

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 28 January 2021.

Present:

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)
Councillor Caroline Bamforth
Councillor Danny Devlin

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; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Graeme Smith, Communications Manager; Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1513. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

MIXED TENURE SCHEME

1514. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment advising on the current circumstances with regard to the expiry of the contract with the Council's third-party provider for the management of the Mixed Tenure Scheme.

The report explained that the Mixed Tenure Scheme had been established in 2013 to improve the condition of mixed tenure estates which comprised both Council houses and private properties and the current contract had been awarded following a competitive tender process in December 2015. Further information was provided on the contract advising that the service was of high quality and represented good value for money. The scheme had been welcomed by residents and Elected Members and provided employment opportunities for, amongst others, Care Experienced Young People.

It was reported that the contract had expired in November 2019 and, due to an oversight, the re-tendering process was not progressed prior to that date. The re-tendering process commenced in March 2020, but was further delayed due to emerging COVID related issues, and the new contract was expected to begin on 31 March 2021.

It was recognised that the Mixed Tenure Scheme delivered essential rapid response neighbourhood services, ensuring mixed tenure areas within East Renfrewshire were well maintained for all residents and, in order to support key Council services, it was essential that this service continued. It had therefore been agreed that the contract would continue on

a monthly basis with the same terms and conditions approved previously. Since March 2020, due to COVID restrictions, some scheme employees were able to assist with wider COVID related services including delivering food parcels and equipment to vulnerable residents; assisting the wider Environment Department in providing bank holiday cover; undertaking sanitising duties at Montgomery Court Sheltered Housing complex; removing waste generated by increased fly tipping; and removing excess garden waste.

Following discussion, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted that the contract with VERG (the Council's third-party Mixed Tenure Scheme provider) expired at the end of November 2019 and that due to an oversight and subsequently coronavirus related issues the contract was not retendered within the timescale required;
- (b) noted that the tendered contract was considered to have provided from December 2015 important high-quality services and value for money;
- (c) noted that for the reasons outlined in the report the contract had been continued on the previous terms and conditions and competitively tendered rates between the period from December 2019 to 31 March 2021 at a projected cost of £375,000;
- (d) noted that the total expenditure was above EU threshold but was appropriate under the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015, Regulation 33 (1) (C) which permitted a negotiated contract without prior publication for reasons of urgency due to events unforeseen by the contracting authority;
- (e) approved the continued use of the contract on this basis until 31 March 2021 which was within the budgetary provision which had been made for the scheme over that period; and
- (f) noted that the contract would be competitively retendered to run from 31 March 2021.

ESTIMATED REVENUE BUDGET OUT-TURN 2020/21

1515. The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer), detailing the projected revenue budget out-turn for 2020/21 and providing details of the expected year-end variances together with summary cost information for each of the undernoted services as at 31 October 2020:-

- (i) Objective and Subjective Summaries;
- (ii) Education Department;
- (iii) Contribution to Integration Joint Board;
- (iv) Environment Department;
- (v) Environment Department – Support;
- (vi) Chief Executive's Office;
- (vii) Chief Executive's Office – Support;
- (viii) Corporate and Community Services Department – Community Resources;
- (ix) Corporate and Community Services Department – Support;
- (x) Other Expenditure and Income;
- (xi) Joint Boards;
- (xii) Contingency – Welfare;
- (xiii) Health and Social Care Partnership; and
- (xiv) Housing Revenue Account.

Whilst noting that as at 31 October 2020, the estimated year end position showed a net overspend of £60k based on current information and taking account of additional grant funding confirmed and anticipated to date, the report indicated that for General Fund services there was a projected underspend of £41k and together with the projected shortfall in Council Tax collection of £450k the total forecast overspend on General Fund services was £409k. This reflected a significantly improved position from that reported to the meeting of the Cabinet on 22 October 2020 and was due to various increases in anticipated grant funding, a significant reduction in the projected PPE operational expenditure, together with very close expenditure controls across all departments.

Approval was sought for a number service virements and operational budget adjustments, details of which were outlined in the report.

The report concluded by highlighting that the Council's projected revenue budget out-turn position was reported as an operational overspend of £60k largely as a result of COVID pressures the position having been arrived at after taking account of both confirmed and anticipated additional grant funding in relation to COVID. The report demonstrated the serious financial implications on operational services arising from the current pandemic and highlighted the remaining budget shortfall still to be closed. Whilst the Council continued to work with COSLA in seeking further grant resources and/or additional fiscal flexibilities, departments needed to continue to do all they could to avoid non-essential expenditure, to closely monitor and manage the impact of COVID-19 on their operational services and on the probable outturn position, and to maintain and increase any operational underspends wherever possible.

The Cabinet, having noted the reported probable out-turn position, agreed:-

- (a) to approve service virements and operational adjustments as set out in the notes to the tables in the report and noted the significant reported improvement in the probable out-turn position;
- (b) to instruct departments to continue to avoid all non-essential spending;
- (c) that management action be taken to remedy any avoidable forecast overspends;
- (d) that all departments continue to closely monitor their probable out-turn position.

CHAIR

