

**MINUTE VOLUME**

**11 September 2024**

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**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE**

**Minute of meeting held at 9.00am in the Council Chambers, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 18 June 2024.**

**Present:**

Councillor Caroline Bamforth  
Councillor Betty Cunningham

Councillor Kate Campbell  
Councillor Katie Pragnell

Councillor O'Donnell in the Chair

**Attending:**

Sharon Dick, Head of HR and Corporate Services and Caitriona McAuley Director of Environment.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**886.** 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.

**HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT (OPERATIONS)**

**887.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 April 2024 (Page 840, Item 832 refers), the committee proceeded to interview 3 of the shortlisted candidates who had been selected for interview following the assessment centre exercise that had taken place.

Having conducted the interviews the committee, after discussion, agreed to offer the post to K Markwick.

CHAIR



**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL**

**Minute of meeting held at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 26 June 2024.**

**Present:**

Councillor Andrew Anderson	Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Provost Mary Montague
Councillor Tony Buchanan	Councillor Andrew Morrison
Deputy Provost Kate Campbell	Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)
Councillor Betty Cunningham*	Councillor Katie Pragnell
Councillor Danny Devlin	Councillor Gordon Wallace*
Councillor Chris Lunday	

Provost Montague in the Chair

**Attending:**

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Julie Murray, Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP); Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Michaela Sullivan, Head of Place; Barry Tudhope, Democratic Services Manager; John Burke, Democratic Services Officer; and Lesleyann Burns, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

(\*) indicates remote attendance.

**Apologies:**

Councillors Angela Convery, Paul Edlin, Annette Ireland, David Macdonald and Jim McLean.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 24 APRIL 2024**

**889.** The Council considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 24 April 2024.

**MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES**

**890.** The Council considered and approved the Minutes of the meetings of the undernoted:-

- (a) Cabinet – 25 April 2024;
- (b) Appointments Committee – 29 April 2024;
- (c) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 9 May 2024;
- (d) Licensing Committee – 14 May 2024;
- (e) Cabinet – 30 May 2024;
- (f) Appointments Committee – 30 May 2024;
- (g) Local Review Body – 5 June 2024;
- (h) Education Committee – 6 June 2024;
- (i) Licensing Committee – 11 June 2024;
- (j) Cabinet (Police & Fire) – 13 June 2024
- (k) Cabinet – 20 June 2024;
- (l) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 20 June 2024; and
- (m) Appeals Committee – 21 June 2024

## **STATEMENTS BY CONVENERS AND REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT BODIES AND COMMITTEES**

**891.** The Provost confirmed that no statements from Conveners or Representatives on Joint Bodies and Committees were being given at this meeting.

## **PROVOST'S ENGAGEMENTS**

**892.** The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships, providing details of civic engagements attended and civic duties performed by Provost Montague since the meeting on 24 April 2024.

The Council noted the report.

## **GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

**893.** The Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) recommending adjustments to the 2024/25 General Fund Capital Programme resulting from finalisation of the previous year's programme and in light of subsequent information.

The report also provided details of a shortfall of £211,000, the reasons for which were fully outlined in the report.

The Council agreed to:-

- (a) note and approve the movements within the programme; and
- (b) note the shortfall of £211,000 and that income and expenditure on the programme would be managed and reported on a regular basis.

## **HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

**894.** The Council considered a joint report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) and Director of Environment recommending adjustments to the 2024/25 Housing Capital Programme resulting from the finalisation of the previous year's programme and in light of subsequent information.

The report also provided details of a shortfall of £143,000, the reasons for which were fully outlined in the report.

The report also detailed developments within the programme, including receipts from land disposal and the new build programme where there were proposed revisions to Council expenditure.

The Council agreed to:-

- (a) note and approve the current movements within the programme;
- (b) approve the revised new build expenditure plans at Barrhead Road, Commercial Road and Maidenhill with an overall expenditure increase in the current year of £4.694m;
- (c) approved increasing the expenditure in the current year on site acquisition and investigation by £0.300m, to be funded by Commuted Sums;
- (d) approved increasing expenditure in the current year by £1.336m to meet investment priorities on existing housing stock; and
- (e) noted the shortfall of £143,000 and that income and expenditure on the programme would be managed and reported on a regular basis.

#### **HRA LAND TRANSFER AND LEASE FOR CITY DEAL FUNDED BALGRAY STATION**

**895.** The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for: transfer of ownership of two small pockets of land held in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to Network Rail for a nominal fee (the areas shaded in purple in Appendix 1 to the report); and to enter into a 175-year lease with Network Rail, for a peppercorn rent, to transfer a larger area of HRA land to be used as the car park for Balgray Station (the area outlined in pink in Appendix 1 to the report).

A City Deal investment package of £44 million had been agreed for East Renfrewshire with contributions from Scottish and UK Governments totalling £38 million, as well as a capital contribution from the Council of £6 million

The Council agreed to:

- (a) approve the revised Development Plan Scheme for publication and submission to Scottish Ministers;
- (b) delegate to the Director of Environment authority to approve any minor inconsequential changes to the documents, in line with Council policy, prior to submission to Scottish Ministers; and
- (c) note that the Director of Environment would confirm the position on the membership of the Member Officer working Group to Councillor Devlin.

**CHANGE TO SCHEME OF ADMINISTRATION – APPEALS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

**896.** The Council considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships regarding a proposed change to the Council's Scheme of Administration to provide for increased membership of the Appeals Committee to ensure that final determination of disciplinary appeals could take place within an appropriate timeframe.

The Council had seen a rise in the number of appeals over the preceding 2 years, which had placed some pressure on officers of Democratic Service in identifying suitable dates for hearings which accommodated the availability of all parties concerned, including appellants and their representatives, witnesses, and members of the committee. In some cases, hearings had been required to be delayed for periods of up to 3 months to identify a suitable date.

To minimise the potential for continuation of such delays, it was proposed that the pool from which committee members were drawn be extended to encompass all elected members, with the quorum continuing as 3 members. Training in the relevant employment matters would be provided to all members to ensure they had relevant knowledge prior to being asked to sit on a Committee.

The Council agreed to amend paragraph 2 of the Scheme of Administration to change the membership of the Appeals Committee from "5 Elected Members" to "All Elected Members save for, in any given case, those members holding convenorships reflective of the service to which the appellant belongs or belonged prior to dismissal".

PROVOST



**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**APPEALS COMMITTEE**

**Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in Meeting Room 5, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 1 August 2024.**

**Present:**

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)  
Councillor Kate Campbell

Councillor Katie Pragnell

Councillor Anderson in the Chair

**Attending:**

Kath McCormack, HR Manager; Nicola McEleny, Solicitor.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**897.** 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 items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

**APPEAL AGAINST DISMISSAL – ENV – 03/2024**

**898.** Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) and Jo Loudon, HR Business Partner appeared on behalf of management.

The appellant and a representative appeared in connection with the appeal.

Both parties made their submissions to the committee and were heard in answer to questions on their submissions.

Thereafter both parties withdrew from the meeting.

Following consideration, both parties were recalled and advised by the Chair that the grounds of the appeal had not been substantiated and the appeal was not upheld.

CHAIR



**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**LICENSING COMMITTEE**

**Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock, on 6 August 2024.**

**Present:**

Councillor Paul Edlin (Chair)	Councillor Andrew Morrison
Councillor Angela Convery (Vice Chair)*	Councillor David Macdonald*
Provost Mary Montague*	

Councillor Edlin in the Chair

(\* indicates remote attendance)

**Attending:**

Nicola McEleny, Solicitor; Jillian McGrain, Senior Officer (Private Sector); Michelle McCarrol, Lead Officer (Tenant & Customer); and Victoria Harkness, Democratic Services Officer.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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 remaining item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

**SHORT TERM LET APPLICATION**

**899.** The committee was advised that this item had been withdrawn as the applicant had successfully submitted all required documentation prior to the meeting.

**SHORT TERM LET APPLICATION**

**900.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Environment regarding an application for a Short Term Let Licence under the terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) act 1982 (Licensing of Short-term Lets) Order 2022 (agenda item 4 refers).

The applicant, having been invited to the meeting, was not present.

902

The Senior Officer (Private Sector) advised on the current status of the application and recommended a further deadline be set for submission of required documentation.

The Committee, having taken account of the information provided, agreed:-

- (a) that the applicants be allowed to submit the missing evidence to Housing Services no later than 2 September 2024;
- (b) that, in the absence of this being submitted by or on this date, the Council could not proceed in approving this incomplete application within the timescales required, and makes a refusal decision without the need for a further hearing;
- (c) to authorise Council officers to report the Applicant and Owner to the Procurator Fiscal, in the event that the licence was refused and the applicant proceeds in operating an unlicensed STL and to cooperate with the Procurator Fiscal and Police in any criminal investigation and prosecution relating to this matter; and
- (d) to authorise Council officers to defend any litigation instituted by the Applicant and Owner in respect of their licence being refused.

CHAIR

**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**LOCAL REVIEW BODY**

**Minute of meeting held at 2.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 7 August 2024.**

**Present:**

Councillor Paul Edlin  
Councillor Annette Ireland  
Councillor Chris Lunday

Provost Mary Montague  
Councillor Andrew Morrison

**Attending:**

Mark Brand, Planning Adviser; Marie Paterson, Senior Solicitor; and John Burke, Committee Services Officer.

**Apologies:**

Councillors Betty Cunningham and Jim McLean.

**APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair it was agreed that Councillor Ireland would chair the meeting.

Councillor Ireland in the Chair

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

The Chair advised that site visits had been held prior to the meeting.

**NOTICE OF REVIEW – REVIEW 2024/05 – REPLACEMENT OF REAR SINGLE STOREY EXTENSION WITH COMBINED FLAT AND PITCHED ROOF AND EXTENDED REAR DORMER AT 68 MONTGOMERY STREET, EAGLESHAM, G76 0AU (REF NO:- 2024/0059/TP).**

**902.** The Local Review Body considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted by Mr and Mrs B and P Scholarios Brown against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in

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respect of the replacement of a rear single storey extension with a combined flat and pitched roof and extended rear dormer at 68 Montgomery Street, Eaglesham, G76 0AU.

The decision had been made in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation made in terms of Section 43A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

The Local Review Body, having considered the information previously circulated, agreed that it did not have sufficient information to determine the review, in light of a determination made by the Scottish Government Reporter in respect of Listed Building Consent for the property in question. Therefore, the Local Review Body determined to defer consideration of this item until the applicant's comments on the Reporter's decision could be provided and the required information the decision presented to the Local Review Body.

**NOTICE OF REVIEW – REVIEW 2024/06 – ERECTION OF A TWO STOREY SIDE AND REAR EXTENSION AND A SINGLE STOREY SIDE/REAR EXTENSION AT 87 HARVIE AVENUE, NEWTON MEARN, G77 6LF. (REF NO:- 2023/0716/TP).**

**903.** The Local Review Body considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted by Mr Falak Chaudhary against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in respect of the erection of a two storey side and rear extension and a single storey side/rear extension at 87 Harvie Avenue, Newton Mearns, G77 6LF.

The decision had been made in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation made in terms of Section 43A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

The Local Review Body, having considered the information previously circulated, agreed that it had sufficient information to determine the review without further procedure.

The Planning Adviser outlined the planning application and reasons for refusal as determined by the Appointed Officer in the decision notice and the grounds for review.

The Planning Adviser further outlined a proposed additional condition to be attached to any consent in the event the Local Review Body overturned the decision of the Appointed Officer and granted planning permission.

Discussion took place, particularly around concerns about the expansion of the building footprint.

Following the discussion, and having heard from the Planning Adviser, the Local Review Body agreed that the Appointed Officer's decision be upheld and planning permission refused.

CHAIR

**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Minute of meeting held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 8 August 2024.**

**Present:**

Councillor Andrew Morrison (Chair)  
Councillor Paul Edlin

Councillor Annette Ireland \*  
Councillor Gordon Wallace

Councillor Morrison in the Chair

(\*) indicates remote attendance

**Attending:**

Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance; Michelle Blair, Chief Auditor; Ian McLean, Senior Auditor; Linda Hutchison, Clerk to the Committee; and John Burke, Democratic Services Officer.

**Also Attending:**

Grace Scanlin, Ernst and Young.

**Apologies:**

Provost Mary Montague, and Councillors Tony Buchanan and David Macdonald.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**CHAIR'S REPORT – EXTERNAL AUDIT ISSUES**

**905.** Councillor Morrison reported that Rob Jones of the External Audit Team had written to him, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee, regarding Auditing Standards which required External Audit to formally update their understanding of the Committee's arrangements for oversight of management processes and arrangements annually. Having cited examples of the questions posed and referred to the value of this, Councillor Morrison confirmed he had issued a formal, written response.

He also reported that, again in his capacity as Chair, he was due to have a further, routine meeting with Rob Jones on 20 August 2024, on which he would report back in due course.

The Committee noted the report.

## **BREAKFAST CART SERVICE AT NEILSTON PRIMARY SCHOOL – CLARIFICATION**

**906.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 20 June 2024 (Page 884, Item 879 refers), when it had been noted that the Chief Accountant would provide clarification on whether or not the Devolved School Management (DSM) Reserve would provide sufficient funding to enable the Breakfast Cart Service at Neilston Primary School which was being sustained through COVID funding until the end of June 2024 to continue, the Committee considered a report by the Clerk summarising the clarification received and circulated. It was reported that the Reserve for the School would provide sufficient funding to enable the Cart Service based at the School to continue for session 2024/25 at least, and that a review would be undertaken during 2024/25 to measure the impact of this expenditure to enable the school community to consider its sustainability in the longer term.

Having referred to the Scottish Government's prior national commitment to fund breakfast provision for primary school pupils by August 2022, Councillor Morrison suggested seeking clarification on whether or not any progress on this was likely to be made during the forthcoming year to enable the service to be delivered through dedicated funding. He added that he was aware that the Scottish Government had concluded a related mapping exercise in June 2024 of current breakfast provision in primary schools across Scotland. Councillor Wallace commented that Neilston Primary School's DSM Reserve had increased from £20k to £58k, but queried if the Reserve would have been significantly more if the Scottish Government funding referred to had been available. It was suggested that it would be useful to ascertain the current cost of providing the Breakfast Cart Service at Neilston Primary School as an example, whilst acknowledged that breakfast provision was currently being provided in several other local schools.

The Committee:-

- (a) agreed that further clarification be sought on whether or not any progress on the provision of dedicated central funding by the Scottish Government for breakfast provision for primary school pupils was likely to be made by the Scottish Government during the forthcoming year, and also the current cost of the Breakfast Cart Service at Neilston Primary School as an example of the cost at present; and
- (b) otherwise, noted the position.

## **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2023/24**

**907.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 22 February 2024 (Page 766 , Item 751 refers), when it had been agreed to recommend to the Council that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 and policy on the repayment of loans fund advances be approved, the Committee 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 2024, and seeking approval to recommend to the Council that a list of organisations for the investment of surplus funds be approved.

The report referred to a well-managed treasury function within the Council and related issues, commenting that the authority continued to adopt a prudent approach to treasury management, and that stability in borrowing assisted the Council to respond to current, national economic pressures. The submission of the report to the Committee, prior to its submission to the Council, was in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management.



The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) highlighted key issues within the report, including why the borrowing undertaken during the year varied from the previous estimate of £58m. She explained that a number of capital projects had been rescheduled to future years, and that due to this and current high interest rates being encountered, no new borrowing had been undertaken.

She highlighted that the Council had operated satisfactorily against all indicators which measured risk, prudence and debt; commented on various specific indicators; outlined the position on internal borrowing and why it was required; and confirmed that capital investment plans and treasury management decisions were affordable, prudent and sustainable. It was commented that the Council's average borrowing rate had reduced by 0.07% compared to 2022/23, but that this trend could change in future as interest rates were not expected to return to the low levels they had been previously.

In response to questions from Councillor Edlin and Councillor Morrison, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) commented further on the extent to which internal borrowing could be used and related issues; clarified why it was not possible to commit all of the Council's reserves to internal borrowing; and more generally outlined how it was determined that borrowing levels were prudent. She confirmed that borrowing would return to a more normal level in due course, when it was possible to do so.

In reply to Councillor Wallace who cited examples of large capital projects planned and the extent to which the Council was exposed to related risk in terms of borrowing as commented on by the External Auditor previously, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) highlighted that all local authorities, not just the Council, were facing a high risk associated with this linked to the current economic position and related pressures. More specifically, she explained that additional funds were being sought from the Scottish Government to progress Get to Zero initiatives as it was not considered realistic to fund this work fully otherwise. She also commented on the ratio of financing to the Net Revenue Stream in terms of the Non-Housing Revenue Account and related issues.

The Committee, agreed:-

- (a) to note the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2023/24 and associated comments; and
- (b) to **recommend to the Council** that the organisations specified in the report for investment of surplus funds be approved.

## **NATIONAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGETS 2024/25**

**908.** The Committee considered a report by the Clerk on the publication in May 2024 of a report by Audit Scotland entitled *Local Government Budgets 2024/25*. Under the Committee's specialisation arrangements, Councillor Morrison was leading the review of the report. The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) had been asked to provide comments and a copy of her feedback was appended to the report.

Having explained that this was the first time such a national report had been compiled by Audit Scotland, the report commented on a range of revenue and capital budgetary issues. It was explained that councils had adopted a range of approaches and reporting styles which made comparisons of budget reports across different authorities difficult. The report highlighted that Audit Scotland was keen to improve transparency in budget reporting across Scotland and that, whilst the Council's budget reports were already considered to provide detailed analysis, officers would work with the Council's External Auditors to consider any further local improvements which might be suggested and help facilitate comparisons with other councils.

It was concluded that the Audit Scotland briefing had provided a high level summary of the main issues facing Scottish Councils in setting their budgets for 2024/25, with almost all of the issues raised being relevant to the Council and it being clear that councils would face increased scrutiny regarding this in future. It was clarified that the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland planned to release similar briefings annually in future.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) highlighted key issues within the report, referring to the increasing financial pressures facing Scottish councils in setting their 2024/25 budgets, that transparency was considered to be demonstrated already in the Council's budget reports and that the Accounts Commission would pursue more consistency across councils in future.

Councillor Morrison referred to the difficulties of benchmarking when approaches to budget reports across councils differed. Referring to fees and charges and the option to introduce a visitor levy, he expressed the view that, given the nature of the local economy in East Renfrewshire, introducing such a levy was unlikely to be beneficial. However he added that, should the Scottish Government ever suggest reducing central funding to councils based on the introduction of the levy, the Council could be disadvantaged.

In response to Councillor Wallace, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) confirmed that at present no formal criteria were provided by the Accounts Commission on providing feedback on budget issues, that the feedback was submitted to the Commission through the External Auditor, and that there could be more direction in future on the information required. Having heard Councillor Wallace suggest that arguments in favour of consistency needed to be pressed by the Accounts Commission and others involved in External Audit, Ms Scanlin confirmed that officers had been able to check the feedback prepared on the budget prior to its submissions to the Commission, and concurred that further clarity on expectations regarding the feedback would be welcomed.

In reply to Councillor Ireland who expressed concern that the Audit Scotland report had cited the Council as one of six which had not consulted residents on the 2024/25 budget, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) highlighted that in October 2022 the Council had carried out very extensive public consultation with residents on the 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 budgets and related savings proposals. Ms Scanlin confirmed that reference to that consultation had been included in the return submitted for the Council, albeit not reflected that way in the Audit Scotland report.

The Committee agreed to note the report and related comments made.

## **INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2024/25 - IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS - APRIL TO JUNE 2024 (QUARTER 1)**

**909.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 28 March 2024 (Page 811, Item 799 refers), when the Internal Audit Strategic Plan for 2024/25 to 2028/29 had been approved, the Committee considered a report by the Chief Auditor regarding progress made on the implementation of the Plan from 1 April to 30 June 2024. It was confirmed that seven reports relating to planned 2023/24 audit work had been issued since the last progress report had been considered, with no reports relating to 2024/25 audit work having been issued thus far. Details of reports issued as part of the 2023/24 Plan, on which responses had been received since the previous progress report had been submitted, were also provided.

Reference was also made to the quarterly performance indicators (PIs) for the section, and three new requests for assistance dealt with using contingency time on which work was still in progress.

The Senior Auditor highlighted various issues, during which he clarified that there had been no significant findings from the audits other than on access to systems, and that the follow-up audits done had confirmed that good progress had been made on implementing previously agreed recommendations.

Regarding the Council Tax Billing and Collection Audit, in response to Councillor Morrison, the Senior Auditor specified the balance of the Council Tax suspense account both in total and relative to the total amount of Council Tax collected, and cited examples of reasons why details were added to that account.

Regarding the City Deal, Councillor Ireland expressed concern regarding a potential increase in the budget for the Aurs Road project and it being completed later than anticipated. Having heard the Chief Auditor refer to the focus of the audit that had been completed, which had not focussed on project delays although that could potentially be considered as part of a future audit, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) confirmed that updates on progress with the project and the impact of any delays would be included in the Capital Plan monitoring reports submitted to the Cabinet and Council. Councillor Morrison suggested that, meantime, the audit report on the City Deal be circulated. In response to Councillor Edlin and Councillor Wallace respectively, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) clarified that local officers managed and monitored progress on the project, and that one-off high profile projects, such as the Aurs Road one, tended to be supported by more experienced officers in the Environment Department.

The Committee agreed:-

- (a) that the Internal Audit Report on the City Deal be circulated to members of the Committee; and
- (b) otherwise, to note the report and related comments made.

CHAIR



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

**Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 15 August 2024.**

**Present:**

Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)                      Councillor Danny Devlin  
Councillor Andrew Anderson (Vice Chair)              Councillor Katie Pragnell

Councillor O'Donnell, Leader, in the Chair

**Attending:**

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Joe McCaig, Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision); Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Mark Rodgers, Head of Housing and Property Services; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance; Michaela Sullivan, Head of Place; Michelle McGuckin, Principal Officer (Capital Projects); Michael McKernan, Economic Development and Inclusive Growth Manager; Erica Roche, Change and Governance Manager; and John Burke, Democratic Services Officer.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

**911.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) on the financial results for 2023/24 and comparing the outturn with the final budgetary control statement for the year which was submitted to Cabinet on 28 March 2024 (Page 801, Paragraph 788 refers). The report also provided details of the Devolved School Management funds held by each school/centre as at 31 March 2024.

The report outlined the unaudited financial results for 2023/24 and confirmed the financial results which had been communicated to all members in June 2024 by e-mail.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) stated that the report demonstrated the Council's sound financial performance, with an overall General Fund surplus of £6.878m, enabling £6.2m to be allocated to earmarked reserves to address future pressures.

The non-earmarked General Reserve held a balance of £7.336m, representing 2.3% of net revenue expenditure, within the Council's reserves policy of between 2% and 4%.

The position reported at period 9 was an underspend of £2.6m, with an improvement of £4m over the expected outcome. The reasons for this were detailed in the report.

Details were also provided on the status of the Housing Revenue Account, which recorded an operational deficit of £97,000, resulting in an accumulated surplus balance carried forward of £1.710m.

Finally, the report provided information regarding Devolved School Management funds held by each school for members' information.

Following a brief discussion, particularly around Devolved School Management funds, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the outturn position compared to the previous Budgetary Control Report;
- (b) noted that once the audit had been completed, the final accounts would be submitted to a future meeting of the Council along with the External Auditor's report; and
- (c) noted the amounts held in the Devolved School Management earmarked reserve as at 31 March 2024, detailed in Annex A.

## **IMPROVEMENTS TO EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE AT CROOKFUR PRIMARY SCHOOL AND EASTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL**

**912.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Education seeking to homologate a decision to spend development contributions on necessary improvements in education infrastructure at Crookfur Primary School and Eastwood High School.

It was explained that East Renfrewshire Council was in receipt of development contributions for use by the Education Department within the catchment areas of Crookfur Primary and Eastwood High Schools and that this allocation was required to be spent or committed by 30 October 2024.

The report detailed issues around the pressures at Crookfur around capacity and how this impacted the use of its current facilities, and dining capacity at Eastwood. Having considered those, it was proposed that a hard games court be created at Crookfur Primary School and an external dining pod be created at Eastwood High School.

It was anticipated that planning permission could be obtained within 6 to 8 weeks and the projects would be value engineered to contain the total costs within the available funding envelope should the tender prices exceed the total contribution sum available.

Given the imminent need to progress the projects, written approval had been sought and obtained from Councillors O'Donnell and Anderson on 22 July 2024, and Cabinet was asked to homologate that decision.

Following a discussion where the expected completion dates for the projects were given as end of 2024 for Crookfur Primary and during 2025 for Eastwood High, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the availability of development contributions and capacity pressures faced by Crookfur Primary and Eastwood High Schools; and
- (b) homologated the decision of 22 July 2024 to authorise the spend and instruct the Education Department and Property and Technical Services to proceed to tender with the proposals immediately.

## **EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL CITY DEAL UPDATE 2024**

**913.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the progress of East Renfrewshire Council's Glasgow City Region City Deal funded M77 Strategic Corridor Programme.

The report provided details of the £44 million City Deal investment package and the programme of projects being funded by it. Appendix 1 to the report provided an update on the completed projects.

The progress of the Aurs Road project was outlined, with issues having been discovered following discovery of a water works while excavating the Active Travel Route. An archaeological survey had been carried out and West of Scotland Archaeology Service had concluded that the structures did not require to be retained. However, this work had caused delays in order to remove the necessary stonework to facilitate the Aurs Road Active Travel Route.

Further details were also provided on the progress of the new Balgray railway station at Barrhead South with active travel options, a bus turning circle and potential bus stop. Transport Scotland had submitted the findings of a Stage 2 Detailed Strategic Transport Appraisal to their Investment Decision Making Board and the decision was expected within 2 weeks of the Cabinet meeting. Approval on the full business case was anticipated to be given at the meeting of the Glasgow City Region's Chief Executive's Group on 5 September 2024.

During discussion on the item, it was indicated that the intention was for construction to be complete by Spring 2026. While options were being looked at for bus provision in the meantime, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport had indicated that they did not want to open a route to the area until the station was complete.

Following further discussion, the Cabinet:

- (a) noted the progress of the remaining three City Deal projects;
- (b) agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Environment for the submission of two Business Cases to Glasgow City Region Programme Management Office for approval and release of the next phase of project funds: for the Full Business Case for the new Balgray Rail Station in Barrhead South to be submitted to Glasgow City Region Executives' Group; and for the Outline Business Case for new visitor facilities in Dams to Darnley Country Park to be submitted to Glasgow City Region Cabinet; and
- (c) noted that Cabinet would receive further updates on progress.

## **PUBLICATION OF LOCAL HEAT AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY STRATEGY**

**914.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval to publish the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) for East Renfrewshire.

Publication of LHEES was required by the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2022, alongside a delivery plan, every five years. It was a long term plan for improving energy efficiency and promoting transition away from fossil fuels for heating which could impact the Council's climate change duties.

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A draft LHEES had been approved by Cabinet on 22 February 2024 (Page 761, Item 747 refers) and subject of a 6 week consultation. The final LHEES had seen moderate changes as a result of that process, and the key changes were detailed in the report.

Following a discussion on the difficulties of insulating homes, and how the Council was supporting initiatives to increase uptake, the Cabinet approved the publication of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy.

## **UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND 2022-2025 – REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY**

**915.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking to homologate the previous approval of three projects and approve projects under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) award from the UK Government for the period 2022-2025.

Cabinet had approved the East Renfrewshire SPF Local Investment Plan at its meeting on 10 November 2022 (Page 290, Item 225 refers). There was an underspend of the funding by £160,000 due to a number of projects coming under budget and others being scaled back or not implemented at all where demand was insufficient.

Three projects had been proposed to Councillors O'Donnell and Devlin in June 2024 to allow them to commence immediately. However, one of those projects had subsequently been withdrawn. Therefore, Cabinet was asked to homologate the decision taken in June 2024, and also approve further projects from Giffnock Business Improvement District and Business Gateway East Renfrewshire. All projects were detailed in the report.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the underspends across the Shared Prosperity Fund interventions;
- (b) homologated the decision to approve three new projects as outlined in the report;
- (c) noted the withdrawal of one project and approved the request for a further two new projects, outlined in the report; and
- (d) delegated to the Director of Environment to approve any new proposal requests that could be accommodated, if any underspends or adjustments arose in the future.

## **NEILSTON LEARNING CAMPUS – VARIATION TO CONTRACT**

**916.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking to homologate the previous approval for variations to contracts in relation to the Neilston Learning Campus project.

Under section 21.5.4 of the Council's Contract Standing Orders, approval had been sought from Councillors O'Donnell and Anderson for two variations of the value of the contract for Neilston Learning Campus project to allow work to commence during the Council recess period.

The Appendices to the report outlined the reports provided to the Councillors in seeking approval for the variations and those were summarised in the report. It was intended that the variations would be met from the overall project budget.



In discussion, it was confirmed that the demolition works highlighted were now complete.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted and homologated the variations to contract approved in July 2024 by the Cabinet Chair and Vice Chair;
- (b) noted the updates following those approvals; and;
- (c) noted compliance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders Section 21.5.4.

**MINUTE OF JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (FIRST TIER) HELD ON 16 MAY 2024**

**917.** The Cabinet noted the minute.

CHAIR



**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Minute of meeting, held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on Thursday 22 August 2024.**

**Present:**

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)	Councillor Gordon Wallace
Councillor Tony Buchanan	Ms Fiona Gilchrist
Councillor Kate Campbell	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)	Mr Des Morris
Councillor Katie Pragnell (Vice Chair)	Ms Evelyn Yedd*
Councillor Colm Merrick	

Councillor Anderson in the Chair

(\* ) indicates remote attendance

**Attending:**

Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance); Joe McCaig, Head of Education Services (Provision); Siobhan McColgan, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Graeme Hay, Senior Manager Leading Change (Education); Tracy Morton, Senior Manager (Developing People) and Jennifer Graham, Democratic Services Officer.

**Apology:**

Councillor Danny Devlin.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**SQA VERBAL UPDATE**

**919.** Councillor Anderson invited the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) to give an overview of examination results in East Renfrewshire Schools in 2024. Once again, the examination result performance of the pupils had been outstanding.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) clarified that the verbal update given at this meeting would be followed up by a more detailed analysis at a later date. She explained that pupils had performed very well across all key measures, with record levels of performance in S5, and a return to full assessment across Nat 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses. She added that S4 learners in 2023/24 were the cohort who did

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not finish P7 and missed a significant part of S1 due to restrictions during the Pandemic, so it was testament to their dedication and resilience that their achievements could be recognised today. Thereafter, she presented some highlights from the examination results.

In S4, 96% of pupils achieved 5 or more qualifications at Nat 4 or better, similar to the results last year. At Nat 5 level, 77% of pupils achieved 5 or more awards, this was similar to 2019, when full course assessments had last taken place. At Mearns Castle High School, pupils achieved their second highest proportion of 5 or more Nat 5 passes in S4, and the quality of awards across East Renfrewshire continued to rise with 61% of Nat 5 qualifications awarded at A Grade, an increase of 7% on pre-pandemic levels.

In S5, 84% of pupils obtained 1 or more Higher, 71% obtained 3 or more Highers and 52% achieved 5 or more Highers, the authority's best ever result at S5. There was an increase in the proportion of S5 pupils in St. Luke's and St. Ninian's High Schools achieving 3 or more and 5 or more Higher passes compared to last year. Pupils in Woodfarm and Williamwood High Schools achieved their best ever results at S5 with an increase of 5% and 10% respectively achieving 5 or more Highers. 27% of Barrhead High School learners had achieved 5 or more Higher passes, a remarkable 7% increase on the last year of full course assessment in 2019 and the second highest result.

In 2024, there was an increase in the proportion of S5 boys gaining 5 or more Highers at 45%, and 50% of all S5 pupils achieved a Higher at A Grade.

Eastwood High School saw an increase in S6 results from the previous year, and at Advanced Higher stage, performance across the authority remained strong at 42%. The performance figures demonstrated that the Education Department continued to aim higher and deliver for all pupils across the authority.

In conclusion, the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) thanked all pupils, parents and staff for their vital contribution to the achievements of all of our young people.

Having heard Councillor Anderson, supported by members of the committee, congratulate staff, pupils and parents for their excellent achievements, the committee agreed to note the report and comments made.

## **DRAFT LITERACY AND ENGLISH STRATEGY 2024-27**

**920.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the evaluation undertaken of the Education Department's previous literacy strategy, and seeking approval of a refreshed Literacy and English Strategy 2024-27.

The report explained that the strategy identified six key aims over a 3 year period and provided a clear set of actions for the department. Amongst other things, the Strategy aimed to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities in literacy development; the employability skills of pupils, school leavers and adults; and the quality of teaching and learning. A review of the impact of the literacy strategy had been delayed due to the global pandemic but had taken place during the 2023/24 session. The review team identified strengths, areas for improvement and recommended that a refreshed strategy be agreed and implemented to drive the improvements which included the quality of learning, teaching and assessment in literacy and English; the development of real-life skills of pupils, school leavers and adults; and teacher confidence and competence in teaching literacy and English.

In conclusion, the report highlighted that the impact of Covid on literacy and English outcomes for children living in poverty was significant and required a continued focus on tackling the impact of this in relation to attainment with careful and considered use of Strategic and Pupil Equity Funding.

In response to questions, the Heads of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) and (Equality and Equity) advised that meetings between principal teachers of English from all secondary schools took place regularly to compare approaches to teaching; confirmed that there was a focus on professional learning which included support for pupils with Additional Support Needs and also linked closely to bilingual work; and stated that work was ongoing with health visitors as part of the Integrated Children's Services Plan to target literacy development from a young age. The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) advised that she would include a spotlight session on literacy with a particular focus on equity at a future Education Committee meeting and added that, although critical thinking was not referenced specifically in the strategy as it was inferred through the holistic way in which children were taught, this could be included to provide additional clarity.

The committee agreed:-

- (a) to note the continued progress of the delivery of literacy as outlined in the report;
- (b) that a spotlight session on literacy, with a particular focus on equity, would be provided at a future Education Committee meeting for consideration; and
- (c) to approve the new draft Literacy and English Strategy for 2024-27 and associated comments.

## **STANDARD CIRCULAR 57: CHILD PROTECTION**

**921.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval of the revised Standard Circular 57: Child Protection which provided guidance on child protection in East Renfrewshire Early Learning and Childcare settings and schools.

The report explained that The Scottish Government had revised guidelines on children protection guidance in 2023 to reflect the changed and changing landscape in this field and had provided a framework for local authorities and other agencies. The updated circular reflected these changes; took into account East Renfrewshire Council's Child Protection Guidance which was also being updated; and made reference to current legislation such as the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) and Scotland's Promise.

Although much of the circular's content remained the same, updates included reference to the importance of the child's voice; ensuring links were made to whole family wellbeing; and ensuring that children's rights were embedded in the document, amongst other things. It also highlighted close partnership working with parents/carers and other organisations including Social Work, Health and Police Scotland.

In response to questions, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) advised that management of bullying incidents was included in a separate Standard Circular, and confirmed that the professional learning presentation which had been developed to accompany the circular had been delivered to all staff during the August in-service day. She provided further information on the role of Child Protection Co-ordinators in schools and

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referred to the importance of regular meetings, collaboration and partnership working when dealing with issues relating to child protection.

The committee agreed:-

- (a) to approve the revised Standard Circular 57: Child Protection; and
- (b) that the Director of Education should take appropriate steps to ensure its implementation in all schools and early learning and childcare settings; and
- (c) otherwise, to note the comments made.

## **EDUCATION DEPARTMENT END-YEAR REPORT 2023-24**

**922.** The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of the end-year report on the performance of the Education Department throughout 2023/24. Detailed figures containing the End of Year Performance Data were attached to the report as an Appendix.

It was highlighted that the report related to the 2023/24 organisational year, not the academic year, and as such many of the indicators were linked to the 2022/23 session as the data for 2023/24 was not available at the time of completion. The report summarised the performance of the Education Department throughout 2023/24, focussing on the department's contribution towards the Council-wide Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP) and set out the wide-ranging work undertaken across the department, schools and early learning and childcare centres in seeking to achieve the vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*. The report also outlined the intended next steps, detailed through the Local Improvement Plan and building on the strong performance throughout 2023/24, to continue to achieve the best outcomes for all learners and work towards closing the attainment gap between our most and least disadvantaged children and young people.

The Senior Manager Leading Change (Education) referred to key highlights in the report including an increase in the proportion of pupils leaving to a positive destination; continued high performance across a number of indicators; opening of the new Neilston campus; and continued support for families through Adult Learning programmes.

In response to questions, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) confirmed that, although the number of exclusions had increased during the reporting year, East Renfrewshire's exclusion figures remained the lowest in Scotland and mainly related to pupil to pupil incidents. She advised that a working group on Violence to Staff had been established to consider how to further support both staff and pupils. This include ensuring that staff are being supported and schools are supported to reflect on any learning following an incident which could mitigate future incidents. Mr Morris confirmed that he was part of the working group and had found the meetings to be extremely productive and was pleased with the actions taken by the Education Department.

Having heard the Director of Education confirm that a summary of the Education Department's approach to the recent national guidance on behaviour in schools would be provided at a future date, the committee noted the report and comments made.

CHAIR

**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**LICENSING COMMITTEE**

**Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock, on 3 September 2024.**

**Present:**

Councillor Paul Edlin (Chair)  
Councillor Angela Convery (Vice Chair)\*  
Provost Mary Montague\*

Councillor Andrew Morrison  
Councillor David Macdonald\*

Councillor Edlin in the Chair

(\*) indicates remote attendance

**Attending:**

Gerry Mahon, Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement); Brian Kilpatrick, Civic Government Enforcement Officer; and Victoria Harkness, Democratic Services Officer.

**Also Attending:**

Inspector Brian Eaglesham and Inspector Gareth Griffiths, Police Scotland.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**923.** 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 remaining items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

**PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER'S LICENCE - APPLICATION FOR GRANT**

**924.** The committee considered a report by the Chief Officer (Legal & Procurement) in relation to an application for the grant of a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (agenda item 3 refers).

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It was reported that the applicant, having been invited to the meeting, had notified officers that he was unable to attend.

The committee agreed to continue the application to the next meeting to allow the applicant to make a personal appearance.

### **PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER'S LICENCE – APPLICATION FOR GRANT**

**925.** The committee considered a report by the Chief Officer (Legal & Procurement) in relation to an application for the grant of a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (agenda item 4 refers).

The applicant and his interpreter were present.

Inspector Eaglesham and Inspector Griffiths representing the Chief Constable, who had made an objection to the application, were also present.

Inspector Griffiths was heard in respect of the objection submitted by the Chief Constable and in response to questions from members.

The applicant was then heard in respect of the application and in response to questions from members.

The Committee agreed to a short adjournment to consider the matter.

On reconvening, the Committee, having taken account of the applicant's previous conviction, its seriousness and relevance to the licence being applied for, and also having taken account of the objection by the Chief Constable, agreed that the application be refused on the grounds that the applicant was not a fit and proper person to be the holder of such a licence by virtue of his previous conviction.

CHAIR



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

**Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 5 September 2024.**

**Present:**

Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)                      Councillor Katie Pragnell  
Councillor Andrew Anderson (Vice Chair)

Councillor O'Donnell, Leader, in the Chair

**Attending:**

Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Mark Rodgers, Head of Housing and Property Services; Kirsty Stanners, Head of Finance; Michaela Sullivan, Head of Place; Jamie Reid, Head of Communities and Transformation; Elaine Rodger, City Deal and Infrastructure Delivery Manager; Suzanne Conlin, Senior Housing Manager; Paul Parsons, Principal Accountant, Craig Geddes, Senior Information and Improvement Officer; and John Burke, Democratic Services Officer.

**Apology:**

Councillor Danny Devlin

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest intimated.

**ESTIMATED REVENUE BUDGET OUT-TURN 2024/2025**

**926.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) detailing the estimated projected revenue budget out-turn for 2024/25 and providing details of the expected year-end variances together with summary cost information for each of the undernoted services as at 30 June 2024 and subsequent assessment of pressures arising.

- (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) Business Operations and Partnerships Department;
- (viii) Business Operations and Partnerships Department – Support;

- (ix) Other Expenditure and Income;
- (x) Joint Boards;
- (xi) Corporate Contingency;
- (xii) Health and Social Care Partnership; and
- (xiii) Housing Revenue Account.

On the basis of the information, and taking account of forecast Council Tax collection, a year end operational underspend of £1,219k was forecast on General Fund services and an overspend of £124k on the Housing Revenue Account. The reasons for departmental variances were set out in the report. He outlined that any such operational underspend at this year-end would assist the Council in meeting future years' budget challenges

It was noted that the above figures reflected that £1,752k of forecast COVID-related pressures would be covered by drawing on the Council's COVID grant resources and as a result did not impact on the operational budget position.

It was noted that the forecast outturn position could still be subject to significant change, for example if COVID pressures increased again. Conversely, it was hoped that management action to avoid any non-essential expenditure could increase the underspend at year end.

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

Following a brief discussion, the Cabinet agreed:-

- (a) to note the forecast underlying General Fund operational underspend of £1,219k together with the HRA operational overspend of £124k before any contribution from the HRA reserve;
- (b) to approve service virements and operational adjustments as set out in the notes to the tables on pages 15 to 32 of the report and note the reported probable out-turn position.
- (c) to approve that £256k of the late increase of £1,178k in the general grant settlement should be allocated to HSCP in line with their overall budget share.

## **CITY DEAL REALLOCATION OF FUNDS**

**927.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment requesting approval to prepare an Outline Business Case and submit a proposal to Glasgow City Region City Deal Programme Management Office to secure funding to construct additional Class 4 Business, Class 5 General Industrial and Class 6 Storage or Distribution Storage or Distribution Commercial Space on plots G and H at Crossmill Business Park, Barrhead.

It was explained that £129.145m of funding had been made available from the Glasgow Airport Access Project (GAAP), with 50% of that funding allocated to regional projects and the other 50% to local projects. East Renfrewshire were estimated to be granted a proportional allocation of £2.4m from this funding.

The City Deal team had given careful consideration to a proposed project, to deliver economic impact within a 2 to 3 year timescale, within budget and which would provide rental income to meet future revenue costs. To that end, the Crossmill Business Park in Barrhead had been identified.

The proposal was summarised in the report, with a proposed site plan attached as an Appendix.

Following a discussion, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the proposed development of additional business units at the Crossmill Business Park, utilising funds that had been made available by the Glasgow City Region City Deal and the expected costs;
- (b) approved the preparation of an Outline Business Case; and
- (c) approved the submission of the Outline Business Case, in accordance with the Glasgow City Region City Deal Assurance Framework.

### **HOUSING ALLOCATION LETTING TARGET CHANGE**

**928.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on emergency changes required to lettings targets within the East Renfrewshire Council's Lettings Policy and ask Cabinet to homologate this decision.

The existing Lettings Policy had been approved by Cabinet in September 2023 (Page 614, Item 563 refers) and provided a target to determine what percentage of empty homes should be allocated to priority groups.

The report detailed the increase in demand from homeless households since the 2018/19 financial year, in addition to the general waiting list for housing. However, turnover of housing had dropped, leading to a reduction in available properties for let to homeless households. In order to address the backlog of homeless households waiting for housing, it was proposed that 53 units be allocated to prioritise the needs of existing Council tenants in order to create turnover to meet the needs of homeless households. The proposal was fully detailed in the report.

The proposal had been approved by Councillor O'Donnell and Councillor Devlin on 20 August 2024 and homologation was now requested by the Cabinet.

Following discussion, the Cabinet:

- (a) noted the current demand for council housing in East Renfrewshire Council, in particular, the increase in homelessness; and
- (b) homologated the decision to amend the letting allocation to key groups.

### **UPDATE ON THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

**929.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on the achievements of the Digital Transformation Programme during 2023/24 and plans for 2024/25.

The latest Digital Transformation Programme had launched in April 2022, in line with the Council's Digital Transformation Strategy for 2021-2024, which was approved by Cabinet in June 2021 (Page 1534, Item 1648 refers).

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The ambitions set out in that plan had made significant progress across 2023/2024 and they were set out in the report in terms of their impact on the 3 key areas of activity: Customer Experience; Workforce Productivity; and Business Systems and Processes.

The report also provided information on the future of the Digital Transformation Programme, with the document due to be refreshed. Work would be undertaken in 2024/25 toward this, taking account of the SOLACE, Improvement Service and Digital Office work on the “Council of the Future: Digital ‘To Be’ State”. Future planned activity was, once again, laid out in terms of the 3 key areas.

Following a discussion, the Cabinet noted the achievements and future plans across the 3 areas of the Council’s Digital Transformation Programme: Customer Experience; Business Systems; and Processes and Workforce Productivity.

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

**930.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive on the annual statistical report on the Council’s performance in dealing with Freedom of Information requests.

The report stated that the Council had received a total of 1,420 requests during the period, 893 of which were under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act and 527 of which were under the related Environmental Information Regulations (Scotland). The full report was attached as an Appendix to the report.

Members noted the increased number of such requests and the subsequent impact that this had on Council resources in dealing with the increased number of requests.

The Cabinet noted the contents of the report.

CHAIR