

MINUTE VOLUME

27 OCTOBER 2021

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MINUTE
of
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Minute of virtual meeting held at 7.00pm on 8 September 2021.

Present:

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

Provost Fletcher in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Julie Murray, Chief Officer – Health and Social Care Partnership; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Sharon Dick, Head of HR and Corporate Services; Jamie Reid, Strategic Insight and Communities Senior Manager; Graeme Smith, Communications Manager; Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; Linda Hutchison, Senior Committee Services Officer; and Lina Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Deputy Provost Betty Cunningham and Councillor Angela Convery.

IAIN DRYSDALE

1737. Provost Fletcher referred to the recent sad death of Mr Iain Drysdale, a former Councillor of Strathclyde Regional Council until local government reorganisation and an East Renfrewshire Councillor from 1995 until 2007. He commented on his prominence in the Conservative Party for many years since the 1980s and his roles as Leader of the Conservative Group within the Council and as Chair of the Audit Committee. Provost Fletcher expressed gratitude for the valuable assistance Mr Drysdale had provided regarding the establishment of the Council as a well-run local authority, and referred to the emphasis he had placed on prioritising the welfare of the Council over party politics.

Thereafter the Council observed a minute’s silence in honour of Mr Drysdale.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1738. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

1739. The Council considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 30 June 2021.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES

1740. The Council, having heard Councillor Ireland thank Councillor Miller for chairing at short notice the meetings of the Planning Applications Committee and Local Review Body held on 1 September, considered and approved the Minutes of the meetings of the undernoted:-

- (a) Appointments Committee – 20 May 2021;
- (b) Planning Applications Committee – 4 August 2021;
- (c) Audit & Scrutiny Committee – 12 August 2021;
- (d) Education Committee – 19 August 2021;
- (e) Appeals Committee – 25 August 2021;
- (f) Cabinet – 26 August 2021;
- (g) Planning Applications Committee – 1 September 2021;
- (h) Local Review Body – 1 September 2021; and
- (i) Licensing Committee – 7 September 2021.

ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2020/21

1741. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee of 12 August 2021 (Page1595, Item 1711 refers), the Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) providing details of the Council's treasury management activities for the year ending 31 March 2021, and seeking approval of the organisations specified in the report for the investment of surplus funds.

The report explained that, in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Audit & Scrutiny Committee was responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of treasury management activities. The submission of the report to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee had been in accordance with that requirement.

Councillor Miller, Chair of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee, clarified that the report reflected how COVID-19 had impacted the Council's borrowing plans for the year and provided performance information against various indicators monitored as part of the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy. Having referred to the impact of the pandemic on building work that had been being delayed during the year, he clarified that there had not therefore been a need to borrow £28m in 2020/21 to support the Capital Programme as planned. He added that, as projects had now restarted, the borrowing had been delayed rather than a saving having been made.

The Council agreed to:-

- (a) note the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2020/21; and

- (b) approve those organisations specified in the report for the investment of surplus funds.

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22

1742. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of 26 August 2021 (Page 1610, Item 1727 refers), when it had been agreed to recommend to the Council that the proposed adjustments to the General Fund Capital Programme 2021/22 be approved, the Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer), recommending adjustments to the 2021/22 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 2021/22; and
- (b) noted that the shortfall of £443,000 would be managed and reported on a regular basis.

STATEMENTS BY CONVENERS/REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT BOARDS/ COMMITTEES

1743. The following statement was made:-

- (a) **Councillor Merrick – Convener of Community Services & Community Safety**

Councillor Merrick commented on the ongoing recovery of the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust (ERCLT), confirming that the lifting of various restrictions on 9 August had increased capacity in gyms and fitness classes, with enhanced cleaning and the need to book sessions remaining in place. It was reported that at present, gym membership levels were approximately 50% of pre-COVID-19 levels.

He explained that mass vaccination was continuing to be supported at Eastwood Park and the Barrhead Foundry, but referred to plans for the Barrhead vaccination centre to move to Barrhead Health Centre from October with the return of the Foundry sports hall to normal operations. Councillor Merrick confirmed that the vaccination centre would continue at Carmichael Hall into 2022, with some fitness classes being delivered from St. Ninians' High School.

Councillor Merrick reported that the summer holiday programme had been delivered successfully despite various challenges presented by COVID-19, which was attributable in part to partnership working between Social Work and Education and the Trust. It was confirmed that planning was underway for October week camps, that bookings were in place for all community halls, and that plans were underway for the re-commencement of out-of-hours bookings in schools over the coming weeks.

Thereafter Councillor Merrick referred to the success and environmental focus of the 2021 summer reading challenge for children which 850 children had started despite restrictions on capacity and activities permitted in the libraries during the school holidays. He confirmed that nearly 600 children had

completed the challenge and would be attending special presentation sessions in libraries throughout September to receive their medal and certificate, congratulating the children, their parents and carers and library staff involved.

Concluding his remarks, Councillor Merrick confirmed that the seven libraries that were currently open were continuing to increase their opening hours. Although a handover date from the contractors was awaited for Busby Library, the Trust's target for both Busby and Netherlee libraries to reopen was mid-September. He expressed disappointment at recent misleading reports and campaigns on social media suggesting library closures, emphasising that there were no plans to close any local libraries. He added that a recent survey of customers received hundreds of responses to questions such as on activities to encourage customers back to the libraries; popular visiting times; planned activities and events; and general satisfaction, the responses having been overwhelmingly positive. Having cited examples of feedback received, he confirmed that the results would continue to inform the Library Service's recovery plans. He also referred to the recent announcement confirming that ERCLT would no longer fine readers for the late return of library books and to related work underway to cancel existing fines. He encouraged residents to return to or visit libraries for the first time to enjoy the resources offered.

The Council noted the statement.

APPOINTMENT OF ELECTED MEMBERS TO VARIOUS POSTS

1744. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 30 June (Page 1573, Item 1694 refers), when the Council had approved the appointment of Elected Members to various posts following resignations by Councillors O'Kane and Lafferty, the Council considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, seeking the appointment of Elected Members to various other posts on which clarification had been sought and received.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) that Councillor Miller be appointed to serve on the Clyde and Loch Lomond Local Plan Joint Committee;
- (b) that Councillor Convery be appointed as a substitute for Councillor Merrick on the East Renfrewshire Renewable Energy Fund; and
- (c) to note the appointment of Councillor McLean to the Joint Consultative Committee (1st Tier).

PROVOST'S ENGAGEMENTS

1745. The Council considered and noted a report by the Deputy Chief Executive providing details of civic engagements attended and civic duties performed by Provost Fletcher since the last meeting.

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCHOOL BUDGETS

1746. The Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) proposing an additional contribution from general reserves to schools to assist them address budget savings pressures.

The report explained that the Devolved School Management (DSM) carry forward scheme, approved by the Council in January 2018, allowed individual schools to retain a capped level of underspends in an earmarked reserve, it being clarified that if contributions to these reserves in any one year exceeded 2% of a school's budget or were not spent within 3 years, the excess funding was returned to the Council's non-earmarked General Fund reserve. In setting its budget for 2021/22, the Council had noted that DSM underspends at 31 March 2021 were expected to be higher than usual due to the impact of COVID-19 on spending plans; that this might result in an abnormally high transfer of excess funds to the non-earmarked General Fund reserve under the DSM scheme; and agreed to consider an additional allocation to school budgets during 2021/22 should this be the case.

It was clarified that in closing the accounts for 2020/21, the Council had been able to increase its non-earmarked General Fund reserve by £1.964m within which excess DSM resources transferred to it had been £285k higher than in 2019/20. Having referred to budget savings allocated to Education for 2021/22, £881k of which were to be met from DSM budgets, the report explained that the Council had recognised that some of the remaining Education savings measures proposed would be one-off actions which would increase pressure on devolved budgets next year. In recognition that schools were facing an exceptionally challenging year it was proposed, on a one-off basis, that the higher than usual excess amount taken back from DSM budgets at 31 March 2021 be returned to Education to reduce the savings burden on schools in the current academic year. This would be allocated across all schools in proportion to their share of the £881k DSM savings target. Any reallocated resources which were unused by 31 March 2022 but intended to address savings required in 2022/23 would be excluded from any calculation of the DSM cap at the end of the current financial year.

Having referred to 2019 Scottish Government guidance which required councils to review and update their DSM schemes with effect from 1 April 2022 and every three years thereafter, the report clarified that Education staff were commencing that review.

Councillor Buchanan commented that the transfer of unspent sums of up to 2% of the unspent budget each year to the reserve helped schools manage future savings and their priority projects; explained that at the end of 2020/21 there had been an overall net increase in schools' DSM reserves of £459k equating to 0.5% of the DSM budget; and clarified that at an individual school level there had been a range of underspends. He confirmed that the underspend above the 2% cap was usually under £100k, but that at the end of 2020/21 £285k more than in the previous year had been removed from schools' balances and transferred to the unallocated General Reserve. Taking account of this, the additional savings target of £881k from DSM budgets and savings in previous years, he argued it was challenging for schools to cope with without affecting the quality of education. He supported the recommendation made to assist schools address budget challenges and prioritise issues.

Councillor Wallace acknowledged the ethos of the DSM arrangements, including their role in incentivising those responsible for the budgets to do what they could with them without being penalised. He referred to the need to preserve reserves, but also the need to support young people in their post COVID-19 learning, expressing support for the proposal.

The Council:-

- (a) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted schools' normal spending plans in 2020/21, resulting in the level of underspend returned to the Council's non-earmarked General Fund reserve being £285,000 higher than in the previous year;

- (b) agreed to allocate £285,000 from the Council's non-earmarked General Fund reserve to primary and secondary schools on a one-off basis, shared pro-rata to the £881,000 of schools savings targets set as part of the 2021/22 budget, to assist schools in managing within their reduced budget levels; and
- (c) noted that the Devolved School Management scheme arrangements would be reviewed for 2022/23 and beyond.

COVID-19 RECOVERY ACTIONS UPDATE

1747. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 30 June (Page 1580, Item 1704 refers), the Council considered a report by the Chief Executive, providing Elected Members with a further update on response, recovery and renewal work taking place across the Council and the Trust.

Whilst commenting on the report, Councillor Buchanan referred to the on-going impact of COVID-19 on the NHS and time it could take it to recover, and the wider and on-going impact of the pandemic on private and public sector organisations. Having also referred to the challenges facing councils, including the extent to which staff remained involved in responding to COVID-19 and supporting the NHS, he commented on the Crisis Grants being paid to those most in need; work being carried out by various teams to keep the area and properties as safe as possible; and backlogs of work and related action being taken to address these. Councillor Buchanan also stressed the extent to which staff had been affected, many of whom had worked long hours during the worst of the pandemic and were still facing pressures to meet expectations that services should be back to normal whilst continuing to work on the COVID-19 response. Having referred to the authority's responsibilities to ensure staff could take leave and avoid burnout, Councillor Buchanan highlighted that the potential of emergency responses being required over winter, COP26, and transport and labour shortages meant a challenging time lay ahead. Against this background, he referred to the importance of Elected Members understanding the pressures on the Council and supporting all officers as they worked tirelessly to provide services.

In response to Councillor Grant, the Chief Officer HSCP confirmed that the vast majority of HSCP staff had been vaccinated. Rates for care and care at home staff were over 90% and just under 90% respectively with this being due to various reasons including medical conditions. Everything possible continued to be done to encourage staff to be vaccinated and arrangements were in place for new staff. Also in response to Councillor Grant, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) confirmed that the full costs for the vaccination and test centres and related staff incurred by the authority was being claimed from the NHS.

In response to a further comment by Councillor Grant on the poor audio quality of the IT helpline message, the Deputy Chief Executive undertook to provide feedback to the service responsible.

Having acknowledged the pressures faced and work being carried out by officers during these very difficult times, Councillor Wallace sought feedback from Councillor Buchanan on when he foresaw a return to normality. Councillor Buchanan commented on the difficulty of giving a specific time given uncertainties around case numbers and the mutation of the virus for example.

Whilst commenting on the report, Councillor Ireland acknowledged the severe difficulties faced by all officers. Whilst focusing on some specific services, she highlighted and commended the work of the Neighbourhood Services Team in view of particular challenges

it had faced and the way the team had and still required to operate to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect staff. She also highlighted the priority that had needed to be given to refuse and recycling services, welcoming and commending progress being made to address work backlogs. Councillor Ireland also highlighted and commended the Roads Service, welcoming that the majority of the resurfacing programme for the current year remained on track, and also the Environmental Health Team, such as for additional tasks it had required to carry out, examples of which were cited. She considered all such achievements noteworthy, thanking officers for their hard work. Provost Fletcher also thanked officers for the work they had done.

In response to Councillor Swift who acknowledged the difficulties forecasting when some normality would return, but sought clarification on what criteria would be applied to determine when services would open normally for routine business, Councillor Buchanan stated this was not possible to predict, but that work was ongoing on how to reopen services safely, citing examples of what had been done to date. He explained that new ways of working to open up services safely in ways both members of the public and officers felt safe were being explored. He referred to work being carried out to introduce hybrid meetings using appropriate safety measures.

The Chief Executive referred to the excellent work of the Leadership Team, and in particular, the work of the Resilience Management Team, and that issues were being taken forward in tandem on both response and recovery, which was unusual for an emergency situation. She confirmed a recovery diary was in place which took into account Government safety guidelines at any given time, with a view to opening up services. She added that all services were operational but not necessarily operating as efficiently as possible, primarily due to the need for social distancing and other COVID-19 related challenges such as staff availability and on the need to control infections. She also referred to the scale of COVID cases in the West of Scotland, related challenges and Government guidance on office based staff being the last to return to their work base. She confirmed that staff who could neither work at home nor work efficiently there were being prioritised in terms of returning to their workplace. She concluded that the efficiency of service delivery and dealing with work backlogs were the main issues at present.

The Council noted:-

- (a) the ongoing work on response, recovery and renewal;
- (b) that ongoing service delivery levels were still affected by staff involvement in response and recovery activities as well as the less efficient operating practices required to meet Coronavirus protocols; and
- (c) the continued additional workload of many staff.

RESCHEDULING OF COUNCIL AND AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1748. The Council considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive seeking approval to reschedule the Council meeting on Thursday, 23 September and the Audit & Scrutiny Committee meeting on Thursday, 18 November to Thursday 25 November.

It was explained that the External Auditor had been in discussions with the Chief Accountant on the timescale for the presentation of their report on the 2020/21 annual accounts to the Council. Due to the pandemic, the normal timescale for consideration of accounts had been extended with a view to them being signed off by the end of November 2021. The

proposal took account of when the accounts were expected to be finalised for consideration by the committee, and the Council thereafter.

The Council agreed that the meeting of the Council on 23 September and the meeting of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee on 18 November be rescheduled to Thursday 25 November.

NATIONAL CARE SERVICE CONSULTATION

1749. The Council considered a report by the Chief Executive seeking approval of the proposed approach and timescales to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on the creation of a new National Care Service.

It was explained that on 1 September 2020 the Scottish Government had announced an Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland, the principal aim of which was to recommend improvements to adult social care in Scotland, primarily in terms of the outcomes achieved by and with people who use services, their carers and families, and the experience of people who work in adult social care. Having referred to the conclusion of the review in January 2021 and publication of the related report on 3 February, the report specified the three recommendations made to shift the debate on social care to focus on human rights, prevention and social benefits; to strengthen the foundations of the service; and redesign the system through the creation of a new National Care Service, focussing on co-production and lived experience.

COSLA supported many of the principles within the report but had also highlighted concerns, indicating it wanted to work with the Scottish Government to address these. It had highlighted that funding was the main underlying issue, and asserted that the report's aims could be achieved by better funding local government. The related National Care consultation had been launched on 9 August 2021, the deadline for responses being 2 November 2021.

The report confirmed that many aspects of the consultation would be supported widely across local government and Integration Joint Boards (IJBs), but that some elements might appear to reduce local democratic influence and localism generally. Having summarised potential changes to the planning and delivery of care services and proposed structural changes which, if implemented, would fundamentally change the role of local government and IJBs, the report explained that the consultation went beyond the recommendations within the report published in February, and was seeking views on whether a new National Care Service should be responsible for children's as well as adult services.

Having confirmed that the proposals had far-reaching consequences for local government, people and communities, the report explained that the Council would work closely with the IJB on developing a local response, but that it was likely both would submit their own response which could differ in some key aspects. Reference was made to senior officers with professional responsibility for key service areas impacted by proposals who would shape the Council's response, and a related briefing to be offered to Elected Members who would also be given the opportunity to inform the Council's draft response and review and discuss it further at the Council meeting on 27 October 2021, prior to its submission.

Councillor Buchanan highlighted key aspects of the report, including how the Council's response would be formulated involving input from senior officers with professional responsibility for Health and Social Care Partnership, education, legal and human resource services as well as others. He referred to some initial views and significant concerns expressed thus far which could be aired further to inform the response prepared to help ensure the services proposed were right for both residents and the Council.

Councillor Wallace referred to concerns he had expressed at meetings of both the Education Committee and Community Planning Partnership on the proposals. He considered a national care service to be a further attack on localism, referring to the centralisation of the Scottish Police Service and ring fencing of block grants from the Scottish Government as further examples. He expressed the view that the current Scottish Government demanded control in the hands of those most affected by issues, but failed to see any benefit in that belief being adopted locally. He anticipated that education services would be centralised next and, having referred to the additional funding announced by the UK Government that would be coming to Scotland, commented that the care service would be controlled centrally.

Councillor Grant also expressed concerns regarding local authorities losing control of services councillors had been elected locally to provide, stressing the importance of local Elected Members looking after local residents and their priorities rather than others' views being prioritised and imposed. She questioned the whole point of local government if services continued to be centralised, views were imposed, and responsibilities were removed from local control. Councillor Miller supported various views expressed by Councillors Grant and Wallace, arguing in favour of local control of services as far as possible and adequate funding to deliver them.

Councillor Bamforth reminded Members that some of the additional funding to be provided to the Scottish Government by the UK Government would be as a result of additional national insurance contributions from people in Scotland, which would also be used to support additional funding provision in England.

Councillor Swift referred to the scale of the Scottish deficit relative to that of the UK, and the Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS) statistics which he argued highlighted the reliance Scotland had placed on funding from English taxpayers for a long time and which he considered should be acknowledged. Whilst commenting on the specific proposal made on the care service, he referred to various other issues progressed by the Scottish Government which he considered unsuccessful.

Councillor Macdonald echoed comments made, expressing reservations on the centralisation of services which he felt did not work well. He cited examples of why he held that view and considered local control important, and clarified that he did not support a "one size fits all" approach to social care. He supported Councillor Grant's comments on the point of local government in the face of the centralisation of services, suggesting that the proposals under consideration were in his view driven by a wish to make savings and ease of use rather than seeking services of a superior quality.

Councillor Lafferty also supported many comments made by Councillor Grant, referring to a range of strategic services which had moved outwith local government control during his time as an Elected Member. He shared the view that one size did not fit all and considered local Elected Members best placed to decide local needs. He understood that councillors from all parties involved in COSLA did not favour a central national care service.

Councillor Ireland expressed the view that the GERS figures referred to by Councillor Swift were regarded as an inaccurate measure and, if anything, supported the case for independence, questioning his interpretation of these. She also supported comments made by Councillor Bamforth on national insurance payments from Scotland funding English social care.

Responding to Councillor Ireland, Councillor Aitken highlighted that the GERS statistics were compiled by the Scottish Government's own economists, questioned the denial of the accuracy of the figures, and considered the existence of the Scottish deficit to be factually accurate.

Focussing on the comments made of relevance to the consultation, Councillor Buchanan referred to the opportunities that would exist to comment on the proposals and inform the Council's response, agreeing with some of the views expressed such as on the concerns expressed by COSLA, which would also submit comments on the proposals. He anticipated some views expressed on a range of issues would be similar.

Reflecting on various comments made during the meeting, Councillor Wallace expressed concern that despite no backing from any local authority to date for their proposals, the Scottish Government would defend and implement them regardless.

The Council, having heard Provost Fletcher encourage as many Elected Members as possible to attend the meeting on 23 September and inform the response to be prepared:-

- (a) noted the consultation on a National Care Service;
- (b) noted that the formation of a National Care Service was likely to have significant implications for all councils;
- (c) noted that the Scottish Government had extended the deadline for responses from 18 October to 2 November 2021;
- (d) agreed that an Elected Member/Officer discussion take place at 4pm on 23 September to explore the detail of the consultation and provide initial comments on the proposals; and
- (e) noted that Elected Members would have the opportunity to review and discuss the final submission at the meeting of the Council on 27 October 2021 prior to it submission.

POST OF DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

1750. The Council considered a report by the Chief Executive requesting that, following notification of the retirement of the Director of Corporate and Community Services with effect from 30 January 2022, arrangements be put in place to ensure continuity and stability within the department, and seeking approval for the establishment of an Appointments Committee for the post.

The report summarised the extent to which the Director of Corporate and Community Service's role had developed since her appointment to the post in 2008. Given the changes in the role over a number of years, and as the Council planned for recovery from the impact of COVID-19 and moved towards renewal, it had been considered appropriate to review the priorities of the post prior to it being advertised to ensure the leadership skills required could be clearly articulated in the recruitment material. It was clarified that the three priorities identified had been categorised under the headings of efficient and effective business operations, council-wide digital transformation and effective community, partnership and strategy development, further details on which were provided and reflected the cross-Council enabling role of the department.

It was reported that the existing designation of the role of Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate and Community Services no longer fully reflected the way the role had developed, and recommended therefore that it be redesignated as Director of Business Operations and Partnerships, with the name of the department amended accordingly. The role of deputising for the Chief Executive would be shared across all directors as required, further building the sense of shared leadership across the Council. It was clarified that once

the new Director was appointed, and after consultation with the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team, a further report might be submitted to the Council if further approvals were required to ensure that the priorities could be delivered within a very challenging financial situation for the Council.

Councillor Buchanan referred briefly to the opportunities that would exist in future to thank the Director of Corporate and Community Services for her work and to wish her well for the future. He highlighted key aspects of the report and proposals to appoint her successor. Councillor Wallace welcomed the change of designation for the role and department to reflect the nature of and extensive remit it currently had.

The Council:-

- (a) noted the retirement of the Director of Corporate and Community Services with effect from 30 January 2022;
- (b) approved the recruitment procedure as detailed in the report;
- (c) approved the redesignation of the post to Director of Business Operations and Partnerships, including the consequent change of name of the Department to Business Operations and Partnerships;
- (d) noted that responsibility for deputising for the Chief Executive would now be shared across all the directors as required rather than vested in a single post;
- (e) authorised the Chief Executive to make the necessary arrangements;
- (f) agreed that membership of the Appointments Committee comprise Councillors Buchanan, Grant, Lafferty, Merrick and Wallace with provision for substitutes should any of those appointed be unable to attend; and
- (g) authorised the Chief Executive to put in place appropriate interim management arrangements for the Department if required.

PROVOST

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 9 September 2021.

Present:

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)
Councillor Caroline Bamforth

Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Colm Merrick

Councillor Buchanan, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Andrew Corry, Head of Operations (Environment); Graeme Smith, Communications Manager; Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Betty Cunningham and Danny Devlin.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1751. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

KITCHEN SUPPLY CONTRACT – PROPOSED VARIATION

1752. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval to apply a variation to the current kitchen supply contract to include installation.

The report advised that the current contract with City Building (Glasgow) LLP (RSBi) was for the manufacture and supply of kitchens only and although installation was included in the remit of the Scottish Government Framework this was not included in the final contract award as this was historically carried out internally by the Council's own Housing Maintenance Team.

Due to the backlog of works caused by COVID-19, it was now considered more efficient to include installation in the current contract. This would ensure contractor ownership for supply and install services allowing Housing Services to concentrate on the delivery of other key work packages.

Having heard the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) confirm that there was no risk of procurement challenge as the current supplier was the only supplier on the Framework that could both supply and install kitchens, and outline that the proposed approach would deliver

best value, the Cabinet in accordance with the Contract Standing Order 14 approved a variation of £895,950 to be applied to the existing kitchen supply contract with *City Building* (Glasgow) LLP (RSBI).

CROOKFUR PLAYING FIELDS – LEASE BY ST CADOC YOUTH CLUB - UPDATE

1753. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of 4 March 2021 (Page 1444, Item 1562 refers), when the Cabinet considered a report on a proposal from St Cadoc's Youth club to lease and take responsibility for operating and maintaining the two grass pitches at Crookfur, the Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment providing an update.

The report reminded Members that at the meeting on 4 March the proposal to grant a 25 year lease of an area of the Crookfur Playing Fields to St Cadoc's Youth Club had been noted; and the Director of Environment instructed to undertake the necessary advertisement process in respect of the proposal and in due course to bring a further report to Cabinet advising of the terms of any objections received in response to the advertisement.

Unfortunately as a result of the impact of the pandemic advertisement and consultation by the Council had not taken place to date and following discussions with St Cadoc's Youth Club and taking into consideration all factors, it was now being proposed that the pitches be retained and operated by the Council as grass football pitches. Discussions had been underway with East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust (ERCLT) regarding operating all pitches on behalf of the Council, and should discussions progress positively then this would remove the opportunity for further approaches from other organisations. It was noted that ERCLT was a wholly owned subsidiary of East Renfrewshire Council and the ownership of the pitches would stay with the Council.

Commenting on the report, the Director of Environment outlined the factors taken into account in reaching this position and highlighted that the Council's Local Development Plan 3 would therefore need to consider the potential for supporting community based sports clubs outwith Protected Urban Greenspace areas and if possible away from existing residential development. This would require the development of a sporting facilities strategy to be inclusive to all clubs in the area and the ever growing demand for football pitches and other training facilities.

Councillor Buchanan made reference to discussions on social media about the proposed lease of football pitches at Crookfur Playing Fields to St Cadoc's Youth Club and noted that unfortunately some of these discussions had been based on misinformation. He noted that the Council had leases with similar clubs and that clubs would continue to require appropriate levels of facilities to deliver for their members. He thanked the team for engaging in discussions with St Cadoc's Youth Club and the community, and for moving forward as much as was possible on this matter during the pandemic.

Having heard from the Director of Environment, the Cabinet noted that:-

- a) no further work was required on this matter as both the Council and St Cadoc's Youth Club agreed that the site could not achieve many of the longer term aims of the club;
- b) although the proposal had not yet been advertised there had been a significant level of correspondence objecting to the proposed lease; and

- c) the Council and relevant partners would work with St Cadoc's and other sports clubs to try to identify appropriate and acceptable sites for the betterment of sporting facilities within the area.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
CABINET
(POLICE & FIRE)

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 16 September 2021.

Present:

Councillor Colm Merrick (Chair)
Councillor Caroline Bamforth

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)
Councillor Barbara Grant

Councillor Merrick in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Murray Husband, Head of Digital and Community Safety; Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Stephen Bell, Community Safety Manager; David Baird, Principal Officer, Asset & Property Management; Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Chief Superintendent Mark Sutherland (Divisional Commander) and Chief Inspector Alan Gray (Area Commander), Police Scotland; Area Commander David McCarrey and Group Commander Alan Coughtrie Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Apologies:

Councillors Danny Devlin, Alan Lafferty and Gordon Wallace.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1754. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

POLICE SCOTLAND – PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2021/22

1755. The Cabinet considered a report by the Divisional Commander, Police Scotland, providing details of the performance of the police over the first quarter of 2021/22. The report also provided statistical information in relation to various categories of crimes and offences committed during the reported period together with comparative statistics for the corresponding period in 2021/22.

Chief Superintendent Sutherland provided an overview of the East Renfrewshire Policing Plan 2020-23 during quarter one. He noted the difficulty of the interpretation of the statistics with previous years given the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions in place during this period and therefore advised that greater context around the statistics had been provided.

He informed Elected Members of the expected impact of day to day police resources during the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November 2021. A suitable and sustainable community policing model would be implemented to support the residents of East Renfrewshire during this period although he highlighted that this would be a challenging time for the police service.

It was reported that a briefing took place with senior health care professionals in East Renfrewshire and the police on the 24 August which focussed on the public health approach to policing. An outcome from the meeting was for an alcohol related matters workshop to be held which would include as a topic police referrals to other services to provide suitable support. It was intended that an update on the public health approach for policing in East Renfrewshire would be brought to a future Cabinet meeting. A full time appointment in the public health approach to policing had been made and partnership working with Public Health Scotland continued.

It was further reported that a dedicated economic crime unit had been established, focussing on the increase in fraud whilst providing specialist support, guidance and expertise to all police officers. Furthermore, over the summer period a meeting took place at the Glasgow Climbing Centre with campus officers and young people involved in diversity work. Reference was also made to the forthcoming Playground Festival in Rouken Glen Park.

Chief Inspector Gray then reported on the performance of the police against the five local policing priorities contained in the East Renfrewshire Policing Plan 2020-23. He outlined the changing timeline of the wider COVID-19 restrictions during this period and the impact this had on the delivery of local operational policing services and crime profiles.

He advised that acquisitive crimes were lower than for the same period the previous year and lower for the five-year average. A slight increase in the number of homes broken into, inclusive of attempted break-ins, took place with fourteen crimes recorded during quarter one which was a rise of five compared to the same period in 2020. It was noted that this was not unexpected given the significant COVID restrictions that were in place during the same period the preceding year, and was down 45% compared to the five-year average. Crime prevention survey visits and social media messaging were being used to alert the public to any emerging trends and to provide guidance with regard to home and vehicle security.

Fraud had increased significantly both locally in East Renfrewshire and across the United Kingdom, with there being an increase in Quarter 1 compared to the same period in 2020 and also in the five-year average. Action plans were in place for bogus worker activity and no significant increasing trend had been seen for this crime. The local police Twitter account had been used to provide guidance in this area.

Chief Inspector Gray advised that in relation to public protection, an update report had been provided to Councillor Bamforth following her request at the previous meeting. Online sexual crimes against children under sixteen years of age was at 29% in East Renfrewshire whilst 33% in the rest of Scotland. This remained an area of focus with parental guidance provided through social media campaigns. The decrease in 2020 for sexual offences was more in line with the previous five-year average. During this period, in separate and unrelated incidents, four warrants had been executed by officers in relation to possession of indecent images of children. Four separate males with ages ranging from 17 to 56 had been reported to the Procurator Fiscal in relation to alleged offences.

Slightly fewer domestic abuse incidents were attended compared to the same period the previous year, although this was slightly more than the five-year average. Year to date domestic abuse incidents, where associated crimes had been recorded, reduced by over a third in comparison to the same period the previous year. During this period local officers were trained as domestic abuse champions.

In relation to the detection of drug supply offences, it was advised that there had been an increase, with twelve crimes recorded in East Renfrewshire. This was above the five-year average figure of 9.8 crimes recorded in Quarter 1.

In relation to violent crime, in the first quarter of this year three fewer serious assaults and twenty four fewer minor assaults had been recorded compared to the same period the previous year. These represented reductions of 33% and 20% respectively and figures remained well below the five-year average statistics. Although not normally reported, there had been a slight increase in the assaults on emergency service workers. Two robberies were reported, with a 26 year old male being reported to the Procurator Fiscal for one of these offences whilst enquiries into the other crime were ongoing.

In comparison to the previous year there was a reduction in the reporting of anti-social behaviour which could be linked to the relaxing of Covid-19 restrictions. Antisocial behaviour and disorder, including youth disorder, was addressed through dedicated action plans with partners and support from additional specialist policing resources, including off-road motorcyclists, Mounted Officers and the Air Support Unit who used their Unmanned Aerial System to assist in identifying groups and facilitate safe and effective engagement with officers.

Chief Inspector Gray then reported on the incidents referred to in the report under the areas of violent crime, crimes of dishonesty, vulnerable road users, domestic abuse, adult protection and child protection and young people.

There followed a short question and answer session in the course of which Chief Superintendent Sutherland and Chief Inspector Gray responded to a number of questions and provided clarification on a range of operational issues within East Renfrewshire and the crime statistics recorded in the report.

The terms of the report were noted.

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (SFRS) PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2021/22

1756. The Cabinet considered a report by the Area Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), providing details of the performance of SFRS in East Renfrewshire during the first quarter of 2021/22.

Area Commander David McCarrey introduced himself to the Cabinet and provided an update that the SFRS would have dedicated resources during the period of COP26 and therefore business as usual would not be affected. However senior members of the SFRS would be called upon therefore availability may be restricted over this period.

An analysis of the incidents identified in the six areas for demand reduction that had taken place in each of the Council's five wards during the reported period was outlined in the report.

Referring to the report, Group Commander Coughtrie provided an overview of the activity during the reported period. There had been a 21% decrease in accidental dwelling fires, ten out of the eleven properties had working detection and nearly 50% were extinguished prior to the arrival of the fire service with the remaining 50% requiring limited action by the fire service on arrival. These fires were limited to the room of origin and to the item first ignited which resulted in limited or no fire damage. Targeted leaflet drops continue in the areas where there have been one or more accidental dwelling fires.

No accidental dwelling fire casualties had occurred during quarter one, a 100% reduction from the same period the previous year and a 40% reduction on the three-year average. Operational crews carried out 45 high risk home fire safety visits.

In terms of unintentional injury and harm, there had been a significant increase on the same period the preceding year, with an 8% increase on the three-year average. The number of casualties showed an increase as a result of eight road traffic collision incidents with five extrications within the reporting period. There were no fatalities, two injuries required hospitalisation and all other casualties had minor injuries.

It was noted that during this period crews and the Community Action Team carried out twenty four multi-agency engagement activities across East Renfrewshire with a focus on road traffic collisions, unintentional injury and harm within the home, and water related injuries. During the extended period of good weather there were no water related incidents or casualties. Familiarisation visits to reservoirs and dams were carried out and response plans implemented to prepare for future periods of good weather. Social media campaigns 'Stay Alive' and 'Get to know the fatal five' focussed on the dangers of drink and drug driving, speeding, careless and inconsiderate driving and using a hand held mobile phone highlighting the risks of these activities to the lives of others.

He reported that there had been a significant increase in deliberate fire setting, both on the year on year and three-year average although this could be attributed to a spate of secondary fires during June in one specific area which contributed to over 50% of the recorded activity. The Community Action Team and Fire Safety Enforcement Team consequently provided advice in this area resulting in a reduction in this figure.

It was reported that there had been a 100% increase in non-domestic fires in relation to the previous reporting period. However this was measured against an unusually low figure of three incidents last year and six this year, with three being private properties and three falling under the fire Scotland Act for relevant premises. No deliberate fires were recorded within these figures therefore resulting fires were accidental or a fault within the premise.

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals had increased by 84% during the quarter, with a reduction of 8% over the three-year average. The significant increase was caused predominantly by actuations at schools, due to apparatus being contaminated with dust in the detector heads from the schools being closed and limited ventilation within the premises. The Take 5 campaign continued to be used in this area, with no further instances of reoccurrence following this being implemented.

Following questions, Group Commander Coughtrie provided an update on the fire alarm regulations due to come into effect in February 2022, advising that all domestic premises would need to have one smoke alarm in the room most frequently used for general living purposes, one in circulation spaces, one heat alarm in every kitchen and a carbon monoxide detector where there was a carbon-fuelled appliance. Area Commander McCarrey advised that Care and Repair would be carrying out installations in East Renfrewshire and the SFRS would be able to carry out high risk installations.

There followed further questions in the course of which Group Commander Coughtrie and Area Commander McCarrey provided clarification on a range of operational issues within East Renfrewshire and the statistics recorded in the report.

The report was noted.

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (SFRS) – PRESENTATION ON UNWANTED FIRE ALARM SIGNALS

1757. A presentation was made by Area Commander McCarrey on unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS), the presentation outlined the case for change inclusive of the impact of UFAS on the SFRS and communities. Area Commander McCarrey outlined the three options detailed in the current public consultation, inclusive of the benefits and risks associated with each of these options.

It was confirmed that arrangements would be made for a consultation response to be submitted on the SFRS Reducing Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals consultation.

The presentation was noted.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minute of virtual meeting held at 2.00pm on 23 September 2021.

Present:

Councillor Stewart Miller (Chair)	Councillor Charlie Gilbert
Councillor Barbara Grant (Vice Chair)	Councillor Annette Ireland
Councillor Angela Convery	Councillor Jim McLean

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Attending:

Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Sharon Dick, Head of HR and Corporate Services; Alison Ballingall, Senior Revenues Manager; Gill Darbyshire, Chief Executive's Business Manager; Anthony Jenkins, Resilience Coordinator; Kath McCormack, HR Manager; Fiona Muir, Senior Auditor; Linda Hutchison, Clerk to the Committee; Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

John Cornett, Louisa Yule and Emma-Rose Drummond, Audit Scotland.

Apology:

Councillor Jim Swift.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1758. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

CHAIR'S REPORT

1759. The Chair advised, and the committee noted, that the Council had recently agreed that the meeting of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee scheduled to take place on Thursday 18 November would now be held on Thursday 25 November to allow the Annual Accounts and all other items to be considered that month to be discussed at a single meeting.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION – UPDATE

1760. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 18 March 2021 (Page 1482, Item 1593 refers), when it had been agreed that a further update on the UK's exit from the European

Union (EU) should be provided to a future meeting, the committee considered a joint report by the Directors of Corporate & Community Services and Environment, providing a further update on the UK's exit from the EU and work within the Council in response.

The report confirmed that the UK had ceased to be a member of the EU on 31 January 2020, entering a transition period then until 31 December 2020. Both sides had announced that a Trade and Cooperation Agreement had been reached on 24 December 2020, following the ratification of which the UK and EU had entered a new relationship from 1 January 2021. Agreements between the EU and UK had provisions that governed their future relationship, trade and citizen's rights, with the potential remaining for supplementary agreements, and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement would be reviewed every five years.

It was explained that increasing numbers of goods and services were proving challenging to procure, and/or had increased in price substantially, but that it was impossible to be clear on how much of this was attributable to the UK's exit from the EU, a consequence of the pandemic, or other factors. Regarding EU nationals seeking to protect their rights to live/work in the UK, it was confirmed that from the end of June 2021, new people seeking to live/work in the UK were required to meet the points based immigration criteria.

Whilst the legal and regulatory landscape had yet to alter significantly, the UK and Scottish legislature could opt to alter this in future. Although the UK would not require to follow EU rules or be subject to the European Court of Justice, both sides had committed to keeping policies within parameters that avoided unfair trade competition. The current position on issues in relation to trade and the economy; data and information sharing; funding; laws and regulations; the EU Settlement Scheme; the work of the Brexit Working Group (BWG); and the Multi Agency Coordination Centre for EU Exit were summarised.

It was concluded that, while the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly remained the priority, EU Exit procedures and preparations were well established, having been implemented for previous Brexit deadlines; and that these would be key mechanisms in responding to impacts arising from the exit from the EU that may develop, as the new UK-EU relationship became established.

Whilst referring to key aspects of the report, the Resilience Coordinator highlighted that the Home Office quarterly statistics on the level of take up of the EU Settlement Scheme were due to be updated shortly for the period ending 30 June 2021, broken down by local authority, and that the Council would continue to promote information on the option to submit late applications. He clarified that the Home Office had discretion on how it dealt with such applications which remained to be tested. Having confirmed the position on data equivalency issues, he commented on price increases and scarcity of products that could impact in the coming months, but confirmed it was difficult to confirm the exact cause of these problems as they could be attributable to the UK's Exit from the EU, or other factors.

Councillor Ireland reported that she held concerns on various issues, seeking further clarification, either at the meeting or subsequently if necessary, on when it could be determined more precisely why an increasing number of goods and services were proving challenging to procure; what would happen when the various grace periods associated with changed border regimes expired; and how price increases were impacting on the Council's programme of works, including its winter maintenance programme. She also asked when further clarification would be available on the cost implications of price increases on food purchasing which seemed high, especially in relation to school meals; on how delays in vehicle purchasing would impact on individual services; and on how the Shared Prosperity Fund would be apportioned across Scotland and the extent to which it would be made available to East Renfrewshire in particular. Furthermore, she asked when it would be known what would happen to the 37% of EU nationals in East Renfrewshire who had been entitled, but not yet

applied, to the Settlement Scheme; and how the Money Advice and Rights Team (MART) and local Citizen's Advice Bureau had prepared for a potential increase in demand for their services.

The Resilience Coordinator explained that the level of funding secured locally from the Shared Prosperity Fund would remain unknown until the outcome of competitive bids made to it was known, reporting that authorities could apply alone or on a joint basis with others; that bids were expected to be determined on a case by case basis; and that further information on the Fund was expected in the UK Government's autumn statement. Regarding import controls, he referred to requirements in terms of checks, certification and taxation for products of animal origin, undertaking to seek and provide further detail on this issue and other matters raised following the meeting. Regarding the Capital Programme, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) confirmed that problems were not anticipated regarding contracts that had been completed or were already underway, but that the risk was higher where the Council was about to enter into contracts and was awaiting tender prices. She cited examples of two large projects in Neilston and Eastwood Park which would be subject to tender in future when the costs would be clearer and referred to how the costs of such projects were spread across a number of years through borrowing and repayment. Regarding winter maintenance, she confirmed that, in the event of there being an issue with grit, through Scotland Excel action would be taken to purchase this in bulk, either alone or on a group basis with other authorities to help mitigate the risk.

On the issue of food price increases, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) referred to ongoing work with Scotland Excel to renegotiate contracts and engage with new suppliers to secure the best possible deals, and confirmed that the Education Department was looking at such cost pressures at the moment to inform budget discussions, clarifying that budget plans could be adjusted right up until the 2022/23 budget was approved by the Council in February. Having referred to the high cost and specialist nature of many vehicles used by the authority, she acknowledged that there were issues with the cost and availability of parts, and referred to the long lead time required to order them for delivery when required, which required and enabled planning to be done and related costs issues to be dealt with.

The Head of HR and Corporate Services confirmed that the MART team had been able to deal with increased demand for support so far and this would be monitored closely including because an upsurge in demand was anticipated because the furlough scheme was coming to an end.

The committee, having heard Councillor Grant express the view that the EU was not particularly helpful on resolving issues, and discussed if a further update would be valuable in due course, agreed:-

- (a) that the Resilience Coordinator would seek and provide further information to the Clerk on the remaining queries raised at the meeting, including on the EU Settlement Scheme, for circulation to Members;
- (b) that a further update be provided to a future meeting in February or March 2022; and
- (c) otherwise, to note the report and related comments made.

MANAGING ABSENCE ANNUAL REPORT

1761. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 September 2020 (Page 1272, Item 1370 refers), when absence management during 2019/20 had been discussed, the committee considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive providing an update on the Council's sickness absence levels and its approach to managing absence.

Whilst commenting on absence data for 2020/21, the report explained that there had been a decrease in both local government employee absence and teacher absence. The top reasons for absence were itemised and it was reported that absences due to COVID-19, including long COVID, were not included in the statutory absence figures but were being monitored by the Crisis Resilience Management Team (CRMT) and would be included in future reports. Having highlighted various issues on absence benchmarking, including a range of data within the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Annual Survey Report 2020 on Health and Well-being at Work for private, public and non-profit sectors, the report provided statistical information on absence trends since 2013/14 and made reference to related issues. The report commented that, although COVID-19 had led to additional sickness absence, measures such as social distancing, shielding and home working may have contributed to a reduction in other causes of absence.

Further information was provided on the focus being placed on absence improvement and related matters during which it was highlighted that mental health would continue to be an area of focus in the coming year. Reference was made to the ways in which the Council had continued to support the well-being of staff, including by providing information on check-in tools, encouraging employees to take short breaks from their work routine, and encouraging managers to check in with staff members on a regular basis.

Statistics were provided on dismissals on grounds of capability and the number of ill-health retirements. It was explained that there was potential for absence levels to continue to be of concern over the next few years associated with planned service reviews, but emphasised that improving absence levels through a more robust approach remained a priority for the Corporate Management Team and departments.

It was concluded that the Council's overall absence performance had improved since 2019/20, possibly attributable to a higher percentage of employees working from home. A strong focus continued to be placed on absence improvement, benchmarking and implementing related training and improvement actions. Reference was made to the focus to be placed on mental health, including encouraging managers to be proactive and supportive when an employee showed signs of a stress related illness; and to encourage employees to attend related training that could be helpful to them.

Having commented further on various key aspects of the report, in response to questions the HR Manager confirmed that the authority benchmarked with other local authorities on performance, but also benchmarked on best practice on a wider basis, citing the work being done within the authority on promoting financial well-being as an example of an initiative that had not been put in place in every local authority. She also confirmed that guidance was sought and available from organisations such as the CIPD on managing sickness absence issues for example.

In response to Councillor McLean who asked if there was any evidence of officers working from home when they were unwell whereas they may not have attended the office in these circumstances before, the HR Manager reported that this had not been measured, but acknowledged it may happen. She referred to some reduction in absence due to issues such as the common cold, reporting that it may be possible to extract data on this kind of issue for inclusion in the 2021/22 report.

The committee:-

- (a) noted the content of the report and trend in absence ratings; and
- (b) agreed to support the range of approaches being taken to reduce absence levels across the Council.

SUMMARY OF EARLY RETIREMENT/REDUNDANCY COSTS TO 31 MARCH 2021

1762. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 September 2020 (Page 1273, Item 1371 refers), when early retirements/redundancies to 31 March 2020 had been discussed, the committee considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive summarising the position on early retirement/redundancy costs from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and related issues. Information on the total costs incurred and projected savings was provided.

Whilst commenting on the report, the HR Manager confirmed that the information provided remained to be audited. She clarified that redundancies continued to be assessed using a process based on a financial business case, referred to associated legal requirements, and explained that related costs depended on the individual circumstances of each employee involved, with each case considered on its own merits.

The committee noted the content of the report, the explanations provided for early retirements/redundancies within the period it covered, and related projected savings.

NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE - UPDATE

1763. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 September 2020 (Page 1275, Item 1373 refers) when a report on the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) in Scotland had been noted, the committee considered a report by the Head of Communities, Revenues and Change providing an update on the NFI in Scotland and related work carried out in 2020/21.

Having referred to the data sharing and matching exercise undertaken throughout Scotland every two years, the purpose of the NFI counter-fraud exercise and keys to success, the report confirmed that the Council had a single point of contact for the NFI and a well-established network of departmental contacts who were responsible for comparing their own data sets, recovery, and follow up action. Reference was made to the number of matches reported in the 2020/21 exercise, and how related work was progressed. Business Rates and Business Grants related information had been included for the first time.

Further information was provided on various initiatives which the Council was involved with, including the Fraud and Error Investigation Service, and it was reported that the majority of NFI investigations from the 2020/21 exercise would be completed by February 2022.

In conclusion, the report referred to the robust and effective approach to NFI in place which was complemented by existing fraud prevention measures, funds recovered following investigations, and the challenges of completing the NFI due to a range of issues. These included workload pressures in teams caused by rising demands, new pandemic-related tasks, and the ongoing transition between legacy and new ICT systems. As reported to the Cabinet and Council recently, it was confirmed that teams throughout the Council were experiencing backlogs which would have ramifications for performance measures across 2021/22.

Having heard the Senior Revenues Manager highlight key aspects of the report, in response to Councillor Grant, she clarified issues relating to Council Tax and the single person discount, confirming that 31% of households in East Renfrewshire were entitled to a single person discount at present and that this number was expected to rise in future.

The committee noted the report and action taken in respect of the National Fraud Initiative in East Renfrewshire Council for 2020/21.

MANAGING THE RISK OF FRAUD AND CORRUPTION – FRAUD RESPONSE STATEMENT 2020/2021 (INCLUDING AUDIT SCOTLAND FRAUD AND IRREGULARITY REPORT 2020/21)

1764. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 September 2020 (Page 1275, Item 1374 refers) when a report on the Council's Fraud Response Statement 2019/20 had been noted, the committee considered a report by the Chief Executive detailing the Council's Fraud Response Statement 2020/21; overviewing measures in place across the Council to address anti-fraud, bribery and theft; referring to the management of the risk of fraud and corruption; and providing an update on action undertaken during 2020/21 where appropriate. Comments were also included on the Council's response to the Audit Scotland Fraud and Irregularity Report 2020/21.

The report referred to the authority's commitment to fighting fraud and bribery and explained that the Council followed the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) Code on "managing the risk of fraud and corruption", referring to its five key principles which included identifying fraud and corruption risks; and developing an appropriate counter fraud and corruption strategy. It was clarified that the Corporate Management Team had approved a revised Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Theft Strategy in August 2019, which aimed to promote an attitude of zero tolerance to fraud regardless of its value or scale, and that in line with the CIPFA Code a Fraud Statement was to be considered annually.

The Audit Scotland report on Fraud and Irregularity 2020/21 had shared risks and case studies to support fraud prevention and the key messages included, recognising the significant challenges due to COVID-19 and addressing weaknesses in controls which contributed to fraud and irregular activities. The Council's response to the key fraud risks highlighted within the Audit Scotland report, including in respect of Governance; IT and Cybercrime; Procurement; Health and Wellbeing; and Payment/Insurance/Payroll & HR, were referred to throughout the report.

The report also provided an overview of work undertaken during 2020/21, where appropriate, and referred to measures in place to address anti-fraud, bribery and theft. These included independent reviews of the adequacy, efficiency and effectiveness of internal controls by Internal Audit; putting in place a range of policies and procedures to support the strategy; providing updated guidance, policies and risk assessments across a range of cyber and information security topics; and the provision of comprehensive training and awareness raising sessions for staff. Other issues referred to included work the Procurement Team was doing with Scotland Excel and Police Scotland to minimise risks to the Council; raising awareness with both residents and employees about potential scams; and specific controls in place across all processes to ensure risk of loss through fraud was minimised.

In relation to reporting on potential fraud, reference was made to the committee's scrutiny role in relation to the application of the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Theft Strategy, and related updates provided to it by Internal Audit on its investigation of one potential fraud incident during 2020/21. Having referred to the NFI and related reports

submitted to the committee, specific reference was made to steps taken to reduce the threat of widespread fraud in relation to the business grants that had been made available associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and ongoing work the Economic Development Team was progressing, in liaison with Police Scotland, regarding possible fraudulent applications.

The committee, having heard the Business Manager highlight key aspects of the report, noted the:-

- (a) content of the report and the work being undertaken across the Council in relation to managing the risk of fraud and corruption; and
- (b) feedback provided in the context of the comments made in the Audit Scotland report, Fraud and Irregularities 2020/21.

STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AND RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRESS – BIENNIAL REPORT

1765. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 18 March 2021 (Page 1481, Item 1592 refers), when the position on the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) and progress with risk management across the Council had been noted, the committee considered a report by the Chief Executive regarding the most recent biennial update of the register and general progress on risk management.

The SRR, a copy of which was appended to the report, itemised key risks that required to be considered and associated actions put in place to manage these. Having referred to related operational risk registers in place, the report confirmed that several strategic risks had been amended to include additional control measures and rescored for significance, clarifying that a thorough review of all the strategic risks had been undertaken by the Corporate Management Team (CMT). In total there were now 42 strategic risks, 18 of which had been evaluated as high and 24 as medium. Risks evaluated as low had been removed from the SRR and would be monitored within departmental or operational registers as appropriate. Relevant significant risks which could impact on achieving the Council's outcomes regarding the work of the IJB and the Culture and Leisure Trust had been considered.

In addition to referring to risks added to the SRR, information was provided on risks that had been removed; risk scores that remained high; risks that had been rescored from high to medium or medium to high; and those that retained the same score but where the risk descriptions had been amended to reflect the current position or provide further clarity. It was confirmed that although reports on the SRR were submitted to the committee every 6 months and the Cabinet annually, the register was considered to be a live document and updated continually, with the review of the SRR playing a fundamental role in ensuring that the Council met its objectives as detailed in Fairer East Ren, the Modern Ambitious Programme and the Outcome Delivery Plan. A risk owner for each strategic risk had been identified from amongst the CMT.

Having heard the Business Manager comment further on various aspects of the report, in response to a comment from Councillor Grant regarding the risk included in respect of external key care service providers (Risk 5.2), the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) explained why this was included. For example, she referred to the role the Health and Social Care Partnership required to take, if an external care provider failed, such as to ensure appropriate alternative accommodation for residents was secured and related communication was dealt with, as had been required in the past. She acknowledged that there could be merit in revisiting the exact wording in the SRR on this issue in the interests of clarity.

The committee:-

- (a) noted that the comments made on Risk 5.2 on key care providers would be relayed back to appropriate officers with a view to a review of the wording being considered in the interests of clarity; and
- (b) otherwise, noted the development of the SRR; that it was considered to be a live document; and that it would be updated and amended by the CMT.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL MANAGEMENT REPORT 2020/21 - REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S INTERNAL CONTROLS IN FINANCIAL SYSTEMS FOR 2020/21

1766. The committee considered a Management Letter by the External Auditor on a review of the Council's internal controls in financial systems for 2020/21 which under the committee's specialisation arrangements fell within the remit of Councillors Miller and Grant for review.

The letter clarified that audit work had been completed later than planned due to additional work required around initial system reviews of both the new NPS benefit and council tax system and iTrent HR/Payroll system and testing of key controls. Testing had not identified any significant control weaknesses, although some less significant issues had been noted and discussed with management to ensure appropriate actions could be taken. These areas were summarised in Appendix 1 and related to superuser system access; housing benefit, payroll and other reconciliations; employee verification; and various council tax and benefits system processes and checks.

Having heard Ms Yule in respect of the report, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) referred to the management responses to issues identified as itemised in Appendix 1 to the report, and the related target dates for the completion of associated actions to be taken by specified officers to address these. Mr Cornett confirmed that progress on implementing the action points listed would be followed up during the 2021/22 audit.

The committee agreed to note the Management Letter and related comments made.

INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

1767. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 13 August 2020 (Page 1230, Item 1324 refers) when the Internal Audit Annual Report 2019/20 had been noted, the committee considered a report by the Chief Auditor regarding the annual report on the activities of internal audit during 2020/21, and providing an independent annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and internal controls based on work undertaken in 2020/21.

Whilst commenting on the report and implementation of the 2020/21 Plan, the Senior Auditor stressed that 2020/21 had been a very challenging year for Internal Audit, with the Plan having been substantially reduced twice during the year due to changing circumstances, such as due to COVID-19, staff absence and a secondment for example, which had resulted in a significant reduction in the number of audits carried out. Having confirmed that sufficient audits had been completed to enable an audit opinion to be given however, she reported that 14 reports had been issued relating to the 2020/21 Plan, satisfactory responses having been received for all of them. A further 2 audits had been completed but reports had not yet been issued. She quantified the initial and final number of audit days available to implement the Plan.

The Senior Auditor commented on four recommendations, across 2 reports, which had not been fully accepted by management, related reasons provided which had been accepted, and follow up work completed on various issues. Having summarised the position on various potential fraud and contingency matters and related issues, she also referred to and cited examples of issues that had impacted on Performance Indicators for the section, and clarified the extent to which the section operated almost fully in compliance with Public Sector Internal Auditor Standards, as reported to the committee in August, confirming that little scope existed therefore for further improvement.

Regarding the annual statement on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and internal controls, the report confirmed that, based on the information available and work carried out, the Chief Auditor's opinion was that reasonable assurance could be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of these controls in the year to 31 March 2021, except in respect of one issue that remained under investigation by Police Scotland.

Councillor Ireland referred to the high risk recommendation made that management should ensure that processes were in place to enable them to demonstrate that all purchases of £50,000 and above had been certified by procurement in advance to comply with the Council's Contract Standing Orders, and to the Chief Procurement Officer's related response why this recommendation could not be accepted, as there was currently no online way to ensure advance certification from procurement in instances where the original order started out under £50,000 then subsequently exceeded this amount. In response to her, the Senior Auditor stated that she was not aware of any work being undertaken by departments to address this at the moment, but that she understood that the preparation of a report on this had been considered at one stage. She undertook to seek clarification from the Chief Auditor on this for circulation.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) advised that the ability to monitor this further may be included in future updates on the Integra system. However, she assured Elected Members that orders of this scale required to be authorised by both a senior manager and procurement so some controls were in place.

The committee agreed:-

- (a) to approve the statement on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and internal control systems and submit it to the Council;
- (b) to note that the Senior Auditor would seek confirmation from the Chief Auditor if any further work was planned to address the issue regarding orders which started out under £50,000 then subsequently exceeded this amount; and
- (c) otherwise, to note the internal audit annual report 2020/21 and associated comments.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Minute of virtual meeting held at 2.00pm on 29 September 2021.

Present:

Councillor Annette Ireland (Chair)
Councillor Betty Cunningham (Vice Chair)
Councillor Angela Convery
Provost Jim Fletcher

Councillor Stewart Miller
Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Jim Swift

Councillor Ireland in the Chair

Attending:

Julie Nicol, Planning and Building Standards Manager; Alan Pepler, Principal Planner (Development Management); Derek Scott, Planner; David Haney, Planner; Colin Hutton, Senior Communications Officer, Corporate and Community Services; Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1768. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

1769. The committee considered reports by the Director of Environment on applications for planning permission requiring consideration by the committee.

The applications were determined as indicated at Appendix 1 accompanying this Minute, particular reference being made to the following:-

- (i) 2021/0420/TP - Construction of an all-weather athletics track on existing school playing field with artificial grass sports pitch, with associated development including storage building, fencing, floodlighting and access road at Mearns Castle High School Sports Field, Broomburn Drive, Newton Mearns, East Renfrewshire.

Sederunt

Councillor Cunningham joined the meeting at this point.

The Principal Planner (Development Management) provided details of the proposal, outlined the development site, and referred to the significant number of representations received both in support of and against the proposal and provided details of the main themes of the representations.

Reference was made to the three main areas of concern being detrimental impact on character and amenity; parking and access requirements; and the impact of light from the floodlighting.

With regard to parking and access requirements, it was noted that the Roads Service had no objections subject to the proposed conditions outlined in the report. The applicant had advised that the use of the facilities would be solely for educational purposes and Condition 1 had been included to restrict evening and Saturday use.

In terms of the lighting impact, it was explained that the applicant had submitted a light spill diagram and the Environmental Health Service was satisfied with the information submitted. Condition 1 as proposed addressed light spill from the floodlights by restricting use to 8pm on weeknights.

In terms of the impact on character and amenity, the site was currently open to the public although in the proposed development access to the site would be restricted for health and safety reasons and to prevent damage. Given the existing use of the site and the site context, it was considered that there would be no subsequent impact on character and amenity of the surrounding area.

Having clarified the exact location of the proposed development site in response to a question from Councillor Cunningham, the Principal Planner (Development Management) confirmed the proposed hours of use and that the use of the facilities would be educational.

Councillor Swift advised that he welcomed the suggested improvements to the current facilities and their use solely in an educational capacity. He noted that in due course other external organisations may seek to use the facilities and for this reason would propose reducing the operational hours of the facilities to 7pm on weekdays instead of the 8pm currently proposed and also to mitigate against the impact of the floodlights on local residents. He noted that the school had intimated it only required the facilities until 7pm which was confirmed by the Principal Planner (Development Management).

Councillor Convery expressed concerns relating to parking although noted that the school parking facilities could be used and that three disabled spaces would be provided. She noted that the ball stop fences would be included instead of acoustic fences, which would result in less visual impact. She noted that this would be a much needed upgrade to the facilities and would support the application.

Councillor Miller also noted the parking facilities, and recognised the requirement to upgrade facilities. He supported the suggestion by Councillor Swift to change the weekday hours of operation on Condition 1 to 7pm to mitigate the effects of the floodlights for local residents.

Councillor McLean concurred with the issues raised by other members of the committee and echoed the concerns regarding the use of the floodlights, supporting a reduction in the hours of use proposed.

Provost Fletcher advised he was supportive of the proposal and the benefits to the school itself and the wider community, whilst understanding the points raised by local residents. However he did note the later use of facilities in the evenings at other schools within the council area in view of which he supported the proposed evening use time of 8pm on weekdays, should this be required by the school.

Councillor Ireland was in agreement with the points made and that the facilities were necessary for the school. However she indicated that she felt that the time restriction as set out in Condition 1 was appropriate in view of which she moved the recommendation to approve the application subject to the conditions as outlined in the report. Provost Fletcher seconded the motion.

Councillor Swift, seconded by Councillor McLean, moved as an amendment that planning permission be approved subject to the conditions as outlined in the report subject to a further amendment to Condition 1 to restrict the hours of use on weekdays to 19.00 as set out below:

1. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority, the running track, synthetic pitch and floodlights hereby approved shall not be used out with the hours of 09:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday or 09:00 to 13:00 on a Saturday.

On a vote being taken Councillor Ireland, Provost Fletcher and Councillor Convery voted for the motion.

Councillors Cunningham, McLean, Miller and Swift voted for the amendment.

There being 3 votes for the motion and 4 votes for the amendment, the amendment was accordingly declared carried and the application approved subject to the conditions as outlined in the report subject to a further amendment to Condition 1 to restrict the hours of use on weekdays to 19.00 as set out below:

1. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority, the running track, synthetic pitch and floodlights hereby approved shall not be used out with the hours of 09:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday or 09:00 to 13:00 on a Saturday.

Reason: To safeguard the residential amenity of the adjacent properties.

- (ii) 2021/0421/TP - Erection of 27 no. lock-up garages at Land To The Rear Of Alexander Avenue, Eaglesham, East Renfrewshire.

The Principal Planner (Development Management) provided details of the proposal, outlined the development site, and referred to the significant number of representations received in objection and provided details of the main themes of these representations.

Reference was made to the two main reasons for refusal which were loss of character and amenity for adjacent residents and as advised by the Roads Service, a significant intensification of use for this area to the detriment of public and road safety.

Councillor McLean noted the significant number of objections received and the issues relating to parking and bin storage. He enquired as to the ownership of the land in response to which the Principal Planner (Development Management) advised of the areas communally owned and the area of land owned by the applicant. Councillor McLean advised that he would support the recommendation to refuse the application.

Supporting the views expressed by Councillor McLean, Councillor Miller questioned the claimed non-commercial nature of the proposals.

Provost Fletcher having sought clarification on the proposed use of the lock up facilities, the Principal Planner (Development Management) outlined that the proposals fell below the road standards set for the size of the garages although the proposed dimensions may be able to accommodate smaller vehicles.

Councillor Swift supported the earlier comments made, noting that in his view there were no community benefits in view of which he also supported the recommendation to refuse the application.

Councillor Cunningham also supported the view that the proposed facilities would not be of benefit to the community.

Councillor Ireland having been heard in support of the recommendation to refuse permission, the committee agreed that the application for planning permission be refused for the reasons as outlined in the report.

CHAIR

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997
AS AMENDED BY THE PLANNING ETC (SCOTLAND) ACT 2006
PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997**

Index of applications under the above acts considered by Planning Applications Committee on
29.09.2021

Reference No: 2021/0420/TP

Ward: 5

Applicant:

Mr Alan Hook
Spiersbridge Offices
2 Spiersbridge Way
Thornliebank
East Renfrewshire
Scotland
G46 8NG

Agent:

Bill Gillespie
6 Crosshill Drive
Rutherglen
Glasgow
Scotland
G73 3QU

Site: Mearns Castle High School Sports Field Broomburn Drive Newton Mearns East Renfrewshire

Description: Construction of an all-weather athletics track on existing school playing field with artificial grass sports pitch, with associated development including storage building, fencing, floodlighting and access road.

Decision: Granted subject to the conditions outlined in the report and with an amendment to Condition 1.

Condition 1 should now detail:

1. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority, the running track, synthetic pitch and floodlights hereby approved shall not be used out with the hours of 09:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday or 09:00 to 13:00 on a Saturday.

Reason: To safeguard the residential amenity of the adjacent properties.

Reference No: 2021/0421/TP

Ward: 5

Applicant:

Joiner Properties Ltd
20 Stonecot Hill
Sutton
United Kingdom
SM1 3SN

Agent:

David Lindsay
C/O Pattison & Co
19 Glasgow Road
Paisley
Scotland
PA1 3QX

Site: Land To The Rear Of Alexander Avenue Eaglesham East Renfrewshire G76 0JG

Description: Erection of 27 no. lock-up garages

Decision: Refused

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 30 September 2021.

Present:

Councillor Alan Lafferty (Chair)	Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Councillor Gordon Wallace
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Dr Frank Angell
Provost Jim Fletcher	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Mrs Mary McIntyre

Councillor Lafferty in the Chair

Attending:

Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement); Joe McCaig, Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision); Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager (Developing People); Graeme Hay, Education Senior Manager (Leading Business Change); David Gordon, Quality Improvement Officer; Aimee Glen, Senior Business Support Assistant; Colin Hutton, Senior Communications Officer; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillor Jim McLean and Mr Des Morris.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1770. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

GET INTO SUMMER

1771. Councillor Lafferty invited Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement), to give an oral report on the “Get Into Summer” programme that had run over the school summer break. The report was accompanied by a brief video presentation in which children and young people, as well as education, and other staff who supported the programme, gave their view on the programme and offered an insight into the range of activities and events offered.

It was explained that “Get Into Summer” had been set up using dedicated, one-off funding from the Scottish Government to help families deal with isolation during lockdown and allow children and young people to stay active out of school. 2,200 children and young people had benefitted from the programme, as well as their families and as the activities were run during

the day, it also provided an element of childcare for families and lunch entitlement for the children and young people. It was also noted that play kit bags had been provided to participating families containing toys and equipment that encouraged active play in an outdoor environment.

In summary, both the children and young people and the staff involved stated that the programme had been excellent and worthwhile, particularly in supporting those who had struggled during lockdown. Many children in particular noted the benefits of not only socialising with people they knew, but also making new friends through the programme's activities.

Councillor Lafferty was impressed by the variety of the activities and events offered, and was pleased to see that the response of the children and young people had been overwhelmingly positive. He led the committee in thanking those involved in running such a successful and worthwhile programme.

Councillor Wallace enquired as to the possibility of expanding and developing the programme still further, seeking clarity on the nature of the funding. He also asked if there was a possibility of linking such a programme with apprenticeship courses through partner colleges. In reply, the Head of Education (Quality Improvement) clarified that, while there was an ongoing summer activity programme run by the Trust, "Get Into Summer" had been a one-off event. The Director further clarified that if additional funding was provided in future years, the scope of the programme could be expanded, particularly with a longer notice period to prepare activities.

Councillor Merrick also added his appreciation for the work of staff in delivering such a successful programme, stating that it was excellent to see the children and young people enjoying themselves after what had been such a difficult year for them.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

PROGRESS REPORT ON PRIORITIES ASSOCIATED WITH NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

1772. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the Education Department's progress in implementing priorities associated with the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education (NIF).

By way of background, the report explained that on 6 January 2016, the Scottish Government had launched the NIF to drive both excellence and equity in Scottish education. The framework was reviewed annually with the 2021 NIF and associated Improvement Plan published in December 2020.

The NIF contained 4 national priorities, these being noted as: improvement in attainment, particularly literacy and numeracy; closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people; improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing; and improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people. These mirrored the Council's own aspirations. The Head of Education (Quality Improvement) explained that, given the COVID-19 situation, local authorities had not been required to report to the Scottish Government on progress in delivering on the priorities. However, the Education Department had been able to evaluate its progress in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

In conclusion, the Head of Education (Quality Improvement) stated that there had been a relentless focus by the Education Department and schools to raise the bar for all learners and, at the same time, reduce inequalities of outcome experienced by more disadvantaged children and young people. This work continued despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic had been far reaching and there would be a continued need to focus resources on reducing the inequalities that would arise as a result of it to ensure that a meaningful, long term recovery could take place. The implementation of the NIF priorities would continue to be monitored, with progress reported to the committee on an annual basis.

Councillor Bamforth thanked all of the staff involved for producing such a detailed report in very challenging circumstances. However, she sought some clarity on the oral language development programme. The reported outcomes had been excellent and Councillor Bamforth asked if this programme would be continued. The Head of Education (Quality Improvement) clarified that the programme had been developed by 2 specialist teachers who had been employed to establish the skills required and build the capacity to run similar programmes across the teaching establishment. That work would allow teachers to make targeted programmes available to children and young people where they felt it was beneficial and necessary, without additional support.

Councillor Wallace sought clarification on the role of “moderation facilitators” and the evidence base for establishing that children and young people leaving school had progressed to positive destinations. In reply, the Head of Education (Quality Improvement) explained that the moderation facilitators were teachers and members of staff who supported teachers in ensuring their judgements in terms of Curriculum for Excellence were consistent and accurate across all schools. In terms of the evidence for positive destination statistics, the National Participation Measure statistics gave the most accurate reflection of outcomes for school leavers in this regard, with East Renfrewshire showing as having the highest number of school leavers moving on to positive destinations. She reflected on the role of partnership working in that achievement, particularly highlighting the role of Skills Development Scotland.

Provost Fletcher expressed some concerns around the quality of materials he had seen from another local authority provided to children and their families for the purposes of home schooling. In particular, he expressed concern about numeracy and literacy teaching during the pandemic. The Head of Education (Quality Improvement) pointed out that the quality of the remote learning programme offered by East Renfrewshire, and the associated materials provided to families, had been widely praised and it had been audited by schools in partnership with the Quality Improvement Team and externally by Education Scotland. However, it was accepted that this was no substitute for classroom learning. Formative assessments being carried out in schools would establish any areas where children and young people required additional support during the return to classroom learning and resources would be targeted appropriately. It was also noted that Pupil Equity Funding would target resources toward those children most in need of assistance.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION REPORT 2020-2021

1773. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education on the evaluation of work undertaken by the West Partnership (Glasgow Region Education Improvement Collaborative) in 2020-2021.

The Evaluation Report, a copy of which accompanied the report, captured the progress of the three main West Partnership workstreams, these being leadership, empowerment and

improvement; curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment; and collaborative learning networks. It also included good examples of how partnership working across the region was supporting local authorities in delivering high quality education to children and young people.

The West Online School resource was highlighted as one particular example of the benefits of the collaborative approach. All schools in East Renfrewshire had made use of the extensive library of learning videos to support both practitioners and learners. Furthermore, senior leaders in East Renfrewshire had attended Virtual Learning Networks which provided a space for senior leaders to effectively collaborate to formulate effective pandemic response strategies.

The Evaluation Report had been approved by the Glasgow City Region Education Committee on 24 August 2021 and, once considered by this committee and others across the region, would be enhanced by the addition of pictures and graphics and published.

Councillor Wallace sought clarification on the meaning of the term “authentic empowerment” in response to which the Director explained that the aim was to ensure that all staff were supported, at all levels, to make appropriate autonomous decisions with accountability.

Mrs McIntyre stated that she was very impressed with the report. While, initially, she had not been convinced by the notion of the West Partnership, the benefits of the approach were clear to see and she extended her congratulations to all involved. Provost Fletcher and Councillor Lafferty then spoke in support of this view, thanking all staff for their commitment and hard work to ensure the collaborative approach had been a success.

Councillor Buchanan welcomed the report and commended the West Partnership as being of huge benefit to all 8 member authorities. Significant improvements had been registered across all areas and he felt this was due to the sharing of best practice across the region.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2021-2022

1774. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 22 April 2021 (Page 1506, Item 1619 refers), when the committee had noted progress of the West Partnership and its interim Action Plan, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education on the West Partnership’s Improvement Plan 2021-2022, a copy of which accompanied the report.

The West Partnership was required to produce an annual improvement plan outlining the vision, purpose and key activities for the year ahead. The committee was reminded that, while the plan was wide ranging, not all schools or local authorities would participate in all activities and would be able to select those which they felt would be of benefit to them.

Three main workstreams had been identified to support and add value to the work of authorities: wellbeing for learning; leadership, empowerment and improvement; and curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment. The West Partnership was committed to working with all its partners to achieve the key objectives set out under each workstream.

It was noted that a revised “Plan on a Page” had been included, which attempted to articulate the vision, values, purpose and priorities of the West Partnership.

The paper had been considered and endorsed by the Glasgow City Region Education Committee on 24 August 2021.

Councillor Wallace indicated that the critical indicators shown in the report highlighted the success of the collaborative approach. However, he enquired as to why targets had been reduced in some measures. In reply, the Director indicated that the targets had initially been set at the beginning of the 3 year planning period and hadn't taken account of progress being made in those particular areas. Those targets would be revised in the coming planning period. Councillor Wallace then asked a further question regarding the dialogue that had taken place in terms of wellbeing for learning and how this could be affected in the context of discussions around the National Care Service. The Director stated that the issue had not been raised at meetings of the West Partnership in order for a view on the matter to be resolved. He clarified that the Wellbeing for Learning workstream was focussed on supporting staff and young people in schools. Since the work of the Partnership was more at an operational level, there had been no specific actions put in place regarding that specific issue.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 7 October 2021.

Present:

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader) Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Caroline Bamforth

Councillor Buchanan, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Debbie Hill, Chief Procurement Officer; Colin Hutton, Senior Communications Officer; Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Betty Cunningham, Danny Devlin and Alan Lafferty (Vice-Chair).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1775. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT END-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020/21

1776. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the Environment Department's end of year performance for 2020/21. The report advised on the Department's performance indicators and activities in the Outcome Delivery Plan (2020-23) and other key departmental management information.

The Director of Environment provided an overview of each of the departmental service areas from the report, these being noted as Business Engagement and Employability; City Deal; Neighbourhood Services; Roads; Housing; Planning; Building Standards; Property and Technical; Health and Safety; Trading Standards; and Environmental Health.

He advised that the Environment Department had generally performed well throughout 2020/21. However Covid-19 and associated restrictions had and continued to impact on the services delivered and upon staff with the department playing a critical role in the Council's response to Covid-19 to keep people safe whilst continuing to provide essential services.

Points noted from the report and discussed by elected members were that during 2020/21, 9.8 days per employee were lost through absence in the department (target 12.3 days), a reduction from 13 days per employee in 2019/20. Further investigation into the reasons for the improvement was ongoing. A range of Covid-19 business grants were provided to local

businesses and the self-employed, with 2,962 grants worth £19.5m being distributed during 2020/21. It was also reported that the “Shop Local” campaign was successful and work will continue in this area.

In relation to Roads, it was reported that the Roads Service delivered a £2.7m programme of routine maintenance, £1.2m programme of structural maintenance works and a capital works programme of £4.9m. There had been a considerable improvement in relation to the condition of A class and B class roads over recent years, second and ninth best in Scotland respectively for 2020. However overall performance was brought down in relation to C class and unclassified roads and that work was now focusing on these.

With regard to recycling it was reported that the Council remained the top recycling council in Scotland for the fourth year in a row for the percentage of household waste that was recycled.

Having heard the Director of Environment further on the report and in response to questions, the Cabinet noted the report and the information provided.

ANNUAL PROCUREMENT REPORT 2020/21 AND PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2019-2022 UPDATE – REPORT BY CHIEF PROCUREMENT OFFICER

1777. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Procurement Officer on the Annual Procurement Report 2020/21 and Procurement Strategy 2019-2022 Update, the production of both reports being statutory requirements under the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. Copies of the Annual Procurement Report and the Procurement Strategy accompanied the report.

It was explained that the Council’s Annual Procurement Report 2020/21 covered all regulated procurements completed during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and highlighted improvement activities in relation to key procurement capabilities, as well as performance in the areas of community benefits and social responsibility. An indication of the proposed regulated procurements to be carried out in the following 2 financial years was also contained within the report.

The updated Procurement Strategy 2019-2022 provided an update of progress against the key procurement aims of improved leadership and stakeholder management; compliance with legislative and statutory duties with improved governance; strategic procurement which identified opportunities and savings; performance reporting being used to drive performance; and improved sustainable procurement and community benefits.

Following hearing from the Chief Procurement Officer, there was a question regarding the cost to the Council for processing food waste and the Chief Procurement Officer agreed to provide clarification of the costs.

Members thereafter discussed procurement processes, seeking clarification on the review of the performance of suppliers and also the regulation of the provision of the Living Wage, the Chief Procurement Officer being heard on procedures in place with regard to monitoring in these areas.

Having heard from the Chief Procurement Officer on the report and in response to questions, the Cabinet approved the Annual Procurement Report 2020/21 and noted the update on the Procurement Strategy.

MINUTE
of
APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 14 October 2021.

Present:

Councillor Tony Buchanan
Councillor Barbara Grant

Councillor Colm Merrick

Councillor Buchanan in the Chair

Apologies:

Councillors Alan Lafferty and Gordon Wallace.

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Sharon Dick, Head of HR and Corporate Services; and Jo Loudon, HR Business Partner.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1778. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

Resolution to Exclude Press and Public

At this point in the meeting, on the motion of the Chair, the committee 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 Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

1779. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Council of 8 September 2021 (Page 1632, Item 1750 refers), the committee took up consideration of applications for the post of Director of Business Operations and Partnerships.

Following full consideration the committee agreed to shortlist 7 candidates for assessment and interview.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 21 October 2021.

Present:

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)
Councillor Danny Devlin

Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Colm Merrick

Councillor Buchanan, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Colin Hutton, Senior Communications Officer; Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Caroline Bamforth and Betty Cunningham.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1780. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING (OUTTURN)

1781. The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) detailing the projected revenue budget out-turn for 2021/22 and providing details of the expected year-end variances together with summary cost information for each of the undernoted services as at 31 August 2021 and subsequent assessment of pressures arising from COVID-19.

- (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) Corporate and Community Services Department – Community Resources;
- (viii) Corporate and Community Services Department – Support;
- (ix) Other Expenditure and Income;
- (x) Joint Boards;
- (xi) Contingency – Welfare;

- (xii) Health and Social Care Partnership; and
- (xiii) Housing Revenue Account.

The report advised that on the basis of the latest information, and taking account of forecast Council Tax collection, a year end overspend of £0.175m or 0.1% of the annual budget was forecast on General Fund services. The reasons for departmental variances were set out in the report but the position reflected £1.464m of COVID pressures, offset by £1.289m of operational Council underspends.

The report noted that all of the pandemic pressures currently forecast could be covered by the COVID grant funding awarded to the Council to date, resulting in a net forecast underspend of £1.289m (0.5%). Any such operational underspend at this year-end would assist the Council in meeting future years' budget challenges.

However, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) advised that the latest forecast could be subject to significant change, for example if COVID pressures increased again or if the current year pay award was settled at a higher level than anticipated. Given the tight nature of the Council's finances in the current economic climate, the Cabinet would continue to actively monitor and receive regular reports on the financial performance throughout the course of the year and all reports would include updated outturn forecasts.

The report also sought approval for a number service virements and operational budget adjustments, details of which were outlined in the report.

Members discussed the current financial position with regard to previous years, and having heard from the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer), the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the continued financial pressures on operational services arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and that it is expected to cover these from accumulated COVID grant funding.
- (b) noted the forecast underlying General Fund operational underspend of £1,289k.
- (c) approved service virements and operational adjustments as set out in the notes to the tables on pages 14 to 30 and noted the reported probable outturn position;
- (d) noted all departments continue to closely monitor and manage their budgets and ensure that spending up to operational budget levels does not take place.

HOUSING SERVICES ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2020/21 (SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER)

1782. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for the Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) 2021. The AAS outlined the Housing Services' compliance with the Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) Regulatory Framework, the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) and the Council's statutory obligations. It also took into account the Council's engagement plan with the SHR. It was explained that the AAS was an annual requirement for all Register Social Landlords (RSLs) by the SHR. The AAS required a self-evaluation to be undertaken by each landlord looking at performance and the quality of services provided and should be accompanied by an appropriate action plan, where any areas of non-compliance with standards were identified.

Commenting on the report, the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) explained that the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) required each landlord to provide the SHR with details of performance against 37 performance indicators and information for 32 contextual indicators. This was known as the “Annual Return on the Charter” (ARC).

The SHR used the information to produce a summary landlord report for every social landlord in Scotland and this information was published on the regulator’s website. Furthermore, the regulator also produced an engagement plan for each landlord, which outlined the areas of scrutiny they would focus on based on the previous year’s reported performance.

The Head of Environment (Strategic Services) advised that the performance report against the SSHC demonstrated that Housing Services was performing well in comparison to last year and the average for the housing sector in Scotland.

The report highlighted areas of good performance in repairs, maintenance, estates and tenancies sustained. A number of improvement areas had been identified and an Assurance Statement which addressed the areas required for improvement was also appended to the report, it being noted that in terms of improving performance the Council would focus on void management and rent collection and arrears management.

Members discussed the issue of rent arrears experienced by individuals as an effect of Universal Credit and that this issue had previously been highlighted to the UK Government. In response to questioning from Members, the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) outlined the process for the handling of antisocial behaviour cases.

The Cabinet: -

- (a) noted the performance report against SSHC indicators and measures and how the Housing Service compared against both 2019-20 performance and the average for the housing sector;
- (b) noted the proposed Action Plan to further strengthen compliance against the Regulatory Framework and SSHC; and
- (c) approved the AAS 2021 which has been prepared taking into account the outcomes of Housing Services self-evaluation of performance.

STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN 2022-2027 - REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT

1783. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment, seeking approval for the proposed Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2022/23–2026/27 and for its submission to Scottish Government. A copy of the Strategic Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) was appended to the report.

The report explained that the Scottish Government required councils to supplement their Local Housing Strategy with an annual review of the SHIP setting out their affordable housing priorities for the next 5 years. The current Resource Planning Assumptions (RPA) for 2021-26 for East Renfrewshire was £37.497m. Proposed details of the subsidies both the Council and Registered Social Landlords (RSL) received for each property to be built was outlined in the report, it being noted that a disparity still remained between councils and RSL.

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The proposed SHIP detailed the approach to prioritising projects, which focused on the delivery of social rented homes (including Council New Build); proposals for affordable housing to meet a range of needs, including smaller and family homes, and those suitable for the elderly and disabled; and developments with the greatest certainty over timing and deliverability.

The proposed SHIP could deliver 522 units of new affordable housing primarily focused on new provision and social housing. A number of affordable properties for sale are also expected, but will largely be delivered outwith the SHIP through developer contributions (and without subsidy). Approximately 10% of the new units programmed are expected to be suitable for particular needs.

Furthermore it was noted, to help meet the need and demand for affordable housing, the SHIP required to be weighted to building in the Eastwood area. However the availability of land in this area meant that this was not always possible and developments in Lavern Valley would be considered. It was also noted that private ownership of a number of sites meant that development timescales could not always be controlled by the Council.

Having heard from the Head of Environment (Strategic Services), the Cabinet approved the East Renfrewshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2022/23–2026/27 for submission to Scottish Government.

CHAIR