

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Offices, Main Street, Barrhead, on 15 May 2014.

Present:

Councillor Jim Fletcher (Leader)	Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Deputy Leader)	Councillor Ian McAlpine
Councillor Danny Devlin	Councillor Mary Montague
Councillor Elaine Green	Councillor Vincent Waters

Councillor Fletcher, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Andy Corry, Head of Environment (Environmental Services and Roads); David Miller, Head of Revenue Services; Laurence Christie, Cleansing, Parks and Waste Strategy Manager; Sharon Beattie, Human Resources Manager; Craig Geddes, Council Records Manager; and Paul O'Neil, Committee Services Officer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1075. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

RESPONSE TO AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION ON PROCEDURAL ISSUES

1076. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 20 February 2014 (Page 897, Item 941 refers), when it was agreed that a response be prepared to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's Investigation on Procedural Issues, the Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive bringing forward the Council's response to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's Investigation of Procedural Issues. A copy of the action plan arising from the investigation was appended to the report.

The report highlighted that the procedural issues raised during the course of the investigation included access to Corporate Personnel Circulars (CPCs); car mileage and related issues and checks; declarations of interest; IT systems access issues; and the Council leaver's checklist. Full details of the Council's response to each of these issues were outlined in the report.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the Council's response to the various recommendations highlighted in the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's Investigation on Procedural Issues; and
- (b) approved the action plan arising from the investigation.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT FOR 2013

1077. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement), providing details of the information requests made to the Council under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 during the course of 2013. A statistical report detailing the enquiries the Council had received during 2013 was appended to the report.

The report explained that the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 provided a public right of access to the information which the Council held. The statistical report appended to the report highlighted the continuing significant rise in requests the Council had received and explained how it had performed in dealing with those requests.

It was noted that during the course of 2013 the Council had dealt with 923 requests representing a 15% increase in the number that had been dealt with during the course of 2012. This was the highest number of requests received since the introduction of the legislation.

The Cabinet, having heard the Council's Records Manager provide clarification on a number of issues associated with the processing of requests by the Council, noted the terms of the report.

RECYCLING POINTS PROVISION OF SERVICE - VARIANCE IN EXPENDITURE

1078. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment, seeking approval of a variation to the value of the Recycling Points Provision of Service contract increasing its value by £92,000 from £58,000 to £150,000 to allow the continuation by the current supplier of the scheduled servicing of recycling points throughout the area.

The report explained that due to fluctuations in market prices, the Council's efforts to expand its recycling services and the implications of the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 the likely outturn for the Recycling Points Provision of Service contract was likely to be around £150,000 against an original estimate of £58,000. A variation to the value of the contract was therefore sought in accordance with the provisions of Financial Regulation 8.3. It was noted that a new procurement exercise would be undertaken prior to the conclusion of the current contract.

The Cabinet agreed that, in accordance with the provisions of Financial Regulation 8.3, to approve a variation in the contract for the Recycling Points Provision of Service increasing its value by £92,000 (i.e. from £58,000 to £150,000) to allow the continuation of the scheduled servicing of recycling points throughout the area by the current supplier.

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS

1079. The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, providing an update on funding which had been made available by both the Department for Work and Pensions and the Scottish Government to support payments of Discretionary Housing Benefit to tenants adversely affected by a number of Housing Benefit changes. A copy of the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment policy was appended to the report.

The report explained that although the Scottish Government had announced that it was making sufficient funding available to fully mitigate the affects of the removal of the spare room subsidy in Scotland, it had not yet been able to distribute sufficient funds to councils to turn this policy aim into reality. It was noted that until the UK and Scottish governments agreed the legislative order, the Council could not fully mitigate under-occupancy charges for social sector tenants.

The report highlighted that there were two main groups of tenants affected by under-occupancy charges, those tenants who were prioritised for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) in terms of the agreed Council's Discretionary Housing Payments policy and tenants who were due to meet increased charges but had been given little or no priority for Discretionary Housing Payments.

Details of the two funding streams which had so far been provided were outlined in the report. This included a sum of £67,000 from the Department for Work and Pensions which was intended to assist the priority group and £102,000 from the Scottish Government which was targeted for the more general group of tenants affected by under-occupancy charges. It was noted that both groups of tenants could only be supported where applications for DHP had been received and considerable effort might be necessary to ensure that all eligible tenants submitted an application.

The Cabinet agreed that:-

- (a) funding provided for Discretionary Housing Payments by the Department for Work and Pensions be allocated to certain groups of tenants in accordance with the Council's Discretionary Payments policy; and
- (b) the additional funding which had been announced by the Scottish Government be distributed to all social sector tenants in East Renfrewshire to mitigate reductions in Housing Benefit as a result of the ending of the spare room subsidy.

CHAIR

