

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 15 August 2024.

Present:

Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader) Councillor Danny Devlin
Councillor Andrew Anderson (Vice Chair) Councillor Katie Pragnell

Councillor O'Donnell, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Joe McCaig, Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision); Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Mark Rodgers, Head of Housing and Property Services; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance; Michaela Sullivan, Head of Place; Michelle McGuckin, Principal Officer (Capital Projects); Michael McKernan, Economic Development and Inclusive Growth Manager; Erica Roche, Change and Governance Manager; and John Burke, Democratic Services Officer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

910. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

911. The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) on the financial results for 2023/24 and comparing the outturn with the final budgetary control statement for the year which was submitted to Cabinet on 28 March 2024 (Page 801, Paragraph 788 refers). The report also provided details of the Devolved School Management funds held by each school/centre as at 31 March 2024.

The report outlined the unaudited financial results for 2023/24 and confirmed the financial results which had been communicated to all members in June 2024 by e-mail.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) stated that the report demonstrated the Council's sound financial performance, with an overall General Fund surplus of £6.878m, enabling £6.2m to be allocated to earmarked reserves to address future pressures.

The non-earmarked General Reserve held a balance of £7.336m, representing 2.3% of net revenue expenditure, within the Council's reserves policy of between 2% and 4%.

The position reported at period 9 was an underspend of £2.6m, with an improvement of £4m over the expected outcome. The reasons for this were detailed in the report.

Details were also provided on the status of the Housing Revenue Account, which recorded an operational deficit of £97,000, resulting in an accumulated surplus balance carried forward of £1.710m.

Finally, the report provided information regarding Devolved School Management funds held by each school for members' information.

Following a brief discussion, particularly around Devolved School Management funds, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the outturn position compared to the previous Budgetary Control Report;
- (b) noted that once the audit had been completed, the final accounts would be submitted to a future meeting of the Council along with the External Auditor's report; and
- (c) noted the amounts held in the Devolved School Management earmarked reserve as at 31 March 2024, detailed in Annex A.

IMPROVEMENTS TO EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE AT CROOKFUR PRIMARY SCHOOL AND EASTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

912. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Education seeking to homologate a decision to spend development contributions on necessary improvements in education infrastructure at Crookfur Primary School and Eastwood High School.

It was explained that East Renfrewshire Council was in receipt of development contributions for use by the Education Department within the catchment areas of Crookfur Primary and Eastwood High Schools and that this allocation was required to be spent or committed by 30 October 2024.

The report detailed issues around the pressures at Crookfur around capacity and how this impacted the use of its current facilities, and dining capacity at Eastwood. Having considered those, it was proposed that a hard games court be created at Crookfur Primary School and an external dining pod be created at Eastwood High School.

It was anticipated that planning permission could be obtained within 6 to 8 weeks and the projects would be value engineered to contain the total costs within the available funding envelope should the tender prices exceed the total contribution sum available.

Given the imminent need to progress the projects, written approval had been sought and obtained from Councillors O'Donnell and Anderson on 22 July 2024, and Cabinet was asked to homologate that decision.

Following a discussion where the expected completion dates for the projects were given as end of 2024 for Crookfur Primary and during 2025 for Eastwood High, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the availability of development contributions and capacity pressures faced by Crookfur Primary and Eastwood High Schools; and
- (b) homologated the decision of 22 July 2024 to authorise the spend and instruct the Education Department and Property and Technical Services to proceed to tender with the proposals immediately.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL CITY DEAL UPDATE 2024

913. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the progress of East Renfrewshire Council's Glasgow City Region City Deal funded M77 Strategic Corridor Programme.

The report provided details of the £44 million City Deal investment package and the programme of projects being funded by it. Appendix 1 to the report provided an update on the completed projects.

The progress of the Aurs Road project was outlined, with issues having been discovered following discovery of a water works while excavating the Active Travel Route. An archaeological survey had been carried out and West of Scotland Archaeology Service had concluded that the structures did not require to be retained. However, this work had caused delays in order to remove the necessary stonework to facilitate the Aurs Road Active Travel Route.

Further details were also provided on the progress of the new Balgray railway station at Barrhead South with active travel options, a bus turning circle and potential bus stop. Transport Scotland had submitted the findings of a Stage 2 Detailed Strategic Transport Appraisal to their Investment Decision Making Board and the decision was expected within 2 weeks of the Cabinet meeting. Approval on the full business case was anticipated to be given at the meeting of the Glasgow City Region's Chief Executive's Group on 5 September 2024.

During discussion on the item, it was indicated that the intention was for construction to be complete by Spring 2026. While options were being looked at for bus provision in the meantime, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport had indicated that they did not want to open a route to the area until the station was complete.

Following further discussion, the Cabinet:

- (a) noted the progress of the remaining three City Deal projects;
- (b) agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Environment for the submission of two Business Cases to Glasgow City Region Programme Management Office for approval and release of the next phase of project funds: for the Full Business Case for the new Balgray Rail Station in Barrhead South to be submitted to Glasgow City Region Executives' Group; and for the Outline Business Case for new visitor facilities in Dams to Darnley Country Park to be submitted to Glasgow City Region Cabinet; and
- (c) noted that Cabinet would receive further updates on progress.

PUBLICATION OF LOCAL HEAT AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY STRATEGY

914. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval to publish the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) for East Renfrewshire.

Publication of LHEES was required by the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2022, alongside a delivery plan, every five years. It was a long term plan for improving energy efficiency and promoting transition away from fossil fuels for heating which could impact the Council's climate change duties.

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A draft LHEES had been approved by Cabinet on 22 February 2024 (Page 761, Item 747 refers) and subject of a 6 week consultation. The final LHEES had seen moderate changes as a result of that process, and the key changes were detailed in the report.

Following a discussion on the difficulties of insulating homes, and how the Council was supporting initiatives to increase uptake, the Cabinet approved the publication of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy.

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND 2022-2025 – REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

915. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking to homologate the previous approval of three projects and approve projects under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) award from the UK Government for the period 2022-2025.

Cabinet had approved the East Renfrewshire SPF Local Investment Plan at its meeting on 10 November 2022 (Page 290, Item 225 refers). There was an underspend of the funding by £160,000 due to a number of projects coming under budget and others being scaled back or not implemented at all where demand was insufficient.

Three projects had been proposed to Councillors O'Donnell and Devlin in June 2024 to allow them to commence immediately. However, one of those projects had subsequently been withdrawn. Therefore, Cabinet was asked to homologate the decision taken in June 2024, and also approve further projects from Giffnock Business Improvement District and Business Gateway East Renfrewshire. All projects were detailed in the report.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the underspends across the Shared Prosperity Fund interventions;
- (b) homologated the decision to approve three new projects as outlined in the report;
- (c) noted the withdrawal of one project and approved the request for a further two new projects, outlined in the report; and
- (d) delegated to the Director of Environment to approve any new proposal requests that could be accommodated, if any underspends or adjustments arose in the future.

NEILSTON LEARNING CAMPUS – VARIATION TO CONTRACT

916. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking to homologate the previous approval for variations to contracts in relation to the Neilston Learning Campus project.

Under section 21.5.4 of the Council's Contract Standing Orders, approval had been sought from Councillors O'Donnell and Anderson for two variations of the value of the contract for Neilston Learning Campus project to allow work to commence during the Council recess period.

The Appendices to the report outlined the reports provided to the Councillors in seeking approval for the variations and those were summarised in the report. It was intended that the variations would be met from the overall project budget.

In discussion, it was confirmed that the demolition works highlighted were now complete.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted and homologated the variations to contract approved in July 2024 by the Cabinet Chair and Vice Chair;
- (b) noted the updates following those approvals; and;
- (c) noted compliance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders Section 21.5.4.

MINUTE OF JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (FIRST TIER) HELD ON 16 MAY 2024

917. The Cabinet noted the minute.

CHAIR

