

MINUTE
of
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting held at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock, on 30 October 2019.

Present:

Provost Jim Fletcher	Councillor Annette Ireland
Councillor Paul Aitken	Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Councillor David Macdonald
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Danny Devlin	Councillor Stewart Miller
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Councillor Paul O’Kane
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; Julie Murray, Chief Officer – Health and Social Care Partnership; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Kate Rocks, Chief Social Work Officer; Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; and Ron Leitch, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Deputy Provost Betty Cunningham, Councillors Angela Convery, Jim McLean, and Jim Swift.

REQUEST TO RECORD PROCEEDINGS

1071. Provost Fletcher intimated that a request had been received to audio record the meeting.

Referring to the regular receipt of such requests, Provost Fletcher proposed that permission be given to audio record all future meetings of the full Council.

The Council:-

- (a) approved the request to audio record the meeting; and
- (b) agreed that audio recording of all future meetings of the full Council be permitted.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1072. There were no declarations of interest intimated

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

1073. The Council considered and approved the Minutes of the meetings held on 11 and 26 September 2019.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES

1074. The Council considered and approved the Minutes of the meetings of the undernoted, except as otherwise referred to in Item 1075 below:-

- (a) Cabinet – 12 September 2019;
- (b) Cabinet (Police & Fire) – 19 September 2019;
- (c) Audit & Scrutiny Committee – 26 September 2019;
- (d) Local Review Body – 2 October 2019;
- (e) Education Committee – 3 October 2019;
- (f) Licensing Committee – 15 October 2019; and
- (g) Cabinet – 24 October 2019.

CABINET – 24 OCTOBER 2019 – HOUSING SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19 AND ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT (SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER)

1075. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of 24 October 2019 (Page 986, Item 1067 refers) Councillor Wallace questioned why the average time to re-let properties in East Renfrewshire was 42 days compared to the Scottish average of 32 days. In response, Councillor Devlin, Convener for Housing and Maintenance Services, explained that he had discussed this matter with the Director of Environment and Head of Environment (Strategic Services). He explained that there had been a high turnover of voids recently but action had been taken that should reduce the turnaround time to under 31 days within the following few months.

Councillor Buchanan explained that the matter had been discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet when it had been reported that there had been an issue with staffing available to prepare void properties for occupation. Given the high standards set by the Council and the need to ensure that properties were fully fit for occupation, both of which had to be factored in, the time taken had extended beyond the national average figure. However, the department was working to redress the situation and to ensure that void properties were made fit for occupation as quickly as possible.

The Council noted the information.

STATEMENTS BY CONVENER/REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT BOARDS/ COMMITTEES

1076. The following statements were made:-

(a) **Councillor O’Kane – Mearns Primary School Fire**

Councillor O’Kane extended his thanks and those of all Elected Members to Council services and external partners who had reacted to the fire at Mearns Primary School on Monday 21 October. Quick work by the fire service and police had ensured that the fire had not spread further and caused greater damage with the impact that would have had on the school community.

He went on to commend the work carried out by Council services including Education, Environment and Facilities Management, as well as by the school’s facilities management external partner Bellrock, to ensure that the school was able to reopen the following day with the nursery class following on Wednesday 23 October. He thanked the Head Teacher at the school for her calm manner and for keeping the school community informed about the situation, and also thanked the Head Teacher of Maidenhill Primary School for hosting the staff of Mearns Primary during their In Service day on the day of the fire.

He concluded by reporting that he had spoken to the parent of a pupil at Mearns Primary School who told him that her daughter had visited Clarkston Community Fire Station to present firefighters with a card and sweets “*for saving my school*”.

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

Councillor Bamforth referred to business considered at the most recent meeting of the Health and Social Care Partnership Integration Joint Board (IJB) at which the main focus had been a series of annual governance reports for scrutiny by the Board. The Audited Annual Accounts had been approved and the Board had been pleased to note that these had been unqualified and demonstrated sound financial governance. Copies were available via the IJB papers or from the IJB Chief Finance Officer.

The Chief Social Work Officer had shared with the Board her annual report to the Council. The report was to be considered by the Council later in the meeting at which time Elected Members would have the opportunity for full scrutiny of social work activity over the past year. The HSCP Annual Clinical and Care Governance report which reflected the progress made in improving the quality of clinical care had also been considered and copies were available via the IJB papers.

Councillor Bamforth went on to report that the IJB continued to monitor the improvement plan for the Care at Home Service. While there had been progress with the initial improvement actions, further work was required to ensure that care planning and delivery was fully person-centred and to support staff in their day-to-day practice. The Head of Adult Health and Care Localities had informed the Board that the Care Inspectorate had recently carried out a full inspection of the service and their report was awaited.

It was confirmed that the next meeting of the IJB was scheduled to take place on 27 November.

(c) **Councillor Merrick – Culture and Leisure Trust**

Councillor Merrick explained that the Council was a signatory to the Renfrewshire Armed Forces Covenant and he was pleased to report that East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust (ERCLT) had become the first Trust in Scotland to provide a free and all-inclusive gym membership for armed forces veterans through a dedicated health and wellbeing programme. The ERCLT *Health for Heroes* programme provided free gym membership to veterans and a family member so that they were better able to reintegrate into society after their service and through which any health and fitness issues could be addressed. Eligibility for inclusion on the programme was assessed in partnership with the Council's Veterans Support Officer with an initial consultation being conducted with one of the Trust's Physical Activity and Health Advisors. A personal fitness programme was then drawn up for each veteran based on their individual circumstances and they were fully introduced to the gym, swim, fitness class, and health suite environments.

He went on the report that he had been pleased to have attended ERCLT's Sports Coach and Volunteers awards ceremony in Carmichael Hall on 4 October. The event had celebrated the work of the army of volunteer coaches, officials and administrators who worked tirelessly in community sports clubs across East Renfrewshire. It had been inspirational to hear stories from young and older individuals who had given 50 years of service in one instance for the love of their sport and their dedication to young people. He expressed his gratitude to the multitude of coaches, officials and administrators across East Renfrewshire without whom East Renfrewshire would not have the sporting landscape that was often taken for granted.

Councillor Merrick concluded by referring to previous statements he had made in respect of the excellent work done by the Trust in the development of the performing arts at Eastwood Park Theatre. The previous week had seen a milestone for the theatre with two sell-out shows in one week with the National Theatre Live production of "Flea Bag" followed by Scotland's own Janey Godley with her one-woman show. This had been a welcome reflection of ERCLT's dedication and determination to deliver quality professional performances and productions at Eastwood Park Theatre.

The Council noted the statements.

PROVOST'S ENGAGEMENTS

1077. 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.

CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

1078. The Council considered a report by the Chief Social Work Officer, providing details of her Annual Report for 2018/19 and seeking approval of the report for submission to the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser, Scottish Government. A copy of the Annual Report was appended to the report.

The report provided a brief narrative on the local authority to set the delivery of social work services in context. It described partnership structures and governance arrangements as well as the social services landscape and presented an overview of the professional activity for social work within East Renfrewshire in 2018/19 through the delivery of statutory functions and responsibilities held by the Chief Social Work Officer. Details of challenges and risks facing social work and the Council were outlined, including the continuing challenging financial climate and the uncertainty for all public services; the increasing expectations and demands from the public and stakeholders; the increasing cost of supporting vulnerable people; the impact of the Living Wage; the redesign of services to ensure that savings were delivered throughout 2018/19; and the management of increased service demand at a time of diminishing resources.

In February 2019 the Care Inspectorate had carried out a full inspection of the Care at Home Service. The outcome of the inspection was that the service had been judged to be poorer than the Council would wish to see with 9 requirements and 1 recommendation requiring to be met. A robust improvement plan had been put in place to address the shortcomings which had been identified.

Concluding her report, the Chief Social Work Officer explained that despite challenging circumstances there had been many significant improvements made over the year and that this delivery had been helped by the shared belief and vision of staff in the service; their efforts in delivering quality services; and strong partnership working.

Councillor Aitken sought clarification on what was required to meet the improvements required as a result of the Care Inspectorate's report. In response the Chief Social Work Officer explained that the quality of assessments and the timescales to implement them, especially within Adult Services, as well as better understanding of the demand for the service, had been identified as areas to be addressed.

Councillor O'Kane welcomed the report and the opportunity to question the Chief Social Work Officer on the report. He went on to reiterate the strong partnership working between the HSCP and the Education Department, especially in the field of children's services. He expressed the view that the model used within East Renfrewshire which involved less formal integration between education and social work services but relied more on strong partnership working, should be commended and continued to provide the best outcomes for children and young people with special emphasis on children who were care-experienced, looked after, and those who found themselves in vulnerable situations.

Welcoming the report and congratulating the Chief Social Work Officer and her team on the achievements over the year, Councillor Buchanan, whilst recognising that improvements were required within the Care at Home Service as a result of the Care Inspectorate report and that these were being monitored and managed, reiterated the importance of strong partnership working across the entire Council in achieving excellent results.

Responding to Councillor Wallace who sought clarification of the reasons for the increase in a number of the reasons leading to an Initial Referral Discussion, the Chief Social Work Officer explained that as a result of the strong partnership working across the Council as mentioned earlier, referrals were received by the Social Work Service earlier than in many other councils. With reference to the category of sexual abuse she explained that this was primarily as a result of increased online activity. With reference to the categories of parental alcohol misuse, parental substance abuse, and parental mental health, she commented that, although the figures were increasing across East Renfrewshire, they were still comparatively low in number and were increasing much more slowly than in other local authority areas, especially those councils with large areas of deprivation.

Councillor Miller welcomed the imminent refurbishment and reconfiguration of Bonnyton House and looked forward to viewing the refurbished facility in due course. He also welcomed the fact that the Council had previously been prevented from disposing of Bonnyton House in order to achieve a budget saving.

Council Bamforth reminded Councillor Miller that it had been the Conservative Group that had first proposed the closure of Bonnyton House in 2012. She went on say that East Renfrewshire HSCP was regarded by COSLA as an exemplar in many areas with a good reputation for the innovative work which it carried out with particular reference to the Family Wellbeing Service which had been the subject of a number of enquiries for detailed information from other HSCPs. She went on to highlight the role of Mental Health Officers, particularly in supporting adults with incapacity, which had been discussed at a recent meeting of the Board of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde when it had been noted that there was a nationwide shortage of suitable trained staff to fill these positions.

Councillor Lafferty highlighted the substantial challenges facing the HSCP and the actions being taken to address these. He also commended the level of partnership working across the Council with particular reference to the Family Firm and the Environment Department which currently had a number of care-experienced young people employed as trainees.

Having heard Provost Fletcher thank the Chief Social Work Officer for a comprehensive and informative report, the Council approved the content of the Chief Social Work Officer's Annual Report for submission to the Office of The Chief Social Work Advisor, Scottish Government.

SCOTTISH ELECTIONS (REFORM) BILL

1079. The Council considered a report by the Chief Executive seeking approval of comments in relation to The Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill.

The report explained that The Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill had been introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 2 September. The Parliament's Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee was the Bill's lead committee and on 18 September it had issued a call for views on the Bill. The deadline for comments to be submitted to the committee was 7 November.

The report explained that the Scottish Government was proposing a number of changes to the law governing elections in Scotland. A summary of the proposed changes contained in the Bill was set out in the report.

Councillor O'Kane supported the views expressed on behalf of the Council and expressed the view that there was a degree of unity across the Council, particularly with respect to the issue of councillor numbers. He went on to express the view that 18 councillors was too low a number for East Renfrewshire which, although it was a small council, had a growing population and the same demands placed on councillors as larger councils. He welcomed the proposal within the Bill to introduce a new process in the Scottish Parliament to scrutinise future proposals with regard to boundaries and councillor numbers rather than such decisions being taken by Ministers as at present. He concluded by expressing his thanks to the Chief Executive and the Democratic Services Manager for their work in producing the report.

Responding to Councillor Macdonald who sought clarification on how it was possible for an individual to be registered to vote in more than one local authority area, the Democratic Services Manager explained that the current legislation did allow for an individual to be on the electoral register in more than one area. The proposal contained in the Bill was designed to remove this anomaly.

Councillor Buchanan added his thanks to the officers involved in producing the report which he recommended for approval by the Council. He reiterated Councillor O’Kane’s view that 18 councillors was too low for East Renfrewshire and expressed the view, as put forward at the time of the last boundary changes, that a more realistic number would be 22 in order to meet the needs of residents. He welcomed the proposal within the Bill to introduce a new process within the Scottish Parliament to scrutinise future proposals which would go some way to ensuring that the voice of local people and their elected representatives was heard. This proposal, if implemented, would go some way to restoring the situation and put the Council in a better position to represent the interests of local residents.

Thereafter, having heard Provost Fletcher explain that the Council had unanimously opposed the Boundary Commission’s previous proposals and express the hope that the Bill would go some way towards preventing a similar situation from arising in future, the Council agreed that the proposed comments be approved and submitted to the Scottish Parliament’s Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

PROVOST

