

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

**Minute of Meeting held at 10am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock, on 28 February 2019.**

**Present:**

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

Provost Fletcher in the Chair

**Attending:**

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources); Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Graeme Smith, Communications Manager; Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; and Linda Hutchison, Senior Committee Services Officer.

**REQUEST TO RECORD PROCEEDINGS**

**795.** Provost Fletcher intimated that a request had been received to audio record the meeting. The request was approved.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**796.** Councillors Devlin, Grant, Merrick and O’Kane declared a non-financial interest in relation to Item 804 by virtue of the fact that they were members of the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust Board.

Provost Fletcher also reported that the Chief Executive would leave the meeting during consideration of Item 810 pertaining to her appointment as a member of the Board of a Scottish charity.

## **MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**797.** The Council, having heard Councillor Grant, considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 19 December 2018 subject to paragraph 4 of Item 744 (Page 675) being amended to reflect that general access to swimming times offered by the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust was limited due to the time allocated for swimming lessons.

## **MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES**

**798.** The Council considered and approved the Minutes of the meetings of the undernoted, except as otherwise referred to in Item 799 below:-

- (a) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 11 January 2019;
- (b) Planning Applications Committee – 16 January 2019;
- (c) Licensing Committee – 22 January 2019;
- (d) Cabinet – 24 January 2019;
- (e) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 24 January 2019;
- (f) Civic Hospitality Committee – 29 January 2019;
- (g) Education Committee – 31 January 2019;
- (h) Civic Hospital Committee – 6 February 2019;
- (i) Planning Applications Committee – 13 February 2019;
- (j) Local Review Body – 13 February 2019;
- (k) Cabinet – 14 February 2019;
- (l) Licensing Committee – 19 February 2019;
- (m) Cabinet (Police and Fire) – 21 February 2019; and
- (n) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 21 February 2019.

## **AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 11 JANUARY 2019 – WOODFARM EDUCATIONAL TRUST**

**799.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 11 January 2019 (Page 677, Item 749 refers), referring to the penultimate paragraph of the Minute, Councillor Wallace clarified that the comment he had made at the meeting was that the fact the committee meeting had taken place was a step forward, not the nature of the discussions that had taken place at it.

Regarding Paragraph 5 on Page 679 of the same Minute, Councillor Swift highlighted that at the meeting Provost Fletcher had accused those calling in the item of being anti-Muslim which had caused great offence. He also referred to correspondence he had received to the effect that this accusation was groundless.

In reply, Provost Fletcher commented that it was up to others to make their own judgement about what had transpired and that he had no wish to rerun the debate held at that meeting. Responding to a further comment just made by Councillor Swift, he also expressed the view that it was inappropriate for Councillor Swift to make a comment about him being a member of an alleged anti-Semitic party.

The Council agreed that the Minute be amended as proposed by Councillor Wallace and, otherwise, noted the comments made.

## TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

**800.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 21 February 2019 (Page 729, Item 792 refers), when it had been agreed to recommend to the Council that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2019 be approved, including the amended list of organisations for investment of surplus funds in accordance with Annex F to the report, and that the policy on the repayment of loans fund advances as specified in Section 3.4 of the report be approved, the Council considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer, reporting on the Treasury Management Strategy for the financial year 2019/20.

Councillor Miller clarified that in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee was responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the Strategy, including the approved list of investors and the policy on the repayment of loans fund advances. He reported that clarification on various issues had been provided, highlighted that the report set out the parameters within which the treasury function operated, and confirmed that related mid-year and annual reports would be submitted to the committee in due course.

In response to Councillor Lafferty who suggested that it would be useful to hear the Chief Auditor's views on the impact of Brexit on treasury management issues, Provost Fletcher confirmed that she was not attending the Council meeting but could be contacted outwith it. Councillor Miller also confirmed that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee had recently noted a report on withdrawal from the European Union (Page 734, Item 794 refers).

The Council agreed:-

- (a) that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2019/20 be approved, including the amended list of organisations for investment of surplus funds in accordance with Annex F to the report; and
- (b) to approve the policy on the repayment of loans fund advances as specified in Section 3.4 of the report.

## STATEMENTS BY CONVENERS/REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT BOARDS/COMMITTEES

**801.** The following statement was made:-

(a) **Integration Joint Board – Councillor Bamforth**

Councillor Bamforth reported that at the most recent Integration Joint Board (IJB) meeting on 30 January, the Board had received a presentation by the Chief Finance Officer on the budget implications of the Scottish Government draft budget announcement of 12 December 2018; and a subsequent letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work.

Councillor Bamforth also explained that the IJB had taken some time to consider the Audit Scotland Report on Progress on Health and Social Care Integration, the reference within it to six areas to be addressed if integration was to make a meaningful difference to Scottish people having been very helpful and the local implications of the IJB response to the recommendations having been discussed. It was confirmed that the next IJB meeting was scheduled to take place on 20 March 2019.

The Council noted the position.

## **PROVOST'S ENGAGEMENTS**

**802.** 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 previous meeting.

## **FINANCIAL PLANNING 2019-2025**

**803.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 2 March 2018 (Page 290, Item 324 refers), when the Outline Revenue Financial Plan 2018-24 had been approved, the Council considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer seeking approval of the updated Outline Revenue Financial Plan for 2019-25.

The report explained that in view of the significant financial and demand pressures facing the Council in the current and following five years, it was essential that its financial plans were updated regularly for consideration by the Council. This was in line with the Council's agreed financial policy of basing decisions on an assessment of medium to long-term needs and consequences.

The report confirmed that the revised Plan had taken account of the 2019/20 settlement, that significant budget pressures were expected to continue, that financial planning was extremely difficult in the present economic and political situation, that Brexit uncertainty further complicated matters, and that there was a need to plan for a range of scenarios. Having commented on the financial outlook, the report summarised the position on various demand pressures making reference to issues such as demographics, capital infrastructure, the City Deal and legislative change in addition to wider political, societal and economic change. Issues pertaining to the Outline Revenue Financial Plan and a range of mitigating actions open to the Council, such as through its Modern Ambitious Programme, partnership working, income generation and use of reserves were commented on.

Whilst referring to Scottish Government priorities, Councillor Swift commented on the predicted rise in the total number of households in East Renfrewshire to 47,649 by 2041, expressing the view that local infrastructure was inadequate and would be unable to cope. Having referred to a lack of local access to GPs experienced by a proportion of Newton Mearns residents, he sought confirmation on what the Council would do to ensure local infrastructure could adequately support the predicted level of housebuilding.

Having highlighted that the report focused on financial rather than infrastructure pressures, Provost Fletcher commented on the need to ensure that due consideration was given to infrastructure issues when planning applications were considered. Councillor Buchanan also highlighted the focus of the report under consideration; following which he acknowledged growth in the area and commented that the Council would endeavour to ensure that related local infrastructure was adequate.

Councillor Convery commended the Administration's approach to participatory budgeting, commenting on plans to extend this to two further locality areas in Neilston and Thornliebank. She emphasised that the funding was a lifeline locally and considered the Council's approach to be forward-thinking.

Whilst referring to funds recently allocated by the Council to help it cope with changes to the welfare system, Councillor Ireland highlighted an increase in residents seeking support of a financial nature, expressing concern that action had been required locally to counter UK government policy.

Referring to the terms of a recent report considered by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on Housing Benefit and related issues, Councillor Swift expressed the view that the Council was not adequately delivering the benefit to residents, and argued that the Council's performance relative to that of other local authorities needed to be addressed.

The Council:-

- (a) noted the continuing budget pressures anticipated in the next five years and the mitigating actions proposed; and
- (b) approved the Outline Revenue Financial Plan 2019-25.

### **EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL REVENUE ESTIMATES 2019/20**

**804.** The Council considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer relative to the proposed Revenue Estimates for 2019/20 of income and expenditure as the basis for the Council Tax declaration for 2019/20. A copy of the Revenue Estimates 2019-20 was appended to the report.

The report outlined the revenue budget process, commented on the Scottish Government's Grant Funding for 2019-20, and explained that in determining the grant distribution it had again put in place the "Floors" arrangement to ensure year-on-year grant stability at individual council level. Under this arrangement the Council would contribute £0.849m by way of deduction from Aggregate External Finance (AEF) grants in 2019/20, this having been reflected in the figures in the report.

Having commented on Non-Domestic Rates income, the report referred to the financial outlook and practice in recent years of setting multi-year budgets. Despite the Council's grant only having been confirmed for 2019/20, it was proposed to continue recent practice and agree budget plans for 2019/20 and an indicative budget for 2020/21 as part of the Council's good practice approach to longer-term financial planning.

It was explained that a total budget shortfall of £11.824m had been confirmed for 2019/20 which was higher than had been expected when the indicative budget had been estimated in March 2018, reasons for which were itemised. Taking account of savings of £9.332m for 2019/20 which had been agreed following consultation in March 2018, and the application of £0.606m of the current year underspend carry forward agreed in December 2018 to cover deferred savings, a budgetary shortfall of £1.886m remained. The report explained that the total shortfall that was expected to be closed over 2018-21 was £29.584m, and referred to further forecasted cash reductions in grant beyond 2019/20 which would result in ongoing shortfalls for the next five years that required to be managed. More specifically the forecast budget shortfall for 2020/21 was £12.930m, against which £7.036m savings had already been identified as set out in Annex A to the report.

The report explained that the Council was permitted to increase Council Tax by up to 4.79% in 2019/20, but that in budget plans prepared following public consultation in February 2018, a 3% increase had been included for each of the following three years. Consequently it was proposed that a 3% increase be agreed for both 2019/20 and 2020/21 to help the Council address the financial challenges it faced. The resulting income of £1.629m each year had been assumed in calculating the budget shortfall.

Having clarified that against the budget shortfall of £11.824m for 2019/20, £9.332m of savings agreed following the previous budget consultation remained available to reduce the shortfall, the report commented on related issues including savings that could be applied to

the IJB budget; a reduction in savings applied to the 2019/20 Culture and Leisure Trust budget to align it with that of the Council and support it for a further year; and the decision made to defer the implementation of the proposed Pupil Support Assistant (PSA) savings from April until August 2019. The extension of Trust support and the PSA savings deferral were covered by the agreed carry forward of the 2018/19 underspend, with full year savings to be available to support budget pressures from 2020/21 onwards.

In addition to the use of £1.6m of unallocated general reserve already agreed for 2019/20 and £1.5m agreed for 2020/21 on 2 March 2018, it was proposed that the £1.886m outstanding savings requirement be deferred in the short term in favour of using reserves. This would allow new, potential savings to be assessed and phased gradually to reduce the impact in services for as long as possible. Whilst commenting on ongoing budget monitoring and underspends sought in 2018/19 to replenish the general reserve, the report clarified that a forecast underspend of £0.455m for 2018/19 had been reported in January 2019 which could increase further. For 2020/21 unallocated savings of £5.894m remained to be identified, including the £1.886m deferred in 2019/20, with options to be identified by the Corporate Management Team (CMT). Almost £4.2m (67%) of the Council's current proposals for 2019/20 related to efficiencies or the Modern Ambitious Programme and the focus on the Council's five capabilities.

The report commented on the Revenue Estimates for 2019/20 and 2020/21 following which specific reference was made to the impact of welfare reform on Council services and related investment needed to support the change. Reference was also made to the assumed Council Tax collection rate for 2019/20 and reserves and balances issues, particularly the General, Modernisation, Insurance, Equalisation, and Repairs and Renewal Funds and Capital Reserve. Having referred to efficiency issues and the equality impact assessment carried out on budget saving measures, the report concluded by indicating that the Revenue Estimates appended to the report were based on a Band D Council Tax level of £1,230.41 being set for 2019/20, representing a 3% increase compared to 2018/19.

Councillor Buchanan highlighted that the Council continued to face significant financial pressures. Having referred to those linked to the area's growing elderly and younger populations and related demand on schools, nurseries and social care services, he commented not only on challenges ahead, but also plans to deliver major projects and improve frontline services that were valued by residents. He added that many of the Council's most ambitious plans would reach key milestones soon, with tenants moving into the first new council houses to be built locally in a generation; work starting on five new nurseries; and a new primary school admitting pupils. He also referred to a new commitment to spend £15m on local road improvements, this being a priority for local residents.

Before commenting further, Councillor Buchanan thanked his Administration colleagues, Accountancy staff and the CMT for their dedicated work preparing the budget, which he stated would deliver an ambitious capital investment programme and direct resources to those in most need. He also acknowledged the Council's Trade Union partners who had provided written and oral submissions on their members' concerns.

Councillor Buchanan explained that the final 2019/20 grant settlement from the Scottish Government of £179.6m was slightly better than expected when the Council had set a three year budget in March 2018 following public consultation. Having commented that the authority's longstanding approach to setting three-year budgets remained appropriate in terms of prudent, long term financial planning, he referred to the Scottish Government's intention to deliver multi-year settlements in future to assist with forward planning.

Councillor Buchanan reported that when the three-year budget had been approved in 2018, the Council had faced a challenging shortfall of £28.6m over that period, this having now

risen to £32.8m due to additional pressures such as from pay awards and increases in superannuation payments for teachers. Having thanked staff for their hard work delivering savings, he clarified that savings of £9.3m were available to assist with the 2019/20 budget but that, even after the planned use of reserves and increasing Council Tax, this would be insufficient to balance the 2019/20 budget. Councillor Buchanan recommended that the £1.9m shortfall be met from reserves generated from years of sound financial planning, confirming that no new savings would be required on top of those already agreed.

He also clarified that when the Council had set three-year savings proposals in 2018, the estimates had been based on increasing Council Tax by 3% in 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21, this having been supported by 61% of respondents to the budget consultation. Whist acknowledging the extra burden this placed on residents, he explained that otherwise major reductions in funding for services, including on schools and roads, would have been required. Councillor Buchanan recommended that despite there being flexibility to increase it by up to 4.79%, the 3% Council Tax increase be adhered to in 2019/20, which he argued reflected a prudent approach to long-term financial planning and a determination to deliver services efficiently. Having highlighted that local Council Tax rates remained below the Scottish average, he also confirmed that the Council had no plans to use new powers provided to local authorities to introduce either a workplace parking levy or tourist tax.

Councillor Buchanan referred to significant challenges ahead, highlighting that it was currently estimated that £12.9m savings were needed for 2020/21, £5.9m of which remained to be identified. Work had started to develop a robust plan to identify options to bridge the gap, allowing important decisions to be taken on service provision. Having highlighted the ongoing aim to increase efficiencies wherever possible and referred to savings from the streamlining of processes and use of digital technology, Councillor Buchanan stressed the commitment that existed to lessen the impact of savings on frontline services. He commented on the modernisation of computer systems and ongoing work on the Council's new website, confirming that in 2019/20 67% of required savings would come from efficiencies generated by the authority's modernisation and change programme. Over the three year budget, £9.6m worth of savings had already been identified through efficiencies.

Reference was made to the Council's commitment to improving local people's lives; continuing investment in the Culture and Leisure Trust and Health and Social Care Partnership, a planned reduction of £459k in the Trust's 2019/20 budget having mostly been delayed. Councillor Buchanan further clarified that a £39k reduction was to be taken in 2019/20, with a further reduction of £190k planned in 2020/21. Furthermore the HSCP's savings target had been reduced by £332k to help support those who were most vulnerable.

Councillor Buchanan stated that, to complement existing work and service improvements, the Council remained committed to significant investment in capital projects to improve its infrastructure, the aim being to spend £212m over the next 8 years on various ambitious developments to improve the lives of the most vulnerable and tackle issues that mattered most to local people. He referred to various capital projects including planned expenditure of £24m on new facilities including five new nurseries linked to a commitment to the Scottish Government's flagship policy to almost double free early learning and childcare provision by August 2020. Having outlined related advantages for parents and families, Councillor Buchanan confirmed these plans were on track and that over 100 families were already benefitting from the extra free provision.

Whilst making further comments, Councillor Buchanan referred to the new primary school under construction at Maidenhill; and plans to create a £30m learning and leisure campus in Neilston, subject to Scottish Government funding, to replace St Thomas's and Neilston Primary Schools and the Madras Family Centre, through which leisure, library and community facilities would be on one site. He confirmed that sector leading education work

would continue through investment in young people, referred to the Regional Education Collaborative through which best practice would be shared with other authorities, and commented on ongoing pioneering digital innovation and work to reduce the attainment gap.

Councillor Buchanan added that plans were also being developed to provide much improved leisure facilities for Eastwood residents as the upgrading of the current Leisure Centre was considered imperative. Having stated that the exact location remained to be decided, he highlighted related health and fitness benefits. He also commented on improvements to facilities at Crookfur and Overlee parks; and the Greenlaw Business Centre scheduled to open later in 2019 linked to the Glasgow City Region City Deal. Having confirmed that the City Deal would generate £44m of local investment in the years ahead, Councillor Buchanan referred to work that was starting on two other City Deal projects later in the year. The first was at Balgraystone Road, Barrhead to allow new homes to be built and improve access to a proposed new railway station and the country park, the second being the realignment of Aurs Road prior to the construction of the new Dams to Darnley Visitor Centre.

Having referred again to the first new Council houses to be built in East Renfrewshire in a generation, Councillor Buchanan clarified that this was the first phase of work to build 240 new houses in coming years, work having started at two other sites. He commented on the importance of improving the transport network to promote economic growth and the importance residents placed on well-maintained roads, announcing a total of £15m expenditure over the next five years to improve the local roads infrastructure and tackle a backlog of repairs. He also referred to £500k to be invested in improving the Council's CCTV systems to combat crime and anti-social behaviour, whilst highlighting that Police Scotland statistics revealed that East Renfrewshire had the lowest crime levels in mainland Scotland.

Councillor Buchanan commented on the Council's popular Community Choices programme which gave residents powers to decide where money would be spent locally, explaining that this was to be expanded. Having clarified that in 2018/19 people in Barrhead had decided which local groups should benefit from a share £100,000, he explained that in 2019/20 residents in Auchenback and Barrhead, Neilston and Thornliebank would also get a chance to vote on which good local causes should benefit from a share of a further £100k.

Councillor Buchanan explained that to achieve the best outcomes for older people and people with long-term conditions, there were plans for further expenditure in excess of £400k to transform facilities at Bonnyton House Care Home which would continue to offer 22 residential places and provide a 6 bed intensive rehabilitation unit but in addition to which a new 6 bed unit for end of life care would be created. He commented that the creation of this integrated centre of excellence highlighted the Council's commitment to those who were most frail. He reiterated that £332k worth of savings would no longer be applied to the HSCP and that a further £2m was to be invested to support it deliver a range of integrated services, including ensuring that staff employed by care providers received the Living Wage and delivering on Scottish Government commitments such as Frank's Law and the new Carers' Act. He considered such projects vital in terms of the Council's five outcomes and making people's lives better.

In conclusion, Councillor Buchanan reiterated that the Council continued to face significant financial challenges but that through various measures a budget could be delivered which tackled the savings gap, balanced the budget and protected frontline services. Having explained that when the three-year budget was set in 2018 the number of jobs in the Council was estimated to reduce by around 265 between 2018 and 2021, he highlighted that this would be offset to a large degree by the creation of more than 200 roles to support the ambitious plans to almost double free nursery care provision.



Councillor Buchanan reaffirmed a commitment to no compulsory redundancies in the coming year and highlighted that the ambition to deliver the very best for residents remained, referring to long planned projects which would start to be delivered and bring real change in the forthcoming 12 months. He added that further significant capital investment ahead would ensure East Renfrewshire remained a good place to live, work and visit. He reported that the Council would continue to push for increased budgets for councils and to look at new ways of achieving savings through efficiencies whilst protecting services. Councillor Buchanan expressed the view that the budget presented would protect important frontline services, highlighting the ambitious future investment planned to improve the lives of those living in East Renfrewshire. He moved that the Council:-

- (a) approve the 2019/20 revenue estimates;
- (b) approve the indicative revenue estimates for 2020/21;
- (c) approve the recommended level and utilisation of reserves;
- (d) determine the 2019/20 Council Tax Band D level at £1,230.41; and
- (e) note that management of the Council's finances and service plans would continue to be undertaken on a longer-term basis.

Seconding the motion, Councillor O'Kane commented that the Administration had worked hard to deliver a budget that provided long-term financial stability and protected frontline services, adding that everyone wanted better and longer settlements. He highlighted that the budget formed part of a local three year financial plan on which consultation with communities had taken place and which sought to remove or reshape the most challenging savings. Councillor O'Kane also referred to difficult decisions which required to be made, and the focus that had remained on securing services that mattered most to communities whilst delivering for vulnerable residents and protecting jobs.

Whilst highlighting that education remained one of the Council's greatest successes with local schools amongst the top performing in Scotland, Councillor O'Kane welcomed that so many ambitious capital projects focussed on early years and learning for young people to build on that success, citing the examples of the new nurseries to be constructed, the new primary school at Maidenhill and the learning campus and leisure provision in Neilston which were amongst projects on which expenditure of £212m would be spent during the next 8 years. He expressed confidence that Elected Members would support the additional £15m expenditure on road infrastructure improvements and repairs, highlighting that the Council was already ranked second in Scotland for maintaining A-class roads and spending 46% more than the Scottish average on road maintenance per kilometre.

Councillor O'Kane expressed the view that the Council was investing wisely for the future in the services that mattered most to residents, referring to the budget as one which balanced the budget, protected services and demonstrated an ambitious programme of investment. He expressed hope that all Elected Members would share that ambition and work to create an area with first class early learning and school facilities, high quality health care and leisure opportunities fit for the 21st Century as people expected, this being a challenge to which the Council needed to rise.

Thereafter, Councillor Miller, seconded by Councillor Swift, moved as an amendment that the Estimates be approved, subject to the details as set out in Appendix 1 accompanying this Minute.

Councillor Miller complimented Finance officers for their hard work after the Scottish budget had been announced initially, thanking the Chief Executive, Head of Accountancy and Director of Environment also for their discussions with him and advice.

Councillor Miller commented that the report under consideration referred to the likelihood of the future financial position remaining difficult and to financial pressures, stating that this need not be the case. Having referred to comments made on alleged Conservative spending cuts, he reported that the independent Scottish Parliament Information Centre's view was that there had been a real-terms increase in funding from Westminster to the Scottish Government for 2019/20, querying what had happened to the increase and expressing concern regarding the SNP's budget settlement for local authorities. He speculated that the Scottish Government, supported by the Green Party, might have saved funds for future projects of their choice or a second independence referendum, expressing the view that support for the latter was declining locally and querying why councils had not therefore been given funding they deserved. Whilst referring to and questioning comments made by the Finance Minister about councils receiving more funds than previously, Councillor Miller commented that what the Minister had failed to confirm was that there were additional burdens attached to the settlement, the local position being a like for like cash reduction of 1.6% or £2.9m. He stressed that the effect of the additional burdens exacerbated the situation requiring a further £5.5m to be found by the Council, referred to the budget as an austerity one, emphasised that the cuts were directly from Holyrood, and expressed the view that right-minded residents would see the position for what it was.

Whilst welcoming the proposal to limit the local Council Tax increase to 3%, Councillor Miller questioned if the permissible increase of 4.79% would be a vote winner. Having criticised the Scottish Government's unwelcome car parking levy which he acknowledged it was not proposed to introduce locally, he suggested that if this was ever considered it should be applied to Elected Members and the CMT first, commenting on the likely displacement of cars to local streets. He suggested that the Council could also learn lessons from a situation in Clarkston when a fire engine had been unable to access a fire site due to an irresponsibly parked car, thanking Councillor Merrick for facilitating a related meeting with residents and expressing hope that a solution could be found. Having criticised the closure of the Glasgow to East Kilbride road resulting in buses and lorries being diverted through residential streets to enable parklets to be created in Busby Road, he expressed the view that the Administration was continuing to hound motorists with prohibitive parking restrictions which only drove parked cars into residential streets and deprived local shops of business.

Councillor Miller questioned the Leader's view that the Administration was protecting frontline services, suggesting that Pupil Support Assistants would take a different view. Having depicted the proposed Conservative budget amendments as constructive and uncontroversial, he stated that he made no apology for returning to past items such as energy savings and finding additional income from advertising on council vehicles, adding that he had been advised that the property and procurement savings were achievable.

Whilst referring to previous losses at Bonnyton House, Councillor Miller reported that the main reason for this had ultimately been found to be linked to the ongoing uncertainty regarding its future, referring to the impact on attracting employees and need to employ agency staff. He argued that if the Opposition had not opposed the closure of the facility, the Council would not have been able to propose its expansion. Whilst acknowledging that some agency staff would always be needed to cover absence, he suggested that a nominal 10% saving in both agency staff and overtime costs was achievable, especially as absence rates were improving in respect of which he acknowledged progress in general.

Councillor Miller referred to efforts made by the CMT and their teams to underspend budgets. He congratulated them on this, but referred also to related criticism within the

Council's Best Value Assurance Report about this occurring annually. Referring to the £1.5m underspend for 2018/19 of which the Administration was proposing to use £826k, he proposed that a continuing underspend of £500k be budgeted for.

Councillor Miller referred to the funding of both the money advice and citizen's advice services. Whilst commending both, he stated that there was understood to be an overlap on advice provided, proposing a nominal 10% cut in their funding for one year only, which took account of the fact that Universal Credit would not be fully rolled out locally until 2022.

Thereafter he highlighted that two years ago the Council had reduced the price of wraparound care for younger children which he had welcomed, but expressed the view that to half it had been foolhardy. Whilst commenting on concerns and anxieties amongst residents regarding where new nurseries would be sited, he highlighted that the legislation governing this did not specify that the public sector had to make all the provision available. Having reported that some parents had moved their children from private nurseries to Council-run facilities, he referred to the risk of private nurseries and childminders being put out of business and of the Council having to meet the provision shortfall by building on land, very little of which was available, whilst also lacking financial resources to do so. He suggested that a rise of only 50p per hour for wraparound care from August 2019 onwards might support the continuation of a multi-use nursery sector to benefit young people.

Councillor Miller expressed surprise, but welcomed, the Administration's proposal to take on board the Conservative's Group's advice and commit £15m to roads expenditure to help address concerns raised repeatedly by residents and various Elected Members past and present about the poor condition of local roads. Having expressed confidence that improvements to roads could be made by the Roads Service subject to resources for this being made available, referring to comments made by Councillor Bamforth in 2018, he expressed hope that she would now appreciate the need for the proposed investment.

Regarding the use to be made of the savings he had recommended, taking account that expenditure on roads was being proposed, Councillor Miller proposed that the Council Tax increase be limited to 2% to the benefit of all households. This would account for £540k of the savings. Whilst expressing the view that the Administration's proposal to use £2m of reserves was not prudent given financial challenges ahead and expressing concern that reserves could fall below the 2% threshold next year, he stressed that this approach was inappropriate, especially given proposals to build various new facilities including a leisure centre and new schools and nurseries almost doubling the level of debt. Having added that related costs would need to be met by future generations, he proposed adding almost £1m to reserves to help meet the costs of future capital projects or further austerity cuts.

Councillor Miller reiterated his concerns regarding the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work's approach as supported by the Green Party, asserting that they had not looked after local government as they had indicated they would. He also expressed concern regarding the plans being made to proceed with many capital projects, related borrowing and mounting debt. He emphasised that the Council could not keep borrowing more and using reserves, commenting that a time would come when it would have to live within its means.

Seconding the amendment, Councillor Swift also thanked the Head of Accountancy and her team for the time and effort they had expended over a short time to try to adjust the financial figures to ensure that a clear picture was provided.

Agreeing with the Leader, Councillor Swift commented that there was no escape from the Scottish Government's woefully inadequate settlement. However he disagreed with the Leader's optimistic view that there would be no service reductions over the three year

budget timeframe because the 2020/21 budget deficit would not be £1.9m but rather almost £4m which made service cuts likely. Echoing Councillor Miller's views, he commented that the Scottish Government had received an extra £1b since 2010. Whilst commenting on its increased settlement for the current year, he compared local government to a hungry orphan seeking a meagre handout while the SNP spent resources on other issues. He stated that they grandstanded on an international stage, spending millions on various issues such as duplicating the functions of British Embassies abroad; on baby boxes without requiring parents to do something worthwhile, such as attending parenting classes in return, as in Finland; and on a Scottish welfare system that cost more to run than it disbursed. He expressed the view that politics concerned choices and that the SNP Government had too often chosen poorly.

Citing highlights from the proposed budget amendments, he reported that the use of agency staff had been singled out by Audit Scotland as a contributory factor in long delays in paying Housing Benefit on which he had commented before. He added that Labour and the SNP supported Universal Credit, which was still not in place, to cover their inadequacies in an area they were in charge of and could control. Referring to the proposed 10% reduction in the use of agency staff, he expressed the view that this would be helped by the better salary settlement for staff in the current year. He supported increasing the charge for wraparound care to help the Council better manage the total childcare market. Whilst commenting on the extent of a previous reduction in the rate charged by the Council to £2.60, he stated that notification had been received that some private nurseries, were in danger of closing as a result of the Council destabilising the market to the extent it had. He argued that a modest increase of 50p per hour proposed in the amendment would bring stability and hopefully reduce migration to council funded public sector provision.

Councillor Swift welcomed not only the Administration's proposed investment in roads which the Opposition had requested for many years, but also many other elements of the budget proposals. He referred to the state of many local roads and related damage caused to vehicles and thanked the Administration for the additional expenditure proposed, adding that in future it should reduce expenditure required for pothole repairs. Having commented that merging MART and CAB would be efficient, Councillor Swift suggested that this would result in savings and help the public seek advice from a single place.

Having referred to annual underestimates of Council Tax collection rates and under-expenditure of budgets, Councillor Swift commented that this year the Council would spend £1.5m less than forecast, arguing that putting aside a modest proportion of that budget more accurately represented the actual state of affairs in the Council's Accounts.

Councillor Swift also welcomed that the previously planned reduction in the HSCP budget had been withdrawn, commenting on the number of very old and young living in East Renfrewshire who were primary recipients of the budget. He highlighted that the proportion on funds allocated to the HSCP as a share of the overall budget was the lowest in Scotland already and that the proposed cut had been higher in proportional terms than for any other part of the Council. He added that had the Conservative campaign to retain Bonnyton House not been successful, it would not have been possible to increase the number of palliative care beds or improve service provision there for which the Administration was now taking credit.

In conclusion, he highlighted that the amendment prudently proposed using lower level of reserves, especially as it remained unknown what other projects the Scottish Government might find which could result in local authorities being underfunded. He reiterated that much of the Administration's budget was really positive, but that it was important to be mindful that funds were being taken from residents' pockets. He supported a reduction in the increase of Council Tax because it was prudent and affordable to do so by taking care of other peoples' funds.

Challenging Councillor Buchanan's and Councillor O'Kane's comments on protecting frontline services, Councillor Aitken highlighted the proposed saving of £138k over the next two years associated with the instrumental music redesign service, arguing that this would cut the school music instructors' service, result in real life consequences and impact on frontline services. Referring to comments he had made in 2018, Councillor Aitken referred to the service as a jewel in the crown and one of the Council's greatest assets, quoting comments made by representatives of the National Youth Orchestra about the high representation of pupils in that orchestra from the local area relative to the size of East Renfrewshire and how the Council compared well to and competed well with the private sector. Whist commenting on the threat associated with the saving, he stated that it would hit those from the poorest households hardest, contrasting costs charged to parents locally for the service with the approach of Renfrewshire and Glasgow City Councils which meant that East Renfrewshire was not competing on an even playing field. Thereafter Councillor Aitken moved a second amendment that the cut be cancelled with immediate effect in favour of cuts instead to the corporate communications budget, community engagement team and community warden service.

Seconding the amendment, Councillor Macdonald referred to the importance of the music service and of the authority continuing to offer opportunities for young people to take up a musical instrument irrespective of their background circumstances.

Thereafter a full discussion on the proposals took place.

Councillor Merrick stated that Councillor Aitken misunderstood how the music service operated, clarifying that the savings were associated with management positions and did not impact on the range or quality of tuition offered. Commending the service, he explained that tuition was provided free in some circumstances, and that charges had not increased for 3 years. More generally, regarding the Conservative Group's amendment, Councillor Merrick referred to the criticisms directed towards the SNP Government, but suggested that the real reason why local residents were facing pressures was Brexit, which had come about due to an internal Conservative Party dispute. He considered the budget prudent in the current circumstances.

Councillor Merrick further highlighted that East Renfrewshire remained the safest place to live and work in Scotland, this being the view of the Police and residents, but added that additional CCTV cameras would help address community safety concerns. Having welcomed the proposed roads expenditure, on a further roads issue he thanked Councillor Miller for attending the meeting he had organised on the issue that had arisen in Clarkston due to a single parked car when a fire had broken out in a local property, setting the problem with this car in the context of the high total number of cars across Scotland.

Having commended the budget, regarding wraparound care, Councillor Merrick highlighted that the Council was working in partnership with private sector providers subject to them working to the required standard, asserting that increasing the cost of the Council's service would impact most on hard working families.

Commenting on Councillor Aitken's proposals, Councillor Convery questioned the lack of detail around the levels of cuts on other services instead of the music service.

Whilst referring to the shortage of financial resources, Councillor Grant highlighted that those living in Scotland paid more income tax than elsewhere, which the Council should keep in mind. In reply, Councillor Bamforth highlighted that many families paying increased tax in Scotland benefitted from free university tuition, prescriptions and nursery care. Having commended the budget, she emphasised that austerity had not ended, adding that taxes paid in Scotland should be returned here.

Whilst commenting on support for the vulnerable, Councillor Bamforth referred to issues relating to Universal Credit, adding that a useful presentation on this had been made to Elected Members. She welcomed developments at Bonnyton House, commenting that Councillor Swift had proposed closing it in 2012. Referring to capital expenditure more generally, she highlighted information in the Treasury Management Strategy report which reflected a level of under-borrowing by the Council in future. She also referred to EU funds which were not passed on by the UK Government to farmers, highlighting that this financial resource was not the only one not passed on.

Councillor Lafferty referred to various historical references made, particularly regarding Bonnyton House, echoing Councillor Bamforth's comments about Councillor Swift proposing its closure in 2012. Referring to difficulties regarding the property in 2017, he commended the HSCP Chief Officer and Councillor Bamforth who had worked in partnership with NHSGCC to find a solution to preserve the property, particularly given the closure of the facility at Mearnskirck. He welcomed further investment in Bonnyton House, and commended the care provided there and speed at which Care Commission recommendations had been implemented.

Having highlighted the need to make a difference to local people and action taken to seek and spend funds in East Renfrewshire, Councillor Lafferty referred to the high standard of local education provision which provided choice for parents, referring to how the Council's services compared to others such as those offered by the private sector. Regarding community safety, he highlighted pioneering work done locally through the use of CCTV and the community warden service, stressing the difference these services, which had been developed in partnership with Police Scotland, had made.

Having referred to good health and care services provided locally and made specific reference to the facilities offered by the Heath and Care facilities in Eastwood and Barrhead, Councillor Lafferty welcomed the proposed investment in roads to improve them which would be welcomed. Finally, prior to commending the budget, he commented that whatever the outcome of Brexit there would be an impact on Gross Domestic Product.

Summing up, Councillor Buchanan responded to the terms of the Conservative Group's amendment in the course of which he referred to the reduction of funds of £340m given to the Scottish Government by the UK Government. Regarding teachers' superannuation, he highlighted that the Treasury was now indicating it would only meet 80% of the associated costs, leaving the balance of £600k to be found locally. Referring to 4.79% Council Tax increases announced by various Conservative councils and reductions in frontline services, he commented that austerity was continuing, the root cause being Conservative policy.

Councillor Buchanan stated that some of the Conservative Group amendments had been presented as quite innocuous, but referred to the real impact the savings suggested would have on both the money advice and citizens' advice service and those who relied upon them in the face of austerity. Regarding the proposed increase in wraparound care costs, he considered the impact of the Conservative Group proposal to be appalling.

Turning to the proposed reductions in overtime and agency staff costs, he emphasised that use of both was to support staff, suggesting that the reductions would again impact on officers who were working hard to deliver frontline services for the most vulnerable. Having added that he did not support additional funds being placed in reserves instead of using them to deliver important frontline services, he highlighted that being taken to the brink of Brexit was likely to make the situation worse. He clarified that the savings made in the music instrumental service had been discussed in depth, emphasising that they would not impact on the number of children receiving tuition or the services they received which were well-

received authority-wide, and referring to discussions with teachers and others on the service. Councillor Buchanan argued that the Administration's budget supported not denigrated frontline services required by local residents, commending it to the Council.

On a vote being taken between the motion and the first amendment, 10 Members voted for the motion and 6 Members voted for the amendment. The motion was accordingly declared carried.

Thereafter on a further vote being taken between the motion and the second amendment, 10 Members voted for the motion and 6 Members voted for the amendment.

The motion was accordingly declared carried and it was agreed to:-

- (a) approve the 2019/20 revenue estimates;
- (b) approve the indicative revenue estimates for 2020/21;
- (c) approve the recommended level and utilisation of reserves;
- (d) determine the 2019/20 Council Tax Band D level at £1,230.41; and
- (e) note that management of the Council's finances and service plans would continue to be undertaken on a longer term basis.

## **CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

**805.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 2 March 2018 (Page 229, Item 326 refers) when an update to the Capital Investment Strategy had been approved, the Council considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer seeking approval of a new Capital Investment Strategy.

Taken together with the Treasury Management Strategy report, it provided background information on the scale, objectives, affordability and risks associated with the Council's capital plans. A copy of the revised Strategy, which all councils required to prepare, was appended to the report specifying the long-term capital ambitions of the Council and associated resource implications and risks, having been compiled with regard to these requirements. The proposed Strategy was more extensive than that approved in 2018, and had been developed with regard to the Prudential Code 2017 and Treasury Management Code of Practice 2017.

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

The Council approved the updated Capital Investment Strategy.

**GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PLAN 2019/20 – 2026-27**

**806.** The Council considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer, seeking approval of the General Fund Capital Plan covering the eight years from 2019/20 to 2026/27. A copy of the Plan, prepared in line with the approach within the Capital Investment Strategy, accompanied the report.

Having highlighted that a number of issues relating to the Plan had already been commented on earlier in the meeting, Councillor Buchanan explained that the plan set out the wide range of priority projects which would make a major contribution to the Council's strategic objectives. He clarified that over £212m would be invested in the Council's capital projects over the next 8 years, bringing a major boost to the local economy in difficult times and providing new primary and nursery facilities as well as £15m investment in local roads.

Speaking in support of the proposed plan, Councillor O'Kane referred to various issues including the ambitious nature of the Plan, the importance of investment in vibrant modern infrastructure, related revenue savings when older buildings did not require to be maintained, and the importance of investment in 21 Century buildings.

Councillor Swift also commented on the ambitious nature of the programme, adding that it sat in the context of a relatively flat revenue budget and capital contribution from the Scottish Government. He expressed the view that without increasing Council Tax over time it would be hard to fund the Programme, suggesting that many would consider it over-leveraged.

Councillor Aitken referred to the revenue cost implications of the Plan and its overall scale, expressing related concerns regarding the commitments being made. Having acknowledged that additional capital grant would be provided to assist with school building projects, he highlighted that projects such as the proposed Leisure Centre would however need to be fully funded in the context of further real-terms reductions in funding which were anticipated. Councillor Aitken questioned progressing as proposed referring to the affordability of the Plan, considered the proposed approach to be reckless, and commented on future shortfalls anticipated in terms of revenue funding at a time when demand for frontline services, such as for elderly clients, were due to increase. He added that serious financial problems for the future would be created.

Councillor Lafferty confirmed that the Administration was committed to investing in the future for public benefit. He referred to the way in which some countries, such as Finland, invested in facilities using tax, commending the model. Thereafter Councillor Ireland referred to the long-term nature of the Capital Plan, commending projects it was proposed to progress over time and thanking her Administration colleagues for the approach taken.

Councillor O'Kane acknowledged the need to repay loans using revenue funds, but highlighted that the authority had a range of ageing properties which were a long-term drain on financial resources. He referred to the benefits of co-locating services in buildings, having good community spaces within properties, and the related economic impact. He added that the Council was a low borrowing authority and, whilst commenting on related financial issues, highlighted that it was currently able to take advantage of low interest rates for borrowing. Challenging Councillor Aitken's comments on recklessness, he referred to the fiduciary responsibility that existed to make prudent decisions and related advice available and provided to ensure decisions were made on that basis.

Supporting Councillor O'Kane, Councillor Buchanan commented that the proposed investment would result also in savings and represented investment in people and the future, supporting the delivery of services from facilities that were fit for purpose.



The Council:-

- (a) approved the Programme for 2019/20 and authorised officers to progress the projects contained therein; and
- (b) agreed to revise the Plan during the year in the light of updated information relating to funding for school building condition improvements and the Council's decision on the Eastwood Leisure Centre.

## **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2019/20**

**807.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 2 March 2018 (Page 301, Item 328 refers) when the Council had approved a 3.9% rent increase with effect from April 2018 and that a further increase of 3.9% be applied in April 2019, the Council considered a report by the Director of Environment, seeking approval of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2019/20.

The report clarified that there was no requirement to approve a rent increase for 2019/20, this having already been approved in March 2018, but that the proposed HRA budget for the year ahead remained to be approved. The report explained that a key legislative challenge for the Council in recent years had been meeting and maintaining the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) in addition to which sustainability improvements to the energy efficiency rating of its housing stock under the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) were required by 2020 following which these would need to be maintained. These challenges were in addition to addressing routine requirements. Having commented on considerable service improvements in recent years but also related challenges such as in relation to Universal Credit, the report made reference to new homes being built by the Council for local residents the first of which would be occupied shortly.

The report clarified that the rent increase for 2019/20 would provide additional income of £360k, commenting on a range of related issues including staffing, sub-contracting matters, loan charges, modernisation and estate investment. It was explained that to deliver improvements an additional £200k from HRA resources would be added to the Mixed Tenure Scheme (MTS). It was also explained that the Housing Service was currently undertaking a full service review.

Having heard Councillor Devlin and Councillor Lafferty in support of the recommendations, Councillor Wallace welcomed progress on some issues, but expressed concern regarding inefficiencies in the reletting of properties. He also commented on the total revenue to be raised through the rent increases in 2018/19 and 2019/20 on which he intended to seek further clarification following the meeting; the MTS in respect of which he welcomed the allocation of an additional £200k; and the allocation of funds in 2019/20 to make various external improvements to properties. Whilst welcoming the construction of new homes by the authority which the Opposition had supported and considered commendable, Councillor Wallace expressed concern regarding the perceived slow construction rate, highlighting that the Opposition supported this being driven forward.

Councillor Swift commented in similar terms also welcoming the reduction reported in rent arrears and timescales for making non-emergency repairs, but also expressing the view that it was not fully clear why the construction rate for new homes was not faster than it was. He also requested clarification on the pursuit of rent harmonisation which no longer seemed to be pursued but had been considered important at one point.

Having heard Councillor Ireland welcome developments on rent arrears and repairs and comment on the impact that Universal Credit could have on rent arrears, Councillor Devlin confirmed that the issue of rent harmonisation had been under consideration for a number of years.

The Council agreed to approve the proposed Housing Revenue Account budget for 2019/20.

### **HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2019/20 – 2023/24**

**808.** The Council considered a report by the Director of Environment, seeking approval of the proposed 5-year Housing Capital Programme from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

The report clarified the position on various issues, including how the capital programme had recently been dominated by the need to invest to meet the Scottish Quality Housing Standard (SHQS); and the need to meet the first Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH1) by 2020/21. Potential exemptions regarding the latter were referred to. Having clarified that the Scottish Government was introducing further energy efficiency targets for social housing to be achieved by 2025 (ESSH2) and commented on related investment requirements, the report explained that funds had been carried forward to the 2019/20 programme linked to some project delays in 2018/19 and that the possibility existed of some further delay in 2018/19 and additional carry forward. Pressures placed on the HRA capital programme was amongst other issues highlighted.

The report provided details of the key areas that the Capital Programme would focus on for the next 5 years, which included investment of more than £4.5m in central heating; of nearly £2m in electrical works primarily house re-wiring and the upgrading of smoke detectors; and of more than £10m in external structural projects primarily targeted at continuing the Council's programme of roof and render renewal. Other projects itemised included investment of £4.8m in installing new internal elements such as kitchens, bathrooms, windows and doors; £1.5m in sheltered housing; and £12.92m to complete the first phase of the new-build council housing programme which would be complemented by ongoing investment on phase 2 in 2020/21 and beyond.

The report commented on a range of further matters including how the programme was financed, related issues and monitoring arrangements, concluding that the high levels of investment within the programme were essential to allow the Council to continue to meet the SHQS, to meet future ESSH requirements, and to provide homes that would address the needs and aspirations of current and prospective tenants. It was emphasised that although continued investment was affordable and would be welcomed by tenants, resources were tight and prudent financial management was required.

Councillor Wallace commented on programme slippage during both 2017/18 and 2018/19, clarifying, supported by Councillor Swift, that the Opposition supported work being driven forward on the construction of new homes. In response to Councillor Swift who asked if there was anything the Council could do to help Housing Associations build houses given progress was slower than anticipated, Councillor Devlin expressed the view that the vast majority of tenants preferred their landlord to be the local authority.

The Council:-

- (a) approved the proposed 2019/20 to 2023/24 Housing Capital Programme; and

- (b) authorised the Director of Environment to progress the projects contained within the 2019/20 programme, and to commence preparations for future years up to, but not including, legal commitment of resources until future budgets had been approved.

## **SCHEME OF MEMBERS' REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES**

**809.** The Council considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive on the Scheme of Members' Remuneration and Expenses for 2019/20. A copy of the Scheme was appended to the report.

The report explained that the Scheme provided details of the levels of basic salary payable to all councillors, and the increased salaries paid to the Leader and the Civic Head (Provost), these amounts being prescribed in legislation. The Scheme also provided details of those positions in the Council that had been identified as Senior Councillor positions for the purpose of the regulations, and the levels of salary to be paid to each postholder. In addition, the Scheme provided details of those other categories in respect of which Elected Members were entitled to claim expenses, such as the performance of approved duties, travelling expenses, and subsistence allowances.

Councillor Macdonald, seconded by Councillor Aitken, moved that the Scheme of Members' Remuneration and Expenses for 2019/20 be approved, but on the understanding that the collective additional funds of £9,480 were not accepted by Elected Members but used towards a fund set up to facilitate the return of Armed Forces Fun Day for one day during the Summer of 2019.

Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Councillor Miller, moved as an amendment that the Scheme of Members' Remuneration and Expenses for 2019/20 be approved. He commented that it was for Elected Members to decide if they wished to accept the increase in their salary as had always been the case.

Having heard Councillor Devlin comment on travelling expenses issues, Councillor Swift expressed the view that Councillor Macdonald's proposal could have been accommodated within the revenue budget had he proposed this Motion when that was being considered, criticising it being raised now.

Councillor Bamforth highlighted that this issue had been discussed at a previous Council meeting and that the Armed Forces Day flag raising still took place. She added that the Armed Forces supported the Council's approach given problems they had resourcing their contribution to the Fun Day, and considered more valuable the Council supporting the welfare post established to support armed services personnel, this being a post jointly funded by East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Councils.

Councillor Wallace considered it unfortunate that the important issue of support for the armed forces was being politicised by an Elected Member when nothing could be further from the truth and it being linked to the subject of the report under consideration in the way it had been.

Councillor Macdonald clarified that he was not raising the issue as a political one. He explained that his motivation was linked to give something back collectively to the community which the Council served. He considered the Armed Forces participation in the event immaterial as the event was hugely enjoyed locally and enhanced the local area.

Thereafter on a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the motion and 15 Members voted for the amendment. The Amendment was accordingly declared carried and the Council agreed to approve the Scheme of Members' Remuneration and Expenses for 2019/20 18.

### **Resolution to Exclude Press and Public**

At this point in the meeting, on the motion of the Provost, the Council 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 undernoted items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

### **Sederunt**

**Councillors Aitken and Macdonald and the Chief Executive left the meeting at this point.**

### **CHIEF EXECUTIVE - APPOINTMENT AS NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SCOTTISH CHARITY**

**810.** The Council considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive recommending that approval be granted to the Chief Executive to allow her to pursue an appointment as a non-executive Director of a Scottish charity.

The report referred to the charity concerned, confirmed that the role was unpaid, and clarified that the associated time commitment would be met by using personal time and Time Off in Lieu. It was explained that the appointment had not yet been made public as approval by the Council was required, this being the reason for the issue being kept confidential for the time being. The Chief Officer Legal and Procurement has been consulted and had confirmed that the role would not be in conflict with the politically restricted role of Chief Executive or the role of Returning Officer.

In response to Councillor Wallace who sought further clarification on potential conflict of interest issues in light of the mission of the body concerned, Councillor Fletcher, supported by Councillor O'Kane, referred to the option to declare an interest in any issue should the need arise. Councillor O'Kane clarified why he considered this unlikely to be an issue, referring to the collaborative approach of bodies such as the one concerned.

The Council, having heard Councillor Buchanan and Depute Provost Cunningham in support of the proposal and the opportunity it presented, consented to the Chief Executive accepting the appointment.

PROVOST

## CONSERVATIVE AMENDMENT PROPOSALS 2019/20

**Savings**

Procurement Savings ( <i>Environment Department</i> )	£250,000
Advertising Commercialisation ( <i>Environment Department</i> )	£100,000
Property Strategy ( <i>Environment Department</i> )	£100,000
Energy Savings ( <i>Environment and Education Departments</i> )	£100,000
10% Reduction in Agency Staff ( <i>All Departments</i> )	£100,000
10% Reduction in Overtime ( <i>All Departments</i> )	£ 85,000
MART/CAB ( <i>Corporate and Community Services Department</i> )	£115,000
Continuing Underspend ( <i>All Departments</i> )	£500,000
Wraparound Income from 1 August 2019 ( <i>Education Department</i> )	£ 97,000
<b><u>Total Budget Savings</u></b>	<b>£1,447,000</b>
2% Increase in Council Tax	£540,000
Additional Sum Returned to Reserves	£907,000

