

EAST RENFREW SHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

3rd October 2024

Report by Chief Executive

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE END YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-2024

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present a summary of performance for the Chief Executive's Office covering the period 2023-2024.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- (a) Scrutinise the performance and achievements of the Chief Executive's Office; and
- (b) Note the contents of the report and appendix as a summary of the Chief Executive's Office End of Year Performance for 2023-2024.

3 BACKGROUND

The Chief Executive's Office is responsible for setting and leading the strategic direction of the Council, promoting and facilitating good practices, enabling activities between and across Council departments. The Chief Executive office has four main areas of work: Legal Services, Accountancy, Procurement and Internal Audit.

4 REPORT

The Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP) sets out core outcomes for the Council, setting the strategic direction to be delivered during the life of the plan. Each year we publish an annual year end performance report providing a review of progress delivering for East Renfrewshire's communities. This review of progress also reflects the outcomes of external scrutiny, self-evaluation and customer feedback.

The nature of services within the Chief Executive's Office is to provide professional and business support to all services across the Council, including Integrated Joint Board, Health and Social Care Partnership and the Leisure Trust and as such will input to and provide a key supporting role enabling the delivery of the Council Priorities.

The teams are responsible for:

- Building and leading organisational culture, supporting the Council vision and values;
- Leading the approach to sustainable future budget planning and enabling efficiencies across the Council;
- Managing, monitoring and reporting on the Council's spending and procurement;
- Supporting a wide range of accountancy and procurement activities, including revenue and capital budget setting and monitoring;
- Enhancing, protecting and providing assurance through a planned programme of internal audits;

- Safeguarding, supporting and providing legal advice, representation and insight; and
- Section 95 Officer and Monitoring Officer services to the Council.

Overview of key achievements in 2023/2024:

- Council operated within budget during 2023/24 and finished the year with general reserves within the recommended 2-4% range (2.3%);
- Annual Accounts for 2022/23 signed off on schedule with a clean audit certificate;
- Internal Audit provided assurance statements and annual reports to the Council and the IJB;
- Legal support enabling completion/progression of key development projects including Neilston Campus and Aurs Road project;
- Efficiencies delivered through a significant increase in the number of contracts arranged by corporate procurement;
- Improved performance responding to Subject Access Requests answered within the target period, from 69% to 86%; and
- Successful reorganisation of the Licensing Team to deliver efficiencies and address backlog.

Areas for further development:

- Increasing focus on financial sustainability is required in light of challenging and uncertain financial outlook; and
- Introduction of new licensing software platform and processes to maximise efficiency.

Future Focused

Each Council service prepares a Service Improvement Plan (SIP), themed around the Council Plan's strategic outcomes, demonstrating how the services will contribute to the delivery of the Council Plan. The Executive's Office SIP is a concise, focused document, setting out how Chief Executive's services will work together to ensure that we have the right skills, learning opportunities and confidence to provide quality services that support the strategic outcome delivery plan 2024-2025 and beyond.

The Chief Executive Office will continue to support Our People Objectives and embed them within our team's future planning and development and use them to build strong foundations for a learning organisation.

Services have identified synergies in their improvement journey that will enable them to work together to develop succession plans, share knowledge, skills and raise awareness of services that the Chief Executive's office provides across the Council. These actions and performance indicators are monitored and align with the Strategic Planning Framework.

5 PUBLICATION OF YEAR END PERFORMANCE

This report and appendix will be posted on the Council's website.

6 FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

There are no financial implications arising from the content of this report.

7 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

This report outlines the Chief Executive's Office contribution to the delivery of the Council's Outcome Delivery Plan, recognising the hard work and commitment of staff right across the organisation plays a key role in our success, and employees within Chief Executive's all have a

valuable contribution to make in helping achieve our ambitions and vision.

8 IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

There are no implications in terms of staffing, property, legal, IT, equalities or sustainability. Specific Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) have been carried out on the Outcome Delivery Plan, where appropriate.

9 CONCLUSION

This report provides an overview of the positive performance, achievements and areas for further development for the Chief Executive's Office's for 2023-2024.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- (a) Scrutinise the performance and achievements of the Chief Executive's Office; and
- (b) Note the contents of the report and appendix as a summary of the Chief Executive's Office End of Year Performance for 2023-2024.

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

YEAR END SUMMARY

2023-2024

Contents:

- Internal Audit
- Legal Services
- Corporate Procurement
- Accountancy Services
- Other Indicators

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Chief Executive's Office – Internal Audit 2023/24

Summary	<p>Budget £309,000 4.7 FTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 2023/24 audits are now complete resulting in 18 reports and memos being issued. • Several pieces of unplanned work carried out resulting in 13% of contingency time being used in 2023/2024. • Eight audits were deleted from the 2023/24 audit plan and will now be carried out in 2024/25 per approved plan.
Outcomes	
Efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External assessment of compliance with PSIAS was carried out and presented to Audit and Scrutiny Committee in January 2024 which concluded that internal audit service generally complies with the main requirements of the standards. • A range of internal performance measures were submitted to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee quarterly showing performance against target (where applicable). • Delivered Internal Audit work with departments and services to ensure the highest standards are adhered to and that resources are managed to provide services across the Council that represent value for money. • 375 audit days completed which was 64% of planned direct audit days. • Assistance and advice was given to services across the council on request.
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Audit Report for ERC for 2023/24 was submitted to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in September 2024. • Internal audit completed one audit specifically for East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust during 2023/24 which delivered the days as specified in the SLA. • Internal audit attended the Integration Joint Board Performance and Audit Committee and audit recommendations relating to IJB and HSCP were submitted. An Annual report for IJB for 2023/24 was submitted in September 2024. • When preparing the Internal Audit Strategic Plan and annual Audit Plan, a wide range of customers including Elected Members, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Council's External Auditors are consulted to ensure that current and developing risks are appropriate, considered and included.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful recruitment of two vacant posts has now been completed.

Chief Executive's Office – Legal Services 2023/24

Summary	<p>Budget £522,000 8.4 FTE</p> <p>Significant contract and conveyancing work was conducted in relation to various land projects including the Aurs Road and Neilston Leisure Campus developments, officers continued to address the handback preparations for the schools PFI contracts. FOI work continued to take up a significant portion of time of the Chief Officer (30 review cases and 3 appeals addressed in the last year). As in previous years, there was ongoing involvement of staff in the public protection agenda whilst the Chief Officer has also undertaken an ongoing role in connection with the Child Abuse Inquiry, providing significant legal support to HSCP in the context of staff training, child welfare issues and adult with incapacity law. The period saw significant change to the staffing within the service with two vastly experienced members of staff retiring and new solicitors employed in their place, there was also a long term absence. Workload levels remained constant and the team maintained an efficient and responsive service to client service needs.</p>
Outcomes	<p>The following are an illustrative indication of the types of work undertaken by Legal services in support of the Outcomes rather than an exhaustive list</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported HSCP in child and adult protection processes to ensure the safety of such vulnerable individuals. • Legal attendance, advice and assistance provided to monthly adoption and fostering panel in respect of permanency decision • Undertook defence of placing request appeals on behalf of Education to maintain appropriate pupil numbers in our schools • Completed planning agreements to secure affordable housing and financial contributions from developers • Settlement in relation to 15 affordable houses at Maidenhill • Progressed rent recovery actions to maintain the public purse • Obtained court orders under the Adult's with Incapacity legislation to ensure the ongoing welfare of affected individuals • Undertook substantial contract and conveyancing work to progress major developments (City Deal and otherwise) for the ultimate benefit of local residents
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to the value of £902,000 undertaken by in house team (based on comparable private sector rates (£925,000 last year) • 14 charging orders recorded to ensure recovery of care home interim funding
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing participation in a number of cross partner committees and sub-committees in the public protection regime e.g. adult care professional governance group, public protection sub group, policy and procedures subgroups (adult and child protection committees) • Witness training provided for staff in HSCP, Education and Housing • Safeguarding Children training events run for HSCP staff • Data Protection training provided to HSCP staff – Health and Social Work • Continuing support to HSCP in responding to and meeting obligations in respect of historical Child Abuse Inquiry • Provision of witness training • Conducted 30 statutory Fol reviews and 3 appeals (31 and 2 respectively last year)
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of solicitors completed Law Society Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and received practicing certificates for the current year • All employees actively involved in networking opportunities via the Society of Local Authority Lawyers & Administrators in Scotland (SOLAR)

Chief Executive's Office - Corporate Procurement 2023/24

Summary	<p>Budget £329,000 5 FTE</p> <p>The Procurement team operate strategically across the Council and are committed to supporting local suppliers and partner providers by following the Government's procurement guidance by supporting supply chain resilience and working proactively with suppliers and key partners such as Scotland Excel, Scottish Government, NHS and COSLA. Work has continued across the Council to understand project pipelines ensuring contingency and preparedness for immediate response with stakeholder engagement undertaken for all contracts to understand if the requirement is essential, and that the marketplace is able to submit a response which is sustainable. A number of work packages have been successfully implemented, including: Contract Standing Orders review and update, Standard Operating Procedures, Online Contracts Register, Contract and Supplier Management, P2P, Grow Local all of which support improved procurement practice and savings.</p>
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Frameworks – working with officers in Education to review tendering pipeline, core products and catalogue accessibility. (Framework = an agreement between one or more contracting authorities and one or more suppliers, the purpose of which is to establish the terms governing contracts to be awarded during a given period). • Glasgow City Region City Deal – working with officers in Environment on the commissioning and procurement of key strategic projects • Grow Local and Community Wealth Building– working with Economic Development and Scotland Excel to support local supplier development. • Climate Change – Supporting the Councils agenda by including screening questions in contract documentation to influence the emerging climate change emergency such as plastic reduction, circular economy, carbon accounting and improvement plans. • Sustainable Procurement – The use of the single procurement self-declaration document to ensure suppliers and their supply chain are compliant with the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Act 2015, Modern Slavery Act 2015, Prompt Payment and they not have breached any obligations in the fields of environmental, social or labour law. • Social Care contract portfolio - working with officers in Health & Social Care Partnership to deliver strategic contracts that include the views of service users.
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harnessing the functionality of procurement advertising systems Public Contracts Scotland, Public Contracts Scotland Tender, spend intelligence tool - SPIKES and Council core systems. • Improved business intelligence including implementation of Online Contracts Register.
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 contracts via route 2 - £50,000 to £189,329 (Goods and Services), £500,000 - £4,733,251 (Works) or Route 3 - values above the noted thresholds (24 in 22/23). • 54 Quick Quotes (contracts £10k-£50k Goods & Services, £20k-£500k Works) (28 in 22/23). • 17 Mini-Competition (contracts placed via a Framework Agreement where best value supplier is identified) (17 in 22/23). • 89 Direct Award (contracts agreed without competition via approved Framework) (43 in 22/23). • Increased use of Direct Award under Framework agreements giving greater cost certainty, early supplier engagement, time and cost savings. • Participation in Supplier Development Programme including National and local "Meet the Buyer". • Improved communications with internal and external customers, evaluation training supported by the Supplier Development Programme. • Procurement Intranet content updated to support officers with Contract Standing Orders. • Integra Super User network, Purchase to Pay working group & newsletter in place to support knowledge sharing and lessons learned. • Online procurement training sessions available including Introduction to Procurement, Quick Quote and Tendering.

Chief Executive's Office – Accountancy Services 2023/24

Summary	<p>Budget £1,606,000 23.4 FTE</p> <p>Statutory accounting and reporting requirements were met and a balanced 2024/25 budget set. Working with new external auditors, we were in the minority of Councils whose annual accounts for 2022/23 were completed within schedule and awarded an unqualified audit certificate. Progress on 2023/24 accounts is on schedule.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Accountancy project support was provided for-</p> <p>Outcomes 1 & 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial planning of new schools, nurseries and family centres and leisure facilities • governance of East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust <p>Outcome 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City deal and housing financial planning
Efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed 2022/23 accounts on time, draft report to Audit & Scrutiny Committee before 30 June 2023, external audit completed on time, confirming unqualified annual accounts for 2022/23 with no unadjusted errors. • Overall Council spend for 2023/24 within budget due to departmental underspends and additional non-recurring income from interest on balances and successful historic VAT appeal. • 2023/24 accounts being presented to Council in September 2024. Unqualified certificate expected. • Close control and reporting of budgets throughout year. • 2024/25 budget balanced despite significant financial challenges & late settlement. • Long term financial planning – Outline Financial Plan 2024-2030 produced and Capital Investment Strategy updated. • Preparations commenced for introduction of IFRS16 leasing requirements. • DoF Indicator: Uncommitted General Fund as % of revenue budget 2.3% (2022/23 2.3%). • DoF Indicator: Outturn as % of budget 97.13% (2021/22 93.7%).
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored support for a range of client service initiatives. • Ongoing senior level support for Audit & Scrutiny Committee & Trust Board.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent regular communications across all Accountancy teams. • Staff consulted and actively involved in change and self-evaluation projects. • Successful recruitment to fill all vacancies.

Chief Executive's Office 2023/24 Year End Report: Other indicators

Absence:

During 2023/24, 7.4 days per employee were lost through absence in the Chief Executive's Office, an increase on 1.5 days per employee in 2022/23

Purchasing:

The Chief Executive's office received 205 invoices 197 of which were paid within 30 days, giving a performance indicator of 96.1% (the figure for 22/23 was 98.1%).

A total of 234 ePay card requests were received and dealt with by the Chief Executive's Business Unit and the team raised a further 15 new procurement cards.

Complaints:

A total of 9 complaints were received by Chief Executive's Office in 2023/24 (2 in 2022/23).

Information Provision:

	Fol requests (Council)	Fol requests (Chief Executive's Office)	Fol requests (Cross-dept. requests)	Subject Access Requests	Records Store Requests	Archival Enquiries and Productions
Volume	1420 (1364 in 22/23)	73 (69 in 22/23)	102 (81 in 22/23)	71 (72 in 22/23)	22 (10 in 22/23)	68 (76 in 22/23)
Proportion answered within statutory timescale	90% (93% in 22/23)	95% (94% in 22/23)	99% (98% in 22/23)	86% (69% in 22/23)	[n.a.]	[n.a.]

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