

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 7 April 2016.

Present:

Councillor Jim Fletcher (Leader)
Councillor Danny Devlin
Councillor Alan Lafferty

Councillor Ian McAlpine
Councillor Mary Montague
Councillor Vincent Waters

Councillor Fletcher, Leader, in the Chair

Also Present:

Councillor Gordon Wallace.

Attending:

Caroline Innes; Deputy Chief Executive; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Jim Sneddon, Head of Democratic and Partnership Services; Sharon McMurtrie, Planning Manager (Projects); Craig Geddes, Council Records Manager; and Paul O'Neil, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Tony Buchanan and Elaine Green.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1997. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

ESTIMATED REVENUE BUDGET OUT-TURN 2015/16

1998. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer, detailing the projected revenue out-turn for 2015/16 and providing details of the expected variances together with summary cost information for each of the undernoted services as at 29 January 2016:-

- (i) Objective and Subjective Summaries;
- (ii) Education;
- (iii) Health and Social Care Partnership;

- (iv) Environment;
- (v) Environment – Support;
- (vi) Corporate and Community Services Department – Community Resources;
- (vii) Corporate and Community Services Department – Support;
- (viii) Chief Executive's Office;
- (ix) Other Expenditure and Income and Other Housing;
- (x) Housing Revenue Account.

Whilst noting that the estimated year-end position showed a net favourable variance on net expenditure of £3,911,400, the report highlighted that for General Fund services the projected underspend was £3,938,400 and that this variance was anticipated in addition to the planned transfer to reserves of £1,010,000 agreed at the meeting of the Council on 12 February 2015.

The report explained that the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 placed a statutory requirement on Significant Trading Operations to achieve a break even position over a rolling three year period. However, it was noted that none of the Council's services fell within the definition of a Significant Trading Operation.

The report concluded by highlighting that a number of operational variances required management action to ensure that expenditure would be in line with budget at the end of the financial year, and that at this time it was expected that management action would lead to all overspends being recovered, that all underspends were consolidated wherever possible and that spending up to budget levels did not take place.

The Cabinet noted:-

- (a) the reported probable out-turn position of the Revenue Budget 2015/16; and
- (b) that all service departments would be required to ensure that action was taken to operate within budget.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT FOR 2015

1999. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement providing details of the information requests made to the Council under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004, during the course of 2015. A statistical report detailing the enquiries the Council had received during 2015 was appended to the report.

The report explained that the Act and the Regulations provided a public right of access to the information which the Council held. The statistical report appended to the report highlighted the continuing significant rise in requests the Council had received and explained how it had performed in dealing with those requests.

It was noted that during the course of 2015, the Council including the Community Health and Care Partnership, the Health and Social Care Partnership Integration Joint Board and East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust had dealt with 789 requests under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and 222 requests under the Environmental Information Regulations (Scotland) Act 2004, giving a total of 1,011 requests.

The Cabinet, having heard the Council's Records Manager provide clarification on a number of issues associated with the processing of requests by the Council, noted the terms of the report.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE RENEWABLE ENERGY FUND

2000. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 18 February 2016 (Page 1793, Item 1915 refers), when it was agreed amongst other things to approve in principle the establishment of a new East Renfrewshire Renewable Energy Fund to replace the Whitelee Wind Farm Fund from later in 2016, the Cabinet considered a report by the Clerk to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee reporting on the outcome of the deliberations at the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 3 March 2016 where following a “call in” the proposals to establish the Fund had been received.

Councillor Fletcher welcomed Councillor Wallace, Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to the meeting and invited him to present the report to the Cabinet.

Councillor Wallace was heard further regarding the report in the course of which he referred to the outcome of the discussions that had taken place at the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in response to the recommendations that had been approved by the Cabinet. The main issues that had been discussed were in relation to the Cabinet's recommendations that there would no longer be priority preference to settlements with turbines; the cessation of the small grant fund; the proposed change of the intervention rate from 87.5% to 75%; core council services being eligible to apply for funding; ring fencing of funding; and that a review of the Fund be held in 5 years.

Whilst referring to the priority preference to settlements with wind turbines, Councillor Wallace stated that the objective of the original scheme was to mitigate the impact and effects of the Whitelee Wind Farm on those closest to it and therefore the committee had recommended that sight should not be lost of this aim when implementing the new arrangements. In terms of the small grant fund, the committee had recommended that this should continue with access to it widened to cover the whole of East Renfrewshire, and for the existence of the fund to be widely publicised to encourage applications.

Councillor Wallace also responded to the Cabinet's recommendation to change the intervention rate to a maximum of 75%. He stated that the committee's recommendation was that it should remain at 87.5% as this would not preclude grants being awarded at 75%. He also indicated that the committee accepted the Cabinet's recommendation in relation to the eligibility of core council services being able to apply for funding. In response to the Cabinet's recommendation that £40,000 be ring-fenced annually to fund Council-led initiatives in order to alleviate fuel poverty and further improve energy efficiency in identified properties, the committee had recommended that this be subject to the focus of the initiative on alleviating fuel poverty and the promotion of energy efficiency being to help those in most need of support irrespective of where they were based geographically. Furthermore, implementation of the initiative should be formally reviewed by the Cabinet after a period of 2 years from when the initiative was up and running. Finally, he stated that the committee had recommended a further review of the full scheme after a period of 5 years and that otherwise it had agreed with the other recommendations that had been made by the Cabinet;

Councillor Fletcher, on behalf of the Cabinet, thanked Councillor Wallace for his presentation.

The Cabinet, having heard Councillor Waters as Convener for the Environment respond to the presentation by Councillor Wallace, and following consideration of the recommendations of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee arising from the call-in of the Cabinet's decisions on the East Renfrewshire Renewable Energy Fund, agreed to accept the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.

AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE INVESTIGATION ON FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY GROUPS

2001. The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, reporting on the investigation by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on Funding for Community and Voluntary Groups. A copy of the committee's final report and executive summary of its investigation was appended to the report.

Councillor Fletcher invited Councillor Wallace, Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to present the report to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet, having heard Councillor Fletcher thank Councillor Wallace for his presentation, agreed that a response be prepared to the committee's investigation into Funding for Community and Voluntary Groups.

CHAIR