

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL  
AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 August 2023

Report by Clerk

CLARIFICATION RECEIVED ON QUERIES RAISED AT PREVIOUS MEETING

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To summarise the clarification received and circulated on queries raised at the meetings of the Committee held on 11 May and 22 June.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. It is recommended that the Committee notes the position.

**REPORT**

3. In June 2022, the Committee endorsed the final observations and recommendations made by the Committee in April 2022 arising from its self-evaluation, agreeing to implement recommendations made as appropriate.

4. One of the self-evaluation observations made was that when queries on reports are raised at meetings, it is not always possible for answers to be provided at the meeting itself. Although the provision of clarification or assurances subsequently was considered acceptable, it was agreed, in the interests of transparency, that the Clerk should submit a summary of clarification received and circulated to the next meeting.

5. A related observation endorsed by the Committee in June 2022 and highlighted subsequently, was that it is useful, where possible, for Members to alert the Clerk or Chair in advance to issues they wish to raise at meetings. This is with a view to helping to ensure that answers can be requested, prepared and made available to the Committee where possible at its meetings, also in the interests of transparency. Members of the Committee are therefore encouraged to alert the Clerk or Chair to issues in advance to the extent possible.

6. Clarification provided on queries raised at the meetings on 11 May and 22 June, which have already been circulated through correspondence, are itemised in Appendix 1 to this report.

**RECOMMENDATION**

7. It is recommended that the Committee notes the position.

Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

Report Author: Linda Hutchison, Clerk to the Committee (Tel.No.0141 577 8388)

e-mail: [linda.hutchison@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:linda.hutchison@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

Background Papers:-

1. Audit and Scrutiny Committee Agenda – 11 May 2023 - Consultancy Expenditure and Related Log
2. Audit and Scrutiny Committee Agenda – 22 June 2023 - Unaudited Annual Accounts 2022-23

## CLARIFICATION SOUGHT AND CIRCULATED FOLLOWING MEETING ON 11 MAY 2023

DATE OF MEETING AND ITEM	ITEM AND ISSUE(S) RAISED	CLARIFICATION
11 May 2023 (Item 4)	<p><a href="#"><u>CONSULTANCY EXPENDITURE AND RELATED LOG</u></a></p> <p>It was agreed to seek clarification from departments if there were any instances in 2022/23 of consultancy costs for the same work being broken down, resulting in the costs of each element being under the £10,000 threshold for approval by Directors.</p> <p><i>Feedback on clarification circulated on two further issues regarding consultancy raised at the May meeting was reported to the Committee on 22 June 2023.</i></p>	<p>Directors stated that they are not aware of any instances where sums were broken down to below the £10,000 level to avoid reporting.</p>
22 June 2023 (Item 5)	<p><a href="#"><u>UNAUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2022-23</u></a></p> <p>It was agreed that further clarification be sought from the Director of Education on an issue raised at the meeting regarding the potential delay in funding for the 1140 hours of early learning and childcare until the start of the term following a child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday in the context of the way information was currently presented in the draft 2022-23 Annual Accounts.</p>	<p>The Director of Education clarified:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that the changes referenced at the meeting were agreed by the Council in March 2023 for the 2023-24 Session, therefore have no impact on the commentary in the draft Annual Accounts for 2022/23;</li> <li>• that the Council is not delaying funding for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), with it provided to all eligible children in line with the statutory duties set out in both the Children &amp; Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Scottish Government's <a href="#"><u>statutory guidance</u></a>;</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• that prior to the 2023-24 Session, all eligible children within East Renfrewshire were able to access funded ELC from the day following their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday;</li><li>• that this provision was discretionary and never formed part of a child's statutory entitlement, with the decision made by the Council in March 2023 removing the discretionary service referred to above and beyond the statutory entitlement; and</li><li>• the eligibility criteria for funded ELC.</li></ul>
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