

MINUTE
of
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Minute of meeting held at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 11 September 2024.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson	Councillor Chris Lunday
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Councillor David Macdonald*
Councillor Tony Buchanan	Councillor Jim McLean*
Deputy Provost Kate Campbell	Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Angela Convery	Provost Mary Montague
Councillor Betty Cunningham*	Councillor Andrew Morrison
Councillor Danny Devlin*	Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)
Councillor Paul Edlin	Councillor Katie Pragnell
Councillor Annette Ireland	Councillor Gordon Wallace

Provost Montague in the Chair

Attending:

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Julie Murray, Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP); Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Gerry Mahon, Chief Officer (Legal & Procurement); Andy Corry, Head of Operations (Environment); Jamie Reid, Head of Communities and Transformation; Mark Rogers, Head of Housing and Property; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance; Michaela Sullivan, Head of Place; Richard Greenwood, Principal Strategy Officer; Barry Tudhope, Democratic Services Manager; Jennifer Graham, Democratic Services Officer; and Lesleyann Burns, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

(*) indicates remote attendance.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

931. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 26 JUNE 2024

932. The Council considered Minute of the meeting held on 26 June 2024.

Councillor Morrison advised that the item relating to the General Fund Capital Programme in the minute did not reflect answers provided to questions from Members and proposed, seconded by Councillor Wallace, that the minute be amended to reflect these responses. Provost Montague proposed that the minute contained within the minute volume be approved

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but, as no seconder could be found, the motion fell and the amendment was subsequently approved.

Thereafter, the minute was approved subject to the undernoted comments being added:

General Fund Capital Programme (Page 896, item 893 refers) – In response to questions, the Director of Education advised that, in relation to the Crookfur Primary School Extension project, pupil numbers were constantly being monitored and, referring to pupil numbers in P1 for 2024, and the number of 3 and 4 year olds expected to register at the school in the next few years, it was expected that an extension would no longer be required at this stage but would remain in the capital plan for possible future provision. He advised that, should the project be required in future years, he expected the tender process to be completed quickly, as designs for the extension were already in place, with the project thereafter being completed within 12 months. In response to a further question about the Dams to Darnley Country Park project, the Director of Environment confirmed that the roadworks currently underway at Aurs Road, Barrhead should be completed within the original timescale.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES

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

- (a) Appointments Committee – 18 June 2024;
- (b) Appeals Committee – 1 August 2024;
- (c) Licensing Committee – 6 August 2024;
- (d) Local Review Body – 7 August 2024;
- (e) Audit & Scrutiny Committee – 8 August 2024;
- (f) Cabinet – 15 August 2024;
- (g) Education Committee – 22 August 2024;
- (h) Licensing Committee – 3 September 2024;
- (i) Cabinet – 5 September 2024;

STATEMENTS BY CONVENERS AND REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT BODIES AND COMMITTEES

934. Two statements had been received and summarised as follows:

- (a) Councillor Anderson – Convener for Education and Equalities

Councillor Anderson advised that the Culture and Leisure Trust had welcomed local school pupils, volunteers and community leaders to the opening of Thornliebank Community Garden at Thornliebank Library. School pupils had submitted design ideas for the garden which included fruit trees; seating areas; planters for fruit and veg; and a bug hotel. This project was part of a wider initiative “The Root Cause Project” which arranged events, programmes and activities to raise awareness of sustainability and green issues at a local level.

He reported that the Culture and Leisure Trust had again delivered successful school summer holiday camps at Barrhead and Williamwood High Schools which included age appropriate outdoor/indoor activities for 5-14 year olds and lunches each day. The Trust had also supported an activity programme at Isobel Mair school during the holiday period which included arts and crafts; parachute games; author events; and sports. He advised that the Leisure Trust would build on the success of the summer programme with a term time out of school activity programme at Isobel Mair school provided by the active schools team.

Councillor Anderson concluded by providing an update on his attendance at the recent Community and Leisure Trust Board meeting when the final accounts for the year had been signed off. He advised that progress in all Trust programmes had been extremely positive with attendance at libraries, gyms, swimming pools, and Eastwood Theatre all reporting a rise on previous years. He wished to commend and thank everyone involved for their achievements.

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

Councillor Pragnell reported on the recent meeting of the Integration Joint Board when, amongst other things, members received a presentation on Adult Services; received an updated on financial matters; and were provided with an overview of an Audit Scotland report. The report highlighted local issues and challenges which had previously been discussed at the IJB and it was acknowledged that significant and complex challenges would require all partners to work together collaboratively. An overall projected overspend of £1.241m was expected, although there had been an underspend in social work and social care activities. She advised that a report on changes to community alarm and Bonnyton House charges had been delayed due to the recent Parliamentary General Election and would now be submitted to Cabinet in October. Further updates had also been provided on the Blood and Go Service and on the health and care experience survey results.

PROVOST'S ENGAGEMENTS

935. 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 24 April 2024.

Having heard the Provost thank Councillor Campbell for deputising at some events, the Council noted the report.

FINAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR 2023-24

936. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 8 August 2024 (Page 906, Item 907 refers), the Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy seeking approval for the investment of surplus funds to the organisations listed in Appendix 8 to the report.

The report explained that delays impacting on some major projects during the year meant that the council had borrowed less than planned in 2023/24 to support the capital programme. However, as projects would still require to be delivered at some point in the future, the borrowing would be delayed and would not be noted as a saving.

The Council agreed to: -

- (a) note the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2023/24; and
- (b) approve the list of organisations at Appendix 8 for investment of surplus funds.

STRATEGIC END YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT AND ANNUAL COMMUNITY PLANNING AND FAIRER EAST REN REPORT FOR 2023-24

937. The Council considered a report by the Chief Executive on the performance of the Council and Community Planning Partnership and demonstrating how the Council was meeting its strategic outcomes.

The report summarised the Council's strategic performance at end-year 2023-24 based on performance indicators in the Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP) including the annual update on complaints handling; the 2023-24 annual progress report on the Community Plan, including Fairer East Ren; and included a short video of the annual highlights across the Council and Community Planning Partnership.

The Director of Business Operations and Partnerships advised that some of the comments contained in the report had been amended and the updated information had been circulated to members. The amended comments related to quality of life for carers; and reduced care need following reablement/rehabilitation.

In response to questions from members, the Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership advised that the numbers relating to the percentage of drug users moving from treatment to recovery were extremely small and even small fluctuations could have a significant impact on the percentages noted. She added that a number of factors had influenced these figures including speed of recovery and ill health; the HSCP hoped to develop a recovery hub in the future; and further information on recovery encouragement could be provided in due course. She advised that completion of Community Payback Order surveys were entirely voluntary, and reasons for non-completion included literacy issues. She added that an action plan to tackle this had been developed.

The Director of Education advised that a decrease in Primary 1 pupils meeting targets had been discussed at the Education Committee as part of an early years report submitted in June 2024 and although no firm explanation for this could be provided, this trend would be monitored closely.

The Head of Operations (Environment) advised that recycling rates had fallen recently as a number of initiatives were no longer being funded and savings had been required in some areas. However, he added that East Renfrewshire continued to be one of the top performing councils in this area.

The Council noted:-

- (a) the summary of the Council's strategic performance at end year 2023/24 and associated comments made;
- (b) the Community Plan and Fairer East Ren Annual Progress Report for 2023-24;
- (c) the complaints handling report 2023-24; and
- (d) the annual highlights video.

LOCAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION REPORT: YEAR 6

938. The Council considered a joint report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships and Chief Officer HSCP on the annual East Renfrewshire Local Child Poverty Action Report required under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

The report provided a summary of progress made in relation to child poverty focussing on critical indicators; income from employment; income from social security; costs of living; and mitigating the impact of poverty. Approaches to tackling family poverty were provided together with action plans and progress measures for 2024-27 including improved understanding of the circumstances of families in, or at risk, of poverty; improved income from employment for parents; enhanced gains for families from income maximisation and social security; and reduced costs of living.

In response to questions, the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships reported that the council continued to assist residents with energy and debt applications, and a fuel/benefits advisor had been appointed until 2025 to give further information on accessing support. She added that a poverty awareness training course had been developed for front line staff and a presentation had also been given to primary and secondary Head Teachers.

The Head of Housing and Property explained that many different types of emergency accommodation were used by the Council, including hotels and B&Bs, but there were rules around how long this type of accommodation could be used for. He added that the council's own stock was also used as temporary accommodation, with families and vulnerable people being prioritised for this type of accommodation. He clarified that families who presented as homeless on an emergency basis could be accommodated in hotels or B&Bs which were not specifically designated for family use, but their stay there would be minimised.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to note the Local Child Poverty Action Report as required under the Child Poverty Act 2017 and associated comments made; and
- (b) to approve the report for publication, subject to IJB and NHSGGC Population Health and Wellbeing Committee approval.

A PLACE TO GROW STRATEGIC VISION AND COMMUNITY PLAN

939. The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on the long-term strategic vision and Community Plan for East Renfrewshire "A Place to Grow".

The report explained that "A Place to Grow" the strategic vision and community plan for East Renfrewshire would be the bedrock of all future planning and partnership work and the interdependent pillars would inform the council's strategic intent and direction for the next 15 years. It was highlighted that the vision would only be achieved through a shared commitment across the Community Planning Partnership and unequivocal cross-party support.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to note the "A Place to Grow" strategic vision;
- (b) to approve the strategic vision as East Renfrewshire's Community Plan, subject to adoption by the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Board;
- (c) to delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Council elected members on the CPP Board, to implement any minor changes to the strategic vision to secure adoption by the Board;
- (d) to note the key priorities laid out for each pillar and make a cross-party commitment to deliver these;

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- (e) to note the continued development of the CPP leadership and governance structures to oversee the strategic vision;
- (f) that more detailed three-year delivery plans with measures would be brought to Council for the start of the 2025/26 cycle; and
- (g) to note the ongoing planning work involved in organising a community conference.

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2025

940. The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships seeking approval of the calendar of Council/committee meetings for 2025.

The Council agreed to:-

- (a) approve the Calendar of Meetings for 2025 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (b) note the provisional dates of meeting of the East Renfrewshire Integration Joint Board.

CAPELRIG HOUSE PROGRAMME UPDATE

941. The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment providing an update on works taking place at Capelrig House and outlining options being explored to utilise the building following completion of improvements and renovations.

The report explained that restorative works had been identified through surveying as being essential to protect Capelrig House. Further information on the renovations and improvements which had taken place were provided, which included ensuring the building remained wind and watertight while conserving the original fabric of the building as much as possible. It was reported that Children First had previously expressed an interest in the building as a "Bairn's Hoose" facility, but they were no longer able to progress with this due to budgetary constraints. Discussions were ongoing regarding how to utilise the space in the future and suggestions included provision of flexible learning spaces; introduction of a social enterprise café; provision of flexible meeting spaces; and storage space for voluntary groups.

In response to questions, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Council was under obligation to ensure that the building was adequately maintained and the contract for external work had come in on budget. He advised that no internal work had yet been carried out as further discussion on possible uses would be required prior to any internal fitting costs being estimated. He added that some community groups had asked previously about using the building as a storage facility and this proposal would form part of the discussions around future use in due course. Community use at evenings and weekends would also be considered as part of the ongoing discussions and option appraisals would be submitted to members in due course.

The Council noted:-

- (a) the improvement and renovation work that had taken place at Capelrig House; and
- (b) the ongoing process to determine a future use for Capelrig House.

OUTLINE OF PRESSURES FACING HOMELESSNESS

942. The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment advising on the challenges and issues facing East Renfrewshire Council Homelessness Services and seeking approval to declare a local housing emergency.

The report explained that East Renfrewshire had received a significant increase in homelessness applications since 2019 which had impacted on demand for services and how they were being delivered. The Scottish Housing Regulator had stated that several Councils in Scotland, including East Renfrewshire, were facing systemic failure of their homelessness services mainly due to the use of hotel accommodation. Further information was provided on the local housing market; data relating to the increase in homelessness; and actions being taken to address increased homelessness including doubling the provision of temporary accommodation; increasing the percentage of lets to homeless households; reviewing existing agreements with local Registered Social Landlords; and reviewing internal processes to focus on a prevention approach.

In response to comments Councillor O'Donnell advised that he had written to the First Minister regarding new measures funding and would share this correspondence with all Members. He added that officers were working extremely hard to deliver a credible action plan relating to homelessness but this issue wouldn't be solved quickly and would require continued lobbying from the Council to address cuts in funding which had impacted on projects being delivered.

The Head of Housing and Property advised that this issue would require more than one solution, and a number of possible options could be considered including using modular units, shipping containers, flatted developments, etc. However, these would always be subject to the necessary consents, warrants and ward member conversations. He added that discussions would continue with local housing providers and to expand mid-market rentals.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to approve the declaration of a local housing emergency and note the actions being taken to mitigate the impact;
- (b) to approve the use of £1m Capital Reserve to support the costs of developing increased supply of temporary accommodation including the purchase of additional housing units and other measures as set out in the report; and
- (c) that a six month update report be presented to Council on levels of homelessness within East Renfrewshire and measures being put in place to address a local housing emergency.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 3 EVIDENCE REPORT

943. The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval to submit the Evidence Report for the next Local Development Plan (LDP3) to Scottish Ministers for the process known as "Gate Check".

The report explained that the first stage in preparing LDP3 was a process of evidence gathering to inform production of an Evidence Report. The Strategic Planning team had worked collaboratively with a range of internal and external stakeholders to prepare the Evidence Report and the topic papers had been open for public consultation between 12th April and 10th May 2024. Disputes over the sufficiency of the evidence related to identification and review of Green Belt boundaries; housing requirements and existing housing need; education analysis and projection methodology; scope for development contributions towards healthcare and infrastructure; and site assessment methodology. The new Gate Check

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process would provide an independent assessment of the evidence and disputes prior to preparation of the new LDP for consultation, examination and adoption.

In response to questions the Head of Place advised that the plan was expected to be adopted by 2027 and any review of school catchment areas as a result of housebuilding would take place between now and the adoption date. The Director of Education added that officers were experienced in dealing with this process, as they had done so previously for St. Clare's and Calderwood Lodge Primary Schools, and would ensure that proper notice was given for any review.

Having heard the Provost, on behalf of the Council, thank all officers for the work which had been put in to producing this report, the Council agreed:-

- (a) to note the findings of the Evidence Report;
- (b) that officers submit the Evidence Report to Scottish Ministers for the Gate Check; and
- (c) to delegate the Director of Environment to approve any minor changes to the Evidence Report, in line with Council policy, prior to submission to Scottish Ministers.

PROVOST