

**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