

MINUTE
of
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Minute of virtual meeting held at 7.00pm on 28 October 2020.

Present:

Provost Jim Fletcher	Councillor Annette Ireland
Deputy Provost Betty Cunningham	Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Paul Aitken	Councillor David Macdonald
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Councillor Stewart Miller
Councillor Angela Convery	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; Julie Murray, Chief Officer – Health and Social Care Partnership; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Gerry Mahon, Chief Officer (Legal & Procurement); Kate Rocks, Chief Social Work Officer; Sharon Dick, Head of HR and Corporate Services; Mark Ratter, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance); Gill Darbyshire, Chief Executive’s Business Manager; Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apology:

Councillor Jim McLean.

JIM SHAW, MBE

1399. Provost Fletcher advised the Council of the recent sad death of Mr Jim Shaw, MBE, a former East Renfrewshire Councillor from 1996 until 2007, and Deputy Provost from 2003 until 2007.

Having heard Provost Fletcher comment that Mr Shaw had been a highly respected councillor, the Council observed a minute’s silence in his honour.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1400. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

1401. The Council considered the Minute of the meeting held on 9 September 2020.

Under reference to Item 1346 (Page 1255 refers), Councillor Wallace reported that he had still not received the clarification the Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer) had undertaken to provide in respect of Huntly Park.

The Council:-

- (a) approved the Minute of the meeting held on 9 September 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

1402. The Council considered and approved the Minutes of the meetings of the undernoted, except as otherwise referred to in Items 1403 to 1405 below:-

- (a) Cabinet – 10 September 2020;
- (b) Cabinet (Police & Fire) – 17 September 2020;
- (c) Cabinet – 24 September 2020;
- (d) Audit & Scrutiny Committee – 24 September 2020;
- (e) Planning Applications Committee – 30 September 2020;
- (f) Local Review Body – 30 September 2020;
- (g) Education Committee – 1 October 2020;
- (h) Cabinet – 22 October 2020.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE – MINUTE OF MEETING OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

1403. Under reference to the minute of the Planning Applications Committee on 30 September (Page 1282, Item 1381 refers), when it was agreed that the Planning Service would write to the Scottish Government's Reporter's Unit (DPEA) asking for a meeting to discuss the decision making processes of Reporters, Councillor Miller reported that a representative from the Reporter's office would attend the Planning Applications Committee on 2 December.

The Council noted the update.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE – MINUTE OF MEETING OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

1404. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Planning Applications Committee held on 30 September 2020 (Page 1282, Item 1382 refers), Councillor Ireland advised that she had made a number of comments in relation to application 2019/0858/TP which had not been included in the Minute. Amongst other things she had noted that the application had previously been rejected; void rates referred to in the Economic Impact Report were not accurate; the application did not comply with policy SG7; and she raised concerns about the condition of the existing building. She acknowledged that the Minute was not a verbatim

record but believed that this information should be included in the Minute as a record that a full discussion had taken place prior to the final decision being made.

Having heard the Democratic Services Manager remind Members that a recording of the meeting containing all the information Councillor Ireland was seeking to be included in the Minute was available on the Council's YouTube channel for public viewing, the Council agreed that the Minute be amended in appropriate terms.

AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – MINUTE OF MEETING OF 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

1405. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 September 2020 (Page 1274, Item 1372 refers), when the Accounts Commission report entitled *Equal Pay in Councils Impact Report* and the position as it related to East Renfrewshire was noted, Councillor Wallace highlighted that the report referred to the Council's commitment to equality but also stated that two thirds of the highest paid employees and three quarters of the Council's overall employees were female. He sought clarification regarding whether any concerns had been raised about these statistics at the meeting.

Having heard Councillor Miller report that the information contained within the report had been received positively by Members of the Committee and no specific comments about the Council's recruitment policy had been made at the meeting, the Council noted the comments made.

STATEMENTS BY CONVENER/REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT BOARDS/ COMMITTEES

1406. The following statements were made:-

(a) 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 Financial Officer.

The Annual Performance Report had been considered and included information on how to use a range of media to engage with the public and recognised that not all services were operating as normal due to the pandemic. Information was provided on young people with mental health issues as instances of emotional distress and self-harm had increased as a result of the pandemic.

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. Further discussion had taken place on the impact of the pandemic on children and adult services and the increased isolation being experienced by older people. The impact on the mental health of care home and homecare staff was also discussed.

Councillor Bamforth went on to report that, although the annual reports were by nature retrospective, they had contained useful detail about the pandemic response and recovery going forward. She further reported that a presentation had been provided on the East Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Plan for 2020-23 and the plan was approved for publication.

It was confirmed that the next meeting of the IJB was scheduled to take place on 25 November.

(b) Councillor Merrick – East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust

Councillor Merrick explained that the Trust's recovery continued even though restrictions, including suspension of indoor fitness classes, had been put in place due to the pandemic and 65% of the Trust's staff remained on furlough. He advised that outdoor fitness classes had continued; swimming lessons had resumed at Barrhead and Eastwood Park with lessons at Neilston due to start soon; and provided an update on libraries and community halls.

Councillor Merrick reported that the Trust had been awarded £90,000 from Creative Scotland to fund initiatives to support the ongoing recovery of performing arts and one of the proposals being considered was the creation of a theatre technical skills programme in partnership with the Education Department to increase capacity and skills within the sector among young people.

He also made reference to eBook, eAudio and Digital Magazine services which had been operating during the lockdown period and the development of online arts classes. The Trust had taken the opportunity to rebuild the Leisure Management System during lockdown which would lead to enhanced customer experience in future. The new system included the launch of an East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure App which would allow customers to book and view services online.

The Council noted the statements.

APPOINTMENTS TO INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD AND LICENSING COMMITTEE/BOARD

1407. The Council considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive seeking appointments to the Integration Joint Board (IJB), the Licensing Committee and the Licensing Board following the resignations of Councillors O'Kane and Lafferty from the IJB and Licensing Board/Committee respectively.

The report provided further information on the IJB including a calendar of meetings for the remainder of 2020 and for 2021 and explained that, although not a requirement, traditionally membership of the Licensing Board and Licensing Committee was the same.

Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Deputy Provost Cunningham, proposed that Councillor Lafferty be appointed to the IJB and Councillor O'Kane be appointed to the Licensing Committee/Board.

Councillor Macdonald, seconded by Councillor Aitken, proposed as an amendment that Councillor Macdonald be appointed to the Licensing Committee/Board.

The Democratic Services Manager clarified that Councillor Lafferty had been appointed to the IJB unopposed and that the appointment of a member to the Licensing Committee/Board would be subject to a vote which in light of current circumstances would be a roll call vote.

On the roll being called, Provost Fletcher, Deputy Provost Cunningham and Councillors Bamforth, Buchanan, Convery, Gilbert, Grant, Ireland, Lafferty, Merrick, O’Kane and Wallace voted for the motion. Councillors Aitken, Macdonald and Swift voted for the amendment. Councillor Miller abstained.

There being 12 voted for the motion, 3 for the amendment and 1 abstention, the motion was accordingly declared carried and it was agreed that Councillor O’Kane be appointed to the Licensing Committee/Board and Councillor Lafferty be appointed to the IJB.

POST OF HEAD OF EDUCATION

1408. The Council considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive seeking approval for a proposed change to Head of Service remits within the Education Department and approval for the establishment of an Appointments Committee as part of the arrangements to fill the vacant post.

The report explained that the recent appointment of Dr Ratter as Director of Education had resulted in a Head of Service vacancy and, in order to support resilience and development of staff and roles within the department, it was proposed that changes be made to the senior role remits. There would be no change to the overall number of posts.

Further information was provided on the revised remits; how these changes would affect the two Heads of Service currently in post; and a proposed timetable for the appointment of the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity).

Councillor O’Kane was heard further in relation to the revised remits and, seconded by Councillor Cunningham, proposed that Councillors O’Kane and Merrick, as Chair and Vice Chair of Education Committee, be appointed to the Appointments Committee, together with Councillors Buchanan, McLean and Wallace.

Councillor Wallace sought clarification regarding the appointment procedure and, in particular, whether or not the Head of Service post to be advertised was the correct one. Having received clarification from Councillor O’Kane and officers regarding the appointment procedure and confirmation that the Council could approve the revision of departmental remits, Councillor Wallace continued to express concern in this regard. In response to a question from Councillor Swift, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that Chief Officer appointments were not delegated to departments. She added that discussions had taken place with officers from HR to ensure the correct procedure was being followed, prior to finalisation of the report.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to approve the proposed revised Head of Service remits within the Education Department;
- (b) to approve the recruitment procedure as detailed;
- (c) to delegate to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Education, to make the necessary arrangements;

- (d) that Councillors O’Kane, Merrick, Buchanan, McLean and Wallace, be appointed to the Appointments Committee;
- (e) that the Director of Education put in place appropriate interim management arrangements for the department, if required.

PROVOST’S ENGAGEMENTS

1409. The Council considered and noted a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, providing details of an event attended by Provost Fletcher, highlighting that appropriate social distancing and other safety measures had been adhered to.

OUTCOME DELIVERY PLAN 2020-23

1410. The Council considered a report by the Chief Executive, providing details of the Council’s Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP) 2020-23 which set out the Council’s contribution to the delivery of the Community Plan. A copy of the ODP was appended to the report.

The report highlighted that the purpose of the ODP was to communicate the Council’s contribution to the Community Plan with the additional organisational outcome of Customer, Efficiency and People. Furthermore, it was a rolling 3-year plan that was updated annually and had been nearing completion pre COVID-19. However, due to the pandemic formal community planning meetings were paused and approval of the plan had been put on hold.

As the new Community Plan had only been approved in June 2018, a light touch approach had been taken to reviewing the ODP since then and, in light of the pandemic, it had now been revised to take account of recovery planning and the impact of COVID-19 across the Council family. Council departments, East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust, and the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) had worked on reviewing and updating the ODP mapping diagrams to produce a revised ODP to reflect changes in work priorities as a result of the pandemic. Although intermediate outcomes had remained the same, a number of critical activities had changed to reflect work undertaken to address the impact of COVID-19 across East Renfrewshire communities.

Details of the four main sections of the plan were outlined in the report these being noted as Strategic Outcomes 1-5; Customer, Efficiency and People outcomes; Finance Information – Spending Plans; and Annexes. It was noted that as the ODP was a strategic, Council-wide plan, it could not cover the extensive range of planned activity to be undertaken across the Council over the lifetime of the plan. However, the plan acknowledged the service strategies and operational plans that underpinned strategic outcome delivery.

The report also provided information in relation to target setting and performance monitoring, and the use of the ODP to test the Fairer Scotland duty that required public bodies to actively consider how they could reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage in any major strategic decisions. In light of the pandemic and the focus on recovery, targets for indicators would not be included for 2020-21 and would be revised the following year.

In response to questions, the Director of Education confirmed that although physical library visits had decreased, book issues and e-book issues had increased and this trend was being replicated across the country. The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) highlighted that the aim was to make the attainment gap as narrow as

possible but acknowledged that COVID-19 would have an impact on these figures. He advised that schools were working hard to address these issues in school, with additional literacy and numeracy work taking place. Classes had also been held during the October school break and Saturday classes were being held in partnership with the Leisure Trust.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that a large number of staff were working for home and would be encouraged to add their mobile contact details to emails, where possible, to make them more accessible. Staff had reported both positives and negatives in relation to their working from home experience and it was highlighted that the Council would want to maximise the benefits of that in the longer term, although it was acknowledged that working from home did not suit everyone. She added that customer satisfaction would continue to be monitored through the Citizen's Panel and some areas of work which required extra attention would be reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

The Director of Environment reported that occupancy of Greenlaw Business Centre had been badly affected by COVID-19 as non-essential office accommodation and call centres were unable to open due to government guidance. He referred to a comprehensive report on supporting town centres and employability which had been submitted to the Cabinet in August, advising that he would send a copy of the report to Councillor Swift for his information.

In addition to the comments made by officers, Councillor Buchanan reported that the employability team were working on a robust response for recovery and a Member/officer working group had also been established to support the recovery process. He added that some targets which were normally contained within the ODP had been removed to allow the post-virus position to be considered.

The Chief Executive added that the Council prepared a comprehensive report on the local government benchmarking framework which compared the Council's position to other local authorities generally and to local authorities with similar demographics. In the longer term it was anticipated that similar comparisons could be added to other reports, including the ODP, but it was sometimes difficult to get a balance between clarity and additional information.

The Council:-

- (a) approved the content of the Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP) 2020-2023;
- (b) noted the changes to the previous ODP, reflecting the impact of COVID-19 on the serviced funded by the Council; and
- (c) noted that targets had not been set for this year as many would require to be re-baselined to reflect the impact of COVID-19.

CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

1411. The Council considered a report by the Chief Social Work Officer, providing details of her Annual Report for 2019/20 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 Annual Report provided an overview of the professional activity for social work within East Renfrewshire for 2019-20 through the delivery of statutory functions and responsibilities held by the Chief Social Work Officer. The impact of COVID-19 on the production of the annual report was highlighted and it was explained that the report provided a narrative of

social work and social care activity across 5 broad headings, these being Governance and Accountability arrangements; Service Quality and Performance; Resources; Workforce; and COVID-19.

A number of areas of strong performance and success were highlighted including the enhancement of the Family Wellbeing Service; reductions in the number of children and young people looked after away from home; enhanced levels of participation and engagement by looked after children and young people; and in adult social work and social care continued high numbers of adults reporting that their outcomes were met.

The report also highlighted a continuing number of significant challenges and risks facing social work and social care in East Renfrewshire. These included dealing with rising incidences of domestic abuse; implementation of learning from the Care Review in all aspects of work with looked after children and young people; increasing expectations and demands from the public and stakeholders, the impact of COVID-19; and the management of increased service demand at a time of diminishing resources and workforce capacity. It was noted that there would be a changing landscape for health and social care services in future as a consequence of COVID-19, and social care would be required to adapt to ensure the recovery, rising demand and renewal associated with protecting and caring for our most vulnerable citizens and all those who were at risk in our communities was supported.

The Chief Social Work Officer was heard in detail on the report, referring to the strong performance of the service over the year, including continued strengthening of partnership arrangements and multi-agency working; a strengthened approach for supporting families; and extra refuge facilities for domestic abuse victims. She explained that in looking forward she was keen to review the impact of COVID-19 on the physical and mental wellbeing of young people, and older people with dependency.

In conclusion, she commended the way in which the HSCP workforce had dealt with the many challenges and risks they had faced during the pandemic.

Members congratulated HSCP staff for their hard work and dedication prior to and during the pandemic and for a very positive annual report. It was recognised that strong work had been undertaken with care experienced young people; adoption rates in East Renfrewshire had increased; and there had been a number of improvements within children's services.

In response to Members, the Chief Social Work Officer reported that a new service was being launched to put a recovery team in place for young people which would include health improvement officers; teachers; family support officers; and third sector providers and would be funded using school counselling funds which could not be used during lockdown. She added that the introduction of a centralised Adult Support and Protection Team to respond to calls dealing with emotional and mental distress, including within local care homes, had been a very positive move.

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.

COVID-19 RECOVERY ACTIONS - UPDATE

1412. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting held on 24 June 2020 (Page 1195, Item 1283 refers) when the Council noted a report on further actions that had been taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council considered a report by the Chief Executive providing an update on recovery work taking place across the Council.

Prior to introducing the report, Councillor Buchanan made a direct appeal to local residents urging them to adhere to the rules which had been introduced by the Government, as the number of COVID-19 cases had increased locally in recent weeks.

The report provided details of the additional activities that had been undertaken since the previous report and highlighted that it was not clear how long the Council would need to continue to deliver these services and functions and what the ongoing financial implications would be.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Wallace regarding traffic and crowding issues at Giffnock Primary School, Councillor Buchanan advised that information had been issued to all parents outlining the procedures which should be followed when picking up and dropping off children at school, including wearing face coverings and social distancing, and that further information would be issued as required. The Director of Education advised that discussions were ongoing at Giffnock Primary School in respect of complaints which had been received, adding that the campus police officer was monitoring the situation and no increased transmissions of COVID-19 had been detected as a result of any incidents in or around the school at the start and end of the day. In response to a question from Councillor Ireland regarding when external organisations would be able to access school premises, the Director of Education advised that it was highly unlikely that access would be given before Spring 2021 as keeping schools open for pupils was their main priority. In order to allow external clubs to access school buildings extra cleaning regimes would require to be introduced and it was difficult to ensure that appropriate contact tracing was taking place. She added that access to outdoor pitches could not be given without access to toilet facilities within buildings.

The Council noted the report and comments made.

UPDATE ON COVID-19 IMPACT ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

1413. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting held on 24 June 2020 (Page 1188, Item 1277 refers), when the Council noted the significant budget gap for 2020/21 arising from COVID-19, the Council considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) providing an update on the revenue budget position for the current year, in view of the COVID-19 pressures now facing services, and the financial outlook for 2021/22 and beyond.

The report highlighted that finalisation of the 2019/20 accounts had improved the scope for the use of reserves to help address future budget challenges; that recently announced fiscal flexibilities should allow significant financial burdens to be address without excessive depletion of reserves; and proposed that a single year budget be set for 2021/22 with a flexible approach adopted to closing next year's budget shortfall. It was reported that directors' actions to reduce expenditure in 2019/20 had been highly successful. The initial 2019/20 budget plans showed £4.312m would be drawn down from reserves to balance the budget, but the final outturn position, which was still subject to audit confirmation, required only £0.964m of reserves to be used, an improvement of around £3.348m.

The Council noted:-

- (a) the improved financial position for 2020/21;
- (b) that the recently announced fiscal flexibilities should allow the Council to bridge the remaining 2020/21 budget gap; and

- (c) the challenging financial position for 2021/22 and beyond and that further reports would be brought as more information became available.

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, agreed to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the item 1414 below on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6, 12 and 13(b) of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

CROOKFUR NURSERY CAR PARKING ARRANGEMENTS

1414. The Council considered a report by the Chief Officer (Legal & Procurement) providing an update on current issues regarding the neighbouring Tenant's position in respect of the construction of the Nursery/Family Centre and associated car park in Crookfur Park, Newton Mearns.

The Chief Officer (Legal & Procurement) was heard further regarding the report and in answer to questions, following which the Council agreed to:-

- (a) delegate to the Chief Officer (Legal & Procurement) authority to make the East Renfrewshire Council (Crookfur Park) Compulsory Purchase Order 2020; and
- (b) note the liability for compensation payments arising from the acquisition and authorise the Chief Officer (Legal & Procurement), in conjunction with the Directors of Environment and Education, to negotiate and settle any compensation claims arising.

VALEDICTORY – MHAIRI SHAW – DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1415. Provost Fletcher invited Councillor O'Kane, as Convener of Education, to make comment about the forthcoming retirement of Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education. He paid tribute to the work of Mrs Shaw, during her time as Head Teacher, Head of Service and Director of Education in East Renfrewshire, and referred to a number of achievements during her time in post, most notably the high standards of education which had continued to improve under her guidance; building new schools, nurseries and family centres; bringing the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people to the fore; and supporting the lowest 20% of learners, and children and young people with additional support needs.

On behalf of the Council, pupils, parents, and staff, Councillor O'Kane wished Mrs Shaw a long and happy retirement.

Thereafter, a number of Elected Members were heard to pay tribute to Mrs Shaw.

Mrs Shaw replied in suitable terms.