

MINUTE
of
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Minute of virtual meeting held at 2.00pm on 15 March 2021.

Present:

Provost Jim Fletcher	Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Angela Convery	Councillor Stewart Miller
Councillor Danny Devlin	Councillor Paul O’Kane
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Councillor Jim Swift
Councillor Barbara Grant	Councillor Gordon Wallace
Councillor Annette Ireland	

Provost Fletcher in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Julie Murray, Chief Officer - Health and Social Care Partnership; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Sharon Dick, Head of HR and Corporate Services; Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Graeme Smith, Communications Manager; Mark Waugh, Principal Accountant; Colin Hutton, Senior Communications Officer; Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; Linda Hutchison, Senior Committee Services Officer; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Louisa Yule and Morven Fraser, Audit Scotland.

Apologies:

Deputy Provost Betty Cunningham and Councillor Paul Aitken.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1575. Provost Fletcher and Councillors Grant, Merrick and O’Kane declared non-financial interests in relation to Items 1579 and 1581 by virtue of the fact that they were members of the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust Board.

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21

1576. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of 4 March 2021 (Page 1442, Item 1557 refers), when it had been agreed to recommend to the Council that the proposed adjustments to the General Fund Capital Programme 2020/21 be approved, and approval of proposals regarding the application of capital receipts generated in the current year under fiscal flexibility powers to help address anticipated unfunded COVID-19 pressures arising in 2020/21 and 2021/22, the Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer), recommending adjustments to the 2020/21 General Fund Capital Programme in light of issues that had arisen since the programme had been approved.

The Council:-

- (a) approved the movements within the General Fund Capital Programme 2020/21; and
- (b) agreed that £1.96m of capital receipts generated in the current year should be applied under fiscal flexibility powers to help address anticipated unfunded COVID-19 pressures arising in 2020/21 and 2021/22, with any unspent elements being reallocated to support the Council's capital plans from 1 April 2022.

HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21

1577. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of 4 March 2021 (Page 1442, Item 1558 refers), when it had been agreed to recommend to the Council that the proposed adjustments to the Housing Capital Programme 2020/21 be approved, the Council considered a joint report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) and Director of Environment, recommending adjustments to the 2020/21 Housing Capital Programme in light of issues that had arisen since the programme had been approved.

The Council:-

- (a) approved the movements within the Housing Capital Programme 2020/21; and
- (b) noted the shortfall of £135,000 and that income and expenditure on the programme would be managed and reported on a regular basis.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021/22

1578. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 11 March 2021 (Page 1459, Item 1574 refers), when it had been agreed to recommend to the Council that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 be approved, including the amended list of organisations for investment of surplus funds in accordance with Annex F to the report, and that the policy on the repayment of Loans Fund advances as specified in Section 3.4 of the report be approved, the Council considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer, reporting on the Treasury Management Strategy for the financial year 2021/22.

Councillor Miller clarified that, in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee was responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the Strategy, including the approved list of investors and the policy on the repayment of

Loans Fund advances. He reported that clarification on various matters had been provided, highlighted that the report set out the parameters within which the treasury function operated, highlighted that the strategy explained various fiscal flexibilities available to the Council to help address COVID-19 pressures, and confirmed that related mid-year and annual reports would be submitted to the committee in due course.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/21 be approved, including the amended list of organisations for investment of surplus funds in accordance with Annex F to the report; and
- (b) to approve the policy on the repayment of loans fund advances as specified in Section 3.4 of the report.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL DETAILED REVENUE ESTIMATES 2021/22

1579. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 25 February 2021 (Page 1428, Item 1544 refers), when it had been agreed to approve outline Revenue Estimates for 2021/22 due to the possibility of late changes being made to the Council's grant settlement, and that the detailed budgets and savings to be applied should be determined by the Council after the final confirmation of the settlement, the Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) relative to the proposed detailed Revenue Estimates for 2021/22 of income and expenditure and associated utilisation of £3.465m of reserves. A copy of the Revenue Estimates 2020/21 was appended to the report.

The report explained that the Council had identified sufficient savings options to balance its budget, but had only wished to implement those considered absolutely necessary. Following the finalisation of the UK and Scottish budgets during the preceding two weeks, it had been confirmed that the Council Tax freeze funding for 2021/22 would be baselined. Some additional new monies for 2021/22 were also expected the amount of which remained to be confirmed, but for specific purposes associated with reducing class sizes and pupil equity funds rather than to support existing service pressures. Regarding budget planning, this effectively represented no net change from the figure announced on 28 January 2021.

It had been confirmed through the Scottish budget that non-recurring funding would be made available to each Council to address COVID-19 pressures in 2021/22. Although the full amount remained to be confirmed, officers would closely monitor such costs in the coming year and consider using fiscal flexibility powers should costs exceed the grant available, with a view to a further report being submitted on proposed actions available.

It was also confirmed that on 25 February 2021 the Council had approved outline departmental non-COVID spending plans totalling £258.343m. This figure included confirmation of the Council's contributions to the Integration Joint Board (IJB) and East Renfrewshire Culture & Leisure Trust (ERCLT), together with savings of £3.503m still to be allocated to Council departments. The report clarified that detailed budgets and savings for the Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) would be determined by the IJB, and confirmed that the total allocation to the IJB for 2021/22 included new government grant funding and was £2.4m higher than in 2020/21 taking account of demographic, pay and contract pressures together with the savings target for the HSCP. Likewise the ERCLT determined the detailed budget and savings plans for services it provided, with specific provision having been made in the Council's support for the Trust for 2021/22 to consolidate the Living Wage for Trust staff in line with the position for Council employees. Any COVID-19 related pressures impacting on the Trust in 2021/22 would be funded by the Council via government grants and/or fiscal flexibilities.

The report explained that as a result of the confirmed settlement figures, the savings requirement for Council departments remained unchanged, but that the forecasted reserves position had been reviewed.

Following close budget monitoring during 2020/21 and as reported to the Cabinet on 4 March, a non-COVID related underspend of £2.472m had been expected by the year-end. Since then continuous review of Education revenue and capital expenditure plans and anticipated grant income had identified a further forecasted underspend of £0.465m through the funding of some equipment purchases from the capital programme rather than the revenue budget. As this would result in an improved year-end General Fund unallocated reserve position, it was proposed that the drawdown from reserves in 2021/22 be increased by this sum to a total of £3.465m to minimise Education savings requirements for that year. This would leave the forecasted, unallocated General Fund reserve at £5.615m (2.2%) at 31 March 2022 as approved by the Council in February 2021.

The report confirmed that scrutiny of the 2020/21 revenue position would continue at the year-end, when the final position on the Devolved School Management (DSM) budgets would be confirmed. Having explained that schools were permitted to carry forward up to 2% of unspent DSM resources into 2021/22 using the DSM reserve, with any excess underspends attributed to the General Fund unallocated reserve, early indications were that the DSM reserve would increase by £0.4m, totalling over £4m by 31 March. DSM underspends were expected to be larger than usual due to the impact of COVID-19, and it was suggested that, if this was the case, the Council might wish to consider making an additional allocation to DSM budgets in 2021/22 to help manage schools' savings requirements. The Council would be asked to consider this when approving the draft Annual Accounts for 2020/21 in June 2021.

The report referred to the revised departmental budgets itemised in Annex A to the report, and the detailed service budgets provided for approval, clarifying that where it had been possible to forecast COVID-19 related grant funding and associated expenditure, this had been reflected in the detailed estimates to assist with monitoring. Savings to be applied were provided in Appendix B, some of which were non-recurring requiring alternative proposals to be identified by relevant departments for future years. Reference was made to equality impact assessments undertaken on budget savings measures and related consultation.

Councillor Buchanan highlighted that when the outline Budget had been agreed in February, it had been confirmed that there would be no Council Tax increase in East Renfrewshire for 2021/22, with charges in every Band remaining below the Scottish average. He explained that clarification received since then from the Scottish Government on the financial settlement had enabled detailed spending plans and a range of ambitious capital projects across the Council's area to be set out.

He welcomed extra funding secured to allow free school meals to be provided to all children in P1 to P4 during 2021/22, and to all primary pupils from 2022/23. Having referred to more than £2m the Council expected to receive to help with its education recovery from COVID-19, he clarified that substantially more was expected to further support local businesses, council services and tackle poverty.

Councillor Buchanan commented that the Council's budget shortfall had improved significantly recently, with the predicted shortfall in October being £11.8m but saving requirements having fallen to £5.5m by February. With £2m of the savings having been allocated to the IJB and ERCLT, the Council required to identify savings of £3.5m. He emphasised that despite painful savings for 2021/22, everything possible had been done to protect vital frontline services, highlighting that despite the challenges of COVID-19, the Council had delivered many new services required as part of the emergency response whilst delivering longer-term infrastructure projects.

Councillor Buchanan made reference to new nurseries in Busby, Eaglesham and Glenwood which formed part of the Council's £26.9m commitment to almost doubling free provision of early learning and childcare to 1140 hours. Although the Scottish Government had extended the deadline for offering this due to COVID-19, the Council had met the original target of August 2020 through cooperation between services and the foresight of the Education Department, which continued to lead the way in Scotland. Whilst commenting also on the unprecedented working changes school staff had experienced as pupils and parents adapted to home learning, Councillor Buchanan also acknowledged the challenges for families associated with this and the hard work done to implement measures to ensure equity of learning, including through the distribution of Chromebooks to pupils. Having referred to a further 700 Chromebooks to be deployed in schools, he acknowledged the range of methods schools had used to deliver home learning, and the 95% engagement level by pupils across the authority. He highlighted that in-school provision had continued for vulnerable and key worker children throughout, thanking pupils and staff for their efforts in the most challenging of years.

He commented on ambitious education projects that remained on track, including the £40m plan to transform Neilston, confirming that funding for the first phase of the project, to build replacements for Neilston Primary, St Thomas's Primary and Madras Family Centre, and for new library provision had been secured. Having clarified that following consultation with the local community work would start towards the end of 2021 with a view to the new schools opening in 2023, he made reference to a second phase of work to improve Neilston's leisure facilities, make further improvements to other schools, such as to extend Crookfur Primary School, and provide a new, all-weather pitch and athletics track at Mearns Castle High School, progress on the latter having been delayed due to COVID-19.

Councillor Buchanan highlighted that the single biggest project the Council had made a commitment to was a new, high-quality leisure centre in Eastwood Park costing up to £55m which would provide three new pools, other sports and gym provision, a new theatre and a library. He explained that the design team would work closely with local groups to ensure the project met the needs of the local community, that there would be related public consultation in May, and that a detailed planning application was expected to be submitted soon afterwards.

He emphasised that all of the Council's new buildings would meet or exceed the latest energy efficient requirements, including the 310 new council houses to be built in the next four years. It was reported that the house-building programme remained on track, with tenants due to move into new homes in Maidenhill in the current week. He highlighted that such projects boosted the local economy, and cited examples of how the Council had been at the forefront of efforts to support businesses suffering the economic impact of COVID-19, including through the promotion of the Shop Local campaign, the distribution of government grants to local businesses, help provided by employability advisers, and the upgraded Work EastRen website.

Thereafter, Councillor Buchanan also cited examples of how digital innovation lay at the heart of Council activities, such as a smart gritting system in Barrhead which monitored road temperatures, and a pilot project involving sensors in grit bins to alert crews to when they required to be filled. He added that, in response to views expressed by residents, local residential roads continued to be the focus of £15m extra capital investment announced in 2019, with £5.3m having been spent in the previous two years and 35 resurfacing projects having been completed in the preceding year despite progress having slowed due to COVID-19.

It was explained that due to severe funding pressures and the need to make multi million pound savings most years and protect key services and assets, as a last resort alternative

vital income sources had required to be examined to avoid difficult decisions being made. Councillor Buchanan reported on plans to introduce a small annual charge, on an opt-in basis, for collecting garden waste, as more than a third of Scottish councils had introduced and many others were considering. However, he confirmed two important changes planned to the original proposals, namely the implementation of charges in the summer rather than April, and looking at instalment payments for those facing financial hardship.

He highlighted the importance of frontline services such as for health and social care, and of resources such as parks and open spaces during the COVID-19 response. He reported that attractions such as Rouken Glen had seen a huge increase in visitor numbers and that local walks and cycle routes had been promoted to help residents with their physical and mental health. He also referred to support offered to the many who had suffered the economic impact of COVID-19, the distribution of food parcels, help provided by the Money Advice and Rights Team, and the formation of new links with the voluntary sector to direct those who had volunteered. The response had also involved assisting those who had struggled to pay bills agreeing a reduction in their Council Tax where appropriate, the modernisation of the CCTV service to protect properties, and rapid improvements to support systems to allow most staff to work from home.

It was emphasised that these COVID-19 related changes complemented ongoing work, such as the successful replacement of three internal computer systems, and use of digital technology to streamline processes and increase efficiency. Councillor Buchanan confirmed that residents had been able to carry out more business with the Council online through the new website launched in July, adding that other modernisations had continued also, such as upgrading telecare systems to allow older and vulnerable people to remain in their own homes. Such technology complemented the work of HSCP staff who had been on the frontline of coping with the tragic impact of COVID-19.

Repeating comments made in February, Councillor Buchanan thanked all staff for the level of commitment shown over the last year, adding that it had been a heartening experience to witness how much the Council had helped people across East Renfrewshire as part of the emergency response. He emphasised that staff remained the Council's single biggest asset, in recognition of which the Council had announced that the Scottish Local Government Living Wage would be embedded into its salary scales. As a result, the majority of lower paid employees in the Council and ERCLT, including care workers, cleaners, refuse workers and catering staff, would receive significant pay rises from April in addition to the national pay settlement for council employees which would help boost the local economy. He thanked Trade Unions partners for their constructive approach when consulted on these proposals and in relation to discussions on the budget.

Whilst commenting on the remaining budget shortfall, the £3.5m savings required and related difficulties due to years of reduced funding, Councillor Buchanan explained that around 50 posts might be affected by this year's savings. In most cases these would be managed by not filling vacancies. He reaffirmed the Council's long-standing commitment to making no compulsory redundancies in the coming year, confirming that the overall number of Council employees would increase by 265 as new roles were created, such as in early years support.

In conclusion, Councillor Buchanan emphasised that over the preceding 12 months Council employees had played a key role in tackling head-on the challenges of COVID-19 and helping more people across East Renfrewshire than ever before. He clarified that this important work to support residents and businesses would continue during the time it was hoped to emerge from lockdown. At the same time, substantial capital projects bringing long-term benefits to local communities would be delivered to help achieve the ambition of improving the lives of everyone in East Renfrewshire. He thanked all those involved in the preparation of the budget.

Councillor Buchanan then moved that the Council approve the detailed Revenue Estimates for 2021/22 and the associated utilisation of £3.465m of reserves.

Seconding the motion, Councillor O'Kane commented that the decision to discuss the outline budget in February followed by consideration of the detailed Revenue Estimates at this meeting had been prudent and allowed the Scottish Government's financial settlement to local government to be confirmed. Having expressed disappointment that discussions with the Scottish Government had not yielded an increased local government settlement, he reported that COSLA had also been disappointed regarding this outcome, and that Council Leaders had restated that the settlement did not represent fair funding for councils. He confirmed that he would continue to argue for a resetting of the relationship between the Scottish Government and local government.

Councillor O'Kane referred to the challenging position facing the Council at present in respect of which difficult decisions had to be made, thanking officers for their strenuous efforts to help reduce the savings required without adversely impacting front line services, whilst still in the midst of the impact of COVID-19. He highlighted the use to be made of reserves, stressing the value of work and consultation with the Trade Unions on this and the budget. Having welcomed that once again a budget had been proposed without the need for compulsory redundancies, Councillor O'Kane highlighted that a gap remained for which there was no additional funding. This required difficult choices to be made. He emphasised the challenges presented by various savings measures, but referred also to how alternative ways forward would have impacted on services that needed to be protected. He made specific reference to the work that would be done to support DSM budgets and ensure that underspends could be used throughout the academic year.

Councillor O'Kane was also heard in support of the Capital Plan, welcoming that young people were returning to school, some of whom were attending new nursery schools due to the investment made in early learning and childcare expansion. He expressed pride in the investment to be made in Neilston, and welcomed progress and investment in the Eastwood Leisure Centre and other projects, particularly after delays attributable to COVID-19 which had impacted on the construction sector. He also welcomed that tenants were moving into the new Council built homes built at Maidenhill.

In conclusion he too thanked all staff for going above and beyond the call of duty, and also residents for supporting the Council and one another. He expressed the view that the Council had done everything possible to support front line services in these difficult circumstances, commented on the increasing challenges of doing so, and called upon the Scottish Government to fund local government fairly and improve parity of esteem between local and central government.

In response to Councillor Grant, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) confirmed that the NHS would be invoiced for the use of buildings for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, and also how catering costs were recharged internally, citing the example of how school meals were provided.

Also in response to Councillor Grant who questioned the provision of free school meals to all children, arguing that some parents could afford to pay, Councillor O'Kane referred to the decision on this made recently by the Scottish Government and related capital and revenue implications the authority would consider, adding that the Council was keen to understand the position on related funding. Having heard him add that parents were not required to make use of free school meals, Councillor Buchanan reported that it was hoped that clarification on various issues requested would be forthcoming soon.

Councillor Miller thanked the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer), the Chief Accountant and their teams for all their work on the budget, especially given the late notification of the financial settlement. Having expressed disappointment regarding the settlement, he acknowledged it had risen by 0.45%, but highlighted that when the rate of inflation was taken into account, this amounted to a real terms cut of 1.5%, adding that local residents who would feel the impact of the lack of investment in local government.

Councillor Miller expressed disappointment regarding the proposed reduction in the roads budget, given that he and his former colleagues on the Conservative Group had campaigned for further roads investment and had been delighted when the Administration had promised an extra £3m of annual expenditure for five years. He commented that he had been assured that the £25k reduction was in administrative costs not repairs themselves.

Councillor Miller referred to the reduction in the cleansing budget which he had been advised reflected budget projections associated with the new garden waste scheme charges. In his capacity as Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee which had initially proposed the adoption of this scheme, he welcomed its introduction without raising Council Tax. Having queried the reduction of £91k in the Community Warden budget, he referred to a very recent meeting he had held with the Chair of the Performance and Audit Committee of the IJB, reporting that East Renfrewshire had a poor record on funding adult social care.

Councillor Wallace referred to the comments made by Councillor Buchanan on roads that had been resurfaced, but emphasised that there were still many in need of repair. Referring to the Leader's comments on the Council's house building programme in future years, he commented on delays in progressing the programme in the previous ten and expressed the view that the vision presented on some issues contrasted with reality.

Referring to recent concerns expressed by the Labour Party at a national level on £1bn cuts to local authority funding, he challenged the allegiances that the Labour Party had made with minority Scottish National Party Administrations in various councils, highlighted that a very small proportion of the Barnett formula consequential funding coming to Scotland was passed on to local authorities, expressed the view that things need not be as they are, and stated that he hoped for a change of Government in May. He commented that if local government received the funding it was entitled to, stealth charges need not be introduced, reserves could be increased, and investment in roads for example could be made. Councillor Wallace stressed his concerns regarding the current Scottish Government's ongoing centralisation agenda, the detrimental impact of this on local authority budgets, and the damaging consequences this had for residents.

Councillor Swift referred to the financial collapse of Greensill, and the £600m guarantee the Scottish Government had provided when it had underwritten the project that would require to come out of its Capital Plan if Greensill did fail, which he considered likely and would be known shortly. He asked what action would be taken locally if the capital funding which had been anticipated was not ultimately forthcoming. In response to Councillor Bamforth who referred to the role the former Prime Minister, David Cameron, had had in this venture, Councillor Swift commented that Mr Cameron's actions were as a private citizen whereas Councillor Swift was questioning the Scottish Government's actions.

Whilst responding to various issues raised, Councillor Buchanan stated that local authorities were not responsible for the actions and spending plans of the UK and Scottish Governments or misdemeanours outwith East Renfrewshire, questioning some of the comments made. Regarding the Council housebuilding programme, he reminded the Council what the position had been ten years ago, including the legislative position, which made building such housing at that time unviable. The programme which was

now possible was addressing significant need that had built up over a long time, expressing pride in how work was proceeding. In the absence of any amendment, he commended the budget proposals to the Council.

The Council approved the:-

- (a) detailed Revenue Estimates for 2021/22; and
- (b) associated utilisation of £3.465m of reserves.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

1580. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 27 February 2020 (Page 1128, Item 1217 refers), when an update to the Capital Investment Strategy had been approved, the Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) seeking approval of a new Capital Investment Strategy.

Taken together with the Treasury Management Strategy report, it provided background information on the scale, objectives, affordability and risks associated with the Council's capital plans. A copy of the revised Strategy, which all councils were required to prepare, was appended to the report specifying the long-term capital ambitions of the Council and associated resource implications and risks, having been compiled with regard to these requirements, the Prudential Code 2017, and Treasury Management Code of Practice 2017.

Having clarified that the Strategy adopted a long-term approach to capital planning beyond the span of the Council's current capital plans, taking direction from the Outcome Delivery Plan and other key plans and strategies, the report confirmed that Council determined objectives within the strategy would be driven forward by the CMT working with partner organisations and local communities to ensure investment aligned to strategies, and that performance was measured against expected outcomes. A long-term strategic and financial view was considered essential for resilience in uncertain times and the strategy would be updated as required. A prudent approach to affordability and risk would continue to be taken, with delivery of projects to be closely monitored at officer and Elected Member level. Against the background of the Council's significant capital investment ambitions, the strategy, together with the Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Plan and Revenue Estimates and financial planning reports, set out how these would be funded and managed.

Having thanked the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) and Chief Executive for their work on the strategy, Councillor Miller highlighted that housing, climate change, transport and education were the main issues being progressed in terms of the national strategy, suggesting that keeping these as local as possible could have an enormous effect on all four and arresting urban expansion. Whilst acknowledging the need for housing, he favoured retaining as much of the area's green space as possible, not only in the interests of maintaining residents' mental and physical health but also because Scottish and local farmers could produce high quality food on productive farm land whilst helping to minimise related mileage costs. He added that East Renfrewshire lay within an agricultural area that was good for growing, expressing disappointment that both grass and trees, the biggest single carbon sinks in the area, were being lost to both roads and housing.

Councillor Miller highlighted the loss of three local farms in recent years for housing development, arguing that such development on productive land also increased reliance on transport and fuel use, exacerbating climate change. Having referred to the work the Audit and Scrutiny Committee had done on climate change to help mitigate its effects, he commended some issues that were being taken forward such as by the Environment

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Department. He supported the construction of the rail halt at Barrhead South, for local people to use, close to where further houses were being built, but questioned the commitment to building a new road from the halt to Junction 5 of the M77, arguing it was not needed, would in his view be an ecological disaster, and would be constructed on more tracts of land and open up the green space between Barrhead and Mearns to various types of new development. He advocated contacting Transport Scotland requesting that they use the funds to build a diamond junction at J4 of the M77 earlier than they otherwise would.

Regarding the Scottish Government plans to increase forested areas across Scotland, including in the Council's area, he referred to the importance of managing this properly and in a way which ensured productive land was not lost to woodlands.

In conclusion he welcomed the formulation of a future strategy, referred to the need to consider future needs carefully including in the context of changing attitudes, and commented that what had been done in the past four or five years was not necessarily appropriate moving forward. He added that whereas a new road might not be required, food would be.

Councillor Buchanan welcomed the strategy. He highlighted that the Cabinet had recently considered a report on the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, which commented on the impact of environmental issues and the climate emergency faced, in which it was suggested that an impact assessment be considered in terms of all future plans. Having confirmed this would be considered, he also referred to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26) that was scheduled to take place in Glasgow later in 2021, expressing confidence that issues such as those raised would be considered at that event and taken into account.

The Council approved the updated Capital Investment Strategy.

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PLAN 2021/22-2030/31

1581. The Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer), seeking approval of the General Fund Capital Plan covering the 10 years from 2021/22 to 2030/31. A copy of the Plan, prepared in line with the approach within the Capital Investment Strategy, accompanied the report.

Having heard Provost Fletcher confirm that the plans for 2022/23 to 2030/31 were indicative only and Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Councillor O'Kane, in support of the proposals, Councillor Swift referred to his comments earlier in the meeting regarding Greensill and the potential need for the Scottish Government to reduce its Capital Programme. He argued in favour of delaying approval of the Capital Programme for a short while until the position on this was fully clear, considering an impact on local authorities likely.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) reported that the Capital Grant for 2021/22 had been confirmed. She explained that, following a review by the Scottish Government later in the year, it would become clearer what the future grants would be. She expressed the opinion that any change to the Grant, whilst unwelcome, could be managed for one year.

The Council, having heard Councillor Buchanan refer to the role of COSLA in negotiations on future capital provision for Scottish councils:-

- (a) approved the Programme for 2021/22 and authorised officers to progress the projects contained therein; and

- (b) agreed to allow a degree of flexibility within the Plan, subject to prudential indicators being adhered to during the year, if required in the light of updated information relating to the time critical Neilston Learning Campus project.

CHIEF OFFICER ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES

1582. The Council considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive providing an update on changes within Chief Officer posts, and seeking approval to put arrangements in place to ensure continuity and stability within the Education Department and HSCP, for the establishment of an Appointments Committee for the Head of Education post, and for changes of Head of Service remits within the HSCP.

The report explained that the Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources) and the Head of Adult Health and Social Care Localities, HSCP had intimated they would retire on 25 June and 30 June respectively. Regarding the former, the report outlined the timetable for filling the Head of Education Services post, and proposals to put in place interim arrangements as necessary pending a successor being appointed.

Regarding the latter, it was proposed to change the current remits for the Head of Adult Health & Social Care Localities (NHS filled) and the Head of Recovery & Intensive Services, with these becoming the Head of Adult Services, Learning Disability & Recovery Services (NHS filled) and the Head of Adult Services, Communities & Wellbeing. Further information was provided on the proposed structure, the revised remits, and how these changes would impact on the General Manager, Hosted Learning Disability post, which was an NHS post. Given the challenging financial context, it was proposed that the management structure be streamlined by deleting the General Manager post and re-designating this role as the Head of Adult Services, Learning Disability & Recovery to more accurately reflect the role and additional responsibilities. The General Manager, who met the essential criteria for the post, would be matched into the position, with the changes made by NHSGGC which was supportive of this change. As part of the overall redesign, there would be further changes to management teams to increase capacity in recognition of service demands, including the recruitment of an additional post and making changes to the remits of other posts. There would be no budget savings arising from this proposal, with funds reinvested within services.

The Council, having heard Provost Fletcher, Councillor O'Kane and Councillor Lafferty thank those retiring for their contribution to the work of the Council:-

- (a) noted the retirement of the Head of Education Services with effect from 25 June 2021 and the Head of Adult Health and Social Care Localities with effect from 30 June 2021;
- (b) approved the recruitment procedure for the Head of Education Services post as detailed in the report;
- (c) agreed to delegate to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Education, to make the necessary arrangements for the recruitment;
- (d) agreed that Councillors O'Kane, Merrick, Buchanan, McLean and Wallace be appointed to the Appointments Committee;
- (e) authorised the Director of Education to put in place appropriate interim management arrangements for the Department if required;

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- (f) approved the changes of remit to the Head of Service positions in the HSCP; and
- (g) approved, in principle, the General Manager, Hosted Learning Disability Services being matched into the Head of Adult Learning Disability and Recovery Services as part of the NHSGGC process.

PLATINUM JUBILEE HOLIDAY 2022

1583. The Council considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive seeking approval to move the May Bank Holiday in 2022 to June and adopt an extra holiday on 3 June 2022 created to mark The Queen's 70 years on the throne.

It was explained that the Minister of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport State had announced the UK Government's plans to mark The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and that the Scottish Government had confirmed that the traditional late May Bank Holiday in 2022 would be moved to Thursday, 2 June and that the extra holiday on Friday, 3 June 2022 would apply to Scotland. All employee conditions of service applying to public holidays would no longer apply on 30 May 2022 but instead apply on 2 and 3 June 2022.

The Council agreed to move the Bank Holiday on Monday, 30 May 2022 to Thursday 2 June, and approve a further holiday on Friday, 3 June 2022 to mark the Platinum Jubilee.

PROVOST