

MINUTE
of
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Minute of meeting held at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 10 September 2025.

Present:

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

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

Provost Montague in the Chair

Attending:

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Alexis Chappell, Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP); Jennifer Greenshields, Chief Executive's Business Manager; Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer); Gerry Mahon, Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement); Michaela Sullivan, Head of Place; Michelle McGuckin, Chief Planner and Building Standards Manager; Barry Tudhope, Democratic Services Manager; Lesleyann Burns, Democratic Services Officer; and Bethany Mitchell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies:

There were no apologies.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1295. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1296. The Provost indicated that, to facilitate the smooth running of the meeting, the items would be considered in the order shown below.

1244

SCHEME OF ADMINISTRATION – PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE AND LOCAL REVIEW BODY

1296. The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships to seek the appointment of an Elected Member to serve on both Planning Applications Committee and Local Review Body; and the appointment of a Chair of both committees.

Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Councillor Bamforth, moved that Councillor Convery be appointed to serve on both Planning Applications Committee and Local Review Body and this was accepted unanimously.

Councillor O'Donnell, seconded by Councillor Wallace, moved that Councillor McLean be appointed to serve as Chair on both Planning Applications Committee and Local Review Body and this was accepted unanimously.

Councillor O'Donnell, seconded by Councillor Devlin, moved that Councillor Ireland be appointed to serve as Vice Chair on both Planning Applications Committee and Local Review Body.

Councillor Wallace, seconded by Councillor Edlin, moved that Councillor Morrison be appointed to serve as Vice Chair on both Planning Applications Committee and Local Review Body.

On a vote being taken by a show of hands 13 votes for Councillor Ireland and 5 votes for Councillor Morrison.

Therefore, the Council agreed that:

- (a) Councillor Convery be appointed to serve on both Planning Applications Committee and Local Review Body;
- (b) Councillor McLean be appointed to serve as Chair on both Planning Applications Committee and Local Review Body; and
- (c) Councillor Ireland be appointed to serve as Vice Chair on both Planning Applications Committee and Local Review Body.

A REPORT TO ADDRESS THE REQUIREMENTS OF AN AMENDED MOTION REFERRING TO PLANNING PERMISSION 2025/0043/TP FOR A BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM

1297. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of Council of 25 June 2025 (Page 1206, Item 1253 refers), the Council considered a report by the Director of Environment to address the requirements of the amended motion approval by Council on 25 June 2025.

Information was given relating to the four points on which Elected Members had requested clarification at the meeting of Council on 25 June 2025.

During discussion, Councillor McLean seconded by Councillor Edlin put forward a motion in the following terms:-

That in terms of recommendation (b) as set out in the presented paper, the decision be as follows:-

Paragraph 20 on page 48 states “Council would have to appoint external planning, legal and landscaping advisors amongst any others deemed necessary in the event of any public enquiry as Council officers recommended approval and cannot appear to defend the opposite case”.

This being the case, the Environment Department as author of the report is also conflicted in preparing a paper to set out the case to overturn an officer recommendation.

Thus the motion to the recommendations set out in the paper by our group is to point out officers have identified a conflict of interest in arguing against the development, therefore so too this paper will be subject to a conflict of interest.

A Stage 1 complaint has recently been submitted by a local resident, alleging maladministration within East Renfrewshire Council’s Planning Department concerning its handling of the compiled and tabled Report of Handling. Additionally, concerns have been raised regarding the role of AAH in this process. There are further complaints regarding the veracity of the alternative sites reviewed and ruled out as not feasible. In short, several landowners claim they were never approached by the developer but their report states landowner permission was not forthcoming.

Further evidence received directly from said landowners, is directly at odds with the application supporting documentation, which must be reviewed also as such statements, if inaccurate undermine the crux of the applicant’s stated need to use a greenbelt location. Whilst we acknowledge Planning Officers do not proactively interrogate statements made by developers, we believe that if credible information subsequently comes to light which suggests those statements are inaccurate, they must be investigated.

While we fully acknowledge the potential financial implications for the Council should this proposal be approved, the concerns raised by local residents necessitate a thorough examination of all available options. If it is upheld that the developer submitted inaccurate information, we request the report also includes details of any legal routes to Council recovering its losses via legal proceedings from the applicant.

It is imperative that East Renfrewshire Council demonstrates it has explored every possible avenue in reviewing this application, ensuring transparency and confidence in the decision-making process among the community.

We acknowledge that local residents have commissioned an independent Judicial Review, which falls outside the scope of this report.

In light of new information arising from Stage 1 complaints—including claims from landowners who state they were never consulted, contrary to the findings presented in the AAH report, we formally request that the report be referred to an independent third party for review.

Given that this report formed the basis of the Planning Area Committee’s (PAC) decision, an impartial assessment is essential to ensure transparency and public confidence in the process. We urge East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) to commission this independent evaluation to address the concerns raised and verify the accuracy of the information relied upon.

An adjournment took place to allow Elected Members to consider this motion.

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The Provost then sought clarification on the second last paragraph of the motion regarding what report the motion referred to. It was clarified that it was the report that officers had brought to this meeting at the request of the Elected Members.

Another adjournment then took place to allow further consideration.

After discussion, the Chief Officer (Legal Services) explained that, in his opinion, this was not a competent motion as the financial consequence of the motion had not been intimated as required in terms of Standing Order 29 and it was inconsistent with the council's previous decision in June to charge officers with production of the report. The Provost, in light of that advice, ruled that the motion was not competent.

Councillor Morrison raised a point of order with regards to Standing Order 29, however, the Provost stated that her ruling on this matter was final.

Discussion then took place among members regarding a number of concerns with the information presented, including the consideration of alternative sites, potential additional information that had come to light following the initial meeting of the Planning Applications Committee, the independence of the report, and the content of paragraph 20 of the report.

During the discussion, the meeting was adjourned as a member of public in the gallery was recording the meeting. The prohibition on recording was explained and it was clarified that the meeting was both being live broadcast and recorded for publication following the meeting.

Following the discussion, Councillor O'Donnell, seconded by Councillor Pragnell moved that, in terms of recommendation (b) of the report, that the Council not pursue a revocation order under Section 65 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor Jim McLean, moved as an amendment that, in terms of recommendation (b) of the report, that the decision of the Council be as follows:-

That Council notes the report as presented, and requests deferment of decision as requested until such time the outcome of the ongoing Judicial Review into the council's conduct and handling of this situation is determined.

An adjournment took place to allow Members to consider this amendment.

On a vote being taken by a show of hands, 12 votes were cast for Councillor O'Donnell's motion and 6 votes for Councillor Morrison's amendment, therefore the motion was declared carried.

The Council:-

- (a) noted the report prepared by officers in accordance with the amended motion; and
- (b) determined that it should not pursue a revocation order under Section 65 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

An adjournment took place to allow members of the public to leave the gallery.

NOTICE OF MOTION

1298. In accordance with Standing Order 27, the following notice of motion had been submitted by Councillor Wallace, seconded by Councillor Morrison:

Council notes that Glasgow City Council is exploring potential revenue streams, with a congestion charge under consideration as one such option.

Council further notes:

- *That many East Renfrewshire residents travel into Glasgow for work, education or hospital appointments, and would face additional costs if such a scheme were introduced.*
- *That local businesses, trades and suppliers depend on vehicle access and would face higher operating costs.*
- *That East Renfrewshire's infrastructure is already under strain, with many railway station car parks full, restricted access to existing public transport networks, and known areas where access to parking competes with other pressures such as shopping.*
- *That if neighbouring authorities were to follow Glasgow's example and impose their own charges, residents could face multiple, overlapping tolls simply to travel across council boundaries - doubling the burden without addressing the underlying issues.*
- *That Clyde Metro represents the region's long-term, multi-authority commitment to integrated transport planning, and offers the proper vehicle to deliver change in a fair and collaborative way.*

Council believes that while improving air quality is an important goal, pursuing congestion charging as a revenue measure in isolation risks unfairly penalising East Renfrewshire residents and businesses, worsening pressure on local infrastructure, and placing additional strain on a working population and business community already struggling to recruit and retain staff.

Council therefore resolves to:

1. *Record its opposition to any congestion charge being introduced by Glasgow.*
2. *Request that officers prepare and present to councillors a briefing paper, drawing on available travel data including information from active travel initiatives, setting out the likely impacts on East Renfrewshire residents, businesses and local infrastructure, so that the Council is better prepared should a congestion charge become a formal proposal by Glasgow.*
3. *Call for renewed urgency in progressing the Clyde Metro initiative as the proper, integrated way to tackle congestion and improve transport across the wider region, rather than piecemeal charging schemes imposed by individual councils.*

Councillor Wallace confirmed the motion and there were no amendments so this motion was agreed.

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REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER – WARD 1: BARRHEAD LIBOSIDE AND UPLAWMOOR BY-ELECTION

1299. The Council considered a report by the Chief Executive/Returning Officer providing details of the results of the Ward 1: Barrhead, Liboside and Uplawmoor By-election and that the new Elected Member, Julie Ann Costello McHale, Scottish Labour Party, had signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Councillor McHale paid respects to the late Councillor Betty Cuningham OBE and thanked the residents of Barrhead.

The Council noted the report.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

1300. The Council considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 25 June 2025.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES

1301. The Council considered and approved the Minutes of the meetings of the undernoted:-

- (a) Special Planning Applications Committee – 17 June 2025;
- (b) Cabinet – 19 June 2025;
- (c) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 19 June 2025;
- (d) Council – 25 June 2025;
- (e) Appeals Committee – 17 July 2025;
- (f) Special Licensing Committee – 22 July 2025;
- (g) Licensing Committee – 5 August 2025;
- (h) Planning Application Committee – 6 August 2025;
- (i) Cabinet – 14 August 2025;
- (j) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 14 August 2025; and
- (k) Education Committee – 21 August 2025.

AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 14 AUGUST 2025 – ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2024-25

1302. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 14 August 2025 (Page 1233, Item 1284 refers), when it had been agreed to recommend to the Council the approval of the Annual Treasury Management Report 2024/25, the Council considered a report by the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) for approval of the attached organisations for investment of surplus funds.

Councillor Morrison made a statement on Annual Treasury Management Report for 2024/25, which outlined the Council's debt position and compliance with prudential and risk indicators. Long-term borrowing increased by £51m, comprising £25m in new borrowing to support capital programmes and £26m due to changes in lease accounting standards. Borrowing remained within approved limits, and all risk indicators were met.

It was asked if clarity could be given on the PFI debt increase, the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that this was an accounting adjustment.

The Council agreed to approve the Annual Treasury Management Report 2024-25 set out in Appendix 8 to the report.

STATEMENTS BY CONVENERS AND REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

The following statements were made:-

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

Councillor Anderson gave a statement on the successful summer activity camps, high participation in the reading challenge, and the Trust's nomination for Scottish Swim Provider of the Year. Eaglesham Library reopened after refurbishment. He also congratulated pupils on record exam results and continued progress in closing the attainment gap. He stated that he was looking forward to a detailed breakdown at the next Education Committee.

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

Councillor Pragnell gave a statement on reflections from the Chief Officer on her early priorities of visibility, engagement, and collaboration, including the introduction of "People Stories" to highlight service impact. The first story showcased life-changing support from the Care at Home team. Updates included progress on the Suicide Prevention Strategy, with East Renfrewshire maintaining the lowest suicide rate in Scotland, and excellent national assessment results for local drug and alcohol services. Budget pressures of £2.4m remained, with work ongoing to address this. Further updates were provided on child poverty, delayed discharge, and veterans support.

Councillor Macdonald raised a point of order under Standing Order 25, he asked why there were only two Conveners making statements and asked what if he had questions for other Conveners.

It was clarified that it was the decision of the Conveners whether they wished to make a statement, and that Elected Members were welcome to contact Conveners at any time.

The Council noted the statements.

PROVOST ENGAGEMENTS

1303. 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 25 June 2025.

The Council noted the report.

ANNUAL STATEMENT ON ADEQUACY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, RISK MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEMS

1304. The Council considered a report by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on providing a statement on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and internal control systems operating within the Council during 2024/25.

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Councillor Morrison summarised the internal and external statement of assurances for 2024/25.

The Council noted the report.

POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS: CHANGES TO CABINET, CONVENER REMITS, COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

1305. The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on proposed changes to Cabinet, Convener Remits, Committee Appointments and representation following the Ward 1: Barrhead, Liboside and Uplawmoor By-Election held on Thursday 21 August 2025.

The Council agreed to:-

- (a) the appointment of Councillor McHale as a fifth member of Cabinet;
- (b) the establishment of a new Convenorship for Communities, Equalities and Culture & Leisure, and the revised remits for the Leader of the Council and Conveners (Appendix 2);
- (c) the replacement of Councillor Devlin with Councillor McHale on the Education Committee;
- (d) the replacement of Councillor O'Donnell with Councillor McHale on the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust Board; and
- (e) the replacement of Councillor O'Donnell with Councillor Anderson on the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) Board.

AURS ROAD UPDATE AND FUNDING REQUEST

1306. The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment to update the Council on the progress of the Aurs Road City Deal Project, currently under construction, and to request the approval of additional funds required to complete the project.

It was requested that further communications be issued with regards to alternative routes being used during this project, which was agreed. The Head of Place gave a summary on the progress made and explained that, although significant progress had taken place, there was still work to be carried out and that more precise information could be provided in Spring 2026.

There was discussion around reallocating funding from the City Deal, and it was clarified that, due to financial constraints, that this was not possible.

The Council:-

- (a) noted the progress on site and the strategic importance of the Aurs Road project;
- (b) acknowledged that additional funds would be required to complete the project;

- (c) approved, in principle, £4.3m of additional funds to complete the Aurs Road project, together with an allowance for variance in the remaining unfixed elements of the cost to complete, requiring a total sum of up to £6.9m;
- (d) approved a maximum £3m to be drawn from the Capital Reserve, with the balance of up to £3.9m to be funded from external borrowing and that authority is delegated to the Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer to determine the exact sums to be drawn from the Capital Reserve and borrowed, dependent on the final outcome of the project and any additional funds that may be obtained; and
- (e) agreed that further communications be issued regarding the use of alternate routes while the project was ongoing.

CALENDAR OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS TO MAY 2027

1307. The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships to seek approval of the proposed Calendar of Council and Committee Meetings to May 2027.

The question was raised as to why Planning Applications Committee was now monthly when previously some Committees had been cancelled, it was clarified that this was to stop any Special Planning Applications Committee meetings having to be arranged due to time constraints.

The Council:-

- (a) approved the Calendars of Meetings, as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report, covering meetings until May 2027; and
- (b) noted the approved dates of meetings of the East Renfrewshire Integration Joint Board.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

1308. The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships to advise Council on the achievement of gaining Gold accreditation from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) and of the ongoing work being carried out in support of serving personnel and veterans.

The Deputy Provost gave a statement noting that East Renfrewshire Council has achieved the MoD's ERS Gold Award, recognising outstanding support for the Armed Forces community. This success reflected the ongoing commitment of Council teams and partners, with practical initiatives such as Health for Heroes and the Veterans' Breakfast Club.

The achievement was formally acknowledged by the Lord-Lieutenant. The Council would continue to champion the Armed Forces Covenant and support veterans and their families.

The Council:-

- (a) recognised the achievement of gaining the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award; and

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- (b) noted the continuing work of the Council, HSCP and East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure in support of serving personnel and veterans.

PROVOST

MINUTE

of

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Minute of meeting held at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 25 September 2025.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson
 Councillor Tony Buchanan
 Deputy Provost Kate Campbell
 Councillor Danny Devlin(*)
 Councillor Paul Edlin
 Councillor Annette Ireland
 Councillor Chris Lunday(*)
 Councillor Julie Ann McHale

Councillor Colm Merrick
 Provost Mary Montague
 Councillor David Macdonald(*)
 Councillor Julieann McHale
 Councillor Jim McLean
 Councillor Andrew Morrison
 Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)

Provost Montague in the Chair

Attending:

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Alexis Chappell, Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP); Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer); Gerry Mahon, Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement); Siobhan McColgan, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Barry Tudhope, Democratic Services Manager; Colin Hutton, Senior Communications Officer; Jennifer Greenshields, Chief Executive's Business Manager; Paul Parsons, Principal Account; John Burke, Democratic Services Officer; and Bethany Mitchell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Rob Jones, Ernst & Young

(*) indicates remote attendance.

Apologies:

Councillors Caroline Bamforth, Angela Convery, Katie Pragnell and Gordon Wallace.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1336. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

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2024/25 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND DRAFT ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT FOR EAST RENFRESHIRE COUNCIL

1337. Under reference to the minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held earlier that day (Page 1268 , Item refers 1329) the Committee considered a report by the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) regarding the Annual Accounts for 2024/25; the associated draft Annual Audit Report prepared by the External Auditor, which provided an overview of the main issues arising from the 2024/25 audit and would be issued in final form after the financial statements had been certified; and the associated Letter of Representation from the Council to the External Auditor.

The Council had received an unqualified audit certificate. It had operated within its operation budget, returning departmental surpluses totalling £2.5m, with the main drivers behind this detailed in the report.

Transfers of £1m had been made to the Capital Reserve, as anticipated in the Revenue Estimates report, leaving the balance of £1.5m in the Council's un-earmarked General Reserve, which equated to 2.7% of the overall net budgeted revenue expenditure, which was in accordance with the Council's reserves policy to hold a minimum of 2%.

Details were also provided on the Council's overall reserve balances and capital expenditure.

A copy of the Letter of Representation from the Council to Ernst & Young, the external auditors, was attached as Appendix 2 to the report for the Council's consideration.

The Council agreed to:-

- (a) approve the Council's Annual Accounts for 2024/25, including the Management Commentary, Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Policies and Audit Certificate, for signature on behalf of the Council;
- (b) noted the draft 2024/25 Annual Audit Report, including the related Action Plan, the finalised copy of which would be circulated to Elected Members; and
- (c) approved for signature the Letter of Representation to be sent from the Council to Ernst & Young.

QUESTIONS TO CONVENERS OF WHICH NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN

1338. The Council heard questions submitted to the Leader of the Council, Convener for Health and Social Care and Convener of Education.

Councillor Morrison submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council:-

"To ask the relevant Convener for a progress update on the survey undertaken to tackle poor mobile phone coverage in Newton Mearns, and wider East Renfrewshire, following announcement on 6th March 2025 of a partnership with Glasgow City Region to install surveying equipment to East Renfrewshire Council refuse collection vehicles."

The Leader of the Council responded to the question, indicating that the survey of mobile phone coverage that had been announced earlier in the year was part of a Glasgow City Region programme, known as the Smart and Connected Social Places Programme. He provided some details of that programme and the projects involved in it. He indicated that the survey was the largest of its type in Scotland.

A handout was circulated, giving details of the outcome of that survey, with areas of low signal highlighted. Those areas of poor coverage had been flagged to mobile phone providers.

The providers had indicated that coverage was expected to increase through use of shared infrastructure and a follow-up survey was planned, with timescales to be agreed.

East Renfrewshire Council would continue to liaise with the dedicated Telecoms Unit within Glasgow City Council to address areas of poor coverage to address any issues.

Councillor Morrison asked, as a supplementary question, if the Leader would undertake to hold the networks responsible for areas of poor coverage. The Leader responded that the Council could only influence decision making in this area and, working at City Region level, would continue to work to influence those decisions to address any problems that arose.

Councillor Macdonald submitted the following question to the Convener for Health and Social Care:-

"Can you provide a progress update for the financial assessments being carried out for the introduction of charges for adult social care?"

The Leader, on behalf of Councillor Pragnell, Convenor of Health and Social Care, who had submitted apologies to the meeting, stated that extensive engagement had been carried out with residents through drop-in sessions, written and video communications; as well as collaboration with third sector providers. There had also been staff training and development of robust processes around the administration of those assessments.

Elected members had received a briefing session on the topic on 23 September 2025, in preparation for the forthcoming paper to Council on the subject.

It was reported that income maximisation work had, on average, seen an annual income increase in excess of £5,000 and, for some, significantly more. The Leader thanked the Council's Money Advice and Rights Team (MART) for their work in assisting HSCP in carrying out the financial assessments.

Of the 515 people identified as being in scope for charging, it was noted that all had received three letters, over 100 had engaged with drop-in and other sessions, 67 had contacted MART for financial assessment and 15 of those assessments had been completed with the remainder still in progress.

The Leader noted that, despite significant efforts to engage, there had been understandable reluctance to fully engage with the financial assessments at the time, with many users waiting for a full and final decision before disclosing any financial details.

A comprehensive report would be presented to Council in October with papers published on the Council website on 14 October.

Councillor MacDonald asked, as a supplementary question, if financial estimates revealed if the charging policy had yielded the revenues expected.

The Leader, and Chief Officer – HSCP, clarified that the outcome had been in line with what was previously stated.

Councillor Macdonald submitted the following question to the Convenor of Education:-

"Does the Convener of Education recognise that allowing smartphones in our schools is causing our young people a great deal of unnecessary harm both to their mental health and

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to the quality of the education they receive in the classroom and is obstructing educators from carrying out their jobs properly?"

Councillor Anderson, the Convener of Education, stated that the Council currently had a live consultation ongoing where children and young people, as well as parents, carers and school staff were being asked to share their views around mobile phone use in East Renfrewshire schools. Councillor Anderson detailed some of the key themes of that presentation and acknowledged the strength of feeling on the topic, with over 5,000 responses received with just over a week of the consultation still to run.

Councillor Anderson went on to discuss some of the benefits and drawbacks of mobile phone use in schools, referring to various studies and articles that had been produced discussing the topic. He noted that a wide range of evidence had been made available on both sides of the argument.

Councillor Anderson stressed the importance of the role of families in shaping digital habits and the- need to hear the voices of the community before making any decisions. However, he reassured the Council that a range of data, including external scrutiny, highlighted the overall wellbeing and educational experience of children and young people in East Renfrewshire continued to be an area of focus. He provided details of some recent inspections which had shown very good and excellent practices across the Council area.

Councillor Anderson looked forward to the outcome of the consultation and seeing how it translated into policy, encouraging anyone who had not yet engaged with the consultation to do so.

Councillor MacDonald asked, as a supplementary question, what the likely outcome would be in terms of policy changes.

Councillor Anderson, and the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) responded that they would have to wait to see the outcome of the consultation before making any decision in that respect. However, scrutiny on those outcomes would be given by the Education Committee.

PROVOST