

MINUTE **of** **CABINET**

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 27 March 2025.

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; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer); Joe McCaig, Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision); Michaela Sullivan, Head of Place; Emma Aeppli, Employability Team Leader; Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Mary Docherty, Education Resources Senior Manager; Thomas McAuley, RCU Lead; Michael McKernan, Economic Growth and Inclusive Development Manager; Paul Parsons, Principal Accountant; Lorna Wallace, Assistant Economic Development Manager; John Burke, Democratic Services Officer; and Bethany Mitchell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1151. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

ESTIMATED REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2024-2025

1152. The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Finance (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 31 January 2025 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.

The Principal Accountant advised that on the basis of the information, and taking account of forecast Council Tax collection, a year end operational underspend of £2,536k was forecast on General Fund services and an underspend of £100k 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 £1,298k 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 £2,536k together with the HRA operational overspend of £100k;
- (b) to approve service virements and operational adjustments as set out in the notes to the tables on pages 15 to 33 of the report and note the reported probable out-turn position.

TRADING UNDER BEST VALUE

1153. Under reference to the minute of the meeting of 28 March 2024 (Page 802, Item 789 refers) when the Cabinet approved that there were no trading services operated by the Council that should be classified as "significant", the Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Finance (Chief Financial Officer) which outlined that under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the Council was required to consider its trading operations and on an annual basis determine those which should be regarded as significant.

The report reviewed the activities for the financial year 2024/25 and advised that, to be classed as significant, the trading operation could only apply to external trading and to those activities that were not statutory. In addition the service had to be provided in a competitive environment and the recharge had to be on a basis other than a straight forward recharge of cost. In reviewing an operation's classification, further tests of significance required to be taken into account, using financial and non-financial criteria. Having considered these conditions the result of the review was that, in line with last year, the Council had no significant trading operations in the current year.

The Cabinet approved that there were no trading services operated by the Council that should be classified as "significant".

DEBT MANAGEMENT FOR SCHOOL MEALS

1154. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval to write-off as irrecoverable sums associated with school meal debt and to create a school meal bad debt provision to assist with managing such debt going forward.

It was noted that the amounts proposed for write-off in 2024/25 could be offset against one-off funding received from the Scottish Government School Meal Debt Fund, the details of which were provided in the report.

Subsequent years would be covered by the funding of a proposed school meal bad debt provision totalling £40,000 to be met from the revenue budget.

Cabinet members, in discussing the proposals, welcomed the additional funding, as well as the COSLA guidance that had been issued on the matter of school meal debt.

Following the discussion, the Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the write-off of all remaining debt accrued to the end of the school year 2023/24, totalling £14,085.19; and
- (b) approved the creation of a bad debt provision for school meals of £40,000 and the write off of irrecoverable school meal debt at the end of each school year up to the total value of this provision.

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND 2025-2026

1155. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) award from the UK Government, and seeking approval for the proposed projects to be undertaken in the period 2025/26.

Full details of the projects supported and information on the outcomes achieved to date through SPF were provided in the appendices to the report.

In discussion, members expressed an interest in setting up a backup list of projects for consideration should additional funding become available for allocation through underspends or other adjustments.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the financial allocation to East Renfrewshire for the programme period 2025/26;
- (b) noted the progress of projects funded since the inception of the programme in Appendix 1;
- (c) approved the projects as outlined in Appendix 2 for 2025/26;
- (d) delegated to the Director of Environment to approve any new proposal requests that could be accommodated if any underspends or adjustments arose during the 2025/26 financial year; and
- (e) agreed that a backup list of projects be prepared in liaison with Cabinet members.

1116

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

1156. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the No One Left Behind (NOLB) grant award from Scottish Government to East Renfrewshire Council, seeking approval for the Annual Investment Plan in 2025/26, as well as to highlight potential funding challenges and associated risks.

NOLB was a partnership approach between Scottish Government and Local Authorities to transform employment support in Scotland. It had been a key strand of employability services in East Renfrewshire since 2020 and had delivered a wide range of programmes.

Details of NOLB outcomes achieved during 2024/2025 were provided in Appendix 1 to the report.

Proposals for projects to be approved in 2025/26 were outlined in Appendix 2 to the report, and it was indicated that the East Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership had supported those proposals.

Cabinet members welcomed the activity, and particularly the provision of case studies to show the impact made by those projects approved in the past year.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the progress of projects funded between 2023 and 2025 in Appendix 1;
- (b) approved the projects outlined in Appendix 2 for 2025/26 based on the Council's provisional allocation from the Scottish Government;
- (c) delegated to the Director of Environment to make adjustments to the proposals depending upon the detailed costs of projects being confirmed; 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 for 2025/26.

ROADS SERVICE ADDITIONAL CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2026-2028

1157. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the proposed programme of road resurfacing and street lighting works funded through additional capital allocation which would be undertaken as part of the wider major road works programme in 2025/2026.

The report outlined the additional funding that had been allocated by Council for street lighting infrastructure. A proposed programme of works to utilise that funding was set out in Appendices A and B to the report, highlighting programmes for both street lighting and roads resurfacing to take place during 2025/26.

In discussion, members received clarification on several points around the quality of modern LED light systems, the savings associated with the installation of those systems, and the planning and implementation process that goes into carrying out roads programmes of this nature. A question was also raised around developer contributions at Drumby Crescent, Clarkston, which would require later clarification by officers.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the street lighting and roads resurfacing programmes for 2025/26, which were funded through additional capital budget allocation, as detailed in Appendices A and B to the report;
- (b) noted the investment made to date in road lighting and road resurfacing;
- (c) noted that regular updates on overall road condition performance would be provided on an ongoing basis;
- (d) noted that Councillor Pragnell would receive further information about potential developer contributions in relation to Drumby Crescent, Clarkston; and
- (e) requested that communications be issued to residents relating to the planning of roads maintenance and resurfacing and the reduction in potholes within the area.

CHAIR

