

**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL**

**Minute of virtual meeting held at 7.00pm on 25 February 2020.**

**Present:**

Provost Jim Fletcher	Councillor Annette Ireland
Deputy Provost Betty Cunningham	Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Paul Aitken	Councillor David Macdonald
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Angela Convery	Councillor Stewart Miller
Councillor Danny Devlin	Councillor Paul O’Kane
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Councillor Jim Swift
Councillor Barbara Grant	Councillor Gordon Wallace

Provost Fletcher in the Chair

**Attending:**

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Julie Murray, Chief Officer – Health and Social Care Partnership; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Phil Daws Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources); Gillian McCarney, Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer); Arlene Cassidy, Children’s Services Strategy Manager, HSCP; Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

**Also Attending:**

Anthony McReavy, Chief Executive, East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust; and Morven Fraser, Audit Scotland.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**1535.** Provost Fletcher and Councillors Grant, Merrick and O’Kane declared a non-financial interest in items 1544, 1547 and 1548 below on the grounds that they were members of the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust Board.

**MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**1536.** The Council considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 16 December 2020.

## **MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES**

**1537.** The Council considered and approved the Minutes of the meetings of the undernoted, except as otherwise referred to in Items 1538 and 1539 below:-

- (a) Appointments Committee – 16 December 2020;
- (b) Licensing Committee – 19 January 2021
- (c) Local Review Body – 20 January 2021
- (d) Education Committee – 21 January 2021;
- (e) Audit & Scrutiny Committee – 21 January 2021;
- (f) Cabinet – 28 January 2021;
- (g) Cabinet – 4 February 2021;
- (h) Planning Applications Committee – 10 February 2021;
- (i) Local Review Body – 10 February 2021;
- (j) Cabinet (Police & Fire) – 11 February 2021;
- (k) Audit & Scrutiny Committee – 18 February 2021.

### **CABINET – 28 JANUARY – MIXED TENURE SCHEME**

**1538.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of 28 January (Page 1401, Item 1514 refers), when amongst other things, it had been noted that the contract would be competitively retendered to run from 31 March 2021, Councillor Grant requested clarification on the timescale for the tendering process. In response, the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) advised that, although the timescale for processing the tender had been tight, it had been processed appropriately and was on schedule to be finalised by the end of the financial year.

The Council noted the comments.

### **CABINET – 4 FEBRUARY – BETTER POINTS INITIATIVE**

**1539.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of 4 February (Page 1406, Item 1519 refers), when the tender for the Better Points Initiative was approved, Councillors Grant and Wallace requested clarification respectively on how the initiative would be evaluated and how long the project would operate for. In response, the Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer) reported that the App could be downloaded voluntarily and consultants would analyse and measure a vast range of data recorded via the App including number of registered/active users; age/gender; activity undertaken; distance travelled; calories burned, etc. She added that introduction of the App had been put on hold because East Renfrewshire had been placed in the highest tier of restrictions, as a result of which Sustrans did not expect the project to be completed by the original date of April 2021. Councillor Wallace proposed that the Audit & Scrutiny Committee should seek updates on the project's progress in due course to ensure value for money was being provided.

Having heard the Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer) advise that she would provide further information to Councillors Grant, Wallace and Swift in response to some of the questions raised, the Council noted the comments.

## **STATEMENTS BY CONVENER/REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT BOARDS/ COMMITTEES**

**1540.** The following statement was made:-

### **Councillor Bamforth – Integration Joint Board**

Councillor Bamforth reported on the most recent meeting of the Integration Joint Board (IJB) held on 3 February 2021 which had mainly focussed on recognising the pressures that staff were working under and providing information on the latest response to the pandemic. She advised that referrals to support mental and physical health had increased; and updates were provided on adult support and protection work, and relocation of care home residents due to a recent closure. An overview of the 2021-22 budget process and a review of the medium term financial plan for the board were noted together with the Revenue Budget Monitoring report for the period up to 30 November 2020. Even though a modest underspend had been reported, it was highlighted that 2021/22 would be a difficult and challenging year, although it was expected that all COVID related costs would be fully funded by the Scottish Government. The Board also considered and noted the East Renfrewshire Children and Young People's Services Plan 2020-23 and the HSCP Strategic Plan Update.

The Council noted the statement.

## **PROVOST'S ENGAGEMENTS**

**1541.** The Council considered and noted a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, providing details of a photoshoot and virtual event attended by Provost Fletcher.

## **FINANCIAL PLANNING 2021-2027**

**1542.** Under reference to the Minute of meeting of 27 February 2020 (Page 1118, Item 125 refers), when the Outline Revenue Financial Plan for 2020-26 had been approved, the Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) seeking approval of the updated Outline Revenue Financial Plan for 2021-27.

The report explained that despite a recent move to annual budgets by the Scottish Government and significant shifts in the local government budget allocation which made long-term planning challenging, the Council had continued to plan its detailed revenue budgets over a 3 year time horizon, updating them annually. The Scottish Government had been unable to move to publishing multi-year settlements from 2020/21 as intended due to the General Election and the impact of COVID-19 on financial planning timescales in 2020, but hoped these would recommence from 2022/23, which would facilitate the Council's revenue planning. The Plan had taken account of the 2020/21 draft settlement, which was subject to change when the final Scottish and UK budget plans were confirmed on 9 and 3 March respectively. The Council's Outcome Delivery Plan and outline multi-year plans for 2022/23 onwards would be refined once the impact of the final figures was known.

It was highlighted that financial planning was extremely difficult in the present economic and political situation, that Brexit and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic uncertainty further complicated matters, and that there was a need to plan for a range of scenarios. Having commented on the financial outlook, the report summarised the position on various demand pressures, making reference to issues such as demographics, capital infrastructure, the City Deal and legislative change in addition to wider political, societal, and economic change.

Issues pertaining to the Outline Revenue Financial Plan and a range of mitigating actions open to the Council, such as through its Modern Ambitious Programme, partnership working, service reductions, income generation and the use of reserves were commented on.

Following discussion, the Council:-

- (a) noted the increasing budget pressures anticipated in the next six years and the mitigating actions proposed; and
- (b) approved the Outline Revenue Financial Plan 2021-27.

## **RESERVES POLICY**

**1543.** The Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) proposing for consideration an updated Reserves Policy for the Council.

The report explained that it was regarded good financial practice that the Council had a documented and approved Financial Reserves Policy, making reference to Local Authority Accounting Practice (LAAP) Bulletin 99 published in July 2014 which provided advice from CIPFA on local authority reserves and balances. Having clarified that the proposed policy reflected key messages from that bulletin, the report referred to their practical application within the Council.

Whilst commenting on related issues in further detail, the report made reference to the various types of reserves operated by the Council, following which the importance of clarity on the rules and responsibilities in respect of governance of the Council's funds and reserves was referred to. The governance arrangements in respect of the General Fund Unallocated Reserve and Earmarked Reserves were summarised, following which it was clarified that the Policy would be reviewed no less frequently than 3-yearly.

The Council agreed that the Reserves Policy be approved.

## **EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL REVENUE ESTIMATES 2021/22**

**1544.** The Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) relative to the proposed Revenue Estimates for 2021/22 of income and expenditure as the basis for the Council Tax declaration for 2021/22. A copy of the Revenue Estimates 2021/22 was appended to the report.

The report outlined the revenue budget process, commented on the Scottish Government's Grant Funding for 2021-22, and explained that in determining the grant distribution the Scottish Government had again put in place the "Floors" arrangement to ensure year-on-year grant stability at individual council level. Under this arrangement, the Council would contribute £1.799m by way of deduction from Aggregate External Finance (AEF) grants in 2021/22. This was higher than in recent years and was reflected in the figures in the report.

Having commented on Non-Domestic Rates income, the report referred to the financial outlook and the practice in recent years of setting multi-year budgets. Given the ongoing financial outlook, it was proposed that the Council continued to adopt a longer-term financial planning approach, but as multi-year Scottish and UK Government settlements were not available, it was proposed to agree plans only for 2021/22. Officers would continue to model departmental figures for 2021/22 to 2023/24 and update figures as set out in the Council's report on Financial Planning 2021-2027 for longer-term planning purposes. It was

anticipated that a further 3 year budget would be set in February 2022 when multi-year figures were announced by the Scottish Government.

Taking account of a range of matters, the report referred to a total initial budget shortfall of £8.519m for the coming year. This was lower than expected when the indicative budget had been estimated, with the main reasons for this being summarised.

The report explained that the Council's settlement included additional grant of £1.802m (equivalent to a 3% Council Tax increase) on condition that Council Tax was frozen for 2021/22. The Council's published forecasts had been based on a 3% assumed Council Tax increase and it was therefore proposed to accept this additional grant and avoid any increase for local Council Tax payers.

It was explained that budgets were closely monitored throughout the year and the latest monitoring had forecast a non-COVID related underspend of £2.472m by the year end, which had been taken into account when considering the scope for a draw on reserves. It was therefore considered that a further £3 million of the outstanding 2021/22 savings requirement could be deferred on a short term basis by a drawdown from unallocated general reserve funds resulting in the budget shortfall for 2021/22 being reduced to £5.519m.

In order to permit the Integrated Joint Board and the East Renfrewshire Culture & Leisure Trust to proceed with their scheduled budget setting plans it was proposed that the Council confirm their contributions to these bodies, leaving a savings figure of £3.503m to be addressed by Council Departments. It was confirmed that Directors had compiled savings options for 2021/22 totalling £9.434m which was sufficient to cover the remaining gap.

Related issues commented on included scope for further changes to the grant settlement, the intention to await details of the final figures before identifying further savings, and the possibility of the most challenging savings being deferred subject to the final budget settlement.

The report explained that further cash reductions in grant were forecast for the years following 2021/22, producing ongoing shortfalls for the next 5 years. For 2022/23 a mid-range budget shortfall of £9.338m was forecast after applying an assumed 3% Council Tax increase for that year.

The report commented on the Revenue Estimates for 2021/22 following which specific reference was made to the impact of Welfare Reform on Council services and contingency provision to help the Council support change. Reference was also made to the assumed Council Tax collection rate for 2021/22 and reserves and balances issues, particularly the General, Modernisation, Insurance, Equalisation, and Repairs and Renewal Funds, Capital Reserve and Devolved School Management Reserve. Having referred to efficiency issues and the equality impact assessment carried out on the budget saving measures, the report concluded by indicating that the Revenue Estimates appended to the report were based on a Council Tax Band D level of £1,289.96 being set for 2021/22, representing a Council Tax freeze compared to 2020/21.

Councillor Buchanan referred to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and proposed that Members pause for a minute's silence to remember those who had lost their lives. He was then heard on the proposals highlighting that councils had played a key role in the COVID-19 response including through supporting shielding residents; offering grants to businesses and individuals; providing key links to the voluntary sector; establishing a humanitarian food hub; establishing new ways of working to support children and young people with their education; setting up two mass vaccination centres; and operating an asymptomatic testing centre. He

added that staff had risen to meet the challenge of providing new services on top of the ones already in place and he expressed his thanks to everyone involved in supporting the Council's response. He paid further tribute to all Health and Social Care Staff, and in particular the staff at Bonnyton Care Home, and referred to the human and financial cost which had been paid by councils and residents during the pandemic.

Councillor Buchanan explained that the Scottish Government grant settlement remained the biggest source of funding for the Council with only 18% of income being obtained from Council Tax payments. In October, a shortfall of £11.8m had been predicted but this figure had been reduced to £3.5m due to internal savings; an improved settlement; and using £3m from reserves. The Council had made a substantial commitment to avoid reductions in vital services, and this included an increase in funding to both the HSCP and the Culture & Leisure Trust. He proposed that the Council's savings plan would be considered at a special meeting of the Council in March 2021 and would include ambitious capital project plans. In addition, he supported the Scottish Government's request to freeze Council tax and confirmed that there would be no Council Tax increase in 2021/22.

In conclusion Councillor Buchanan having thanked all Council, HSCP and Leisure Trust staff for their hard work in ensuring high quality services could be delivered and for supporting local people moved that the Council:-

- (a) approve the 2021/22 revenue estimates;
- (b) agree that the detailed budgets and savings to be applied should be determined by Council after the final confirmation of the Scottish Government grant settlement;
- (c) agree to hold a further meeting of the Council on 15 March 2021 to determine detailed budgets and savings to be applied for 2021/22;
- (d) approve the recommended level and utilisation of reserves;
- (e) determine the 2020/21 Council Tax Band D level at £1,289.96; and
- (f) note that the management of the Council's finances and service plans would continue to be undertaken on a longer-term basis.

Seconding the motion, Councillor O'Kane highlighted that the Budget was set in the difficult context of the financial settlement becoming known late, commenting that the Administration had worked hard to deliver it in the circumstances and against a background of financial uncertainty and ongoing local government funding reductions. He added that the budget had been set in a different context this year and praised the generosity and kindness of people who assisted during the pandemic across all the Council's communities. Staff had worked hard to keep vulnerable people safe and connected; supported children and young people at home; set up local vaccination centres; and ensured that services continued to operate. He added that Directors had worked hard to reduce spend and the budget gap and continued to lobby the Government for an improved settlement. He highlighted that it was prudent to wait on the outcome of both the Scottish and UK Government's budget processes before finalising any decisions on savings.

Thereafter, Councillor O'Kane thanked officers for their hard work during a difficult year and during the budget process, and thanked residents for working together to make lives better.

A full discussion took place in the course of which concerns were expressed about the use of Council reserves and the Floors arrangement. Councillor Wallace highlighted that local

government services and decision making were vital but, the grant received from the Scottish Government remained low and related to a cut in funding in real cash terms. Councillor Miller agreed that the amount of work undertaken in local areas during the pandemic had not been sufficiently recognised by the Scottish Government in terms of additional funding to deliver local services. Concluding the discussion, all Members agreed that the response to the pandemic by local people and Council employees had been outstanding and supported the proposed Council Tax freeze.

Summing up, Councillor Buchanan was heard in response to some of the issues raised during discussion, emphasising that the Council had and would continue to push for a fairer settlement from the Scottish Government, no matter which party was in control, to ensure that vital local services could continue to be provided.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to approve the 2021/22 revenue estimates;
- (b) that the detailed budgets and savings to be applied should be determined by Council after the final confirmation of the Scottish Government grant settlement;
- (c) to hold a further meeting of the Council on 15 March 2021 to determine detailed budgets and savings to be applied for 2021/22;
- (d) to approve the recommended level and utilisation of reserves;
- (e) to determine the 2020/21 Council Tax Band D level at £1,289.96; and
- (f) to note that the management of the Council's finances and service plans would continue to be undertaken on a longer-term basis.

### **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – RENT SETTING 2021/22 AND 2022/23**

**1545.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 27 February 2020 (Page 1128, Item 1219 refers), when the Council had approved the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2020/21, the Council considered a report by the Director of Environment making recommendations in relation to the proposed rent increase for council housing for 2021/22.

Having referred to the need to review legislative requirements, local priorities, related costs and what would be sustainable, affordable and acceptable to tenants when determining the level of rent increase required, the report clarified that a key legislative challenge for the Council in recent years had been meeting and maintaining the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS), in addition to which sustainability improvements to the energy efficiency rating of its housing stock under the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) were required by 2020. Despite COVID-19 restrictions, 91% of the Council housing stock had been brought up to meet the standard required and it was expected that the remaining 9% would be completed by the end of the 2020/21 financial year. These challenges were in addition to addressing routine requirements. Having commented on considerable service improvements in recent years but also related challenges, such as in relation to Universal Credit and ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, the report explained that approval of the proposed rent increase of 1% for 2021/22 effective from April 2021 and a further 1% increase in April 2022 would assist the Housing Service to address some of the issues tenants considered priorities. It was explained that the Council was also keen to continue to

provide new homes for local residents. 45 new homes had already been built with a further 116 units currently under construction.

The report commented on a range of related matters further, including affordability, the impact of the rent increase, staffing, loan charges and additional investment. It was also explained that the Housing Service was currently undertaking a significant redesign, which included implementation of new digital technologies to ensure customers could use self-serve tools and allow officers to spend greater time in the community delivering customer focused services. It was further reported that COVID-19 had led to an increase in both void rent loss and rent arrears, in addition to which the need to minimise the rent increase but maintain investment had created a projected deficit of £606,000 for 2020/21. However, the deficit would be addressed by the 30 year Housing Business Plan which had sufficient reserves in place.

Councillor Devlin was heard in support of the proposals during which he referred to the balance needed between making improvements to the housing stock and keeping rent levels reasonable, particularly this year as many people's incomes had been badly affected by the pandemic. He confirmed that the authority's rent levels were lower than other local landlords.

The Council agreed that a rent increase of 1% be applied for the financial year 2021/22 with effect from April 2021, and that a further increase of 1% be applied in April 2022.

#### **HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22 TO 2030/31**

**1546.** The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment, seeking approval of the proposed 10-year Housing Capital Programme for 2021/22 to 2030/31.

The report clarified the position on various matters, including how the programme had recently been dominated by the need to invest to meet the Scottish Quality Housing Standard (SQHS) and first Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH1) by 2020/21. 91% of housing stock had already been brought up to meet the standard by the end of December 2020 and it was expected that the remaining stock would be completed by the end of 2020/21. Having clarified that the Scottish Government was introducing further energy efficiency targets for social housing to be achieved by 2025 (ESSH2), the report explained that the targets would be extremely challenging to achieve and the actual cost of ESSH2 would be dependent on further research and feasibility studies. It was also reported that, due to the impact of COVID-19, many planned works had been moved to 2020/21 and there may be further slippage in 2020/21 due to progress made on contracts and the impact of government restrictions.

Having commented on the need to achieve a difficult balance between tenants' aspirations regarding housing improvements, investment affordability, and the implications of the age of the Council's housing stock, the report provided details of key areas on which the Housing Capital Programme would focus for the next ten years, including investment of £43.7m to complete the delivery of 310 new council houses; of £6.8m in central heating; of £2.2m primarily in house re-wiring and the upgrading of smoke detectors; of £19.2m in external structural projects; and of £15.5m in the installation of internal elements such as kitchens. Other projects itemised included investment of £150k to fund house purchase opportunities such as through the Scottish Government's Mortgage to Rent Scheme; of £1.5m in sheltered housing; and further development of the new Housing Management IT system.

The report commented on a range of further matters, including how the programme was financed, related issues and monitoring arrangements. It concluded that the levels of



investment within the programme were essential to allow the Council to continue to meet the SQHS, to meet the future requirements of EESSH, and to provide homes that would address the needs and aspirations of current and prospective tenants. It was emphasised that although continued investment was affordable and would be welcomed by tenants, resources were tight and prudent financial management was required.

Councillor Devlin highlighted that the 10 year capital programme would continue to meet the SHQS and EESSH standards and aimed to mitigate fuel poverty and climate change emissions. He added that a number of planned improvements had been delayed due to COVID-19 but had been included in the 2021/22 programme, including fitting integrated smoke and fire alarms in properties.

The Council:-

- (a) approved the proposed 2021/22 to 2030/231 Housing Capital Programme; and
- (b) authorised the Director of Environment to progress the projects contained with the 2021/22 programme.

#### **EAST RENFREWSHIRE CULTURE AND LEISURE TRUST 2021/22 BUSINESS PLAN**

**1547.** The Council considered a report by the Director of Education, seeking approval of the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust (ERCL) 2021/22 Business Plan. A copy of the plan was appended to the report.

It was highlighted that the report had been delayed this year due to COVID-19 to allow the Trust to plan more effectively for 2021/22 and align the plan more closely with the budget setting process. The report provided background details about the establishment of the Trust as an independent charity and indicated that the business planning process was outlined in the Services Agreement between the Trust and the Council that vested the Trust with the assets to deliver culture and leisure services on behalf of the Council. Details of what the business plan identified together with its strategic aims were outlined in the report.

Whilst noting that this was the sixth East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust Business Plan which gave clear strategic direction that was in accordance with the Council's strategies, the report highlighted that the plan was supported by detailed operational plans which delivered the Council's objectives under the Community Plan, Fairer East Ren Plan and Outcome Delivery Plan and would guide the work of the Trust and its staff to deliver high quality services to the residents and communities of East Renfrewshire.

The Council approved the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust 2020/21 Business Plan.

#### **EASTWOOD LEISURE CENTRE AND EASTWOOD PARK MASTERPLAN**

**1548.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 16 December 2020 (Page 1376, Item 1487 refers), when it was noted that a further report specifically with regard to the Leisure Centre and Theatre options, costs and potential phasing of costs would be submitted to the Council for consideration in February 2021, the Council considered a report by the Director of Environment providing an update on the Eastwood Leisure Centre and Theatre options, costs and potential phasing of costs.

The report highlighted that the Leisure Centre/Theatre had the potential to deliver extremely wide benefits and the basic construction costs, including demolition of the existing buildings, contingencies and inflation was estimated at £47,500,000. In order to demonstrate value for money, the project had been benchmarked against other relevant projects, including the Allander Leisure Centre in East Dunbartonshire, although it was highlighted that there were a number of key differences between the two projects which made an exact comparison difficult. Key additions to the Eastwood Park project included, a library; theatre; 50m pool; a gymnastics zone; and café, kitchen and theatre bar, amongst other things. The cost data benchmarking exercise had confirmed that the estimated cost level was appropriate for a leisure centre of this ambition, size and scope.

Further information was provided on the benefits of the site selected; design and impact of the project; and option appraisal. It was further reported that considerable progress had been made since the previous report was considered by the Council in December 2020, including review and refinement of the project brief; having a full project design team in place; agreement reached on project governance arrangements and reporting schedules with the project managers; and submission of a Proposal for Application Notice; amongst other things. Further information was also provided on the next stages, which included surveys and investigations; and wider masterplanning issues.

Councillor Wallace was heard in respect of the proposals indicating that, although overall he was in favour of the project, he was concerned at the scale as the costs and aspirations for the facility had increased significantly since the original proposal. Councillor O'Kane added that this was a very ambitious and aspirational project which would serve the needs of all residents for many years to come and would generate additional income for the Culture and Leisure Trust. Councillor Buchanan highlighted that the project had developed significantly since the original plans and would include facilities which allowed local residents, and those from further afield, to look after their health and wellbeing in a modern, future-proof environment. He added that the project would provide jobs within the local community, including during the building phase of the project, and that this was the perfect time to progress with such an ambitious project as borrowing costs remained low.

Further discussion took place in the course of which some concerns were raised about the costs involved; whether this type of facility would be used in the post COVID landscape; and the status of the wider masterplan. In response, Mr McReavy advised that the Trust had been keeping in touch with customers over the past year and the overwhelming response was that people were keen to return to leisure facilities as quickly as possible and return to normal. However, it was acknowledged that customers remained wary and would require a number of additional facilities to be put in place to allow them to return safely including additional handwashing facilities/cleaning regimes, and that areas such as saunas/steam rooms/showers may be out of use for some time to come. He added that swimming lessons and fitness classes had been particularly well received when leisure centres reopened after the first lockdown and he expected this to be the case again when further restriction were eased in due course. The Director of Environment reported that a meeting of the working group, which had been established to consider the project in more detail, would be convened as soon as possible to allow decisions on the project to be finalised; and advised that the wider master plan had been put on hold at the present time, to allow Elected Members/officers to concentrate on the Leisure Centre/Theatre project, and would be brought forward to the Cabinet for consideration at a future date.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) confirmed that interest rates remained low at the moment which would reduce the project's costs going forward; that the annual repayment could be approximately £2.2-2.5 million each year; and that half of the financial provision had already been included in the Capital Plan.

The Council:-

- (a) agreed to proceed with the current proposals for Eastwood Leisure Centre/Theatre at an estimated £55m capital cost; and
- (b) noted that a further meeting of the member officer working group would be arranged in the near future to discuss progress.

## **PLANNING SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

**1549.** The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval to change the Planning Scheme of Delegation, for onward submission to Scottish Ministers, and to clarify certain criteria.

The report explained that the current Scheme of Delegation had been approved in 2013, taking account of the Scottish Government's modernisation of the planning system and the Town & Country Planning (Schemes of Delegation and Local Review Procedures)(Scotland) Regulations 2013, and allow appointed officers to make decisions on local and less controversial planning applications. In 2019/20, the delegation rate to officers was just under 99%.

In order to take account of changes to the management and staff structures within the Environment Department and to allow the planning applications process to operate more efficiently, a number of changes to the current Scheme of Delegation were proposed, including delegation to appointed officers; applications with an Elected Member or staff member interest; and objections which triggered referral to the Planning Applications Committee. It was considered that the modifications would result in more efficient decision-making with decisions being made at an appropriate level.

The Council:-

- (a) approved updates to the Planning Scheme of Delegation, subject to a minor amendment at Appendix 2, paragraph (x) to replace "emails" with "electronic communications"; and
- (b) noted that the updated Planning Scheme of Delegation would be submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval.

## **PROPOSED LEASE AND IMPROVEMENT OF CAPELRIG HOUSE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CHILDREN 1<sup>ST</sup>**

**1550.** The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment and Head of Public Protection and Children's Services (CSWO), seeking approval to enter into a 25 year lease with Children 1<sup>st</sup> for their pioneering project "Child's House for Healing" (Scotland's first Barnahus) and to acknowledge the benefits to the Council in progressing this project.

The report highlighted that Children 1<sup>st</sup>, in collaboration with Victim Support Scotland, Edinburgh University and Children England, had obtained People's Postcode Lottery funding to progress a project to allow every child victim and witness in Scotland and Britain to receive support in a house for healing. East Renfrewshire had been chosen to lead a national pilot to develop this approach, in partnership with neighbouring HSCPs and Strathclyde Police colleagues, and premises for the project had been sought in the local area. Capelrig House had been identified as a possible venue.

Further information was provided on the repair costs, which would be shared between the Council and Children 1<sup>st</sup>, and the annual running costs for the building which were currently incurred by the Environment Department. It was estimated that the Council would benefit from revenue savings of around £38,000 per annum but would have a potential capital contribution of around £440,000.

Children 1<sup>st</sup> had approached the Council regarding use of the building and a fresh condition survey was carried out identifying repair costs of £879,000. Following discussion it was proposed that Children 1<sup>st</sup> would work jointly with the Council to address the repairs and improvements required, sharing the cost of improvements, and would be prepared in principle to enter into a full repairing and insurance lease for 25 years and meet the annual running costs for the building.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to note the terms of the proposed joint financial commitment of the Council and Children 1<sup>st</sup> investing up to £879,000 in the Capelrig House/Child's House for Healing Project;
- (b) that provision be made within the General Fund capital programme of £440,000 for 2021/22 being the Council's contribution towards the improvements;
- (c) to note that this expenditure would be contained within existing Environment Department capital resources and any resultant adjustments to the programme would be part of the General Fund Capital Plan report to be considered by the Council in March 2021;
- (d) to approve the proposal to release Capelrig House to Children 1<sup>st</sup> for 25 years to deliver the pioneering project (Child's House for Healing);
- (e) to note the benefits in securing the preservation of Capelrig House and the longer term potential financial savings of £950,000 to the Council; and
- (f) to delegate to the Director of Environment in consultation with the Chief Solicitor to conclude the lease and repair/improvement financial arrangements with Children 1<sup>st</sup> with regard to Capelrig House.

## **EAST RENFREWSHIRE'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES PLAN 2020-2023**

**1551.** The Council considered a report by the Chief Social Work Officer, presenting for consideration *At Our Heart*, the East Renfrewshire Children and Young People's Services Plan 2020-2023, a copy of which accompanied the report.

The report referred to the obligations placed on local authorities, in conjunction with their relevant health board, to jointly prepare a 3-year Children's Services Plan for the local authority area, as well as the requirement on the local authority and health board to jointly publish an annual report detailing how the provision of children's services and related services in the area had been provided in accordance with the plan. It was noted that the submission date for new children's services plans had been extended by the Scottish Government due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Referring to the plan, the report explained that in accordance with the statutory guidance, the plan had been framed within the national *Getting it Right for Every Child* agenda and in particular the Wellbeing Indicators. Having set out the Wellbeing Indicators, the report provided details of the consultation and partnership working that had taken place in the development of the plan. In particular, the overarching role of the Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People Partnership was outlined.

The report concluded by confirming that the purpose of the plan was to set out the vision for East Renfrewshire's children, young people and their families, and demonstrate the commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for them.

The Council agreed to:-

- (a) acknowledge the new duties of the Children and Young People Act 2014 as they relate to Part 3 Children's Services Planning; and
- (b) approve the content of the Children and Young People's Services Plan 2020–2023 prior to its submission to the Scottish Government.

#### **SCHEME FOR MEMBERS' REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES 2021-22**

**1552.** The Council considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive on the Scheme of Members' Remuneration and Expenses for 2021/22. A copy of the Scheme was appended to the report.

The report explained that the Scheme provided details of the levels of basic salary payable to all councillors, and the increased salaries paid to the Leader and the Civic Head (Provost), these amounts being prescribed in legislation. The Scheme also provided details of those positions in the Council that had been identified as Senior Councillor positions for the purpose of the regulations, and the levels of salary to be paid to each postholder. In addition, the Scheme provided details of those other categories in respect of which Elected Members were entitled to claim expenses, such as the performance of approved duties, travelling expenses, and subsistence allowances.

The Council agreed to approve the Scheme of Members' Remuneration and Expenses for 2021/22.

PROVOST

