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MINUTE
of
AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 20 February 2025.

Present:

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

Councillor David Macdonald *
Provost Mary Montague *
Councillor Gordon Wallace *

Councillor Morrison in the Chair

(*) indicates remote attendance

Attending:

Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer); Jamie Reid, Head of Communities and Transformation; Michelle Blair, Chief Auditor; Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Debbie Hill, Chief Procurement Officer; Linda Hutchison, Clerk to the Committee; and Bethany Mitchell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Laura Prior and Grace Scanlin, Ernst and Young.

Apology:

Councillor Annette Ireland.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1115. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

CHAIR'S REPORT – VARIOUS ISSUES

1116. The following matters were raised during the Chair's report:-

(i) Accounts Commission Best Value Report

Councillor Morrison referred to the Accounts Commission's very positive Best Value report regarding the Council, commenting that it had included reference to the overview of advantages and disadvantages of working from home presented to the Committee, at its request, during 2024. Having reported that the Corporate Management Team, Leader of the Council and Councillor Buchanan, in his capacity as Vice Chair of the Committee, had met members of the Accounts Commission earlier in the week to discuss the report and matters arising from it, he thanked Councillor Buchanan for representing him at that meeting. He explained that he had attended a subsequent meeting with the Chief Executive at which he had received a briefing.

(ii) Fraud Response Statement 2023/24 – Procurement Issues

Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 23 January (Page 1058, Item 1086 refers), when clarification had been provided on fraud prevention related issues regarding procurement, including conflict of interest related checks done to address the potential for links between council officers and contractors used by the Council, Councillor Morrison referred to the feedback provided previously on the joint completion by procurement and the procuring service of a contract strategy document for every tender opportunity.

He reminded the Committee that, in light of further issues raised by Councillor Ireland at the January meeting, it had been agreed to seek clarification on whether or not the section of the contract strategy document on conflict of interest, which required officers involved in the procurement to declare any conflict of interest and did not permit them to be involved in the procurement where this was the case, relied solely on self-reporting and was considered sufficiently robust. Since the meeting, the Chief Procurement Officer had confirmed that no further action would be taken beyond an officer's self-declaration, as to do otherwise could be considered a breach of the person's personal information. It had also been clarified that when an officer was engaged in a procurement activity, they were taken through the Contract Strategy document by a Procurement Category Manager during which the importance of a fair and transparent process and the risks to the Council if this was not adhered to were stressed to the officer. Self-declaration was part of that process. If an officer indicated they wished to declare a conflict, the details were recorded on a register, the officer concerned would be removed from the activity, and the Chief Procurement Officer reported the register entry to the officer's Head of Service.

(iii) Meeting with External Auditor

Councillor Morrison stated that he was due to have his next regular meeting with the External Auditor on 20 March. This would be in advance of the Committee's scheduled meeting that month when the External Audit Plan would be considered

(iv) Treasury Management Training for Elected Members

Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 23 January (Page 1058, Paragraph 1087 refers), when members of the Committee had agreed to advise the Clerk if they wished further Treasury Management training, Councillor Morrison highlighted that reports on this issue were now considered more frequently than before. He confirmed that, in response to representations from some Elected Members, further training was to be arranged, attendance at which would be offered to all Elected Members.

The Committee noted the report.

TACKLING DIGITAL EXCLUSION – CLARIFICATION

1117. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 21 November 2024 (Page 1025, Item 1051 refers), when it had been agreed that further clarification be provided on various issues associated with tackling digital exclusion, including the approximate number of people who had taken advantage of digital literacy training, the Committee considered a report by the Clerk summarising the clarification received and circulated on the issues concerned.

The Committee noted the report.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025/26

1118. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 23 January (Page 1058, Item 1086 refers), when it had been agreed to note the Interim Treasury Management Report for Quarter 3 of 2024/25 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 Finance (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 and 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 for 2025/26 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, as before, the report concentrated on the Council's Borrowing and Investment Strategies, and setting out parameters which helped monitor both. Regarding the Performance Indicators (PIs) set to monitor permissible borrowing and allow it to be compared against actual gross debt, she highlighted that it was not planned to fully fund capital expenditure by external borrowing whilst interest rates remained high in favour of using reserves where possible, taking account that interest rates were forecast to fall during the year. The PIs had been set using the Council's 2025/26 Capital Programme, in respect of which the Chief Accountant confirmed that any movement in the Programme would affect how well the limits set could be adhered to, and that the PIs could require to be reviewed once the implications of a new Accounting standard were known in full. Quarterly and year-end reports would continue to 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. Regarding the Council's policy on the repayment of loan debt, specific reference was made to the intention to move from using equal instalments of principal to an annuity method in line with other councils across Scotland, which was considered a fair and prudent approach.

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.

In response to Councillor Edlin, the Chief Accountant and Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) referred to regular guidance received from the Council's Treasury Management Advisors and also CIPFA regulations local authorities required to adhere to which ensured that levels of borrowing were appropriate. In response to Councillor Wallace, they explained why, following completion of a modelling exercise, repayment of loan debt using an annuity method was now deemed the appropriate way forward.

Provost Montague highlighted reference within the Strategy to the CIPFA Code which required the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) to ensure that both Elected Members and officers with responsibility for treasury management received adequate training in this area. More specifically, she referred to the requirement for authorities to do a range of things to monitor and review knowledge and skills in this area, including recording attendance at training and ensuring action was taken when poor attendance was identified, seeking feedback on what was done regarding this. The Senior Democratic Services Officer and Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) commented on various issues, including the range of training opportunities offered to Elected Members, the preparation and publication of Elected Members' training records annually which was a requirement, and related reporting options.

Having expressed the view that Elected Members learned from participation in meetings and referred to the importance of equitable participation of Elected Members in committees to which they were appointed, Provost Montague suggested that it would be useful when reviewing governance documents associated with formal meetings to consider further potential courses of action when this was not the case.

Clarification was provided to Councillor Morrison on a range of issues raised by him, including that CFCR was the acronym for Capital From Current Revenue; and why housing borrowing was so low for 2025/26 relative to other years although a housing emergency had been declared and the shortage of social housing. It was explained that this was due to the use of a £6.5m capital receipt from the sale of land and Housing advancing the building of 105 new homes to help address the emergency. The Chief Accountant also explained why the Housing Revenue Account debt as a proportion of income stream was due to fall by a relatively large amount from 2026/27 onwards which was because loan fund debt inherited at local government reorganisation would be paid off.

The Committee agreed:-

- (a) **to recommend to the Council** that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26 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;
- (d) to note the comments made by Provost Montague on meeting participation and related issues and that appropriate officers would be alerted to these; and
- (e) otherwise, to note the report.

NATIONAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – TRANSFORMATION IN COUNCILS

1119. The Committee considered a report by the Clerk on the publication in October 2024 of a report by Audit Scotland entitled *Transformation in Councils*. Under the Committee's specialisation arrangements, Councillor Morrison was leading the review of the report. The Director of Business Operations and Partnerships had been asked to provide comments and a copy of her feedback was appended to the report.

The report explained that, while many of the expectations set out in the External Audit report impacted on national bodies, the Council was playing an active role in national networks and programmes in support of sectoral transformation. In terms of the national expectations for Councils, East Renfrewshire was considered to be very well placed, having a clear long-term strategic vision for the area which was shared with partners and underpinned by excellent partnership working arrangements. The digital transformation strategy was being refreshed by building on a foundation of previously successful transformation programmes, which was enabling the Council to keep pace with technological change and maintain a strong strategic focus on prioritisation, benefits and addressing local needs. This approach would support the Council to help meet the fiscal and workforce challenges ahead, realise tangible benefits, and meet its long-term ambitions for the area.

It was concluded that the Council was well placed to respond to the expectations set out in the report; that the Council's transformation programme was part of Audit Scotland's very positive Best Value report published in February; that work was underway to refresh the Council's Transformation Strategy in the summer of 2025; and that the External Audit national Best Value theme this year was Transformation, the findings of which would be reported on as part of the Annual Accounts in the autumn.

Councillor Morrison sought clarification on the quantification of efficiency savings linked to transformation, and referred to the importance of transformation taking account of the authority's growing population and associated impact on services. The Head of Communities and Transformation highlighted that potential savings was just one of various potential benefits that could be realised, citing others such as benefits for communities. He also referred to a one Council approach taken which looked at projects from various perspectives, and the alignment of work to the strategic vision *A Place to Grow*. Whilst also referring to the social value of innovation and preventative work, he commented that measuring the future impact of transformation work was challenging.

The Director of Business Operations and Partnerships highlighted that various transformation initiatives involved technology, such as automation, citing various examples. She explained that, although it was possible to demonstrate savings from transformation work, it was not always easy to draw a direct link between projects and budgets, such as when work progressed over several years. She also referred to transformation work at a national level, such as through the Improvement Service, individual reviews within the Council some of which were the subject of reports to committees, and strategic and operational work done to prioritise work, confirming that there was a model for project prioritisation. In response to Councillor Wallace who highlighted that the External Audit report was about radical change at a high level and sought clarification on the position locally, she commented that references in the report to step and radical change were directed at all local authorities, and that there were examples where the Council was ahead of others on some processes.

Whilst referring to the Christie Commission, shared services and collaboration, the national reform agenda which local authorities feed into and related issues, Councillor Buchanan reported on his recent attendance at an event at Strathclyde University at which national Government, local authorities and the third sector had been represented. Issues discussed had included, for example, how digitalisation and automation helped with transformation, but did not necessarily result in staff losses but rather redeployment of employee resources to

where they were needed more. He highlighted that some change was only discernible in the long-term, rather than being measurable year on year.

In response to Councillor Edlin, the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships and Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) quantified the financial resource allocated in 2024/25 and 2025/26 through SOLACE to augment Improvement Service capacity to develop some transformation work streams, and clarified how the Council's contribution had been calculated.

In response to Councillor Morrison, it was clarified that the outcome of work to refresh the Council's Digital Transformation Strategy would be reported to the Cabinet.

The Committee agreed to note the report and related comments made.

INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2024/25 – IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS - OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2024 (QUARTER 3)

1120. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 28 March 2024 (Page 811, Item 799 refers), when the Internal Audit Strategic Plan for 2024/25 to 2028/29 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 2024.

It was confirmed that four reports relating to planned 2024/25 audit work had been issued since the last progress report had been considered, details of which were provided. Reference was also made to the quarterly performance indicators (PIs) for the section. It was proposed to delete the overtime audit from the plan as overtime had been checked recently as part of the payroll audit, and to reallocate the time as consultancy to assist HR/Payroll to carry out some checks on system calculation anomalies. Two requests for assistance were dealt with using contingency time during the quarter.

The Chief Auditor highlighted various issues, during which she clarified that one of the reports issued had been a follow up report on Environment Department audits. She reported that there had been no issues raised on major concern from the audits undertaken, but drew the Committee's attention to a recommendation rated as high in relation to Bonnyton House concerning the corporate appointeeship bank account, regarding which it had been recommended that action be taken quickly. She confirmed that the work on both issues dealt with using contingency had been concluded, neither of which had resulted in a report being written or a loss to the Council. The section was currently meeting all of its PI standards except one on the time taken to issue reports.

In response to Councillor Wallace, the Chief Auditor confirmed that audit work on the City Deal involved checking the latest four claims submitted were reasonable and accurate, and if the projects were overspent or running late. Having heard him refer to the current delay regarding the Aurs Road project and suggest that there could be value in looking at this project in more detail to ascertain the current position and, for example, actual versus projected expenditure and if there were any lessons to be learned, the Chief Auditor confirmed that this type of issue was considered at least some of the time when City Deal audits were done. She added that the City Deal audit work had been completed, but that the file on that remained to be reviewed by her following which she could provide clarification. It was suggested therefore that it would be useful to circulate the Internal Audit report on the City Deal on completion.

The Committee agreed:-

- (a) to approve the deletion of the overtime audit from the Audit Plan;
- (b) that the audit report on the City Deal be circulated on completion; and

- (c) otherwise, to note the report and related comments made.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 26 February 2025.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson
Councillor Caroline Bamforth
Councillor Tony Buchanan
Deputy Provost Kate Campbell
Councillor Betty Cunningham
Councillor Danny Devlin
Councillor Paul Edlin
Councillor Annette Ireland
Councillor Chris Lunday

Councillor David Macdonald
Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Colm Merrick
Provost Mary Montague
Councillor Andrew Morrison
Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)
Councillor Katie Pragnell
Councillor Gordon Wallace (*)

Provost Montague 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; Anthony McReavy, Chief Executive, Culture and Leisure Trust (*); Julie Murray, Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP); Lesley Bairden, Head of Finance and Resources, HSCP; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer); Mark Rodgers, Head of Environment (Housing and Property); Gerry Mahon, Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement); Graeme Smith, Communications Manager; Barry Tudhope, Democratic Services Manager; John Burke, Democratic Services Officer; and Lesleyann Burns, Democratic Services Officer.

(*) indicates remote attendance.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1121. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

PROVOST'S REMARKS – ORDER OF MEETING

1122. The Provost indicated that, to facilitate the smooth running of the meeting, the items would be considered in the order shown below.

DEFERRAL OF DECISION TO COUNCIL: HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP – CHARGING FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL CARE SERVICES IN 2025/2026

The lead signatory to the call-in, Councillor Buchanan, outlined the reasons for the call-in of the Cabinet decision on this matter. He stated that he and the other signatories felt that, given the impact on residents and the budgetary position, it was important that the Council look at the matter and find a better way forward. He was pleased to note that, following cross-party discussions, an amendment to the decision had been reached and asked that Councillor O'Donnell be allowed to outline that amendment.

Councillor O'Donnell spoke on the proposed amendment, outlining the difficulties in reaching the decision given the financial challenges facing the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). He indicated that neither the Integrated Joint Board (IJB) or the Cabinet had wanted to make the decision, explaining that Cabinet had deferred the decision initially to give greater analysis to the HSCP budget and to ascertain if further support would become available from Scottish Government. On considering the matter again, no such support had been indicated and they felt it was needed to assure that the HSCP could set a balanced budget.

Councillor O'Donnell conceded that, given the public interest in the proposals, it may have been preferable to defer the issue to a decision of Council.

Councillor O'Donnell went on to outline the proposed amendment to the initial decision, a paper copy of which was circulated to those members present. He also indicated that he would be writing to the First Minister, alongside the Convener of the IJB, in order to request clarity on the Scottish Government's intentions in terms of any potential abolishment of such charges as were proposed.

Councillor O'Donnell, seconded by Councillor Buchanan moved the following:

“That the Council defer the introduction of charging for non-residential care services until 1 April 2026 and ask that the HSCP reviews the impact of the deferral.

The deferral should allow sufficient time for financial assessments to take place alongside income maximisation and right to appeal.

Funding for the deferral of the implementation to 1 April 2026, where appropriate, to be taken from expected current year revenue budget underspends.

By 1 April 2026, we will also know if the Scottish Government intends to abolish or modify such charges in their budget for 2026/27.

We further propose that the IJB prepares a report for October's full Council meeting. That report should:

1. provide an updated equalities impact assessment on those service users actually asked to contribute;
2. provide an analysis of the income maximisation efforts made to support all potentially affected users; and
3. include an analysis of the amount of revenue expected to be generated and the taper level recommended.”

Councillor Buchanan then spoke in support of this motion, indicating that it afforded time for the necessary scrutiny to take place and ensure that the best way forward was found.

Councillor Wallace first received clarity that the amended proposal was the motion that was before the Council. He then proposed an amendment to the motion as follows:

“Council agrees to replace the original motion with the following:

1. that the policy on charges for non-residential care services shall not be reconsidered for the remainder of the current Administration’s term, ensuring clarity and stability for service users and their families;
2. that the Council supports the HSCP by mitigating the costs of non-residential care services through the allocation of predicted underspend from the 2024/25 financial year;
3. that the anticipated review by the Money and Rights Team, in collaboration with other partners, aimed at maximising income for users of non-residential care services, proceeds without delay; and
4. that the Council commits to prioritising the protection of non-residential care service funding when setting the budget for the 2026/27 financial year, ensuring that financial pressures do not undermine the sustainability of this support.

This amendment seeks to reaffirm the Council’s commitment to upholding the principle that living within this Council’s boundaries means being part of a fair, supportive, and compassionate community – one that prioritises the well-being of its residents and protects essential services for those who need them most. By taking this approach, the Council provides certainty to service users while ensuring the sustainability of these vital services. Furthermore, deferring any decision on charges beyond the May 2026 Parliamentary elections will allow the Council to make informed policy choices with a full understanding of the national legislative framework, ensuring that future decisions align with government policy and best serve the needs of our residents.”

In order for the members to receive the text of Councillor Wallace’s amendment, Provost Montague called for the meeting to be adjourned.

Following the adjournment, it was indicated that the amendment proposed by Councillor Wallace initially had been withdrawn and a new amendment proposed. Thereafter, Councillor Wallace, seconded by Councillor Edlin, proposed the new amendment as follows:

“Council agrees to replace the original motion with the following:

1. that the policy on charges for non-residential care services shall not be reconsidered for the remainder of the current Administration’s term, ensuring clarity and stability for service users and their families;
2. that the Council supports the HSCP by mitigating the costs of non-residential care services through the allocation of predicted underspend from the 2024/25 financial year, plus additional savings or income generation opportunities to be found within the Council for the following financial years;
3. that the anticipated review by the Money and Rights Team, in collaboration with other partners, aimed at maximising income for users of non-residential care services, proceeds without delay; and
4. that the Council commits to prioritising the protection of non-residential care service funding when setting the budget for the 2026/27 financial year, ensuring that financial pressures do not undermine the sustainability of this support.

This amendment seeks to reaffirm the Council’s commitment to upholding the principle that living within this Council’s boundaries means being part of a fair, supportive, and compassionate community – one that prioritises the well-being of its residents and protects essential services for those who need them most. By taking this approach, the Council provides certainty to service users while ensuring the sustainability of these vital services. Furthermore, deferring any decision on charges beyond the May 2026 Parliamentary elections will allow the Council to make informed policy choices with a full understanding of the national

legislative framework, ensuring that future decisions align with government policy and best serve the needs of our residents.”

The Provost asked for a short adjournment while the revised amendment was considered by members. Following that adjournment, the Provost invited the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) to comment on the amendment in terms of Standing Order 29(a), as it could involve the Council incurring expenditure.

The Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) outlined the position in terms of reduced income arising from the proposals before the Council. In particular, she indicated that there would be a requirement for further income generation as a result of the proposal.

Councillor Ireland expressed her disappointment that the charges were deferred rather than removed. She stated that the decision should have been delayed until October when further information would be available.

Councillor O'Donnell indicated that the report to Council in October would provide clarity and further information. In his view, the motion did not seek to implement any decision before that information would be considered. He also highlighted that it would allow the income maximisation work and financial assessments to be carried out.

Councillor Buchanan highlighted some points of concern with the amendment as proposed, stating that it lacked specifics in terms of how the additional income requirements would be met. In particular, he felt that the amendment looked to ring fence money in the 2026/27 budget, which was a budget that was not yet known.

Councillor Macdonald, stated that he disagreed with charges being levied at all. He stated that funding was found to pay for the Leisure Centre and for upgrades to Council Headquarters and so the funding should be found to defer those charges.

Thereafter, Councillor O'Donnell summed up the discussion. He recognised that it was a difficult issue and agreed that all parties would prefer not to apply the proposed charges. He expressed disappointment that the cross-party discussions, which he felt had led to agreement on the proposed motion, had not come to fruition in the meeting.

On the roll being called, Councillors Anderson, Bamforth, Buchanan, Convery, Cunningham, Devlin, Lunday, Merrick, O'Donnell, Pragnell and Provost Montague voted for the motion.

Councillors Campbell, Edlin, Ireland, Macdonald, McLean, Morrison and Wallace voted for the amendment.

There being 11 votes for the motion and 7 votes for the amendment, the motion was declared carried and the Council:-

Deferred the introduction of charging for non-residential care services until 1 April 2026 and asked that the HSCP reviewed the impact of the deferral.

The deferral should allow sufficient time for financial assessments to take place alongside income maximisation and right to appeal.

Funding for the deferral of the implementation to 1 April 2026, where appropriate, should be taken from expected current year revenue budget underspends.

By 1 April 2026, the Council would also know if the Scottish Government intended to abolish or modify such charges in their budget for 2026/27.

It was further agreed that the IJB should prepare a report for October's full Council meeting. That report should:

1. provide an updated equalities impact assessment on those service users actually asked to contribute;
2. provide an analysis of the income maximisation efforts made to support all potentially affected users; and
3. include an analysis of the amount of revenue expected to be generated and the taper level recommended.

Councillor Wallace left the meeting following the conclusion of this item of business.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

1123. The Council considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 11 December 2024.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES

1124. The Council considered and approved the Minutes of the meetings of the undernoted:-

- (a) Special Licensing Committee – 10 December 2024;
- (b) Cabinet (Police & Fire) – 23 January 2025;
- (c) Audit & Scrutiny Committee – 23 January 2025
- (d) Education Committee – 6 February 2025;
- (e) Cabinet – 6 February 2025;
- (f) Licensing Committee – 11 February 2025;
- (g) Local Review Body – 12 February 2025;
- (h) Special Planning Applications Committee – 13 February 2025;
- (i) Appeals Committee – 14 February 2025;
- (j) Appeals Committee – 18 February 2025

AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 JANUARY 2025 – INTERIM TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2024/25 – QUARTER 3

1125. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 23 January 2025 (Page 1058, Item 1087 refers), when it had been agreed to recommend to the Council that the organisations for investment of surplus funds be approved in accordance with Appendix 8 to the report, the Council considered a report by the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) on treasury management activities for the third Quarter of 2024/25.

The Council approved the organisations for the investment of surplus funds in accordance with Appendix 8 of the report.

AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20 FEBRUARY 2025 – TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025/26

1126. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 20 February 2025 (Page 1087, Item 1118 refers), when it had been agreed to recommend to the Council that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26 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; that the policy on the repayment of

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loans fund advances as specified in Section 3.4 of the report be approved; and that the forms of investment instruments for use as permitted investments be approved in accordance with Annex C to the report, the Council considered a report by the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) on the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26 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) that the policy on the repayment of loans fund advances as specified in Section 3.4 of the report be approved;
- (c) that the forms of investment instruments for use as permitted investments be approved in accordance with Annex C to the report;

PROVOST'S ENGAGEMENTS

1127. The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships, providing details of civic engagements attended and civic duties performed by Provost Montague since the meeting on 23 October 2024.

The Council noted the report.

Following consideration of this item, the Provost adjourned the meeting for a short time to allow members to take a break before reconvening. The meeting was then reconvened.

BEST VALUE – EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL: REPORT BY CONTROLLER OF AUDIT

1128. The Council considered a report by the Chief Executive on the East Renfrewshire Council's Controller of Audit Report for Best Value, published by the Accounts Commission in February 2025.

Delivery of Best Value was a statutory requirement for all local authorities in Scotland, and this was scrutinised by the Accounts Commission, who reported on whether councils were delivering on this duty.

In 2023, Audit Scotland had announced a change to the national approach to auditing Best Value, integrating it into the wider scope of audit work completed annually by each Council.

The report was attached as Appendix 1 to the report and it concluded that the Council had made consistently good progress with actions from previous Best Value reports, developing action plans to address previous recommendations. The report's headline findings were detailed in the report.

Members welcomed the report and acknowledged the hard work of both officers and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to deliver on the recommendations of previous reports in this field.

The Council:-

- (a) noted the Controller of Audit's Best Value Report attached as Appendix 1 to the report; and

- (b) commended the positive findings of the Accounts Commission on Best Value delivered by East Renfrewshire Council as detailed on pages 4-5 of Appendix 1.

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025-2030

1129. The Council considered a report by the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) on the financial outlook facing the Council and seeking approval of a Medium Term Financial Strategy covering the five years from 2025/26 to 2029/30, which was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Council had undertaken long-term financial planning for a number of years, including producing a Financial Planning document each year, forecasting resource levels for the next 6 years. Capital planning was undertaken over a rolling ten-year period, reflecting the contents of the Capital Investment Strategy and the need to plan infrastructure over a longer period.

The financial planning document had been refreshed to form the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025-2030. It set out the Council's approach to the management of its finances and the wider context within which those plans had been developed, linking with the Community Planning Partnership's shared vision set out in "A Place to Grow". The MTFS also included the Council's reserves policy, which would no longer be presented as a separate document.

The report went on to summarise the financial outlook for the Council and the key strategic areas that the Council would concentrate on to address the significant challenges it would face over the period of the report.

The strategy would be updated on an annual basis.

The Council:-

- (a) noted the financial outlook, budget projections and key assumptions for financial planning from 2025/26 to 2029/30, set out within the appendix; and
- (b) approved the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025-2030.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL REVENUE ESTIMATES 2025/26

1130. Councillor O'Donnell delivered a presentation regarding the Council's budget for 2025/26, indicating that there were grounds for cautious optimism regarding the Council's finances, though there were still significant challenges ahead. He believed there was a path to a more positive future for the Council.

He expressed his delight at the Accounts Commission report, discussed in the previous item, that stated that East Renfrewshire Council was an example other local authorities could learn from. Councillor O'Donnell summarised the many areas that were praised, as well as the financial prudence of the Council over many years.

Councillor O'Donnell stated his belief that East Renfrewshire Council was the best run Council in the country, but reiterated that the Council was not complacent and would work to continue to provide the best possible services to residents.

1100

In discussing the financial challenges facing all Councils, Councillor O'Donnell welcomed record levels of funding for Scotland announced in the UK Government's budget and subsequent Scottish Budget, the Council had received the best funding settlement for many years. He stressed that this was key to ensuring the continuation of high quality services. Despite this, he expressed disappointment that, with record Scottish budget funding going into the NHS and social care, none of that money had come to the Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP).

In terms of grant settlement, the Council would receive £271.3m, an increase of £14.7m on previous years. It was stressed that the grant remained the biggest source of Council funding, with Council Tax accounting for only 21% of the Council's budget. The additional funding had allowed £1.6m to be passed on to the East Renfrewshire HSCP.

Councillor O'Donnell went on to outline the budget gap, which had reduced from £15m to £7.1m due to the higher than expected funding settlement as well as work carried out by officers and elected members to address the budget gap. He outlined some of the savings proposals which would address the remaining gap. The full details were included in Annex B of the Revenue Estimates report.

Councillor O'Donnell welcomed the decision to lift the Council Tax freeze to allow Councils to raise further funding to pay for vital services. He referenced consultation exercises which had shown residents were prepared to pay a bit more to protect services. To that end, an 8% increase in Council Tax was proposed. Councillor O'Donnell stated that this was more than he would like, however, it would protect the vital services that residents rely on. He subsequently advised that Scottish Water had decided upon an increase in water and sewerage rates of 9.9% and that this was a central decision not made by the Council.

Money from the Council's reserves would also be used to address the remainder of the Council's budget shortfall for the year.

Councillor O'Donnell went on to detail how the Council would continue to support the East Renfrewshire HSCP against a backdrop of increasing demand and complexity of needs driving serious financial challenges for the HSCP. £79.1m would be allocated to HSCP from the Council, more than a fifth of the Council's budget.

Councillor O'Donnell commented on the future challenges facing the Council, with budget gaps for the next 2 years estimated at £5m per year. He called for a 3 year budget cycle which would provide more certainty on budgeting and allow long term projections on funding to be carried out more easily. Councillor O'Donnell took a moment to praise the cross-party work carried out through the Budget Strategy Group.

Councillor O'Donnell went on to detail many projects being carried out across the Council across each Council Department, including improvements to educational facilities, local infrastructure, meeting challenges in housing and the launch of the new East Renfrewshire Community Plan, "A Place to Grow".

After thanking the Council's workforce on their exemplary work to deliver services against the backdrop of financial challenges, Councillor O'Donnell stressed that there would be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the savings proposed within the budget. He concluded that the Council would continue to invest in services and the workforce to improve the lives of all residents of East Renfrewshire.

In response, members joined in praising the work of the Budget Strategy Group in preparing the budget over the year, and agreed with calls for a 3 year budget settlement should it be possible. Some concerns were expressed around the National Insurance Contributions.

Information was also provided relating to points of clarity around producer responsibility income, some reductions in spend around some staff groups, as well as information on crossing guard patrols. The Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) also provided further information on the situation with the National Insurance increases.

The Council:-

- (a) noted that the revenue estimates for 2025/26 (Annex A) have been prepared with the budget gap of £7.066m, closed on the basis of a 8% Council Tax increase, the utilisation of £0.385m of resources made available through Service Concession Flexibilities agreed by the Scottish Government and savings proposals of £1.235m (Annex B);
- (b) noted that £0.844m of the listed 2025/26 savings have already been agreed by Council;
- (c) noted that a 1% change to the level of Council Tax set would produce an adjustment of £0.681m to the level of income available;
- (d) noted that the budget gaps for 2026/27 and 2027/28 have been estimated at £5.019m and £5.001m respectively, with a cumulative budget gap of £10.020m over this two year period, on the basis of an assumed 3% Council Tax increase each year but before application of any new savings or draw down from general reserves in those years;
- (e) noted the estimated funding gaps of £0.332m, £5.187m and £5.216m also faced by the Integration Joint Board (IJB) in respect of social care in 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28, with a cumulative budget gap of £10.735 over this three year period;
- (f) noted that where a funding gap is closed through the use of recurring measures, this will reduce the funding gap in the following and subsequent years;
- (g) agreed that the management of the Council's finances and services will continue to be undertaken on a longer term basis;
- (h) agreed the Council Tax Band D level of £1,528.44 for 2025/26;
- (i) agreed the utilisation of reserves and the savings to be implemented for 2025/26; and
- (j) agreed that, where possible, savings for implementation in 2026/27 which require significant preparatory work should be brought back for approval later in the year to permit this to be undertaken timeously.

David Macdonald left the meeting during the consideration of this item of business.

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PLAN 2025/26 – 2034/35

1131. The Council considered a report by the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) on the General Fund Capital Plan covering the 10 years from 2025/26 to 2034/35, prepared in line with the approach set out in the Capital Investment Strategy.

Details of the funding strategy for the Plan, as well as key projects and programmes planned for the period were detailed in the report and attached appendices.

In response to a question from Councillor Ireland relating to spending which had already taken place on the Eastwood Park Leisure Centre, the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) indicated that she would provide a breakdown on the figure to Councillor Ireland outside of the meeting.

There was also discussion around other aspects of the Plan, including works on Carolside Primary School and the Aurs Road project.

The Council approved the programme for 2025/26 and authorised officers to progress the projects contained therein.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – RENT SETTING 2025/26

1132. The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment on proposals to increase rent for council housing for 2025/26.

The report detailed the various drivers and legislative challenges that had led to the proposal to increase rents by 4.9%. It was stated that, following an affordability assessment, it was established that the proposed increase was affordable and that East Renfrewshire Council's housing would remain the most affordable available social housing in the area in comparison with other providers.

There was discussion among members around the figures presented, in particular, around the increase in Void Rent Loss Provision, increase in purchase and hire of equipment as the standard of stock was increased and the increase in payments to sub-contractors.

The Council approved a 4.9% rent increase be applied for 2025/26

HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 – 2035/36

1133. The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment on the Housing Capital Programme 2025/26 and the proposed ten-year programme.

The report detailed the pressures placed upon the current Housing Capital Programme, as well as key areas for investment in the next 10 years. Full details were provided in the appendices to the report.

There was discussion around the limitation on land sites and possible use of the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund to bring some sites into use. There was also discussion of the Shanks site in Barrhead and barriers to development on that site due to issues with landowners.

The Council approved the Housing Capital Programme for 2025/26 to 2034/35 and authorised officers to progress the projects listed in Appendix A for 2025/26.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE CULTURE AND LEISURE TRUST 2025/26 BUSINESS PLAN

1134. The Council considered a report by the Director of Education on the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust 2025/26 Business Plan.

The Business Plan was attached as Appendix 1 to the report and was presented to the Council for approval. The operational highlights within the plan were detailed in the report.

Members welcomed the report and the work of the Culture and Leisure Trust, which was performing well.

The Council approved the proposed Business Plan for 2025/26.

UPDATED CIVIC EVENT PROTOCOL (INCORPORATING FLAG FLYING PROTOCOL)

1135. The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on the updated Civic Events Protocol (incorporating Flag Flying Protocol).

Officers responded to members questions regarding the flying of the Union Flag during Workers' Memorial Day, indicating that this was the flag traditionally flown on that day.

The Council approved the updated Civic Event Protocol (incorporating Flag Flying Protocol).

LICENSING COMMITTEE – APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

1136. The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on the appointment of a Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee.

The Council approved the appointment of Councillor Colm Merrick as the Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee.

PROVOST

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 6 March 2025.

Present:

Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader) Councillor Katie Pragnell
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; Barry Ashcroft, Head of ICT and Resilience; Mark Rodgers, Head of Housing and Property; Michaela Sullivan, Head of Place; Andy Dick, Get to Zero Manager; Michael McKernan, Economic Growth and Inclusive Development Manager; Paul Parsons, Principal Accountant; John Semple, Regeneration Officer; and John Burke, Democratic Services Officer.

Apology:

Councillor Danny Devlin

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1137. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

1138. The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Finance to monitor both income and expenditure as at 31 December 2024 against the approved General Fund Capital Programme and recommending adjustments where possible.

The report updated project costs and phasings based on current progress and anticipated progress to 31 March 2025.

The Principal Accountant outlined that the current position was a budget shortfall of £0.362m, which was within manageable limits.

The main income and expenditure movements to December 2024 were detailed in the report.

Following a brief discussion, the Cabinet agreed to recommend that Council:-

- (a) note and approve the movements within the 2024/25 programme;

- (b) note the shortfall of £0.362m and that income and expenditure on the programme would be managed and reported on a regular basis; and
- (c) noted that the Principal Accountant would come back to Councillor Anderson with more information on the number of sites for Education CCTV that would carry into the next financial year.

HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

1139. The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Finance to monitor both income and expenditure as at 31 December 2024 against the approved Housing Capital Programme and recommending adjustments where required.

The report updated project costs and phasings based on current progress and anticipated progress to 31 March 2025.

The Principal Accountant outlined that the current position was a budget shortfall of £0.119m, which was within manageable limits.

The main income and expenditure movements to December 2024 were detailed in the report.

Following a discussion, the Cabinet recommended that Council:-

- (a) note and approve the movements within the programme; and
- (b) note the shortfall of £0.119m and that income and expenditure on the programme would be managed and reported on a regular basis.

CARBON EMISSIONS REPORT 2023-24

1140. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the carbon emissions from the Council's operations in 2023/24 as well as an introduction to area-wide carbon emission reporting and the results for East Renfrewshire. The report also provided details of progress towards the Council's 2045 net-zero carbon emissions target.

The full report, containing all details of the Council's emissions, area wide emissions, and highlighting projects which were being undertaken to reduce those emissions, was attached as Appendix A to the report.

Following a discussion of the key figures, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the Council's operational carbon emissions for 2023/24;
- (b) noted East Renfrewshire's area wide emissions for 2020; and;
- (c) noted the projects and actions across the Council that had a positive climate change impact.

WRITE-OFF OF IRRECOVERABLE FORMER TENANT RENTS AND COURT EXPENSES

1141. 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.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the write-off sum up to the value of £99,606.49 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 £93,508.68 of that amount was written off against the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the remaining £6,097.81 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.

OVERLEE PUMP TRACK

1142. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on a community-led proposal for the construction of a pump track on an area of Overlee Playing Fields, Clarkston, and to seek approval to provide match funding for the construction of the facility from the Economic Development regeneration capital budget.

The provision of a pump track or skateboard park for wheeled play had been identified as a priority within the 2024 Local Action Plan for Clarkston. Netherlee and Stamperland Community Council had contacted the Council in January 2025 seeking support to establish one within their area and liaised with officers from Economic Development to develop the proposal.

The report detailed the budgetary requirements and work done by both the Council and Community Council in meeting the cost of the project. A full funding plan was outlined in the report.

In discussion, Cabinet members praised the work of the Community Council in driving the project forward, indicating this highlighted the impact that can be made by Local Action Plans, and by participation in Community Councils.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the proposal for a new pump track (undulating circuit for wheeled play) at Overlee Playing Fields; and
- (b) approved the match funding commitment of an estimated £87,397 from the Council's regeneration capital budget for 2025/2026.

CYBER SECURITY OPERATIONS CENTRE – VARIATION OF CONTRACT PROPOSAL

1143. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships seeking approval to modify an existing contract with Quorum Cyber Security Limited for the provision of Cyber Security Operations Centre (CSOC) services across the East Renfrewshire Council corporate ICT network.

The initial contract had been set to run to March 2025, following a competitive procurement exercise. However, it was noted that the Council's ICT services were due to undergo a significant redesign to meet future needs. Changing CSOC provider during that period of change would bring risks, which were detailed in the report.

It was proposed that the contract be extended for a period of up to 24 months, which would allow the Council to conduct a full procurement options appraisal once the ICT programme of change was completed.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the modification of the existing contract with Quorum Cyber Security Limited to extend the same for a period of up to 24 months; and
- (b) approved variation of the contract value in the sum of up to £120,000.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock, on 11 March 2025.

Present:

Councillor Paul Edlin (Chair)
Councillor Colm Merrick
Provost Mary Montague*

Councillor Kate Campbell
Councillor Andrew Morrison
Councillor David Macdonald*

Councillor Edlin in the Chair

(*) indicates remote attendance

Attending:

Nicola McEleny, Senior Solicitor; David Higgins, Civic Government Enforcement Officer; Michelle McCarrol, Lead Officer (Tenant & Customer); Grant Murray, Housing Officer (Private Sector) and Lesleyann Burns, Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Sergeant Emma Gardner and Sergeant Belinda Rafferty, Police Scotland.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1144. There were no apologies given.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1145. 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.

1110

PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER'S LICENCE – APPLICATION FOR GRANT

1146. 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 3 refers).

The applicant was present.

Sergeant Emma Gardner and Sergeant Belinda Rafferty, representing the Chief Constable, who had made an objection to the application, were also present.

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

The applicant was then heard in respect of the application.

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 representation by the Chief Constable, decided by split decision, following the chair's deciding vote, to grant the application.

PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER'S LICENCE – APPLICATION FOR GRANT

1147. 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 4 refers).

The applicant was present.

Sergeant Emma Gardner and Sergeant Belinda Rafferty, representing the Chief Constable, who had made an objection to the application, were also present.

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

The applicant was then heard in respect of the application.

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 representation by the Chief Constable decided by majority decision, to grant the Application.

PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER'S LICENCE – REQUEST FOR IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION

1148. The Committee agreed to continue the report at Licensing Committee on 29 April 2025 as the applicant did not receive sufficient time to allow them representation at Committee. The applicant remains suspended meantime.

PRIVATE LANDLORD REGISTRATION

1149. 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 6 refers).

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

Councillor MacDonald left the meeting at this point.

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.

Following discussion the committee agreed, by majority decision (Councillor Morrison's dissenting vote being noted for the Minute) :-

- (a) that the applicant had four weeks to provide necessary statutory paperwork to Housing Services;
- (b) Housing Services were to make clear to the tenant that entry was to be made available forthwith and that the Applicant would proceed with raising action in the Housing Tribunal if entry was not agreed; and
- (b) that if the necessary statutory paperwork was not provided a report would be brought to next Committee on 29 April 2025.

PRIVATE LANDLORD REGISTRATION

1150. 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 7 refers).

The Senior Housing Officer (Private Sector) was heard in respect of the application 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.

Following discussion the committee agreed to grant the application, on the basis that all outstanding statutory paperwork had been received in respect of the both of the landlord's properties.

CHAIR

MINUTE **of** **CABINET**

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 27 March 2025.

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; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer); Joe McCaig, Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision); Michaela Sullivan, Head of Place; Emma Aeppli, Employability Team Leader; Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Mary Docherty, Education Resources Senior Manager; Thomas McAuley, RCU Lead; Michael McKernan, Economic Growth and Inclusive Development Manager; Paul Parsons, Principal Accountant; Lorna Wallace, Assistant Economic Development Manager; John Burke, Democratic Services Officer; and Bethany Mitchell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1151. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

ESTIMATED REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2024-2025

1152. The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) detailing the estimated projected revenue budget out-turn for 2024/25 and providing details of the expected year-end variances together with summary cost information for each of the undernoted services as at 31 January 2025 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 Principal Accountant advised that on the basis of the information, and taking account of forecast Council Tax collection, a year end operational underspend of £2,536k was forecast on General Fund services and an underspend of £100k on the Housing Revenue Account. The reasons for departmental variances were set out in the report. He 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 £1,298k 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 £2,536k together with the HRA operational overspend of £100k;
- (b) to approve service virements and operational adjustments as set out in the notes to the tables on pages 15 to 33 of the report and note the reported probable out-turn position.

TRADING UNDER BEST VALUE

1153. Under reference to the minute of the meeting of 28 March 2024 (Page 802, Item 789 refers) when the Cabinet approved that there were no trading services operated by the Council that should be classified as "significant", the Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) which outlined that under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the Council was required to consider its trading operations and on an annual basis determine those which should be regarded as significant.

The report reviewed the activities for the financial year 2024/25 and advised that, to be classed as significant, the trading operation could only apply to external trading and to those activities that were not statutory. In addition the service had to be provided in a competitive environment and the recharge had to be on a basis other than a straight forward recharge of cost. In reviewing an operation's classification, further tests of significance required to be taken into account, using financial and non-financial criteria. Having considered these conditions the result of the review was that, in line with last year, the Council had no significant trading operations in the current year.

The Cabinet approved that there were no trading services operated by the Council that should be classified as "significant".

DEBT MANAGEMENT FOR SCHOOL MEALS

1154. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval to write-off as irrecoverable sums associated with school meal debt and to create a school meal bad debt provision to assist with managing such debt going forward.

It was noted that the amounts proposed for write-off in 2024/25 could be offset against one-off funding received from the Scottish Government School Meal Debt Fund, the details of which were provided in the report.

Subsequent years would be covered by the funding of a proposed school meal bad debt provision totalling £40,000 to be met from the revenue budget.

Cabinet members, in discussing the proposals, welcomed the additional funding, as well as the COSLA guidance that had been issued on the matter of school meal debt.

Following the discussion, the Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the write-off of all remaining debt accrued to the end of the school year 2023/24, totalling £14,085.19; and
- (b) approved the creation of a bad debt provision for school meals of £40,000 and the write off of irrecoverable school meal debt at the end of each school year up to the total value of this provision.

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND 2025-2026

1155. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) award from the UK Government, and seeking approval for the proposed projects to be undertaken in the period 2025/26.

Full details of the projects supported and information on the outcomes achieved to date through SPF were provided in the appendices to the report.

In discussion, members expressed an interest in setting up a backup list of projects for consideration should additional funding become available for allocation through underspends or other adjustments.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the financial allocation to East Renfrewshire for the programme period 2025/26;
- (b) noted the progress of projects funded since the inception of the programme in Appendix 1;
- (c) approved the projects as outlined in Appendix 2 for 2025/26;
- (d) delegated to the Director of Environment to approve any new proposal requests that could be accommodated if any underspends or adjustments arose during the 2025/26 financial year; and
- (e) agreed that a backup list of projects be prepared in liaison with Cabinet members.

1116

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

1156. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the No One Left Behind (NOLB) grant award from Scottish Government to East Renfrewshire Council, seeking approval for the Annual Investment Plan in 2025/26, as well as to highlight potential funding challenges and associated risks.

NOLB was a partnership approach between Scottish Government and Local Authorities to transform employment support in Scotland. It had been a key strand of employability services in East Renfrewshire since 2020 and had delivered a wide range of programmes.

Details of NOLB outcomes achieved during 2024/2025 were provided in Appendix 1 to the report.

Proposals for projects to be approved in 2025/26 were outlined in Appendix 2 to the report, and it was indicated that the East Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership had supported those proposals.

Cabinet members welcomed the activity, and particularly the provision of case studies to show the impact made by those projects approved in the past year.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the progress of projects funded between 2023 and 2025 in Appendix 1;
- (b) approved the projects outlined in Appendix 2 for 2025/26 based on the Council's provisional allocation from the Scottish Government;
- (c) delegated to the Director of Environment to make adjustments to the proposals depending upon the detailed costs of projects being confirmed; and
- (d) delegated to the Director of Environment to approve any new proposal requests that could be accommodated, if any underspends or adjustments arose in the future for 2025/26.

ROADS SERVICE ADDITIONAL CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2026-2028

1157. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the proposed programme of road resurfacing and street lighting works funded through additional capital allocation which would be undertaken as part of the wider major road works programme in 2025/2026.

The report outlined the additional funding that had been allocated by Council for street lighting infrastructure. A proposed programme of works to utilise that funding was set out in Appendices A and B to the report, highlighting programmes for both street lighting and roads resurfacing to take place during 2025/26.

In discussion, members received clarification on several points around the quality of modern LED light systems, the savings associated with the installation of those systems, and the planning and implementation process that goes into carrying out roads programmes of this nature. A question was also raised around developer contributions at Drumby Crescent, Clarkston, which would require later clarification by officers.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the street lighting and roads resurfacing programmes for 2025/26, which were funded through additional capital budget allocation, as detailed in Appendices A and B to the report;
- (b) noted the investment made to date in road lighting and road resurfacing;
- (c) noted that regular updates on overall road condition performance would be provided on an ongoing basis;
- (d) noted that Councillor Pragnell would receive further information about potential developer contributions in relation to Drumby Crescent, Clarkston; and
- (e) requested that communications be issued to residents relating to the planning of roads maintenance and resurfacing and the reduction in potholes within the area.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 27 March 2025.

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

Attending:

Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer); Michelle Blair, Chief Auditor; Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Ian McLean, Senior Auditor; Anthony Jenkins, Resilience Coordinator; Linda Hutchison, Clerk to the Committee; and Bethany Mitchell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Laura Prior and Grace Scanlin, Ernst and Young.

Apology:

Councillor David Macdonald.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1158. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

CHAIR'S REPORT - MEETING WITH EXTERNAL AUDITOR

1159. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 20 February (Page 1085, Item 1116 refers), when it had been noted that Councillor Morrison was due to have his next regular meeting with the External Auditor on 20 March, Councillor Morrison reported that issues discussed had included the financial position of the Council and future forecasts; governance issues; and matters relating to Internal Audit. Furthermore, an update had been provided on the Audit, including the provisional Annual Audit Plan and key audit matters; and Best Value related issues had been discussed, such as the thematic review on Transformation on which the Committee would receive a report in due course, and a proposed presentation to the Committee in June on the Council's Best Value report.

The Committee noted the report.

INTERIM TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2024/25 – QUARTER 4

1160. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 23 January (Page 1058, Item 1087 refers), when it had been agreed to note the Interim Treasury Management Report for Quarter 3 of 2024/25 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 Finance (Chief Financial Officer) on treasury management activities for Quarter 4.

The report explained that, in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Committee was responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the Council's treasury management activities, in accordance with which the interim Treasury Management Report for the period ending 31 March 2025 was attached to the report for consideration.

Whilst highlighting key issues, the Chief Accountant clarified that no further borrowing had been taken during the quarter due to current high interest rates offered, but that as balances depleted this position would be unsustainable. The Council continued to adopt a prudent approach to treasury management and, in particular, the percentage of loans held as at 28 February 2025 with variable interest rates was 5.6% which was well below the Council's approved upper limit of 15%.

Having reported 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. She explained that implementation of a new accounting standard required assets that were leased, rented or hired to be brought onto the balance sheet, impacting on the levels previously approved for most of the indicators. Consequently the Committee was being asked to recommend to the Council that these indicators be approved at revised levels, incorporating the requirements of the new standard.

The Chief Accountant confirmed that the Council's list of counterparties remained unchanged from the one for Quarter 3, 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.

In response to Councillor Ireland, the Chief Accountant commented further on future borrowing requirements and related cash flow issues.

The Committee agreed:-

- (a) to **recommend to the Council** that the:-
 - (i) proposed increases in the Prudential Indicators, as a result of the introduction of the new financial reporting standard, International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS16), be approved; and
 - (ii) organisations specified in the report for the investment of surplus funds be approved; and
- (b) otherwise, to note the report and related comments made.

REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER – BIENNIAL REPORT

1161. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 26 September 2024 (Page 955, Item 966 refers), when the position on the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) and related issues had been noted, the Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive regarding the most recent biennial update of the register.

The report referred to the Council's approach to risk management, confirming that the SRR appended to the report itemised key strategic risks considered, and actions identified to manage these. The report explained that no risks had been removed from the SRR and no new ones had been added, clarifying that updates had primarily been made to existing and proposed controls. 13 strategic risks remained, 8 of which were regarded as high risk, the remaining 5 being amber. A summary of the changes made was provided.

Having highlighted that an update of the Council's Risk Management Strategy and Risk Management Framework was required during 2025, the report referred to related training workshops that had taken place for officers, learning from which would help shape the update of a single Risk Management Framework/Strategy and align it with *A Place to Grow* and the Council's People vision. Opportunities for a further workshop for Elected Members and Integration Joint Board (IJB) representatives were also being explored.

The Resilience Coordinator highlighted key aspects of the report, including changes made to the SRR, the updating of the Strategy/Framework, and work to be done to align the Strategy and SRR with *A Place to Grow* and People Vision. He confirmed that a workshop, supported by Zurich Insurance, was planned to which all members of the Committee, Cabinet and voting members of the IJB would be invited on a date to be confirmed later in 2025 at which discussion would take place on various issues, including good characteristics of risk management and related best practice; and the Risk Strategy and future direction on this.

Having highlighted that the risk of major works capital programmes facing unanticipated challenges due to external factors remained medium (Risk 6.22 refers), Councillor Wallace referred to progress on the Aurs Road City Deal project, and asked if this risk was now higher than before. The Resilience Coordinator confirmed that the SRR remained a live document, undertaking to seek clarification on this and provide feedback.

Councillor Morrison highlighted that, at one stage, the biannual risk reports submitted to the Committee had included reference to horizon scanning on emerging risks or concerns, supporting the reintroduction of this information within the reports. The Resilience Coordinator confirmed that horizon scanning was still undertaken by the Corporate Management Team, and undertook to alert them to the suggestion made. He added that if there were further report changes Elected Members would consider useful, these could be suggested at the workshop.

In response to Councillor Ireland, the Resilience Coordinator clarified that it was hoped to align the Risk Management Framework/Strategy and SRR with *A Place to Grow* in time for this to be reflected in the next biannual report submitted to the Committee. In reply to Councillor Morrison who raised issues regarding the potential full or partial operational loss or restrictions on the use of school/nursery buildings (Risk 2.1.3 refers) and referred to the related condition survey, the Resilience Manager undertook to check and confirm if it would be completed earlier than February 2026 as work on this was ongoing.

Councillor Buchanan commented on an emerging risk of potential increased pressures on council services linked, for example, to the impact on individuals and organisations in the third sector of price rises and increased National Insurance contributions. The Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) confirmed that direct costs of the National Insurance increase had been factored into the 2025/26 budget, in accordance with discussions with the Budget Strategy Group, and that the pressure on commissioned HSCP services had been quantified and included within their budget. However, taking account of the Council's prudent financial approach, officers would endeavour to manage the risks associated with the potential impact on costs associated with the Council's contracts within existing budgets. An exercise was underway to capture associated risks, the outcome of which would be reported on through budget reports, and issues would be considered further if it was felt they could not be managed. She confirmed that, when the SRR was reviewed, it would be considered if

emerging risks, such as the one cited by Councillor Buchanan, needed to be added to it or if they could be managed at another level.

Commenting on the risk score for Braidbar Quarry (Risk 3.5), Councillor Wallace expressed the view that, given control measures already in place, the likelihood of a problem occurring was low rather than medium, whilst acknowledging that the potential impact of one could be higher. He considered it important not to indicate a major safety concern where one was not considered to exist, referring to how the score could be perceived out with the Council. Having referred to discussions that had already taken place to determine the risk score, the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships confirmed there had been no significant change regarding the Quarry, and that the scoring could be discussed further with Zurich Insurance, such as at the forthcoming Elected Member workshop. Given the live status of the SRR, Councillor Wallace requested further feedback on how often the score was revisited and the specific issue he had raised.

The Committee agreed:-

- (a) that the Resilience Co-ordinator seek and provide further clarification on the following issues:-
 - (i) if the risk regarding major works capital programmes facing unanticipated challenges as a result of external factors during the lifespan of projects (Risk 6.22) was now higher than before, taking account of the position regarding the Aurs Road City Deal project;
 - (ii) the timescale for completing the school condition survey, and if this would be earlier than February 2026 as work on this was ongoing (Risk 2.1.3 refers); and
 - (iii) how often the risk score for Braidbar Quarry was revisited (Risk 3.5 refers) and the score currently attributed to the likelihood of there being a risk, given the mitigations already in place;
- (b) that it would be considered valuable by the Committee if comments on horizon scanning for risks could be reintroduced in the biannual reports it received;
- (c) that feedback be provided to senior officers on other comments made at the meeting on the Strategic Risk Register as appropriate; and
- (d) otherwise, to note the development of the Strategic Risk Register; that it was considered to be a live document; and that it would be updated and amended by the Corporate Management Team.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL – PROVISIONAL ANNUAL EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

1162. The Committee considered a report by the External Auditor regarding the provisional Annual Audit Plan for the year ended 31 March 2025, which referred to the purpose of the Plan, the scope of and responsibilities associated with it, and related issues.

Whilst commenting on the financial statements audit, the report made reference to issues on which an opinion would be offered. The audit would also include a review of the consistency of other information prepared and published along with the financial statements; and determine with reasonable confidence whether they were free from material misstatement. Regarding the latter, reference was made to performance and planning materiality levels set, and the reporting threshold level above which the External Auditor would report misstatements

to the Committee. The audit would take account of an updated International Auditing Standard (ISA 600); and Best Value considerations would be integrated with wider scope audit work.

A summary was provided regarding three significant risks impacting on the audit of the financial statements, these being the risks of fraud in revenue and expenditure; of misstatement due to fraud and error; and regarding the valuation of property, plant and equipment. Information was also provided on three inherent risks impacting on the audit of the financial statements which related to the valuation of pension assets and liabilities; the valuation of Private Finance Initiative (PFI)/Public Private Partnership (PPP) liabilities; and the implementation of International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS) 16.

Amongst other things, the report highlighted areas of audit focus in relation to Best Value and the wider scope audit dimensions, making reference to financial sustainability in terms of the development of sustainable and achievable medium term financial plans; and a Best Value Thematic Review which would focus on Transformation.

Other issues commented on were key developments in the sector within which local authorities operated to inform the audit approach taken, namely the position on local government finances, the Scottish budget, IJBs' finances and the Controller of Audit Report on Best Value for East Renfrewshire published in February 2025. Further details were provided on the approach to be taken, assessment of, and the External Auditor's response to, significant risks regarding the financial statements, and the Best Value and wider scope audit work to be progressed. Required communications, related timescales for these, and the 2024/25 audit fees and related issues, were amongst other issues commented on.

Mr Jones highlighted various key aspects of the Plan in advance of the approval of the financial statements later in 2025, referring to the executive summary and more detailed information provided. Amongst other things, he highlighted the need to comply with the implementation of IFRS 16, acknowledged the financial challenges facing local authorities, and reported it was hoped to submit the Best Value related report on Transformation to the Committee in June.

In response to a wide range of questions from Elected Members, Mr Jones first cited examples of infrastructure assets and referred to their valuation when under construction and on completion. Regarding the delayed Aurs Road City Deal project, he indicated that the project would be looked at as part of wider scope audit work and from an accountancy perspective. He also commented on complexities associated with the fair valuation of roads without undertaking a huge amount of work, the depreciation of such assets, and that, when considering the accounting treatment, officers would look at the business case for such assets in determining if any additional costs incurred during construction were reasonable. Speaking in more general terms, he added that when projects were delivered over budget, that did not necessarily impact on the valuation of the asset.

Regarding what was deemed a reasonable frequency for the revaluation of property taking account of accounting code requirements, he confirmed that there was an expectation that this was done every 5 years as a minimum. However, he also referred to the need to scrutinise what was actually needed, such as to take account of inflation. He confirmed that discussions took place with Council managers on this issue annually, and these had taken place when determining and agreeing which assets needed to be revalued for the 2024/25 audit.

Mr Jones also confirmed that, in terms of materiality, a focus was generally placed on the largest assets, but clarified that all properties were valued as part of the preparation of the last two sets of financial accounts. Having heard the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) clarify the distinction between valuations for the purpose of the Annual Accounts and property condition surveys, Mr Jones clarified that whilst the condition of a property could impact on its valuation, and this was accounted for using obsolescence factors, property condition surveys, which fulfil a different purpose, were far more detailed. Regarding audit sampling of building valuations, he cited the example of schools, the valuation of which was tested annually as

their valuation was deemed material, confirming also that some testing was always done each year.

Regarding the new Sports and Leisure Centre, Mr Jones, clarified that the approach taken during the audit was informed by the materiality of the expenditure, and that the Centre would be regarded as an asset under construction until operational. He stated that it was not uncommon for projects to be delivered over budget, due to the impact of inflation on multiyear projects for example, and that the recovery of costs over the lifetime of the asset would need to be determined. He added that, when considered relevant or important to comment on issues with any project, these would be included in the Annual Audit Report.

In response to questions regarding budget monitoring reports and what would be considered a significant underspend, Mr Jones explained that, when discussing this issue with management, consideration would be given to various issues such as what was deemed proportionate to various budgets, what could and could not be forecasted, and the context of savings requirements. In response to a concern expressed that the underspend reported at the end of the year was greater than reported to Elected Members during the year, and that important decisions were being made on the basis of the reported position, the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) commented on the significant VAT refund received in the last financial year following approximately 20 years work which had a positive impact on the outturn position, and that an underspend of only 0.76% for the current financial year had been reported to the Cabinet earlier in the day. She noted that a risk based approach was taken, and that unused contingency provision might not be able to be reflected in reports until the year end. She confirmed that it was hoped to reduce variability in reporting throughout the year.

The Committee noted the provisional Annual Audit Plan for year ending 31 March 2025 and timetable for the publication of related documents, including the Annual Audit Report for 2024/25.

INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGIC PLAN 2025/26 – 2029/30

1163. The Committee considered a report by the Chief Auditor on the Internal Audit Strategic Plan for 2025/26 to 2029/30, which included the proposed Annual Audit Plan for 2025/26 and reference to the indicative number of days to be spent in the following four years based on the risk assessed audit universe which lists all potential audits.

Having summarised the role of Internal Audit and clarified that the function operated in accordance with the revised Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and within the context of the Internal Audit Charter, the report explained that the Plan had been prepared following consultation with key partners, referred to related risk issues, and clarified, amongst other things, that the consultation process and risk assessment used to prepare the Plan sometimes resulted in new audits being added to the audit universe or being rescheduled to a different year, such as the agency cost and homelessness audits. Some audits had been renamed, such as maximising attendance becoming the sickness absence capability audit.

20 audit days had been included in the Plan for providing an Internal Audit service to the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust, with the scope of audits to be carried out to be agreed with the management of the Trust and members of its Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. Resulting audit reports would be issued directly to the Trust's Chief Executive.

Referring to audit needs compared to resources available, the report explained that over the 5-year period of the Plan there was an estimated shortfall of only 23 audit days, which was considered manageable. Audit resources had been assessed as being sufficient to provide evidence based opinions.

In line with good practice, the Plan would be reviewed on a regular basis throughout the year and could be adjusted in response to changes in audit resources or the Council's business, risks, systems and controls. Any such changes would be drawn to the Committee's attention as part of the quarterly reporting mechanism already in place.

The Senior Auditor provided further clarification on how the Plan had been formulated from the audit universe, during which he referred to new audits added to the Plan, related risk issues taken into account, resource assumptions made and the provision made for contingency.

In response to Councillor Morrison, the Senior Auditor clarified how a shortfall of 227 days in 2026 in terms of the audit needs assessment could be addressed taking account of needs over the entire period of the plan and related peaks and troughs, highlighting for example that there was excess capacity in 2028.

The Committee agreed to approve the Internal Audit Strategic Plan for 2025/26 to 2029/30.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
LOCAL REVIEW BODY

Minute of meeting held at 2.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 2 April 2025.

Present:

Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Paul Edlin

Provost Mary Montague

Councillor McLean in the Chair

Attending:

Mark Brand, Planning Adviser; Nicola McEleny, Senior Solicitor; and John Burke, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Betty Cunningham, Annette Ireland, Chris Lunday and Andrew Morrison.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1164. No interests were declared.

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

NOTICE OF REVIEW – REVIEW 2025/02 – CONVERSION OF EXISTING DETACHED GARAGE INTO ANNEX AT 26 GLENVILLE AVENUE, GIFFNOCK. (REF NO:- 2024/0422/TP).

1165. The Local Review Body considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted by Mr Alex Findlay against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in respect of the conversion of an existing detached garage into a residential annex at 26 Glenville Avenue, Giffnock.

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 applicant's grounds for review.

The Planning Adviser further outlined the proposed condition 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 definition of an annex in comparison to a standalone dwelling.

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 2025/03 – ATTIC CONVERSION INCORPORATING A REAR DORMER WINDOW AND A ROOFLIGHT AT 98 EAST KILBRIDE ROAD, BUSBY. (REF NO:- 2024/0452/TP).

1166. The Local Review Body considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted by Mr Stephen Christie against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in respect of an attic conversion incorporating a rear dormer window and a rooflight at 98 East Kilbride Road, Busby.

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 applicant's grounds for review.

The Planning Adviser further outlined the proposed condition 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 nature of the conservation area and the property's place within 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 2025/04 – TWO STOREY REAR EXTENSION WITH INTERNAL REMODEL AT 2 ARNSIDE AVENUE, GIFFNOCK. (REF NO:- 2024/0525/TP).

1167. The Local Review Body considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted by Mrs Melanie and Mr Daniel Friel against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in respect of a one and half storey rear extension with internal remodel at 2 Arnside Avenue, Giffnock.

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 applicant's grounds for review.

The Planning Adviser further outlined the proposed condition 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 issue of overlooking the neighbouring properties.

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.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting, held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on Thursday 3 April 2025.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)
Councillor Kate Campbell
Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)
Councillor Katie Pragnell (Vice Chair)

Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Gordon Wallace
Ms Fiona Gilchrist
Ms Evelyn Yedd*

Councillor Anderson in the Chair

(*) indicates remote attendance

Attending:

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

Also Attending:

Suzanne Martin, Head Teacher, St. Joseph's Primary School; Chris Atherton, Depute Principal Educational Psychologist; Clare Creighton, (Quality Improvement Manager); and Seana Moore, Head Teacher, Isobel Mair School.

Apologies:

Councillor Tony Buchanan; Councillor Danny Devlin and Ms Dorothy Graham.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1168. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

1169. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report produced by Education Scotland following its inspection of St. Joseph's Primary School. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The inspection had been carried out by Education Scotland in January 2025. It had covered key aspects of the work of the school and had identified particular strengths and areas for improvement using the full model of the Education Scotland six-point scale and self-evaluation framework.

In assessing the indicators of quality in the school, Education Scotland found 4 aspects of the work to be very good: leadership of change, learning, teaching and assessment, ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion and raising attainment and achievement.

The report highlighted leading practice across Scotland and noted the following as an area worth sharing more widely nationally: The effective approaches, which support children to assess how well they were learning and to recall their prior learning. This was effective in supporting how children independently assess how much support they required in their next steps in learning. Teachers supported children well with this through structured questions, opportunities for children to reflect on their learning and use of individual digital profiles. These profiles were helpful for children to reflect on their learning as they progress through school.

Particular strengths highlighted by the inspection team included the highly effective headteacher providing strong leadership and direction to the work of the school. The headteacher was supported very well by the deputy headteacher and principal teachers. Together, with all staff, they were highly ambitious for all children. Children were happy, enthusiastic and confident, they were successful and independent learners. Together staff and children created a welcoming, nurturing, caring and inclusive ethos which supported positive relationships and a strong sense of community. All staff worked well together as a team, this resulted in high quality learning and teaching which was leading to very strong levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.

The inspection team also identified 2 areas for improvement. One was to continue to build on the highly effective practice in learning, teaching and assessment, the other was to continue to develop approaches to the tracking and monitoring of skills across the curriculum as planned.

Members all congratulated the head teacher on the report and supported the fact that the report was done in the long model. The head teacher provided more detail around the programme for outdoor learning; she also explained the 'No hands up' approach, which allows children more time to think before responding to a question.

The Committee heard from Suzanne Martin, Head Teacher, she commended the strong sense of community throughout the school and that she was delighted that leadership had been recognised in the report. She highlighted that the practices in place were worth sharing more widely. She thanked everyone involved including the children and the Education Committee.

Having heard members commend the report, the Committee agreed:-

- (a) to note the content of the Education Scotland report on St. Joseph's Primary School; and
- (b) to approve the action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement.

Councillor Anderson indicated at this point that the items of the agenda would be considered in the order shown below.

REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING (ASL) REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

1170. The Committee considered the report on the progress of East Renfrewshire Council Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Review recommendations. The report detailed how a national review of the implementation of additional support for learning in schools was carried out by Angela Morgan (2020) which considered the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning legislation and how this was applied to practice across authorities.

The East Renfrewshire review considered how we provided high quality support to children and young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN) who attended specialist provision whilst also providing enhanced ASN provision in our mainstream schools through sharing of specialist knowledge, training and resources.

Based on the findings of the review there were 19 recommendations that were agreed and these were organised into 4 categories – Vision; Culture and Climate; Specialist Provision and Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL).

It was explained how the ASL Oversight Group had overseen the planning, implementation and evaluation of the ASL Review in East Renfrewshire, an extensive consultation had taken place during the data gathering phase of the ASL review and this had been used to inform the actions that had been taken moving forward. Pupils and parents had also been widely involved in the consultation and evaluation of a range of activity linked to the ASL review.

It was recognised that inclusion is an ongoing journey, not a destination and that sustaining this drive for improvement in the area of ASN required continuous commitment and effort in all of the workforce.

A question was asked on how regularly Pupil Support Assistant's (PSA) received training and whether parents can request for their child to have an individual assessment plan. It was confirmed that the Education Department had developed a range of professional learning for PSAs including a programme called 'Keeping Trauma in Mind', this has been so successful that a level 2 was now being introduced with PSA's co-delivering the training. It was also confirmed that a PSA induction programme along with guidance had been developed and that this was an ongoing piece of work. Regarding individual assessment plans for pupils, this would be done through the school and the link Educational Psychologist.

Having heard members commend the report, the Committee agreed to note the content of the Education Departments Executive Summary on the progress of East Renfrewshire council ASL Review Recommendations.

SPOTLIGHT ON LEARN WELL SERVICE AND ISOBEL MAIR SCHOOL

1171. Councillor Anderson invited Seana Moore, Head Teacher Isobel Mair School and Claire Creighton, Quality Improvement Officer to showcase Isobel Mair School. Seana Moore started off by thanking everyone and explaining that she started her new post in January 2025. She went on to explain how work starts with the Family Centre, then continues onto Primary School and Secondary School with the full account of Curriculum for Excellence being taken on board. She confirmed that all learners have now secured positive destinations for the

coming year. Members were able to talk to some of the pupils prior to Committee who showcased and discussed how their curriculum had enabled them to develop throughout their time at Isobel Mair School.

Seana Moore reflected that in February 2023, the Scottish Government commissioned a literature review on 'Transitions to adulthood for disabled young people', which explored experiences and best practices that supported these young people. She reflected on how it's hard to support this as well as the challenges faced in sustaining this onto adulthood, and the school recognises that. She explained that the majority of children within the Family Centre and Primary School had complex learning needs with an increase in those with complex medical needs. When designing the curriculum they are required to look at the youngest in P1 and seek to see what they are preparing them for in adulthood post school. Going forward it was reflected that it was important to ensure that focus was kept on the purpose of education for learners and continuation of core skills which equipped them to be the best they could be.

Clare Creighton commended the work that Seana had done. It was reiterated that there were children and young people with complex needs across many East Renfrewshire's schools. To address this, a transitions team was established in 2022 which had a multiagency approach. This meets 5 times a year, along with 5 separate meeting for Isobel Mair School to discuss possible supports for the children and young people. She highlighted the work of the Communities Pathways team which Members had been given the opportunity to see before the Committee commenced. Across the 7 secondary schools, 3 areas were being looked at to develop the curriculum for young people with additional support needs, this would be developed in these schools as well as Isobel Mair School. She highlighted how crucial partnership working had been as this reassured both parents and young people.

Chris Atherton, Depute Principal Educational Psychologist was then invited to do a presentation on Learn Well. He presented to the Committee that referrals come as a result of emotionally based school absence. He went on to explain that they helped care experienced pupils in years S1 – S4 who's attendance had fallen below 70%. These pupils were supported with learning as well as their wellbeing and tend to have additional support needs.

Learn Well received different funding for various places. Since 2022 there had been over 50 plus young people supported by Learn Well. On average the attendance is 62 – 66%, feedback and quotes were shown on the presentation from both young people and families. He confirmed that they had worked in collaboration with the both the schools and families.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROMISE 5TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRESS REPORT

1172. The Committee considered the report by East Renfrewshire Children's Services on The Promise. The paper highlighted the work undertaken by East Renfrewshire Council, the Health and Social Care Partnership, and the wider Children's Planning Partnership - the Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People Partnership – in promoting The Promise. The report highlighted progress with local implementation over the period 2020 to 2025. The local partnership acknowledged that whilst progress has been made there is much still to do to be fully Promise compliant by 2030.

The Promise Oversight Board published their [report](#) in 5 February 2025 to mark the five year mid-way point in the ten year programme. It concluded that the national journey was behind schedule but still on course to be achieved by 2030. The report stated that to get there will "*require pace, renewed purpose, and everyone to play their part*" over the next five years. It highlighted the statutory provisions of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2024 that related to public bodies as corporate parents and was clear all of these local and national

organisations must fulfil their responsibilities if children and young people were to get the support they required from across the system.

The Calls to Action from the Oversight Board Report were being considered by our local multi agency Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People Partnership and where necessary we will ensure areas for improvement are included within A Place To Grow. The paper set out a range of activity undertaken within the Education Department to deliver on the actions set out in The Promise Plan 2020-23.

The Committee welcomed this paper and acknowledged that work is ongoing. It was noted that 100% of looked after children who had left school in 2022-23 were in a positive destination.

Education Committee agreed to:

- a) note the publication of the national Promise Oversight Board 5th Anniversary Report (2025);
- b) note and comment on the Education Department update on implementation of The Promise in East Renfrewshire; and,
- c) note that a full report on the progress of The Promise will be taken to Council on 23 April 2025.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
APPEALS COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Committee Room, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 10 April 2025.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson
Councillor Paul Edlin

Councillor Annette Ireland

Councillor Anderson in the Chair

Attending:

Kath McCormack, HR Manager; Bethan Jones, Solicitor.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1173. 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 items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

APPEAL AGAINST DISMISSAL – Environment – 02/2025

1174. John Buchanan, Operations Manager and Sharon Bradshaw, HR Case Advisor appeared on behalf of management.

The appellant and a representative appeared in connection with the appeal.

Both parties made their submissions to the committee and were heard in answer to questions on their submissions, a witness also appeared in connection with the appeal and responded to both parties' questions.

Thereafter both parties withdrew from the meeting.

Following consideration, both parties were recalled and advised by the Chair that the grounds of the appeal had not been substantiated and the appeal was not upheld.

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CHAIR