

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

**Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 4 February 2021.**

**Present:**

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)  
Councillor Caroline Bamforth  
Councillor Danny Devlin

Councillor Alan Lafferty  
Councillor Colm Merrick  
Councillor Paul O’Kane

Councillor Buchanan in the Chair

**Attending:**

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive (to Item 1519 only); Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Gillian McCarney, Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer); Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

**FORMER COUNCILLOR KENNY HAY**

**1516.** Prior to the start of the meeting Councillor Buchanan referred to the recent sad death of former Councillor Kenny Hay and offered condolences on behalf of the Council.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**1517.** There were no declarations of interest intimated.

**HOUSING SERVICES ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2019/20 (SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER)**

**1518.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment providing details of the Council’s performance for 2019/20 against the annual return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter; seeking approval of the 2019/20 Annual Assurance Statement, and providing information on the impact of COVID-19 on the Housing Service during 2020/21.

The report explained that the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) required all social landlords to provide the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) with details of performance against a large range of key indicators at each year end, with the information provided being used to produce a summary Landlord Report for every social landlord in Scotland. This also enabled comparison of performance.

The report also explained that each social landlord was required to publish a detailed report on their performance against the SSHC for tenants and customers. A copy of this Annual Landlord Performance Report (ALPR) accompanied the report.

Furthermore, it was explained that the SHR had introduced a new requirement in the preceding year for every social landlord to produce an Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) confirming compliance with SSHC standards and statutory obligations. The statement, which incorporated an improvement plan, also accompanied the report.

Both the ALPR and the AAS would be used by the SHR to make a risk assessment of services and prepare an Engagement Plan detailing areas they wished to scrutinise further.

It was explained that in addition, the SHR had asked for information on how COVID-19 had impacted on the Housing Service, with details being set out in the report.

Thereafter the report summarised the performance information contained in the ALPR it being noted that East Renfrewshire had performed above the Scottish council average in approximately 70% of key indicators. Details of improvement actions in the AAS were also summarised.

The Head of Environment was heard in response to questions on the report, in particular the challenges associated with making void houses available for let, the additional impact COVID-19 had in this regard, and the positive effect on void turnaround times that the new housing management software system would bring.

Councillor Devlin having highlighted that delays were often due to external factors such as utility companies, and Councillor Buchanan having acknowledged that quick turnaround of void properties continued to be a challenge but that work was underway to address this, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted performance for 2019/20 as outlined in the Annual Return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter which would be published via the Council's Housing Services Annual Performance Report; and
- (b) approved the Annual Assurance Statement for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

## **BETTER POINTS INITIATIVE**

**1519.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment providing information in relation to the introduction of the Better Points Initiative and seeking approval for the an exemption from tendering to enable Ansons Consulting to be appointed to deliver the programme in East Renfrewshire.

The report explained that Better Points was an incentivisation programme which encouraged users of a Better Points mobile app to travel sustainably by offering rewards for doing so. Users collected points or 'BetterPoints' which could be exchanged for rewards, ranging from a drink in a local coffee shop, money off shopping or a donation to charity. The programme was flexible offering scalability and a variety of customisation, enabling programmes across the country to vary widely in terms of scope and purpose. It was noted that Ansons Consulting had an exclusive partnership with Better Points to deliver programmes in Scotland.

The report highlighted that the purpose of a scheme in East Renfrewshire would be to encourage sustainable travel and boost the local economy by encouraging footfall in town centres. It was noted that the total cost of Phase 1 of the project was £80,000 covered by external funding and that an optional Phase 2 project could follow if the project met/exceeded objectives and if further funding became available.

A summary of the proposal was outlined with a comprehensive proposal from Ansons for an East Renfrewshire programme accompanying the report.

In response to questions the Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer) explained the reasons why Ansons Consulting were being used to deliver the project and commented on the technology used to determine modes of travel.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved an exemption from tendering in accordance with Contract Standing Order 15(iii) to enable Ansons Consulting to be appointed to deliver the programme; and
- (b) delegated to the Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer) to approve and sign the Service Level Agreement between East Renfrewshire Council and Ansons Consulting in line with Council policy.

### **Sederunt**

**The Chief Executive left the meeting at this point.**

### **CITY DEAL – BALGRAYSTONE ROAD PROJECT**

**1520.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment advising on the current position in relation to the Balgraystone Road City Deal project.

Having reminded Members that the Balgraystone Road project was one of a number of projects that sat within the Council's overarching M77 Strategic Corridor Programme, and having outlined the benefits of the project, the report referred to the decision of the Council in March 2018 to make provision of £12.564 million in the capital programme for the Barrhead Station project. This was subsequently broken down in February 2019 with £2.21 million being apportioned to construction of the Balgraystone Road project and the remaining balance being allocated to the station.

The report explained that the contract for the road construction was let for £1.769 million. Work started in June 2019 with a scheduled completion of December 2019. Due to a number of challenges completion was subsequently delayed until October/November 2020.

The report thereafter explained that due to the required procurement method for City Deal projects contractors could claim additional time and payments for "compensation events". Examples of these events were set out in the report and included where project changes were made such as increasing the scope of the project.

The report then set out the various reasons why the overall contract cost had increased from £1.769 million to £3.242 million. This included a range of improvements to the scope of the project. It was noted that these changes, not included in the original project cost amounted to £670,000.

A breakdown of the current funding position was then set out it being noted that the final project shortfall was £362,000 and whilst there was no overall impact on the overall total capital budget for all City Deal projects a proposed adjustment would be made to the existing allocation of resources between the Barrhead Station and Balgraystone Road projects to reflect the current situation and provide clear visibility of all project costs. This would be

reported to a future meeting along with an update on all City Deal projects in relation to scope, timescales and costs.

The Director of Environment was heard in detailed explanation of the report and thereafter the director and Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer) were heard in response to questions from Members in relation to various issues including contract contingency levels; staff training on contract development and use of contract standing orders and financial regulations; potential costs of not carrying out the additional work as part of the initial project; and the need for relocation of a foul waste pumping station and extension of a water supply pipe, amongst other things.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) also clarified the position relative the timing of adjustments to the General Fund Capital Programme when project costs came in under the initial estimated cost.

The position in relation to the use of funds from the Housing Capital Programme having been clarified, the Cabinet noted:-

- (a) the considerable additional betterment provided through the revised project;
- (b) the contract compensation event changes in relation to redesigns and on-site conditions
- (c) that a further report regarding the scope, timescales and costs for all City Deal projects would be submitted to the Cabinet in the near future.

CHAIR