

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

**Minute of virtual meeting held at 7.00pm on 9 September 2020.**

**Present:**

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

Provost Fletcher in the Chair

**Attending:**

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Candy Millard, Head of Strategic Services, HSCP; Graeme Smith, Communications Manager; Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; and Linda Hutchison, Senior Committee Services Officer.

**Apologies:**

Councillors Angela Convery and Danny Devlin.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**1345.** There were no declarations of Interest intimated.

**MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**1346.** The Council considered the Minute of the meeting held on 24 June 2020.

Under reference to Item 1282 (Page 1194 refers), Councillor Wallace highlighted comments he had made regarding Braidbar Quarry being part of the Proposed Local Development Plan 2, and specifically about ambiguity he felt existed regarding the area defined as Huntly Park. He reported he had not yet received the clarification the Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer) had undertaken to provide confirming the area designated as the Park.

1256

The Council:-

- (a) approved the Minute of the meeting held on 24 June 2020; and
- (b) otherwise, noted the comment made by Councillor Wallace on the information he was awaiting on Huntly Park.

## **MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES**

**1347.** The Council considered and approved the Minutes of the meetings of the undernoted, except as otherwise referred to in Items 1348 to 1350 below:-

- (a) Planning Applications Committee – 25 June 2020;
- (b) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 25 June 2020;
- (c) Planning Applications Committee – 5 August 2020;
- (d) Local Review Body – 5 August 2020;
- (e) Cabinet – 13 August 2020;
- (f) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 13 August 2020;
- (g) Licensing Committee – 18 August 2020;
- (h) Education Committee – 20 August 2020;
- (i) Appointments Committee – 24 August 2020;
- (j) Cabinet – 27 August 2020;
- (k) Local Review Body – 2 September 2020; and
- (l) Appointments Committee – 7 September 2020;

## **APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE – 7 SEPTEMBER 2020 – APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**1348.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Appointments Committee of 7 September 2020 (Page 1253, Item 1344 refers), Councillor O’Kane congratulated Dr Mark Ratter on his appointment as Director of Education, which he considered an excellent appointment. He expressed confidence that Dr Ratter would drive forward the excellence and equity agenda in the Education Department.

Having thanked the Appointments Committee for their diligence, Councillor O’Kane thanked Mrs Shaw for her service as Director, stating that she would now be able to engage in a detailed handover to Dr Ratter. He indicated that there would be an opportunity for Members to pay tribute to Mrs Shaw at the Council meeting in October.

The Council noted the position.

## **AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 JUNE 2020 - UNAUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2019/20**

**1349.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 25 June 2020 (Page 1200, Item 1291 refers), when the unaudited Annual Accounts 2019/20 had been considered and it had been reported that the financial position of the Council continued to be satisfactory, Councillor Wallace asked when an update on the financial position for the current financial year could be provided given the COVID-19 pandemic, its impact on the Council, and as almost three months had elapsed since the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) commented that at the Council meeting in June an update had been provided on the financial position, based on information available at the end of April, at which point a very large funding gap had existed. As reported to the Cabinet on 27 August, based on information available as of the end of June and assumptions made about the share of additional funding the Council would receive based on announcements made by the UK and Scottish Governments thus far, she explained that the anticipated funding gap had reduced from approximately £8m to just under £3m. She clarified that several avenues were being pursued with both Governments to reduce the gap further, pending which the suspension of all non-essential expenditure was continuing. She explained that the use of reserves to bridge the gap remained an option, but highlighted that once used they would be unavailable to use in relation to future budget planning.

The Council noted the position.

#### **AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 JUNE 2020 - EAST RENFREWSHIRE CULTURE AND LEISURE TRUST – BEST VALUE REVIEW**

**1350.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 25 June 2020 (Page 1201, Item 1292 refers), in relation to comments made on the Best Value Review of the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust, Councillor Wallace highlighted that reference had been included to some opportunities for further improvement, seeking further details regarding these.

The Director of Education confirmed that a full and independent review of the Trust had been undertaken, leading to a very positive report being produced. She clarified that she and the Chief Executive of the Trust and Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) had met in recent weeks to consider the recommendations, most of which were positive and some of which related to service level agreements between the Council and the Trust. It had been agreed to submit a further report to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in February 2021 on specific actions to be taken. She confirmed that the Chief Executive of the Trust had also undertaken to prepare a related action plan for submission to the Trust Board.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) commented that some items on the action plan would be subject to the full roll-out of the new financial core systems project which was currently in phase 3 of implementation.

The Council:-

- (a) agreed that further details of the opportunities for improvement referred to in the Minute be sent to Councillor Wallace; and
- (b) otherwise, noted the comments made.

#### **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2019/20**

**1351.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 13 August 2020 (Page 1126, Item 1318 refers), the Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) providing details of the Council's treasury management activities for the year ending 31 March 2020, and seeking approval of the organisations specified in the report for the investment of surplus funds.

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

The Council agreed to:-

- (a) note the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2019/20; and
- (b) approve those organisations specified in the report for the investment of surplus funds.

### **GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21**

**1352.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of 27 August 2020 (Page 1248, Item 1339 refers), when it had been agreed to recommend to the Council that the proposed adjustments to the General Fund Capital Programme 2020/21 be approved, the Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer), recommending adjustments to the 2020/21 General Fund Capital Programme in light of issues that had arisen since the programme had been approved.

Councillor Ireland acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted on some projects, seeking confirmation on when some would proceed. The Director of Environment confirmed that the window renewal projects at Carolside Primary School together with an element of the school toilet improvements, the Overlee House extension, and some roadworks in Newton Mearns had been deferred to 2021/22.

Councillor Wallace referred to the state of both the local and national economy, highlighting that almost £4.5m of capital project work had been deferred to 2021/22. He asked if any management resources could be deployed to help bring the work forward to promote employment and in the interests of the economy, rather than the funds remaining unspent for longer than planned originally. In reply, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) confirmed that the Corporate Asset Management Group (CAMG) had been assessing how much work it was possible to support and was making every effort to do so, taking account of both internal and external capacity. She undertook to raise Councillor Wallace's comments at the forthcoming meeting of the Group.

Councillor Buchanan stated that whilst he shared the concerns raised, sometimes difficulties existed reinstating projects to their original timetable, referring to a range of ongoing work and issues relating to construction companies operating at reduced levels for example. Councillor Wallace encouraged the Council to guard against complacency, and make every effort to progress projects where possible.

The Council:-

- (a) approved the movements within the General Fund Capital Programme 2020/21;
- (b) noted that the shortfall of £425,000 would be managed and reported on a regular basis; and
- (c) otherwise, noted the comments made, including that the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) would reiterate the concerns raised at the forthcoming meeting of the Corporate Asset Management Group.

## HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21

**1353.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of Cabinet of 27 August 2020 (Page 1249, Item 1340 refers), when it had been agreed to recommend to the Council that the proposed adjustments to the Housing Capital Programme 2020/21 be approved, the Council considered a joint report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) and Director of Environment, recommending adjustments to the 2020/21 Housing Capital Programme in light of issues that had arisen since the programme had been approved.

Councillor Wallace stated that his previous comments on the General Fund Capital Programme applied equally to the Housing Capital Programme, requesting that everything possible was done to progress projects in the interests of the economy.

The Council:-

- (a) approved the movements within the Housing Capital Programme 2020/21; and
- (b) noted the shortfall of £135,000 and that income and expenditure on the programme would be managed and reported on a regular basis.

## STATEMENTS BY REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT BOARDS/COMMITTEES

**1354.** The following statements were made:-

- (a) **Councillor Merrick – East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust**

Councillor Merrick referred to the closure of East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust buildings to the public and the suspension of its programmes on 18 March, highlighting that 90% of Trust staff had been placed on furlough. It was explained that, despite membership payments remaining frozen until November, the Trust had made efforts to keep the public fit and healthy during lockdown such as by running free online fitness classes. The Board and its committee meetings had also continued.

Councillor Merrick explained that in line with Part 3 of the Scottish Government's Route Map, permission had been given to reopen libraries and leisure centres. He referred to the launch of outdoor fitness classes, the availability of some click and collect library services from July, and the reopening of the Trust's two biggest leisure centres in the current week and gym facilities and fitness classes to be provided there, with enhanced cleaning, safety and social distancing measures in place, clarifying that they would be operating at 31% of pre-COVID capacity. Having confirmed that swimming pools at these venues would open on 14 September, he referred in more detail to plans published by the Trust to reopen various other facilities as part of a phased approach, confirming the position on libraries, a pilot programme of outdoor sports classes, and a limited Holiday Camp programme during the October school holiday week.

He also made reference to the inevitable impact of COVID-19 on the need to make additional space for or place restrictions on activities; reduce occupancy levels and the number of sessions offered; and introduce additional cleaning and track and trace protocols. Reference was made to the sensitivities around school sites which meant that activities and programmes could not resume as before, seeking patience and understanding as the Trust dealt with these restrictions.

Having highlighted that evidence from the recovery of sports throughout the UK had been that leisure centres had been opened extremely safely, Councillor Merrick referred to the need to maintain rigorous standards and protocols, stressing that the Trust would continue to monitor the situation and make adjustments as necessary.

In conclusion, he reported that, thus far, customer feedback had been overwhelmingly positive, and joined with customer comments to compliment the staff on the efficient, safe and orderly operations at both leisure centres, and on the creativity and care that had gone into the recovery of leisure and cultural services in East Renfrewshire to date.

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

Councillor Bamforth reported on a presentation made at the most recent meeting of the Integration Joint Board by Children's 1<sup>st</sup> on the Family Wellbeing Service, and related discussions on progress made, how the impact of the service would be monitored, and its links to the CAMHS service and the Mental Health 5-year strategy.

She also referred to a presentation at the same meeting on the Care at Home service and related developments. She reported that the IJB had been pleased about how the service was working, improvements made to it, the successful recruitment of staff to the service and a new manager, and how working from a single base had helped the service respond to residents during the pandemic. The IJB had been particularly pleased to hear of positive feedback from service users.

Councillor Bamforth explained that the IJB had been happy to support the Child Poverty Action Plan, and that an easy read version would be made available. Time had also been spent discussing the recovery progress the HSCP was making, and welcoming a useful and informative report detailing progress by service. The IJB had recognised the scale of work and challenges the HSCP faced, and acknowledged how much had been achieved in recent months.

Councillor Bamforth reported that the IJB had welcomed 2 new Board members, Amina Khan and Jacqueline Forbes, replacing Susan Brimelow and John Matthews as 2 of the 4 Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board representatives, and acknowledged the contribution of and expressed thanks to Mrs Brimelow and Mr Matthews.

The Council noted the statements.

**ANNUAL STATEMENT ON ADEQUACY OF GOVERNANCE, RISK MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEMS**

**1355.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 13 August 2020 (Page 1230, Item 1324 refers), when it had been agreed to approve the Annual Statement on the Adequacy of Governance, Risk Management and Internal Control Systems and submit it to the Council for noting, the Council considered a report by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee regarding the statement. A copy of the statement was appended to the report.

The report confirmed that the 2019/20 audit year had been satisfactory for Internal Audit as the audit plan had been substantially completed despite a reduction in staffing levels due to an internal secondment and COVID-19 restrictions in the final quarter which had prevented 5 audits, which had commenced, being completed and issued. It also clarified that External Audit continued to place reliance on the work of the service and that a reasonable level of performance had been achieved against indicator targets given restrictions largely outwith the control of the internal audit service.

The report highlighted that it was the opinion of the Chief Auditor that reasonable assurance could be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and internal control for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Councillor Wallace asked if the Chief Auditor reporting directly to the Chief Executive presented any conflict of interest, and if this had been discussed by the committee. He also sought clarification on learning and development opportunities on scrutiny available to senior managers.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) clarified that it was considered best practice by CIPFA for the Chief Auditor to report directly to the Chief Executive, following which the Chief Executive confirmed that the Chief Auditor also reported directly to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The Chief Executive further confirmed that the Chief Auditor was able to raise any issue directly with the committee without reference to her.

Having heard the Chief Executive refer to the emphasis placed relatively recently on providing scrutiny training to elected Members, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that a range of leadership training for various levels of management containing elements of training on good governance and sound financial management was in place.

The Council, having heard Councillor Buchanan thank the Chair and members of the committee and the Chief Auditor for their work, noted the internal audit Annual Statement on the Adequacy and Effectiveness of the Governance, Risk Management and Internal Control Systems of the Council for the year ending 31 March 2020.

PROVOST

