

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 3 December 2020.

Present:

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)
Councillor Caroline Bamforth
Councillor Alan Lafferty

Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Paul O’Kane

Councillor Buchanan in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Sharon Dick, Head of HR and Corporate Services; Louise Pringle, Head of Communities, Revenues and Change; Catherine McKay, Senior Marketing Officer; Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apology:

Councillor Danny Devlin.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1456. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

CORE SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION - PROGRESS

1457. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive providing an update on the implementation of the new Finance/Procurement and HR/Payroll ICT systems.

The report explained that the Modern, Ambitious Programme (MAP) sought to change the way the Council worked, with a particular focus on the capabilities of modernising, digital and data, including complex replacement of some of the most fundamental ICT legacy systems. Procurement exercises had been undertaken for both the Finance/Procurement and HR/Payroll systems and the first phase of the Finance/Procurement system was successfully implemented in November 2019. Positive feedback on the implementation had been received from departments. Work had continued to connect it to other Council systems and, although COVID-19 had caused some delays, it was expected that the programme would transition to “business as usual” late in 2021/22.

Implementation of the new HR/Payroll system had initially been delayed due to protracted negotiations and staffing issues, and was further delayed due to COVID-19. The Head of

Communities, Revenues and Change confirmed that the system had gone live earlier in the week and a programme of work to fully embed the system would continue during 2021/22. Both systems would continue to be maintained and developed and, in order to manage the ongoing demand, a restructure of several areas of responsibility and an extension of certain temporary resource would be required. It was expected that revenue budget resources would be required for 2022/23, with Modernisation Funding being used to cover interim costs. It was reported that this was one of the most complex change programmes that the Council had ever undertaken and through strong governance, clear goals and sound prioritisation, the programme had demonstrated that it could and would continue to deliver.

Following discussion, the Cabinet:

- (a) noted the successful implementation of the new Finance and Procurement ICT system;
- (b) noted the revised plan for implementation of HR & Payroll system as a result of COVID-19;
- (c) noted that the overall programme remained within budget, but that there may be future costs, dependent on the level of efficiencies that could be projected from future phases of the programme; and
- (d) commended the continued delivery of this complex programme across a challenging year and the ongoing realisation of early business efficiencies from the phases delivered to date.

STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN 2021-25

1458. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for the proposed Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2021/22-2025/26 for submission to the Scottish Government. A copy of the plan was appended to the report.

The report explained that the Scottish Government required local authorities to supplement their Local Housing Strategy (LHS) with a Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) which must set out in detail the Council's affordable housing investment priorities for the following 5 years. The existing SHIP would be rolled forward and added to taking into account increased resources and subsidy levels announced by the Scottish Government. It was further explained that although Government funding had increased by 16% compared to the previous 5 year programme, it was conditional on a number of requirements being met. These included the installation of fire suppression systems; additional indoor space for work or study; improved connectivity; access to outside space; higher energy efficiency standards; and use of modern construction methods.

The SHIP outlined that a total of 579 units of social rented housing could be provided; the number of affordable properties for sale was still to be determined; and approximately 10% of the new units programmed were expected to be suitable for particular needs e.g. wheelchair users, older people, etc. The SHIP also detailed how the Council intended to spend its Resource Planning Allocation from the Scottish Government while highlighting that demand for new social rented housing, especially new council housing, continued to exceed demand. In order to address demand, the Council had agreed an ambitious plan to build 240 new council housing and was currently reviewing the capacity within the HRA business plan to develop more homes. The need to identify available sites was an ongoing challenge and private ownership of a number of sites meant that developmental timescales were often outwith the Council's control.

Welcoming the expansion of social rented housing across the area, the Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the East Renfrewshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2021-2026 for submission to the Scottish Government; and
- (b) noted that a further report would be submitted to Cabinet in early 2021/22 in relation to the resulting Strategic Local Programme Agreement with Scottish Government, which would confirm the programme of housing projects to be funded locally over the next 2 years.

PLACE BRANDING AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

1459. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for the proposed “*place branding*” strategy for East Renfrewshire to assist specifically in promoting local economic recovery from COVID-19 pressure and to create a brand which would allow the Council, in the longer term, to better promote East Renfrewshire as a desirable place in which to live, work, visit and invest.

The report explained that the COVID-19 pandemic had caused unprecedented disruption to the economy and many local business had struggled to cope despite Scottish Government support through various grants. As more residents were now working from home there was an increased opportunity to promote local retail and leisure opportunities and reduce leakage of spend. Place branding would allow the area’s unique features and characteristics to be communicated to support economic recovery and unite East Renfrewshire’s towns and people through a shared sense of pride to live, work and play in East Renfrewshire.

Research on branding was undertaken with a number of stakeholders including local businesses, residents, council officers, and business organisations, and a place brand had been developed supported by local photography, a colourful logo, and a vibrant graphical patchwork showcasing the diversity of the different towns, landmarks and activities within East Renfrewshire. In the short term, place branding would support local businesses during and immediately following the pandemic. However, medium and long term objectives would play a key role in continuing to promote economic development as well as wider corporate objectives for the Council.

The Senior Marketing Officer then made a short presentation on the development of and proposals for the branding strategy

Welcoming the proposals, the Cabinet agreed to approve the proposed branding strategy for East Renfrewshire to assist specifically in promoting local economic recovery from COVID-19 pressure and create a brand which would allow the Council in the longer term to promote East Renfrewshire as a desirable place in which to live, work, visit and invest.

TOWN CENTRE CAPITAL FUND 2019-20 AND 2020-21

1460. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting held on 18 November 2019 (Page 1032, Item 116 refers), when it was agreed that a number of projects detailed within the report be approved, the Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment providing an update on those projects which received funding from the 2019/20 Town Centre Capital Fund allocation and seeking approval for those projects which would be funded from the additional 2020/21 grant.

The report explained that the 2019/20 projects previously reported to the Cabinet, including an intelligent lighting scheme in Barrhead; public realm improvements in Eaglesham and

Neilston; a community noticeboard in Thornliebank; and an extensive winter lighting programme in various town centre/village locations, were making good progress and were on track to be delivered by the end of September 2021. It had been confirmed that underspend of £122,608 from the 2019/20 allocation could be carried forward for schemes in 2020/21. A list of proposed schemes was provided and included installation of CCTV at Cowan Park, Barrhead; various Town Centre lighting projects; and installation of Menorah Lighting at Clarkston. Although the timescales for delivery would be challenging, particularly in relation to the 2020/21 projects, it was reported that both the existing projects and the proposed projects would make a considerable impact on local town and village centres.

In response to a request from Councillor Bamforth to fund an additional project to relocate the Peter Pan statue from the former Mearnskirk Hospital to a new suitable location, the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) confirmed that this project could be considered if sufficient funding became available through savings in the other listed projects.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the background and objectives of the Town Centre Capital Fund;
- (b) noted the progress of those projects funded in 2019/20;
- (c) approved additional projects totalling £475,000 for 2020/21 as set out in the report; and
- (d) agreed to include on the list of projects a project to relocate the Peter Pan statue from the former Mearnskirk Hospital to a new suitable location, to be carried out subject to sufficient funding becoming available through savings in the other listed projects.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE (EXPANSION 2020)

1461. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Council of 9 September 2020 (Page 1258, Item 1352 refers) when movements within the General Fund Capital Programme were agreed, the Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment providing an update in relation to the progress of the project to deliver the expansion of Early Years provision in East Renfrewshire to meet Scottish Government requirements.

The report explained that building contractors were appointed for the six Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) projects; that completion was originally expected by July 2020; and that the projects had since been delayed due to COVID-19 and Scottish Water issues. Negotiations had taken place with both the contractors and Scottish Water in order to resolve matters as quickly as possible. The building contractors had been working under a restrictive regime since June 2020, as a result of Government guidance, and in order to prevent any costly legal claims in future, it was proposed that the Council would share the additional COVID-19 related costs with the contractors. In addition, due to a tightening of regulations by Scottish Water, costs which had not previously been identified would now be incurred for surface water drainage. Given the urgency of the projects and the advanced stage of construction, approval had already been given for the works to go ahead as, without these connections, the centres could not open. Further information was also provided on other additional costs which had been incurred including an allowance for the sum of post contract changes; additional contingency allowance; and additional equipment and services.

The Director of Environment clarified that every attempt had been made to mitigate the additional expenditure, including identifying potential savings, and a sum of money had been

identified as a rebate from Hub West Scotland and from works at St Cadoc's. The remaining funds would be found from delays and deferrals due to COVID-19 in other projects.

The Cabinet:

- (a) noted the delay in the opening of the nurseries due to the impact of the COVID-19 virus on the construction industry;
- (b) homologated the decision by the Director of Environment to vary the relevant contracts to accommodate additional works in particularly challenging circumstances in an effort to open the nurseries as quickly as possible;
- (c) **recommended to the Council** that additional capital expenditure of £910,000 be approved to cover the additional committed works; and
- (d) **recommended to the Council** that a compensation payment of £803,000 in relation to coronavirus issues be made to Heron Bros as outlined in the report.

CHAIR

