

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 21 June 2018.

Present:

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Paul O’Kane (Deputy Leader)	Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Danny Devlin	

Councillor Buchanan, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Louise Pringle, Head of Business Change and Revenues; Sharon Dick, Head of HR, Customer and Communications; Brian Dunigan, Senior Welfare Rights Officer; and Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer.

Apology:

Councillor Caroline Bamforth.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

471. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

Variation in Order of Business

In accordance with Standing Order 19, it was agreed to vary the order of business as printed on the agenda and supplementary agenda in order to facilitate the conduct of the meeting.

UPDATE ON MODERN, AMBITIOUS PROGRAMME (MAP) AND DIGITAL STRATEGY

472. The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, providing a high level update on the Modern, Ambitious Programme (MAP) including core systems, and seeking approval of the Digital Strategy. A copy of the strategy was appended to the report.

The report gave a flavour of the pace and scale of change across the Council, through the MAP, which had been focused this year principally towards furthering the Council’s digital agenda and gearing up for a significant change to the Council’s underpinning core systems.

The Head of Business Change and Revenues confirmed that tenders for the new finance/procurement and HR/payroll systems had been issued and it was expected that the contracts for these would be awarded in September. An overview of the key progress areas on digital were provided, setting out the building blocks for all work in this area, and it was reported that the Council was working closely with the Scottish Local Government Digital Partnership to take advantage of opportunities which had been tried and tested elsewhere. She added that a further report on the Annual Efficiency Statement for 2017/18 would be issued to Cabinet in August.

In response to questions, the Head of Business Change and Revenues advised that work to introduce online payment systems throughout the Council and Leisure Trust was ongoing and a new governance model would allow officers to determine if digital service scores were improving.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the high level progress update on the core systems programme of work, including the high level road map taking the Council towards award of contract in September 2018;
- (b) noted that work was currently underway to develop and enhance the Council's approach to reporting on the Modern, Ambitious Programme;
- (c) approved the digital strategy which would run until 2019/20 noting the focus on user-centred design; agreeing the stated delivery principles; and noting that the strategy would be used to influence the development of other departmental digital strategies and projects at a more detailed level as part of the departmental change programme; and
- (d) agreed to **recommend to the Council** that the Convener remits be expanded to include the role of Advocates/Champions of Digital within each to enhance digital leadership in East Renfrewshire.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT IMPLEMENTATION

473. The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive providing an update on the Council's preparations for the full roll-out of Universal Credit in East Renfrewshire in 2018 and seeking approval of a proposal for further use of welfare reform contingency funding to mitigate some of the impact for local residents.

The report explained that welfare benefits continued to be a complex landscape with a range of UK reserved benefits, digitally driven, and an emerging agenda for the new Scottish Social Security Agency, which was planning very much a face to face service. It was noted that the Council was very much at the mercy of nationally driven timelines on this and there had been significant UK slippage in the roll out of Universal Credit.

Whilst noting that the caseload seen by both the Council's Money Advice and Rights Team and the Citizens Advice Team continued to increase and both were delivering valued and vital services to vulnerable local residents, the report explained that the work linked closely to the wider poverty agenda which was being pursued both nationally and locally through the Fairer East Ren plan. Furthermore, it was noted that whilst the roll out of Universal Credit in East Renfrewshire was predicted to cause further hardship for some local residents, the Council could mitigate some of this through an organised approach, including good joined up

communication to signpost support from the various Council services and Citizens Advice and also provision of appropriate digital support and that the use of welfare reform contingency funding would be critical to support this work.

In response to questions, the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) advised that there may be a need to further increase staffing levels to facilitate increased face to face time with clients, particularly in the first two years of implementation.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the update on the Universal Credit (UC) implementation in East Renfrewshire and the project approach being taken to prepare the Council and partner services for the September roll-out;
- (b) noted that £200,000 of welfare contingency funding had been made available in the revenue estimates for each of the next three years, with previous approval by the Cabinet for contributions of £40,000 in both 2018/19 and 2019/20 to East Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau;
- (c) approved the Money Advice and Rights Team's bid for £69,251 of welfare contingency funding over the next two years for a project to build community capacity and resilience in the area of personal budgeting; and
- (d) approved the Scottish Welfare Fund Team's bid for £41,320 for an 18 month post to assist in dealing with project case load increases in Crisis and Community Care Grants.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL WORKFORCE PLAN 2018/21

474. The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive providing details of the Council's Workforce Plan for 2018/21.

The report explained that the Council's Workforce Plan now took a longer term approach which was aligned with the Financial Plan and that by focusing on the critical activities identified this would ensure that there was an established workforce with the right employees with the correct skills, tools, environment and knowledge who were engaged and motivated and who supported digital transformation.

Having heard the Head of HR, Customer and Communications advise that further consideration would be given to automation of services and upskilling of staff in future, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the Workforce Plan for 2018/21 and the three intermediate outcomes identified to ensure the Council's workforce supported a forward thinking and high performing Council; and
- (b) noted the alignment of the financial plan with workforce planning over the period to better predict potential changes to workforce shape and size.

ASSESSMENT OF WINTER MAINTENANCE ARRANGEMENTS

475. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment providing details of the performance of the Council during the adverse weather conditions experienced in 2018 and advising on proposals to review the current winter maintenance regime.

The report explained that the weather experienced in East Renfrewshire in 2017/18 was the worst, from a perspective of freezing conditions and snow fall, for a number of years. Although the Council in the main coped well there were a number of areas for potential improvement that had been identified and these would be further explored in the coming months.

However, the report highlighted that it had to be noted that public expectations could sometimes exceed the practical and financial capacity of local authorities to deliver high volume services for a short period of time when these services were only infrequently required. It was noted that all the areas for review that had been identified would be reported back to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

In response to questions, the Director of Environment confirmed that options for the future winter maintenance regime would be presented to the Cabinet in due course, some of which may require consideration of additional resources. The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) confirmed that additional resources for winter maintenance in 2017/18 had been provided through the Repairs and Renewal Fund.

Having heard the Leader report that the Winter Maintenance Team had been named as "Team of the Year" at the recent We Are East Ren Awards as recognition for their excellent service during the recent bad weather, the Cabinet noted:-

- (a) the successful outcomes for the Council during several periods of unusually extreme weather;
- (b) that a review of gritting routes was currently underway;
- (c) the proposal to implement digital technology which would permit the public to identify the location of gritters operating in their area;
- (d) the proposal to review the location and extent of grit bins and to assess whether this required to be changed;
- (e) the intention to review the manner in which the winter maintenance workforce was organised and deployed as part of the Environment Department's Change Programme; and
- (f) that a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet with regard to the review of gritting routes and grit bins.

PROPOSED PLANNING GUIDANCE – WASTE STRATEGY FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS

476. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval of proposed Planning Guidance – Waste Strategy for New Developments for publication and consultation. A copy of the guidance was appended to the report.

The report explained that the proposed Planning Guidance – Waste Strategy for New Developments, provided detailed information and guidance for considering planning applications and proposals. Furthermore, the Strategic Environmental Assessment screening process informed the details of the document and relevant details had been included in the proposed Planning Guidance.

The Cabinet approved the proposed Planning Guidance – Waste Strategy for New Developments, for formal publication and consultation with the development industry.

REVIEW OF HOUSING SERVICES ALLOCATION POLICY AND THE INTRODUCTION OF A CHOICE-BASED LETTING SCHEME

477. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval of a new allocation policy and implementation of a Choice Based Letting (CBL) scheme.

The report explained that Housing Services proposed to introduce the new Allocations Policy and the CBL scheme in summer 2018 and that the proposed changes to the way in which Council homes were let had been the subject of public consultation. It was noted that over 80% of tenants and waiting list applicants who had responded to the consultation were in favour of the new policy and choice based letting. A copy of the new Allocations Policy was appended to the report.

The new Allocations Policy and CBL scheme would be easier for customers to understand, fairer and lettings outcomes more transparent and informative.

The report concluded by indicating that the implementation of the new Allocations Policy and CBL scheme was designed to embrace the Council's five capabilities, especially in relation to modernising how we work and digital. The expansion of online services was a key part of proposals for the development of the service.

Having heard the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) advise that he could meet with Elected Members, individually or in groups, if they required clarification on any aspects of the policy, the Cabinet approved the:-

- (a) new Housing Allocations Policy; and
- (b) introduction of a Choice Based Letting scheme.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR YEAR-ENDED 31 MARCH 2018

478. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer providing details of the financial results for 2017/18 and to compare the out-turn with a final budgetary control statement for that year which was submitted to the meeting of the Cabinet on 5 April 2018.

The report demonstrated the continuing excellent financial performance of the Council and that subject to audit, the financial results contained within the accounts were satisfactory. Whilst noting that the Council's financial affairs had again been managed within its operational budget, the report highlighted that an overall surplus for the financial year of £5,057,000 had been recorded in the accounts.

The report highlighted that after transfers to earmarked reserves, the Council's non-earmarked General Fund reserve had increased by £364,000 resulting in a balance of

£10,118,000 as at 31 March 2018. This represented 4.3% of the annual budgeted net revenue expenditure which complied with the Council's policy and included £681,000 in respect of Scottish Government grant received at the end of 2017/18 for use in 2018/19.

The report also provided details of transfers totalling £4,600,000 that had been made from the General Fund balance to the Capital Reserve, Modernisation Fund, Repairs and Renewals Fund, and Equalisation Reserve. Furthermore, the Housing Revenue Account recorded an operational surplus of £385,000 thus increasing accumulated surpluses brought forward on that account to £1,629,000.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the out-turn position compared to the previous budgetary control report;
- (b) noted that the unaudited accounts were being reported to the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee later that day;
- (c) approved the transfers to be made from the General Fund to the Capital Reserve, Modernisation Fund, Repairs and Renewal Fund and Equalisation Reserve after the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's consideration; and
- (d) 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.

Resolution to Exclude Press and Public

At this point in the meeting, on the motion of the Leader, the Cabinet unanimously resolved that in accordance with the provisions of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act.

13 LOWNDES STREET, BARRHEAD

479. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment submitting for consideration the options regarding the future of the flatted property at 13 Lowndes Street, Barrhead.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) agreed to recommendation (a)(i) as outlined in the report; and
- (b) that delegated powers be granted to the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement to implement the chosen option.