

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 5 December 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; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance; Lesley Bairden, Head of Finance and Resources, Health and Social Care Partnership; Tom Kelly, Head Of Adult Services, Learning Disability & Recovery; Kenny Markwick, Head of Environment (Operations); Jamie Reid, Head of Communities and Transformation; Mark Rodgers, Head of Housing and Property; Michaela Sullivan, Head of Place; John Buchanan, Operations Manager; Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Mary Docherty, Education Resources Senior Manager; Michael McKernan, Economic Development and Inclusive Growth Manager; and John Burke, Democratic Services Officer.

(*) indicates remote attendance

CHAIR'S REMARKS – ORDER OF MEETING

The Chair indicated that, to facilitate the smooth running of the meeting, the items would be considered in the order shown below.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1058. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP CHARGING FOR SERVICES 2025/26

1059. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Officer – Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) on the proposed charges for the HSCP for 2025/26, including the implementation of charging for non-residential care from 1 April 2025.

The report set out the charging proposals and documents had also been circulated, and made available on the Council's website, giving details of the consultation events and exercises that had been undertaken and summarising the results of those.

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The Head of Finance and Resources, HSCP acknowledged that the proposals had been agreed to by the Integrated Joint Board and HSCP officers with a heavy heart, however, it was agreed that difficult decisions required to be made to balance the finances of the HSCP against the backdrop of the ongoing funding issues being felt across Scotland and the UK.

The charges proposed included a proposal to implement charging for non-residential care from 2025/26, which would bring the HSCP into line with other authorities.

There followed an extended discussion on potential options that were considered instead of the proposed charges, and it was confirmed that should the charges not be approved, it would simply result in cuts to services being required elsewhere. Assurance was also provided that charging would be linked to the ability to pay and that a financial assessment would be carried out with individuals receiving care, with referral to Money Advice and Rights Team where appropriate, and where the individual agreed to such a referral. The Head of Finance and Resources, HSCP also explained the tapering system whereby the charge would be reflective of a percentage of the individual's disposable income.

Members expressed their unease with imposing such a charge, but accepted that it may be necessary in the circumstances. However, there was discussion on any clarity regarding possible assistance included in the Scottish Government's latest budget. It was indicated that there had been no financial memorandum put in place regarding the services under discussion to date.

Following the discussion, the Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the proposed increase to existing charges for the HSCP for 2025/26; and
- (b) in recognition of the many objections received, agreed to defer decision on the charges for non-residential care until its meeting of 6 February 2025, in order to receive clarity on the impact of the latest Scottish Government budget.

SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENTAL CHARGING PROPOSALS 2025/2026

1060 The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Finance and the appropriate Directors regarding the outcome of the charging for services carried out in each of the departments and recommended proposed fees and charges for 2025/26.

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

- (i) Business Operations and Partnerships Department;
- (ii) Education Department;
- (iii) Environment Department; and
- (iv) Licensing.

Following a brief discussion, in which it was agreed that more be done to raise awareness of the Council's pest control services. the Cabinet agreed to:-

- (a) note the three options proposed for Early Learning and Childcare Add-On charges, and approve Option A, as recommended;

- (b) approve all proposed increases to charges and new charges set out in the report; and
- (c) noted that the Director of Education would look into raising awareness of the Council's pest control services in East Renfrewshire.

STRATEGIC MID-YEAR COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT

1061 The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships, providing a summary of Council performance at mid-year 2024-25 based on performance indicators in the Outcome Delivery Plan 2024-25. 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 15 showing as "On Target", 10 as "Target to be Achieved" and 3 as "Off Target". A further 3 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.

Officers responded to members questions on the figures, particularly around school exclusion rates and attendance rates in the post-COVID era. The Leader also noted the positive trend in terms of complaints, with a significant reduction and congratulated the Environment department for their sector leading work on recycling.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) scrutinised and commented on the summary of the Council's performance at mid-year 2024-25, as set out in Annex 1; and
- (b) scrutinised and noted the mid-year complaints data report at Annex 2.

LOCAL DISCRETIONARY FUND 2 – REQUEST FOR FURTHER BUSINESS GROWTH INTERVENTION

1062 The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment providing an update on the progress of the Local Discretionary Fund 2 (LDF2) programme, and seeking approval for further business growth interventions to use the remaining funds.

Cabinet had approved the use of a grant of £1,254,281 as a Local Discretionary Fund to support local businesses as part of the Scottish Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund had been established to support businesses from December 2022 until March 2025.

The report set out the achievements to date of the fund, and it was indicated that the success of the programme had been recognised by the local business community. Given that success, it was proposed that the funding be allowed to carry over until March 2026, to both continue to deliver existing support mechanisms and develop new programmes. Details of the programmes to be continued and the new programmes proposed were provided in the report.

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Members were highly supportive of the programme, in particular they praised the Accelerator Programme which had been extremely successful in supporting the growth of local professional services businesses.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the activity to date on the Local Discretionary Fund 2 (LDF2) programme;
- (b) agreed to additional activities to use the remaining LDF2 allocation, as set out in paragraph 10 of the report;
- (c) delegated to the Director of Environment to vary the amounts allocated under each intervention, based on the level of take up and to ensure full spend of the Scottish Government allocation; and
- (d) agreed to extend the programme of activities to the end of March 2026.

STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SERVICE GRANT AWARD FUNDED PROJECTS 2024/2025

1063 The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the grant awards made to East Renfrewshire Council for active and sustainable travel and road safety projects in the 2024/25 financial year, and to outline and seek approval for the projects being progressed in 2025/26.

Annual grant funding was received from various sources to support sustainable transport and road safety initiatives. The Scottish Government had increased its commitment in this area, with a new funding delivery model being implemented for 2024/25 for projects aligning with the National Transport Strategy 2 and Regional Transport Strategy priorities. Proposed projects would also support the Council's key local transport plans.

Those projects which had benefitted from funding were detailed in the report. Appendix 1 to the report provided a list of those projects that Sustrans Scotland intended to undertake or had commenced in the 2024/25 financial year. Details were also provided of projects being looked at for the 2025/26 financial year.

In discussion, members were pleased to see the breadth of projects being undertaken and received assurances that everything was being done to ensure that those projects that were approved represented value for money and met the Council's strategy and key transport aims linked to the national strategies outlined.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the grant awards detailed in the report and Appendix 1 for the 2024/25 financial year;
- (b) approved the grant funded projects outlined in Appendix 1, where approval had not previously been given; and
- (c) delegated to the Director of Environment to make adjustments to the programme depending upon the detailed costs of projects becoming available.

REVIEW OF EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL'S USE OF GLYPHOSATE

1064 The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on a trial exploring alternative methods of reducing glyphosate usage for weed control.

A review had been initiated into the Council's use of glyphosate following a motion passed at the Council's meeting on 13 September 2023 (Page 628, Item 586 refers). Considerations in this review included general safety for staff and the public, efficacy, cost and environmental impact.

The efforts that had been undertaken to reduced glyphosate use and additional protective measures being implemented where it was still used were summarised in the report.

The report laid out the results of the trials that had been carried out and summarised the products and approaches that had been trialled along with the results. The approaches adopted by other local authorities, and their implications, were also detailed.

In discussion, it was proposed that the review continue on an ongoing basis and that Cabinet be updated on an annual basis on the progress of the review and any changes to its recommendations.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) acknowledged the reduced use of glyphosate for weed control and the protective measures in place where it is still used;
- (b) noted initial findings from testing of alternative weed control solutions, with glyphosate being the currently preferred pesticide for continued effective weed treatment;
- (c) noted that Council officers were engaged with other local authorities and were continuing to review alternative weed control approaches;
- (d) noted resource implications for wider rollouts of alternate approaches to weed control; and
- (e) agreed that the review of the Council's use of glyphosate continue with a report to be provided to Cabinet on an annual basis of progress made.

CHAIR

