission in principle) at Weighing Equipment, 37 Stamperland Crescent, Clarkston, G76 8LH.

The decision had been made in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation made in terms of Section 43A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

The Local Review Body, having considered the information previously circulated, agreed that it had sufficient information to determine the review without further procedure.

The Planning Adviser outlined the planning application and reasons for refusal as determined by the Appointed Officer in the decision notice and the grounds for review.

The Planning Adviser further outlined proposed additional conditions to be attached to any consent in the event the Local Review Body overturned the decision of the Appointed Officer and granted planning permission.

Discussion took place, particularly around the fact that the application was for planning permission in principle, rather than for a specific development.

758

Following the discussion, and having heard from the Planning Adviser, the Local Review Body agreed that the Appointed Officer's decision be overturned and planning permission in principle be granted, subject to the conditions outlined in the report.

LOCAL REVIEW BODY MEETING SCHEDULE.

742. The Local Review Body considered a report by the Director of Environment on the frequency of Review Body meetings held during 2023 and to consider arrangements for 2024.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that this report proposed that the Local Review Body maintain its current bi-monthly frequency, with arrangements to be reviewed in June 2024.

Following discussion, where the Democratic Services Officer assured members that special meetings of the Local Review Body could be held as required by members to consider urgent items of business, the Local Review Body agreed that bi-monthly meetings (every second month) continue during 2024, with the effectiveness of this arrangement to be reviewed in June 2024.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 22 February 2024.

Present:

Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader) Councillor Danny Devlin
Councillor Andrew Anderson (Vice Chair)

Councillor O'Donnell, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Alison Ballingall, Senior Revenues Manager; Suzanne Conlin, Senior Housing Manager; Erica Roche, Change and Governance Manager; John Burke, Democratic Services Officer; and Lesleyann Burns, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apology:

Councillor Katie Pragnell

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

743. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

DEBT MANAGEMENT FOR COUNCIL TAX, NON DOMESTIC RATES, SUNDRY DEBT INCOME AND HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS AND EMPTY PROPERTY RELIEF OF NON DOMESTIC RATES

744. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships which sought approval to write-off as irrecoverable sums associated with Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates, sundry debt income and Housing Benefit overpayments. The debts recommended for write-off had previously been included in bad debt provision and, therefore, the write-off had no net impact on the revenue accounts of the Council

The Senior Revenues Manager advised that every effort had been made to recover these sums and the decision to seek write-off was not taken lightly or without due cause. Should any future avenue become available by which to recover those monies, any decision taken by Cabinet would not prevent such opportunities being pursued, hence the recommendation of write-offs "up to" said amounts.

760

The Senior Revenues Manager outlined the proposed write-off sums and advised that these were in accordance with the Council's Debt Recovery Policy.

The Senior Revenues Manager also explained that Empty Property Relief had been devolved from Scottish Government to local authorities on 1 April 2023, with the policy for dealing with this agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 23 March 2023 (Page 447, Item 380 refers). It was proposed that the policy continue for the coming year, for the reasons set out in the report.

In responding to members questions, the Senior Revenues Manager confirmed that the write-offs were taken into account in budget planning and would not affect services and plans for the future. She also confirmed that a report would come to Cabinet in the future on the limit for sums being written off, which currently stood at £20.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the write-off of the following sums, totalling up to £594,510.43 without prejudice to subsequent recovery procedure:
 - Council Tax arrears totalling up to £356,800.39
 - Non Domestic rates arrears totalling up to £129,670.68
 - Sundry debt income totalling up to £37,603.34
 - Housing Benefit Overpayments totalling up to £70,436.02;
- (b) noted that write-off of those sums would have no net impact on the Council's accounts as provision had been made for the debt, in full, in previous years;
- (c) noted that Water and Sewerage charges, totalling up to £122,703.32 were also being written off in discussion with Scottish Water; and
- (d) approved the continuation of the current policy for Empty Property Relief for Non Domestic Rate properties;
- (e) noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of Cabinet relating to the outcome of a review of the write-off limit amount.

WRITE-OFF OF IRRECOVERABLE FORMER TENANT RENTS AND COURT EXPENSES

745. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval to write-off former tenant rent and court expenses debt that could not be recovered through the debt collection process.

The proposed write-off sums had previously been included in bad debt provision. Therefore, the write-off had no net impact on the revenue accounts of the Council. It was acknowledged that those debts could be pursued and recovered in future if additional information and opportunities arose.

In response to members' questions, the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) confirmed that the department were sensitive in respect of each individual's circumstances in terms of how debts were pursued. It was also confirmed by the Senior Housing Manager that while some grant funding was received from the Scottish Government to assist with temporary accommodation for homeless cases, this did not cover the full cost of provision.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the write-off sum up to the value of £113,215.02 of former tenant irrecoverable rents and court expenses whilst acknowledging those could be pursued and recovered in future should additional information and opportunities arise;
- (b) noted that £55,412.04 of that amount was written off against the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the remaining £57,802.98 was written off against the non HRA as it was accrued by homeless households placed in temporary accommodation; and
- (c) noted that the write-off of those historic unrecoverable debts would have no net impact on the Council's accounts as provision had been made for the debt, in full, in previous years.

PUBLICATION OF GET TO ZERO ACTION PLAN

746. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval to publish the Council's Get to Zero Action Plan.

The Get to Zero Action Plan (GTZAP) detailed how the Council proposed to fulfil its obligation to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2045, for both direct (gas/water/fuel) and indirect (electricity) emissions. A draft of GTZAP had been approved to be submitted for public consultation at its meeting on 11 May 2023 (Page 511, Item 447 refers). Actions that had been undertaken during the consultation process were outlined in the report.

The key points raised in the public consultation were summarised in the report, and the changes from the previous draft outlined, with the amended document attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Cabinet approved the publication of the Get to Zero Action Plan, noting the summary of the public consultation responses and headline actions.

DRAFT LOCAL HEAT AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY STRATEGY

747. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval to carry out a public consultation on the draft Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES).

The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2022 required each local authority to produce LHEES and accompanying delivery plans every five years. LHEES was a long term plan for the entire local authority area to improve energy efficiency and transition away from burning fossil fuels for heating, which could directly contribute to fulfilling the Council's climate change duties.

The Scottish Government had provided £75,000 per annum until 2027/28 to allow the Council to complete LHEES and begin implementing the related Delivery Plan. This funding had been used to recruit a LHEES Officer, who had been in post since January 2023 and working to prepare the draft document.

762

The draft LHEES was attached as Appendix 1 to the report and the key areas of the document were summarised in the report. It was proposed that it be made available for a period of 6 weeks to the public and key stakeholders, detailed in the report.

There was discussion around the difficulties in getting private property owners to participate in schemes to improve insulation and energy efficiency, and also some discussion around the variety of heating options, as well as heat pumps, that were available and the complicated and evolving landscape of sustainable solutions for individuals and the Council to consider.

The Change and Governance Manager also confirmed that it was intended to report back on the outcome of the consultation and subsequent changes made before the summer recess, if possible.

The Cabinet:

- (a) noted the content of the draft Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy attached as Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (b) approved the publication of the draft Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy for consultation with the public and key stakeholders until early April 2024.

NEC HOUSING – PROPOSED VARIATION OF CONTRACT

748. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval to apply a variation to the replacement Housing Services IT contract with NEC Software Solutions UK Limited to extend supplier project management time to complete the project.

East Renfrewshire Council had approved the award of a contract to NEC Software Solutions UK Limited (NEC) to replace the Open Housing Management System (OHMS) in 2019. This new system would support all key service areas such as allocations, homelessness, estate management and repair requests.

The report outlined the phasing of the delivery of the new system, which had launched in April 2023, providing a fully digital and efficient housing application. It was explained that the contract was initially awarded for £565,740. However, a paper was subsequently approved by Cabinet on 15 September 2022 (Page 179, Item 131 refers) which raised the approved contract value to £626,940.

Internal resource constraints within Housing Services would mean that the second and third phases of project delivery would take longer than initially anticipated, with total additional accumulated costs for project management and out of hours support from the IT provider amounting to £76,371. In accordance with paragraph 14 of the Council's Standing Orders on Contracts, as this sum was greater than 10% of the original contract value, it required to be reported to Cabinet as soon as practicable, following approval by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement.

The Senior Housing Manager was heard in response to members' questions on the phasing of works and to provide assurances that further adjustments would not be required.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:

- (a) approved an immediate variation of £76,371 to be applied to the existing Housing Services IT contract with NEC Software Solutions UK Limited; and

- (b) delegated to the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement, and the Chief Procurement Officer, authority to submit the necessary notice for publication in the UK e-notification service under Regulation 72(3) of the Public Contracts (Scotland) Act 2015.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 22 February 2024.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Morrison (Chair)
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Vice Chair)
Councillor Paul Edlin

Councillor Annette Ireland*
Councillor David Macdonald*
Provost Mary Montague*

Councillor Morrison in the Chair

(*) indicates remote attendance

Attending:

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Michelle Blair, Chief Auditor; Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Linda Hutchison, Clerk to the Committee; Jennifer Graham, Democratic Services Officer; Lesleyann Burns, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Rob Jones, Ernst and Young.

Apology:

Councillor Gordon Wallace.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

749. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

CHAIR'S REPORT

750. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 18 January 2024 (Page 726, Item 706 refers), when the Committee had agreed to explore options regarding how members of the Committee could become more actively engaged in some discussions on absenteeism and addressing it with a view to reporting back to a future meeting, Councillor Morrison reported that, following subsequent discussions, a meeting was being arranged between himself, Councillor Wallace and Councillor Ireland to represent the Committee and the Head of HR and Corporate Services and HR Manager at which various issues would be discussed.

As already requested by the Clerk on his behalf, he asked Members to provide feedback to her by 29 February on any issues they considered valuable to discuss at the forthcoming meeting.

Thereafter, Councillor Morrison advised that, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee, he had met immediately prior to the meeting with Rob Jones, External Auditor, to discuss a range of issues including budget, internal audit and external audit matters.

The Committee noted:-

- (a) that feedback from members of the Committee on issues they would consider valuable to discuss at the forthcoming meeting, between representatives of the Committee and the Head of HR and Corporate Services and HR Manager, should be sent to the Clerk by 29 February; and
- (b) otherwise, the report.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024/25

751. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 18 January 2024 (Page 726, Item 705 refers), when it had been agreed to note the Interim Treasury Management Report for Quarter 3 of 2023/24 and recommend to the Council that the organisations specified in the report for investment of surplus funds be approved, the Committee considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) explaining that, in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice 2021, the Audit & Scrutiny Committee was responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the Council's treasury management strategy and policies.

In accordance with that requirement, a copy of the Treasury Management Strategy Report for 2024/25 was attached to the report for consideration in advance of its submission to the Council. It was highlighted that the figures within the report had been compiled on the basis of the latest available information.

The Strategy Report included a proposal to amend treasury management practices in accordance with Annex E accompanying the report which listed organisations approved for the investment of surplus funds, in respect of which information was provided on related issues such as credit ratings and limits. It was also proposed that a policy on the repayment of loans fund advances, as specified in Section 3.4 of the report, be approved.

The Chief Accountant confirmed that the report was similar to previous years and from a borrowing or investment perspective, the approach remained as before, with the report concentrating on the Council's Borrowing and Investment Strategies, and setting out parameters that helped monitor both. To allow borrowing to be controlled, PIs had been set which monitored permissible borrowing and allowed this to be compared against actual gross debt. Having explained that the PIs had been set using the Council's 2024/25 Capital Programme, she confirmed that any movement in the Programme would affect how well the limits set could be adhered to; and that the indicators could require to be reviewed once the implications of a new Accounting standard were known in full. The Chief Accountant highlighted plans to use the Council's reserve balances temporarily rather than fully funding capital expenditure by external borrowing, this being considered prudent and cost effective taking account of falling interest rates which were forecast from the second quarter of 2024. It was confirmed that quarterly and year-end reports would be provided to the Committee.

Having clarified that it remained the case that the primary objectives of the investment strategy were security and liquidity, the Chief Accountant referred to the types of investments that could

be made as set out in Annexes C and D to the report respectively and associated risks; the proposed list of investors itemised in Annex E; and related monitoring arrangements. Reference was also made to a range of economic background information within the report which provided contextual information on the United Kingdom and global economic situation.

The Chief Accountant confirmed that she would be happy to arrange further treasury management training for Elected Members if that would be useful at any point, requests for which should be made through the Clerk.

The Committee agreed:-

- (a) **to recommend to the Council** that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 be approved, including the Prudential and Treasury Indicators and the amended list of organisations for investment of surplus funds in accordance with Annex E to the report;
- (b) **to recommend to the Council** that the policy on the repayment of loans fund advances as specified in Section 3.4 of the report be approved;
- (c) **to recommend to the Council** that the forms of investment instruments for use as permitted investments be approved in accordance with Annex C to the report; and
- (d) otherwise, to note the report.

INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2023/24 – IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS – OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2023

752. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 30 March 2023 (Page 459, Item 391 refers) when the Internal Audit Strategic Plan for 2023/24 to 2027/28 had been approved, the Committee considered a report by the Chief Auditor regarding progress made on the implementation of the Plan from 1 October to 31 December 2023. It was confirmed that three audits in relation to planned 2023-24 audit work had completed in Quarter 3, information on which had been provided. Details of reports which were issued as part of the 2023-24 Plan, on which responses had been received since the previous progress report had been submitted, were also provided.

Reference was made to the quarterly performance indicators (PIs) for the section. On the basis of the current resources within the section, it was proposed that eight audits be deleted from the 2023/24 Plan, and that most of these be deferred to 2024/25 or reconsidered as part of future audit plans. It was reported that one of the vacant posts within the section had been filled, with action being taken to fill the remaining post which would increase the available audit dates in 2024/25. It was confirmed that there had been no new requests for assistance dealt with using contingency time.

The Chief Auditor referred to key aspects of the report, during which she confirmed that one of the three reports issued in the quarter was a follow-up report on Environment Department audits which had already been circulated to members of the Committee. During further discussion on the Follow Up report, Members proposed that further feedback be sought from the Environment Department on the maintenance of any private land by the Council, including the accuracy of the estimated costs of this and capacity in future to review the contracts concerned.

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Thereafter, in response to Councillor Macdonald, the Chief Auditor confirmed that many of the audits it was proposed to delete from the 2023/24 Audit Plan would be covered as part of the 2024/25 Plan, explained the reasons for deferring most, and clarified that it was proposed to delete the grant certification audit entirely due to the fact the certification work was no longer required.

The Committee agreed:-

- (a) to approve the amended Internal Audit Strategic Plan for 2023/24;
- (b) that the Clerk seek further feedback from the Environment Department in relation to the recommendation made on maintenance of private land referred to in the Environment Department Follow-up Audit report, including the accuracy of the estimated costs of this and capacity in future to review the contracts concerned; and
- (c) otherwise, to note the report and related comments made.

CHAIR