

**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**CABINET**

**Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 5 September 2024.**

**Present:**

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

Councillor O'Donnell, Leader, in the Chair

**Attending:**

Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; 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; Jamie Reid, Head of Communities and Transformation; Elaine Rodger, City Deal and Infrastructure Delivery Manager; Suzanne Conlin, Senior Housing Manager; Paul Parsons, Principal Accountant, Craig Geddes, Senior Information and Improvement Officer; and John Burke, Democratic Services Officer.

**Apology:**

Councillor Danny Devlin

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest intimated.

**ESTIMATED REVENUE BUDGET OUT-TURN 2024/2025**

**926.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) detailing the estimated projected revenue budget out-turn for 2024/25 and providing details of the expected year-end variances together with summary cost information for each of the undernoted services as at 30 June 2024 and subsequent assessment of pressures arising.

- (i) Education Department;
- (ii) Contribution to Integration Joint Board;
- (iii) Environment Department;
- (iv) Environment Department – Support;
- (v) Chief Executive's Office;
- (vi) Chief Executive's Office – Support;
- (vii) Business Operations and Partnerships Department;
- (viii) Business Operations and Partnerships Department – Support;

- (ix) Other Expenditure and Income;
- (x) Joint Boards;
- (xi) Corporate Contingency;
- (xii) Health and Social Care Partnership; and
- (xiii) Housing Revenue Account.

On the basis of the information, and taking account of forecast Council Tax collection, a year end operational underspend of £1,219k was forecast on General Fund services and an overspend of £124k on the Housing Revenue Account. The reasons for departmental variances were set out in the report. He outlined that any such operational underspend at this year-end would assist the Council in meeting future years' budget challenges

It was noted that the above figures reflected that £1,752k of forecast COVID-related pressures would be covered by drawing on the Council's COVID grant resources and as a result did not impact on the operational budget position.

It was noted that the forecast outturn position could still be subject to significant change, for example if COVID pressures increased again. Conversely, it was hoped that management action to avoid any non-essential expenditure could increase the underspend at year end.

In addition, the report sought approval for a number of service virements and operational budget adjustments, details of which were outlined.

Following a brief discussion, the Cabinet agreed:-

- (a) to note the forecast underlying General Fund operational underspend of £1,219k together with the HRA operational overspend of £124k before any contribution from the HRA reserve;
- (b) to approve service virements and operational adjustments as set out in the notes to the tables on pages 15 to 32 of the report and note the reported probable out-turn position.
- (c) to approve that £256k of the late increase of £1,178k in the general grant settlement should be allocated to HSCP in line with their overall budget share.

## **CITY DEAL REALLOCATION OF FUNDS**

**927.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment requesting approval to prepare an Outline Business Case and submit a proposal to Glasgow City Region City Deal Programme Management Office to secure funding to construct additional Class 4 Business, Class 5 General Industrial and Class 6 Storage or Distribution Storage or Distribution Commercial Space on plots G and H at Crossmill Business Park, Barrhead.

It was explained that £129.145m of funding had been made available from the Glasgow Airport Access Project (GAAP), with 50% of that funding allocated to regional projects and the other 50% to local projects. East Renfrewshire were estimated to be granted a proportional allocation of £2.4m from this funding.

The City Deal team had given careful consideration to a proposed project, to deliver economic impact within a 2 to 3 year timescale, within budget and which would provide rental income to meet future revenue costs. To that end, the Crossmill Business Park in Barrhead had been identified.

The proposal was summarised in the report, with a proposed site plan attached as an Appendix.

Following a discussion, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the proposed development of additional business units at the Crossmill Business Park, utilising funds that had been made available by the Glasgow City Region City Deal and the expected costs;
- (b) approved the preparation of an Outline Business Case; and
- (c) approved the submission of the Outline Business Case, in accordance with the Glasgow City Region City Deal Assurance Framework.

### **HOUSING ALLOCATION LETTING TARGET CHANGE**

**928.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on emergency changes required to lettings targets within the East Renfrewshire Council's Lettings Policy and ask Cabinet to homologate this decision.

The existing Lettings Policy had been approved by Cabinet in September 2023 (Page 614, Item 563 refers) and provided a target to determine what percentage of empty homes should be allocated to priority groups.

The report detailed the increase in demand from homeless households since the 2018/19 financial year, in addition to the general waiting list for housing. However, turnover of housing had dropped, leading to a reduction in available properties for let to homeless households. In order to address the backlog of homeless households waiting for housing, it was proposed that 53 units be allocated to prioritise the needs of existing Council tenants in order to create turnover to meet the needs of homeless households. The proposal was fully detailed in the report.

The proposal had been approved by Councillor O'Donnell and Councillor Devlin on 20 August 2024 and homologation was now requested by the Cabinet.

Following discussion, the Cabinet:

- (a) noted the current demand for council housing in East Renfrewshire Council, in particular, the increase in homelessness; and
- (b) homologated the decision to amend the letting allocation to key groups.

### **UPDATE ON THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

**929.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on the achievements of the Digital Transformation Programme during 2023/24 and plans for 2024/25.

The latest Digital Transformation Programme had launched in April 2022, in line with the Council's Digital Transformation Strategy for 2021-2024, which was approved by Cabinet in June 2021 (Page 1534, Item 1648 refers).

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The ambitions set out in that plan had made significant progress across 2023/2024 and they were set out in the report in terms of their impact on the 3 key areas of activity: Customer Experience; Workforce Productivity; and Business Systems and Processes.

The report also provided information on the future of the Digital Transformation Programme, with the document due to be refreshed. Work would be undertaken in 2024/25 toward this, taking account of the SOLACE, Improvement Service and Digital Office work on the “Council of the Future: Digital ‘To Be’ State”. Future planned activity was, once again, laid out in terms of the 3 key areas.

Following a discussion, the Cabinet noted the achievements and future plans across the 3 areas of the Council’s Digital Transformation Programme: Customer Experience; Business Systems; and Processes and Workforce Productivity.

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

**930.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive on the annual statistical report on the Council’s performance in dealing with Freedom of Information requests.

The report stated that the Council had received a total of 1,420 requests during the period, 893 of which were under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act and 527 of which were under the related Environmental Information Regulations (Scotland). The full report was attached as an Appendix to the report.

Members noted the increased number of such requests and the subsequent impact that this had on Council resources in dealing with the increased number of requests.

The Cabinet noted the contents of the report.

CHAIR