

MINUTE VOLUME

30 JUNE 2021

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MINUTE
of
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Minute of virtual meeting held at 7.00pm on 28 April 2021.

Present:

Provost Jim Fletcher	Councillor Annette Ireland
Deputy Provost Betty Cunningham	Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Paul Aitken	Councillor David Macdonald
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Angela Convery	Councillor Stewart Miller
Councillor Danny Devlin	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; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Julie Murray, Chief Officer - Health and Social Care Partnership; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Sharon Dick, Head of HR and Corporate Services; Louise Pringle, Head of Communities, Revenue and Business Change; Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Graeme Smith, Communications Manager; Kathryn McCormack, HR Manager; Jamie Reid, Communities and Strategic Insight Senior Manager; Claire Coburn, Strategic Services Lead Officer; Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1621. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

MINUTE OF MEETING OF COUNCIL – 25 FEBRUARY 2021

1622. The Council considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 25 February 2021, subject to an amendment to the date of the meeting from 2020 to 2021.

MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 15 MARCH 2021

1623. The Council considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 15 March 2021.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES

1624. The Council considered and approved the Minutes of the meetings of the undernoted, except as otherwise referred to in items 1625 and 1626 below:-

- (a) Cabinet – 4 March 2021
- (b) Planning Applications Committee – 10 March 2021
- (c) Local Review Body – 10 March 2021
- (d) Education Committee – 11 March 2021
- (e) Audit & Scrutiny Committee – 11 March 2021
- (f) Licensing Committee – 16 March 2021
- (g) Audit & Scrutiny Committee – 18 March 2021
- (h) Cabinet – 1 April 2021
- (i) Local Review Body – 7 April 2021
- (j) Licensing 13 April 2021
- (k) Cabinet – 15 April 2021
- (l) Education Committee – 22 April 2021
- (m) Appointments Committee – 26 April 2021

CABINET – 4 MARCH 2021 – CROOKFUR PLAYING FIELDS

1625. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of 4 March 2021 (Page 1444, Item 1562 refers), Councillor Grant requested clarification on the consultation to be carried out in respect of the lease and what community benefit would be delivered. In response, the Director of Environment indicated that these matters had been fully set out in the report to Cabinet and the Culture and Leisure Trust had been fully consulted on the lease of the ground. Furthermore, he explained that sports clubs did provide community benefit by engaging with young people and giving them a place to socialise and to keep fit.

Councillor Swift sought further clarification on this matter, in terms of how it would be guaranteed that the public would still have access to the playing fields for recreational purposes. The Director of Environment confirmed that those matters would be resolved through the terms of the lease agreement.

LOCAL REVIEW BODY – 7 APRIL 2021

1626. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Local Review Body of 7 April (Page 1492, Item 1602 refers), it was noted that the reference to 2 Mansefield Crescent should, in fact, refer to 42 Mansefield Crescent.

The Council noted this correction.

NOTICE OF MOTION – FIELDS IN TRUST STATUS FOR KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELD

1627. In accordance with Standing Order 25, the following notice of motion had been submitted by Councillor Wallace, seconded by Councillor Grant.

“This motion requests that East Renfrewshire Council instruct officers to proactively seek Fields in Trust status for the recreational area commonly known as the ‘lower playing fields and woods’ (Area 2 – see attached map) that adjoin the existing King George V Playing Field (Giffnock), known as ‘Huntly Park’ (Area 1 – see attached map).

Huntly Park was transferred by the First District Council to itself as trustees for King George's Field Foundation (King George V pitches). This dedicates the area in all time coming for the purposes of a playing field for public recreation. Under the terms of the agreement, no buildings shall be erected except residences for park keepers, gardeners or pavilions, dressing rooms or shelters in connection with recreation purposes and East Renfrewshire Council cannot sell or dispose of any part without consent of Scottish Committee of the National Playing Fields Association.

The lower playing fields and associated woods are not afforded the same protection, leaving them to an uncertain future, where their inestimable value as a resource that has helped and may continue to help underpin the health and wellbeing of countless generations, remains under constant threat of development in pursuit of the short-term interests of just one."

No amendment to the motion having been submitted, Provost Fletcher invited Councillor Wallace to speak to the terms of the motion in the course of which he made a short presentation highlighting the work of Fields in Trust and the historical significance of the site. Further, Councillor Wallace highlighted the work of the Friends of Huntly Park community group in maintaining and improving the site for public use.

The motion received widespread comments of support from the Members present in the course of which some of the work already undertaken by the Council through the Local Development Plan to protect the site was highlighted.

Thereafter in the absence of an amendment, the Council approved the terms of the motion.

STATEMENTS BY CONVENERS/REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT BOARDS/COMMITTEES

1628. The Council received the following statement.

Councillor Bamforth – Integration Joint Board

Councillor Bamforth reported on the most recent meeting of the Integration Joint Board (IJB) held on 17 March 2021. She explained that the budget for 2021/2022 had been agreed as part of which the significant financial challenges facing the IJB had been recognised. The Chief Officer had given an overview of the review of adult social care with 53 recommendations, centred around human rights, having been made. An interim Strategic Plan and Carer's Strategy was also agreed and a seminar for IJB members would take place in June which would focus on Carers' issues. A presentation on addiction issues had been given and a report on the Health and Social Care Partnership's response to the pandemic had also been considered.

The Council noted the statement.

EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS MAINSTREAMING

1629. The Council considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, seeking approval of the East Renfrewshire Council Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Report.

The report explained that The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Scotland) Regulations 2012 placed a requirement on the Council to publish an Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Report every 4 years with details of those matters to be considered being set

out. In addition, the Council was required to publish a progress report every 2 years on the equality outcomes it had set and progress made towards mainstreaming the general equality duty into its functions. A copy of the Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Report accompanied the report.

It was noted that the reporting period for the report had fallen within the pandemic and that as a member of the Scottish Council Equality Network the Council had raised concerns about the April 2021 deadline for setting new outcomes. However the deadline had remained unchanged and so all engagement activity had taken place virtually and within a limited timescale.

Particular highlights raised were the work of the Equality Officer Working Group, the roll out of improved training, work on the gender pay gap and information on employees' equality status. Work around LGBT+ issues were also highlighted.

Welcoming the report. Councillor O'Kane commended the team involved in delivering it in such difficult circumstances.

The Council:-

- (a) acknowledged the duties of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Scotland) Regulations 2012; and
- (b) approved the content of the Equality and Human Rights Report, including the new Equality Outcomes, prior to publication.

PROVOST

MINUTE
of
AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minute of virtual meeting held at 2.00pm on 29 April 2021.

Present:

Councillor Stewart Miller (Chair)	Councillor Charlie Gilbert
Councillor Barbara Grant (Vice Chair)	Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Angela Convery	Councillor Jim Swift

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Attending:

Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Michelle Blair, Chief Auditor; Linda Hutchison, Clerk to the Committee; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

John Cornett, Louisa Yule and Morven Fraser, Audit Scotland.

Apology:

Councillor Annette Ireland.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1630. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

CHAIR'S REPORT

1631. Councillor Miller referred to the recent sad death of Ross Mitchell, Senior Auditor, who had attended the committee on a number of occasions, paying tribute to his work within the Council since 1996. On behalf of the committee, he offered condolences to Mr Mitchell's family and former colleagues.

The committee endorsed the tribute paid to Mr Mitchell.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL – ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2020/21

1632. The committee considered a report by the External Auditor regarding the 2020/21 Annual Audit Plan. The Plan provided an overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit to be carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs), the Code of Audit Practice and other relevant guidance. It was confirmed that the Plan set out the work necessary to allow the External Auditor to provide an independent report on the annual accounts and meet the wider scope requirements of public sector audit, including the audit of Best Value.

Reference was made to the way in which the wider scope of public audit contributed to assessments and conclusions on the audit dimensions of financial management; financial sustainability; governance and transparency; and value for money. Having commented on the impact of COVID-19 on society, public finances, public audit work and related issues, the report made reference to how added value was achieved for the Council through external audit work. It was explained that the aim was now to issue the independent auditor's report and Annual Audit Report by an updated deadline of 30 November 2021, but also acknowledged this may not be achievable due to ongoing pressures and uncertainties caused by COVID-19 which required a pragmatic and flexible approach to be taken on audit work. Progress would be discussed between External Audit and management as necessary.

Based on discussions with staff, attendance at committee meetings and a review of supporting information, the report highlighted the main financial statement risks and issues as well as risks of a wider dimensional nature identified for the Council, and related audit work planned. It was clarified that there was not considered to be a significant risk of fraud regarding either revenue or expenditure. Various reports to be prepared, including the Annual Audit Report, were referred to, as were the audit of Trusts registered as Scottish charities, the audit fee, and the responsibilities of the committee, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) and the appointed Auditor.

Having summarised the approach to be adopted on the Annual Accounts, it was clarified that an opinion on them would be given on a range of issues, including whether they gave a true and fair view and were properly prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and legislative requirements.

Further issues commented on included other information in the Annual Accounts to be reviewed and reported on; materiality values; and the annual assessment of the Internal Audit function to ensure it operated in accordance with the main requirements of Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). Having referred to the reliance it was proposed to place on Internal Audit's work and related issues, detailed reference was made to the four audit dimensions framing the wider scope of public sector audit requirements, conclusions on which would help contribute to an overall assessment and assurance on Best Value. Whilst making further comments on Best Value, the report highlighted that the work planned during the year would focus on follow-up of recommendations made previously in the areas of financial planning and financial governance and resource management and equalities. More generally, issues on independence and objectivity; and quality control were commented on.

Whilst commenting on key aspects of the report, Mr Cornett referred to the significant audit risks itemised in Exhibit 1 which required specific audit testing and on which an update would be provided in the Annual Audit Report, clarifying that a number were not specific to East Renfrewshire. He reiterated that potential existed for the Annual Accounts timetable to change due to challenges and uncertainties linked to COVID-19, referring to the intention to discuss progress with the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) and Chief Accountant. He stressed that if the 30 November deadline was not met, this would not impact negatively on the Council as it would be made clear that this responsibility lay with External Audit.

Regarding financial sustainability, Mr Cornett explained that the Council was not expected to know the full impact of the pandemic at present, which remained to be fully quantified, but that audit work would consider the Council's ongoing approach to the way forward.

In response to Councillor Miller who highlighted the extent to which reference was made in the Plan to estimated valuations such as regarding property, plant and equipment, commented that these could depend on who was valuing an asset, and referred to the need for a balanced approach on this, Mr Cornett referred to the market valuation of assets and how the property market did not react as quickly to changing circumstances compared to stocks and shares for example. The Chief Accountant reported that the view of the Council's property advisor was that COVID-19 should not have a large impact on property valuations.

Making further reference to financial sustainability, Councillor Swift sought clarification on how close the Council was to closing its £8.5m funding gap. The Chief Accountant confirmed that the 2021/22 budget had been agreed and that the Council had a good track record of implementing planned savings proposals, but that this did not mean there would not be budget issues to address in 2022/23 and subsequently.

The committee noted the 2020/21 Annual Audit Plan and current timetable for the publication of related documents, including the Annual Audit Report for 2020/21.

NATIONAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SCOTLAND FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2019/20

1633. The committee considered a report by the Clerk on the publication by Audit Scotland of a report entitled *Local Government in Scotland – Financial Overview 2019/20*, which under the committee's specialisation arrangements had been sent to Councillors Convery and Ireland for review. The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) had been asked to provide comments and a copy of her feedback was attached to the report.

It was explained that the Audit Scotland report covered councils' income; their financial position; the financial outlook for local authorities; and an Integration Joint Board (IJB) overview, on each of which the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) had provided comments. The audit report had found that revenue funding from the Scottish Government, the largest element of local authority income, had increased by 5.4% in 2019/20, equating to 3.4% in real terms, almost half of which related to the introduction of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare. It was clarified that since 2013/14 revenue funding for local government had fallen by 4.7% in real terms whilst funding for other Scottish Government funded sectors had fallen by only 0.8%, with a growing proportion of local government funding committed to national policy initiatives which reduced local flexibility. The report explained how Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) was calculated, based on factors such as population, deprivation, crime and rurality. Although the Council had previously benefitted from GAE distribution due to local population growth, there had been an increased focus in recent years on such other factors, with East Renfrewshire now receiving a relatively low level of income from grants and NHS funding reflecting the area's relatively low levels of deprivation.

Whilst commenting on the financial position, the report made reference to planned savings. It was explained that COVID-19 had not had a material impact on the Council in 2019/20, but significant financial impacts had been felt during 2020/21, reasons for which were summarised. These were expected to be covered by Government grants and use of fiscal flexibilities. Details of the impact on 2021/22 were emerging and would be carefully monitored.

Reference was made to the use of reserves, such as how £4.3m and £3.5m of those had been used to help bridge budget gaps in 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively, in addition to which the

Council had agreed to use a further £3.465m for the same purpose in 2021/22. This would leave the unallocated general reserve level at 2.2% as at March 2022, which was still within the acceptable 2-4% level. Whilst commenting on capital expenditure, the report explained how projects were funded and related issues, and that new investment was focussed mainly on early learning and childcare, City Deal projects, roads and new housing stock. COVID-19 had impacted on some capital projects and related timescales in terms of slippage. In 2019/20 the Council had been the second lowest in Scotland in terms of debt as a percentage of annual revenue budget, but its net debt had increased by 14% and would continue to rise in future reflecting ambitious capital plans.

Regarding the financial outlook, it was reported that total revenue funding to councils in 2020/21 had increased by 1.4% in real terms and 3.4% in cash terms, but the increase was largely ring-fenced for national education and IJB commitments. The Council faced a 6% funding gap compared to the Scottish average of 3% due to range of factors, with various means adopted to close the gap. While multi-year budget planning had been standard practice for some time, UK and Scottish Government settlement figures had only been provided for a single year for 2021/22 with the budget position further exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19. Accordingly, the Council had agreed to set a single year budget for that year and hoped that national multi-year settlements would be published from 2022/23 onwards, allowing it to resume its preferred 3 year budget approach.

Related issues were commented on including medium-term planning at departmental level, the publication of updated higher level financial plans, and how COVID-19 related issues had been monitored as information on pressures and funding streams emerged. The latest estimate was that the funding pressure amounted to almost £9m excluding IJB services, with further funding having been announced which it was understood would cover these pressures in 2020/21. The report commented on other COVID-19 related financial matters, including ongoing financial pressures as the economic and social impacts of the pandemic unwind, £2m of capital receipts already earmarked to help address COVID-19 pressures, and how the position would be kept under review when developing the next 3 year revenue and 10 year capital budget plans. Having referred to a real term reduction in capital grant of 30% between 2013/14 and 2020/21 and confirmed that the Council's capital grant had not increased for 2021/22, the report explained that these factors together with COVID-19 pressures would constrain the Council's ability to invest further in local infrastructure despite interest rates remaining low and continuing work with regional partners to maximise the impact of projects.

The Audit Scotland report had also included an overview on IJBs for 2019/20, which had responsibility for the operation, finances and governance of integrated health and care services rather than councils. It was explained that East Renfrewshire IJB had reported a modest deficit of £0.065m after using £0.519m of reserves to meet unachieved savings, and that the total savings challenge for 2019/20 had been £3.686m, £3.097m of which was within social care and £0.585m within health. Other issues commented on included the accumulation and use of reserves, the 2020/21 budget set by the IJB, COVID-19 related costs quantified for that year which were to be fully funded, and the funding of IJBs more generally. It was reported that the IJB had set its 2021/22 budget in March 2021 although there were many unknowns remaining to be faced as part of the pandemic response and post COVID-19 landscape which would be discussed throughout the year.

It was confirmed that the Chief Officer and Chief Financial Officer remained unchanged since the IJB had been established, putting East Renfrewshire's IJB in a stronger leadership and governance position than some others. The report explained that significant work had been undertaken prior to the pandemic to review the Integration Scheme in line with the legislative requirement for a five year review which, as for others, had been paused due to COVID-19. Work would recommence in 2021/22.

The Chief Accountant commented on and highlighted key aspects of the report, including the pressures the Council continued to face to produce a balanced budget, capital expenditure and related borrowing issues, the financial outlook, service demands, and long-term financial planning.

Councillor Miller commented that the financial outlook for the Council was not positive unless central grant funding significantly increased. Having heard the Chief Accountant, in response to Councillor Grant, refer to the Council's contribution to the "Floors" arrangement in terms of funding, Councillor Convery thanked the officers involved in providing a very thorough and informative report.

The committee agreed to note the report and related comments made.

CONSULTANCY EXPENDITURE AND RELATED LOG

1634. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 25 June 2020 (Page 1205, Item 1296 refers), when the committee had noted a report on the log in relation to the appointment of consultants for the 2019/20 financial year, and agreed that further such reports should be submitted to the committee annually after the end of each financial year, the committee considered a report by the Clerk referring to discussions by the committee thus far on such expenditure, and providing feedback on consultancy expenditure for the 2020/21 financial year. A copy of the log was appended to the report, it being noted that with log was also published on the corporate procurement section of the Council's website and updated on a 6-monthly basis.

Councillor Swift proposed seeking confirmation if every contract awarded for consultancy had been awarded in accordance with the guidance in place for this or if any contracts for consultancy had been awarded above a threshold or had migrated towards being above one. He suggested that it would also be useful if future reports on the log provided feedback on consultancy grouped by department and section for ease of review. Both he and Councillor Miller welcomed that information on consultancy was now in the public domain in the interests of transparency.

The committee agreed:-

- (a) that the Clerk seek confirmation if every contract awarded for consultancy had been awarded in accordance with the guidance in place for this or if any had been awarded above a threshold or had migrated towards being above one and circulate feedback on this on receipt;
- (b) to request that future reports on the log provide feedback on consultancy grouped by department and section for ease of review; and
- (c) otherwise, to note the report.

AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLANS 2020/21 AND 2021/22

1635. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 21 January 2021 (Page 1400, Item 1511 refers), when the committee had noted performance against the committee's updated 2020/21 Work Plan at that stage, agreed that development and implementation of the Plan should continue, and also agreed that a further report on performance against it and on the 2021/22 Work Plan be submitted to a future meeting, the committee considered a report by

the Clerk providing a further update on 2020/21 Work Plan, and seeking approval of the 2021/22 Work Plan to the extent it had been developed thus far. A copy of the updated 2020/21 Work Plan and the proposed 2021/22 Plan formed Appendices 1 and 2 to the report.

It was clarified that both plans had been prepared in accordance with the Scrutiny and Review Guide approved by the Council in June 2019 to help the committee schedule and prioritise its work and in the interests of providing transparency, openness and evidence of the Council's ongoing commitment to demonstrating Best Value and continuous improvement. Having referred to the range of issues considered by the committee, which included recurring reports and those prepared on External Audit reports, the report clarified that the plans were effectively live documents which had been and would be added to as required, such as to include reference to specific investigations and work which the committee agreed to pursue.

The report provided a statement on progress as at 31 March 2021 against the 2020/21 Work Plan, including in-depth work pursued and, for clarity, notes on various issues such as ongoing matters to be considered during 2021/22 and beyond. The draft Work Plan for 2021/22, to the extent it had been possible to develop it, was also presented. Regarding 2021/22, the report summarised the position on the publication of external audit reports, highlighting that Audit Scotland was maintaining a pragmatic and flexible approach which would enable change at short notice as new issues emerged, or current risks changed in significance. The External Auditor had confirmed that there had been some changes to planned reports for the next year with some publication dates remaining to be finalised. The committee's 2021/22 Work Plan would be updated further, in due course, when the position was clarified further.

As had been the case in the past since the committee was first established, it was proposed that a short, focussed report be prepared overviewing work the committee had undertaken during the current Administration prior to the local government elections in 2022. Having clarified that it was recommended that audit committees review their effectiveness periodically through self-evaluation, a view endorsed by the committee in August 2017 when it had agreed that this was useful to help analyse performance and allow improvements to be considered, and had supported a self-evaluation being carried out at least once during the life of this Council, it was proposed that this work also be progressed prior to May 2022.

The committee, having heard the Clerk highlight key aspects of the report and the Chief Auditor confirm why it had not been possible to submit the Internal Audit Strategic Plan to this meeting:-

- (a) noted performance against the committee's 2020/21 Annual Work Plan;
- (b) approved the committee's 2021/22 Annual Work Plan, to the extent it had been developed;
- (c) agreed that, in due course, a short, focussed report on key aspects of work undertaken by the committee since 2017 be prepared, and that a further self-evaluation exercise be completed as part of the 2021/22 Work Plan;
- (d) agreed that the development of the 2021/22 Work Plan continue, with an update submitted to a future meeting; and
- (e) noted that progress in delivering the 2021/22 Work Plan would be reviewed in due course, with a progress report submitted to a future meeting.

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 13 May 2021.

Present:

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

Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Alan Lafferty

Councillor Buchanan, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Gillian McCarney, Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer); Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillor Paul O’Kane.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1636. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

LAND AT 48-58 MAIN STREET, NEILSTON

1637. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of 12 March 2020 (Page 1149, Item 1241 refers), when the Cabinet, amongst other things, had agreed to the transfer of land to the front of the shops at 48-58 Main Street Neilston from the shopkeepers to the Council at nil value, the Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment, advising that the shopkeepers had reconsidered and no longer wished to dispose of the ground to the Council as previously outlined.

The Cabinet noted that the shopkeepers no longer wished to transfer the land to the Council.

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT COVID BUSINESS SUPPORT – LOCAL AUTHORITY DISCRETIONARY FUND

1638. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment providing an update on the development and implementation of the East Renfrewshire Council model for the distribution of the Scottish Government’s Local Authority Discretionary Fund.

The report outlined that East Renfrewshire Council had administered over £17 million of COVID-19 business support grants since March 2020.

It was explained that the Council was originally allocated £539,846 from the Scottish Government's Local Authority Discretionary Fund in December 2020, and that following agreement by the Council, the Director of Environment in consultation with the Leader of the Council had prepared an eligibility and distribution scheme for the fund locally. Details of the approved scheme were circulated to all Elected Members in February 2021.

It was further explained that in March 2021 the Scottish Government had announced additional funds to Local Authorities for the Local Authority Discretionary Fund to enable them to provide additional support for businesses in their area. East Renfrewshire Council had been allocated a further £1,254,281.

For the additional funds received in March 2021 it was proposed that top-up payments would be made to local eligible businesses who had already received support from the Local Authority Discretionary Fund. Broad details of the previously approved eligibility criteria for the fund and proposed payments accompanied the report.

Councillor Bamforth requested information on the businesses who had been refused or had been found not to be eligible for the Local Authority Discretionary Fund to be circulated to members of the Cabinet.

Having heard from the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) and following various Members welcome the additional funding for businesses during this extremely difficult time, the Cabinet:-

- a) approved the proposal that the additional grant received of £1.254 million be used for top-up payments to those eligible businesses that had already received a grant; and
- b) noted that Council staff had administered over £17 million of COVID-19 business support grants since March 2020.

GLASGOW CITY REGION CITY DEAL UPDATE

1639. In view of the late circulation of the report, Councillor Buchanan proposed that consideration of the report be continued to the next meeting of the Cabinet scheduled on 3 June 2021.

Having heard the Director of Environment in support of the proposal for continuation, the Cabinet agreed to continue the consideration of the report to the meeting of the Cabinet on 3 June 2021 to allow time for Cabinet and other elected members to review the paper.

ROADS RESURFACING PROGRAMME 2021/22

1640. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment, which advised of the major additional Roads Works Programme in relation to Carriageway and Footway Resurfacing for 2021/22.

The report outlined that the 2021/22 proposed roads works programme would use the additional capital resources of £3 million made available to improve the roads condition across the authority. The majority of the additional funding would be directed towards C class and unclassified roads. A proposed Roads Works Programme covering major carriageway and footway resurfacing accompanied the report.

Having heard from the Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer), Members welcomed the additional capital resources of £3 million to improve the roads condition across the authority.

In response to Councillor Devlin who raised the poor condition of some roads held on the Housing Revenue Account and whether they could be included in the General Fund Programme, the Director of Environment explained that he had sought legal advice which confirmed that this was not permitted. He advised that work had started looking into the possibility of the transfer of roads held on the Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund.

Members were in agreement that a report should be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet to consider options for the possible transfer of roads held on the Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund.

The Cabinet approved the roads resurfacing works programme.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Minute of virtual meeting held at 2.00pm on 19 May 2021.

Present:

Councillor Annette Ireland (Chair)
Provost Jim Fletcher
Councillor Jim McLean

Councillor Stewart Miller
Councillor Jim Swift

Councillor Ireland in the Chair

Attending:

Graham Shankland, Planning and Building Standards Manager; Derek Scott, Planning Officer, Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer, and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Angela Convery and Betty Cunningham.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1641. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

NOTIFICATION OF A PLANNING APPEAL AND AN APPEAL DECISION

1642. The committee considered a report by the Director of Environment, advising of the receipt of a planning appeal relating to the Change of Use of land for outdoor pre and after school at the site Adjacent East of Williamwood High School, Eaglesham Road, Clarkston. The application was refused planning permission at the Planning Applications Committee on 10 March 2021.

The report also explained that an appeal to the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) regarding the decision of the Council to refuse planning permission for the formation of a driveway, realign front boundary and adjacent footway, including lowering of ground levels at 29 East Kilbride Road, Busby had been dismissed.

Councillor Miller having noted this outcome, Councillor Ireland referred to the DPEA Reporter's findings that the principle of a new direct access would gain no support from the guidance within Designing Streets and that the visibility splays required could not be met.

The committee noted the report.

APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

1643. The committee considered reports by the Director of Environment on applications for planning permission requiring consideration by the committee.

The Planning and Building Standards Manager advised that application 2021/0110/TP – Subdivision and change of use of retail unit (class 1) to create 3 units (1 x class 1 - shops/retail, 1 x sui generis - hot foot takeaway 1 x class 3 - cafe/restaurant) and associated shopfront alterations at site American Golf 6 Fenwick Road Giffnock East Renfrewshire G46 6AN would be continued to a future meeting of the Planning Applications Committee following further discussion with the Applicant, Planning Officer and Roads Service.

Thereafter it was agreed that the applications be determined as indicated at Appendix 1 accompanying this Minute, particular reference being made to the following:-

- (i) 2021/0076/TP - Change of use from retail unit (class 1) to hot food takeaway (sui generis) at Men Zone 47 Eastwoodmains Road Giffnock

Having heard the Planning and Building Standards Manager refer to the significant number of representations received and provide details of the proposal, Councillor Miller referenced the appeal against a similar proposal in the parade of shops which was refused by the then Secretary of State for Scotland in 1989 and also enquired as to the type of outlet detailed in the proposed application.

The Planning and Building Standards Manager advised that relevance to the previous appeal was very limited, if any, and that the application should be based on the current proposed application and current planning policy. The Planning and Building Standards Manager also confirmed that the application was for a takeaway pizzeria.

Councillor Miller enquired as to the route of appeal for the application should it be refused in response to which the Planning and Building Standards Manager advised this would be to Scottish Ministers through the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA).

Provost Fletcher was heard in relation to the recommendation to approve planning permission for the proposed application. He drew attention to the substantial number of objections received and the reasons for objecting namely litter, vermin, anti-social behaviour, limited car parking and road safety. Provost Fletcher also referred to the appeal to the Secretary of State for Scotland in 1989 and that this was dismissed for similar reasons to the objections received for the proposed application. He highlighted that Eastwoodmains Road was an extremely busy road, and expressed concern that insufficient parking was a concern for road safety in addition to access to the site.

Councillor McLean mirrored Provost Fletcher's concerns regarding access and insufficient parking at the site given the nature of the proposed business.

Councillor Swift appreciated the concerns already raised with regards to parking and access onto Eastwoodmains Road although acknowledged that the site had lain vacant for a significant period of time.

Councillor Ireland sought confirmation from the Planning and Building Standards Manager that Policy SG9 had been met. In reply, the Planning and Building Standards Manager advised that it was considered that the proposal complied with the terms of Policy SG9 of the adopted East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan in that the site had been sufficiently marketed and had lain vacant for over six months.

Councillor Miller noted that the previous use of the site was as a gentlemen's hairdresser, which had closed during previous COVID-19 restrictions. Whilst recognising that the site had lain vacant for some time, Councillor Miller also referred to the issue of insufficient parking.

Councillor Ireland noted the issues raised by shop owners with regard to the character of the area although not wishing a unit to sit empty moved the recommendation to approve the application subject to the conditions as outlined in the report. Councillor Swift seconded the motion.

Provost Fletcher, seconded by Councillor McLean, moved as an amendment that planning permission be refused on the grounds of roads safety as a result of insufficient parking and difficult access to the site.

On a vote being taken Councillors Ireland, Miller and Swift voted for the motion.

Provost Fletcher and Councillor McLean voted for the amendment.

There being 3 votes for the motion and 2 votes for the amendment the motion was accordingly declared carried and the application approved subject to conditions as outlined in the report.

- (i) 2021/0183/TP – Erection of single flat roof extension to rear single storey front extension; installation of flue at 4 Wigton Avenue, Newton Mearns.

The Planning and Building Standards Manager referred to the number of representations received and provided details of the proposal brought to committee in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, as the applicant was an officer within the Planning and Buildings Standards Service.

In response to a question from Councillor Ireland regarding the positioning of the proposed front/side extension, the Planning and Building Standards Manager confirmed this was within a metre of the side boundary although access to the site was maintained.

Provost Fletcher sought to confirm that the Planning Officer's recommendation would have been to approve the application regardless of whether the applicant was an officer within the Planning and Buildings Standards Service. In reply, the Planning and Building Standards Manager, whilst recognising the concerns of neighbours, confirmed that the recommendation would have been to grant planning permission for the reasons set out in the report.

Councillor Miller enquired regarding the ownership of the existing boundary hedge intended for removal and if the roof overhang was positioned at the back of the rear extension. The Planning and Building Standards Manager advised that removal of the hedge would require the permission of the owner(s) and confirmed that the roof overhang was at the back of the rear extension.

Councillor Swift noted that the proposed front/side extension was contrary to Supplementary Planning Guidance Householder Design Guide in that it was not set back at least one metre from the side boundary.

Councillor Ireland moved the recommendation to approve the application subject to conditions as outlined in the report. Provost Fletcher seconded the motion.

Councillor Swift, seconded by Councillor Miller, moved as an amendment that planning permission be refused on the grounds that the proposed front/side extension was contrary to Supplementary Planning Guidance Householder Design Guide in that it was not set back at least one metre from the side boundary.

Councillor Swift restated his earlier position that the application was a breach of the Supplementary Planning Guidance and for this reason the application should be refused. Councillor Miller and Councillor McLean supported this position.

On a vote being taken Councillor Ireland and Provost Fletcher voted for the motion.

Councillors Swift, Miller and McLean voted for the amendment.

There being 2 votes for the motion and 3 votes for the amendment, the amendment was accordingly declared carried and the application was refused on the grounds that the proposed front/side extension was contrary to Supplementary Planning Guidance Householder Design Guide in that it was not set back at least one metre from the side boundary.

CHAIR

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997
AS AMENDED BY THE PLANNING ETC (SCOTLAND) ACT 2006
PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997**

Index of applications under the above acts considered by Planning Applications Committee on
19.05.2021

Reference No: 2021/0076/TP

Ward: 3

Applicant:

Trattoria 47 Limited C/o Blackadders LLP
6/1 Mercantile Chambers
53 Bothwell Street
Glasgow
Scotland
G2 6TS

Agent:

Natalie Righetti
Parkside
83 Skirving Street
Glasgow
Scotland
G41 3BF

Site: Men Zone 47 Eastwoodmains Road Giffnock East Renfrewshire G46 6PW

Description: Change of use from retail unit (class 1) to hot food takeaway (sui generis)

Decision: Approved

Reference No: 2021/0110/TP

Ward: 3

Applicant:

Mr Andrew Forrest
19 The Loaning
Giffnock
Scotland
G46 6SF

Agent:

William Ewing
226 West George Street
Glasgow
Scotland
G2 2PQ

Site: American Golf 6 Fenwick Road Giffnock East Renfrewshire G46 6AN

Description: Subdivision and change of use of retail unit (class 1) to create 3 units (1 x class 1 - shops/retail, 1 x sui generis - hot foot takeway 1 x class 3 - cafe/restaurant) and associated shopfront alterations

Decision: Application 2021/0110/TP to be continued to a future meeting of the Planning Applications Committee.

Reference No: 2021/0183/TP

Ward: 2

Applicant:

Mrs Gillian Morgan
4 Wigton Avenue
Newton Mearns
Scotland
G776JG

Agent:

Malcolm McCallie
14 Ballingall Drive
GLENROTHES
Scotland
KY6 3QD

Site: 4 Wigton Avenue Newton Mearns East Renfrewshire G77 6JG

Description: Erection of single storey flat roof extension to rear single storey front extension; installation of flue.

Decision: Refused

MINUTE
of
LOCAL REVIEW BODY

Minute of virtual meeting held at 2.30pm on 19 May 2021.

Present:

Councillor Annette Ireland (Chair)
Provost Jim Fletcher

Councillor Stewart Miller
Councillor Jim Swift

Councillor Ireland in the Chair

Attending:

Andrew Bennie, Planning Adviser; Siobhan Wilson, Solicitor (Legal Adviser); Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer (Clerk) and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Angela Convery, Betty Cunningham and Jim McLean.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1644. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

NOTICE OF REVIEW – REVIEW 2021/04 – SUB-DIVISION OF FEU AND ERECTION OF DWELLING HOUSE AT MAIDENHILL LODGE, AYR ROAD, NEWTON MEARNS (REF NO: 2020/0598/TP)

1645. The Local Review Body considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted by Mr E Clark and Miss K. MacLennan against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in respect of the sub-division of feu and erection of dwelling house at Maidenhill Lodge, Ayr Road, Newton Mearns.

The decision had been made in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation made in terms of Section 43A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

The Local Review Body, having considered the information previously circulated, agreed that it had sufficient information to determine the review without further procedure.

The Planning Adviser outlined the planning application and reasons for refusal as outlined by the Appointed Officer in the decision notice.

1532

Having heard the Planning Adviser and following discussion, Councillor Ireland moved that the Local Review Body overturn the decision to refuse planning permission as the application would not be contrary to Policy D1 of the adopted East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan, this was seconded by Councillor Miller. All other Members were in agreement.

The Local Review Body therefore agreed that the Appointed Officer's decision as set out in the decision notice of 10 February 2021 be overturned and planning permission approved subject to standard conditions.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 3 June 2021.

Present:

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

Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Alan Lafferty

Councillor Buchanan, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Gerry Mahon, Chief Officer - Legal and Procurement; Louise Pringle, Head of Communities, Revenues & Change; Candy Millard, Head of Strategic Services; Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Murray Husband, Head of Digital and Community Safety; Jaime Reid, Strategic Insight and Communities Senior Manager; Graeme Smith, Communications Manager; Morag Brown, Policy and Improvement Manager; Robert Spencer, Principal Accountant (Revenue); Ricky Taylor, Business Relationship Manager; Kathryn McCormack, HR Manager; Colin Hutton, Senior Communications Officer; Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillor Paul O’Kane.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1646. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK (LGBF) 2019/20 PERFORMANCE

1647. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive providing an overview of the Council’s performance against the national Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicators for the period of 2019/20. It was noted that the report provided a pre-Covid position and therefore the effects and impact of COVID on service performance would become apparent in future LGBF reporting for 2020/21 and beyond.

The report provided a summary of performance with further information included within the Annex. It was noted that the Council was performing well in educational attainment,

recycling, satisfaction with parks and open spaces, minimising delayed discharge from hospitals and residential costs per week for residents aged over 65. Areas for improvement were noted as invoice processing and some of the cost indicators.

In response to a question from Councillor Bamforth on the increase in the cost per attendance at sports facilities from £4.24 in 2018/19 to £5.60 in 2019/20, above the Scottish average of £2.71, the Policy and Improvement Manager, Principal Accountant (Revenue) and Chief Executive advised that the Trust was performing well, and the difference in these figures could be a result of this figure being calculated differently in comparison to other local authorities. The use of outdoor facilities was also a factor to be taken into account. However it was noted that further investigation would be undertaken regarding the calculation of the indicator.

Councillor Buchanan having noted an error in the annex to the report in that the dark grey line on the graph for 'Culture and Leisure: Spotlights' should represent the percentage for Scotland and not East Renfrewshire, he then noted the efficiency value for voids in housing. In reply, the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) outlined that this was a result of an increase in turnover from current council house tenants moving into new council house properties and existing council house properties then being prepared for use again.

In response to Councillor Buchanan's comments on the decrease in invoice payments processing performance, the Head of Communities, Revenues & Change advised that current unaudited figures for 20/21 indicated a 6% improvement in this area following implementation of the new finance system and processes which had caused this initial decrease in performance. The Council was also twelfth in Scotland for processing payments to local firms within 10 days.

Noting the 9.6% of procurement spent on local small/medium enterprises, Councillor Bamforth suggested that improvement was required in this area. The Chief Executive advised that the Economic Development team was focusing on maximising opportunities to encourage local businesses to work with the Council although as East Renfrewshire was predominantly residential in nature with a low business base it would be difficult to improve this indicator significantly.

Councillor Buchanan commended the position of the Council as the top recycling council in Scotland whilst referring to the increasing costs in this area which had resulted in changes to the management of waste including garden waste.

Having welcomed the findings outlined in the report and having heard from the Policy and Improvement Manager, the Cabinet noted the Council's performance against the LGBF indicators and the action being taken by departments to address any performance issues.

UPDATE ON MODERN, AMBITIOUS PROGRAMME (MAP) & DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

1648. The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, which provided an update on the Modern, Ambitious Programme; reviewed the last Digital Strategy and set out the digital priorities for the next 3 years.

Having provided a summary of the work that had already taken place across the Council, the report outlined the Council's 3 priority areas for digital transformation across the next few years. These were noted as: customer experience; business systems and processes; and workforce productivity, particularly through Microsoft 365. These areas would be underpinned by use of service design and user engagement techniques; progress on the

Council's data and insight strategy; a focus on new ways of working beyond the pandemic; and a drive through the Council's workforce plan to develop the Digital, Data and Technology skills of the workforce.

These priorities aligned well with the recommendations of Audit Scotland's recent report on digital progress in local government, as well as the themes of the new national digital strategy. An update on this would be provided to Audit and Scrutiny Committee later in June.

Having heard from the Head of Communities, Revenues & Change, and welcomed the report and significant work in this area, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the good progress across the Modern, Ambitious Programme (MAP) including the core systems, digital and departmental programmes.
- (b) commended the achievements of the Digital Strategy 2016-20 (Annex 1) and noted the impact of the pandemic in accelerating key aspects of our digital delivery to enable our services to keep operating effectively over this challenging period.
- (c) agreed the 3 priority areas of the Council's digital transformation strategy for 2021-24: customer experience; business systems and processes and workforce productivity and that these would be underpinned by a more detailed roadmap for change which would be developed on completion of project prioritisation and resourcing work.

COVID-19 HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT FUNDING 2021/2022

1649. The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, which outlined a proposed 4-tier approach to use over £700K available for use in 2021/22 under the Scottish Government humanitarian support funding to support local people and address the financial hardship caused by the pandemic.

The Head of Communities, Revenues & Change outlined how the funding had been used to date, in consultation with services and Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire, to support local communities.

Having heard the Head of Communities, Revenues & Change further on the proposed 4-tier approach, including short-term spending proposals as set out in Annex 1 accompanying the report, Councillor Devlin sought details of the arrangements currently in place to provide support to third sector organisations. In reply, the Head of Communities, Revenues & Change reported that she would provide Councillor Devlin with an update on the ongoing support and support which has already been provided to the third sector in response to the pandemic.

Elected Members having praised the efforts of Council staff, HSCP and voluntary sector during the pandemic, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the availability of COVID-related Scottish Government funding in 2021/22 for Flexible Support and Financial Insecurity;
- (b) approved the proposed 4-tier approach and proposed budget allocations for use of this funding including:
 - meeting appropriate COVID support needs arising as part of ongoing response in communities;

- progressing a range of internal projects in line with the funding criteria;
 - conducting research and engagement to inform our recovery and renewal strategies and culminating in a community-bid process in the autumn; and
- (c) approved the recommended short-term spending proposals outlined at Annex 1.

EXEMPTION FROM TENDERING – PENTANA PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

1650. The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, seeking an exemption from tendering in accordance with Contract Standing Order 15 (ii) in relation to the procurement of the Pentana performance management system from Ideagen Plc. to cover the period August 2021 to August 2022.

The report outlined that this would allow a managed transition from the web hosted platform to a Council managed database that had scope for further automation in future years, supporting the Council to continue on its journey of improving efficiency. Granting an exemption from tendering would allow the project to provide a higher level of assurance that there would be no break in continuity of statutory performance reporting. The total cost would be no more than £12,000 and would be met within existing revenue budgets.

Having heard from the Head of Digital and Community Safety the Cabinet, in accordance with Contract Standing Order 15 (ii), approved an exemption from tendering to allow the procurement of the Pentana performance management system from August 2021 until August 2022.

REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS (SCOTLAND) ACT 2000 - COVERT SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITY 2020-21

1651. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Officer - Legal and Procurement, which updated Cabinet on the surveillance activity undertaken and authorised by the Council during 2020/21.

The report outlined that during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 the Council had authorised directed surveillance of 3 overarching authorisations and 6 separate targets.

Two involved the sale of counterfeit goods and copyright/trademark infringement and surveillance was undertaken by officers of Trading Standards Scotland acting as part of national initiatives. The third authorisation permitted investigation by Council Trading Standards officers into the suspected sale of dangerous substances contrary to health regulations. All authorisations related to online investigations.

These figures reflected a decline in the use of surveillance from 2019/20 during which period 14 targets were investigated under 3 authorisations.

The report advised that as a result of remote working due to COVID restrictions online training resources have been provided during this period.

Having heard further from the Chief Officer - Legal and Procurement, the Cabinet noted the use of directed surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources during the period 2020/21.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY TRANSFORMATION

1652. The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Digital and Community Safety informing of the proposed digital connectivity transformation of the Council area and seeking approval of the use of the Scottish Government Capita SWAN framework to procure the additional bandwidth for the Council.

The report explained that the current East Renfrewshire Council Wide Area Network (WAN) was reaching its original design limits and required investment to be fit for the future. There were growing network performance issues throughout the Council, most notably the Education estate, which consumed around 80% of the bandwidth and required continual incremental increases reactively to meet internet demands.

The report further explained that the proposal outlined would create an authority-wide high speed fibre network infrastructure to replace the current Corporate and Education WAN and provide the essential foundations for economic growth, social inclusion and prosperity throughout East Renfrewshire. An added benefit would be the investment by CityFibre of up to £27 million in a full fibre network for residents and businesses following on from the investment in the Council network. This investment could give 85% of homes and businesses access to a full fibre network with Barrhead and Neilston included in the plans. In addition to this, further discussions were ongoing with Capita to move towards 100% coverage across the East Renfrewshire area. It was noted that capital costs associated with the proposal had already been approved at the Council meeting on 15 March 2021 with approval now being sought to proceed to project implementation.

In response to questions on the project timeline, the Head of Digital and Community Safety advised that this was expected to be between 18 and 24 months.

Members having welcomed the benefits of improved digital connectivity as an essential service for residents of East Renfrewshire, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted that on 15 March 2021 Council had approved an investment of £2.7m in the Council's wide area network which would improve internet connection speeds across the Council's estate;
- (b) noted that further work had been undertaken to build the details of the business case including an independent assessment of the case;
- (c) approved the use of the Scottish Government Capita SWAN framework to procure the additional bandwidth through which Capita would work in partnership with City Fibre to provide a "Full fibre network";
- (d) noted that CityFibre intended to invest up to £27M in a full fibre network for residents and businesses on the back of the investment in the Council network;
- (e) noted that the City Fibre investment could give 85% of homes and businesses access to a full fibre network with Barrhead and Neilston included in the plans; and
- (f) noted that further discussions were ongoing with Capita to move towards 100% coverage across the East Renfrewshire area.

GLASGOW CITY REGION CITY DEAL UPDATE

1653. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment providing an update on the progress with the Glasgow City Region City Deal projects in East Renfrewshire. The report also detailed proposals for revising the programme in terms of scope, cost and timescale given that all City Deal projects had to be delivered by 2025 in terms of the current funding arrangements.

The Director of Environment provided the background to the City Deal investment, outlining that this was a programme of ambitious projects approved by the Council in 2015 to stimulate economic growth, improve transport links, increase leisure opportunities, support business development, unlock residential land and generate economic benefits measured as additional Gross Value Added (GVA) and employment. At that time it was entitled the M77 Strategic Corridor Programme, with paragraph 8 of the report outlining the key objectives of the project set in 2015.

The report noted that the Glasgow City Region Project Management Office had asked City Region Member Authorities (MA's) to revise their programmes taking into account deliverability and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on costs and timescales.

The Director of Environment having provided an overview of the completed projects as outlined in the report, he then provided an overview of the proposed revisions to the programme for the remaining projects. He proposed that the new rail station at Barrhead South, Dams to Darnley Country Park Visitor Facilities, and Aurs Road Improvement projects proceed but that none of the remaining City Deal resources be allocated to the delivery of the Levern Valley Link/Newton Mearns to Barrhead new road connection and that delivery of this project be postponed.

The Chief Executive highlighted that as the proposals meant a change to the projects within the capital plan, Council approval would be required.

Following discussion and questions in relation to the remaining project delivery, and Councillors having welcomed the significant improvements of the revised proposals, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the progress made on the development and implementation of East Renfrewshire's £44 million City Deal programme.
- (b) **agreed to recommend to the Council** approval of the revised projects and budgets to be delivered within the remaining resources available; and
- (c) noted that the revised projects and budgets would require to be submitted to the Glasgow City Region Project Management Office for approval through the appropriate City Region governance channels.

ADOPTION OF GLASGOW CITY REGION CLIMATE ADAPTION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

1654. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment, advising of the likely forthcoming adoption of the Glasgow City Region's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan by the Glasgow City Region Cabinet (subject to individual City Region Member Authority approval) and seeking an indication of early support by the Council. The report also provided an overview on the way in which the Council could play its part in the implementation of the Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan throughout 2021/22.

Commenting on the report, the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) referred to the Glasgow City Region Climate Adaptation Strategy 2020-2030 produced by Climate Ready Clyde and to the implications outlined in that strategy document should collective adaptation to Climate Change not be taken on.

It was noted that subject to support from the constituent authorities, the Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan would be formally launched on 29 June 2021.

In the course of discussion it was noted that arrangements were to be made to involve young people in the delivery of the Clyde Climate Forest through tree planting, and in response to questions from Councillor Lafferty the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) indicated that he would clarify if the tree planting of the Clyde Climate Forest was included in the national target of planting 22 million trees outlined by the Strategic Development Plan Joint Committee.

Having heard further from the Head of Environment (Strategic Services), the Cabinet:-

- (a) indicated early approval of and support for the proposed Glasgow City Region Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan;
- (b) noted that there would be a formal launch for the Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan on 29 June 2021, coordinated by Climate Ready Clyde, which would be supported by East Renfrewshire Council at a local level; and
- (c) noted that the delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan necessarily implied a greater allocation of resources to planning, financing and implementation in the years ahead, as well as additional policy and regulation.

COVID 19 – ALLOCATIONS UPDATE AND POLICY REVIEW

1655. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment advising of the steps taken by Housing Services to deliver the housing allocations service during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the proposed policy review.

The report outlined the restrictions placed on services due to the pandemic resulting in a backlog of both homeless and waiting list applicants' access to accommodation. A full consultation exercise would be undertaken on the existing policy to address the housing concerns of those most in need.

Having heard from the Head of Environment (Strategic Services), the Cabinet noted the:-

- (a) impact of COVID 19 to East Renfrewshire Council's Allocation Policy that were required to address homelessness; and
- (b) proposed review of East Renfrewshire Council's Allocation Policy which would be presented to Cabinet for approval in autumn 2021.

THE EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL (A727 EAST KILBRIDE ROAD, BUSBY) (50MPH SPEED LIMIT) ORDER 2021

1656. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for the making and confirmation of 'The East Renfrewshire Council (A727 East Kilbride Road, Busby) (50mph Speed Limit) Order 2021'.

1540

The report outlined that the making and confirmation of 'The East Renfrewshire Council (A727 East Kilbride Road, Busby) (50mph Speed Limit) Order 2021' would implement a reduced speed limit applicable to all road vehicle users in order to address speeding and safety concerns particularly on the approach to an urban area.

Having heard from the Director of Environment, the Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the making and confirmation of the 'The East Renfrewshire Council (A727 East Kilbride Road, Busby) (50mph Speed Limit) Order 2021'; and
- (b) delegated to the Director of Environment the implementation of the Order in accordance with the associated statutory procedures.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 8 June 2021.

Present:

Councillor Angela Convery (Chair)
Councillor Charlie Gilbert

Councillor Stewart Miller

Councillor Convery in the Chair

Attending:

Jacqui McCusker, Senior Solicitor; Brian Kilpatrick, Civic Government Enforcement Officer; Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Inspector Michelle Grant and Sergeant David Gilmore, Police Scotland.

Apologies:

Councillors Betty Cunningham (Vice Chair) and Paul O’Kane.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1657. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

Resolution to Exclude Press and Public

At this point in the meeting, on the motion of the Chair, the committee unanimously resolved that in accordance with the provisions of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following Items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

TAXI DRIVER'S LICENCE – APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL

1658. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 13 April 2021 (Page 1496, Item 1605 refers), when it had been agreed that consideration of the application be continued to a future meeting to allow a decision on the pending court action to be made, the committee considered a report by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement in relation to an application for the renewal of a Taxi Driver's Licence (Agenda Item 3 refers).

The licence holder was present together with his solicitor Ms Sinclair.

Inspector Grant and Sergeant Gilmore representing the Chief Constable, who had made an objection in respect of the application, were also present.

The report explained that in determining the application it would be for the committee to decide what weight it wished to attach to the objection by the Chief Constable.

Sergeant Gilmore was heard in respect of the objection by the Chief Constable and provided an update on the licence holder's recent court appearance.

Ms Sinclair was then heard in respect of the application, providing background information on the case and further information in respect of the licence holder's recent court appearance.

Both parties were heard in response to questions from Members.

The committee, having taken account of the information provided in respect of the recent court case and the objection by the Chief Constable, agreed that the licence be renewed for a period of 1 year subject to standard conditions.

PRIVATE HIRE CAR DRIVER'S LICENCE – APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL

1659. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 13 April 2021 (Page 1497, Item 1607 refers), when it has been agreed that consideration of the application be continued to a future meeting to allow a decision on the pending court action to be made, the committee considered a report by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement in relation to an application for the renewal of a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (Agenda Item 4 refers).

Prior to consideration of the application, the Senior Solicitor clarified that this was an application for renewal and not an application for grant as referred to on the agenda and covering report submitted to the committee.

The licence holder, having been invited to attend, was not present.

Inspector Grant and Sergeant Gilmore representing the Chief Constable, who had made a representation in respect of the application, were present.

The report explained that in determining the application it would be for the committee to decide what weight it wished to attach to the representation by the Chief Constable.

Sergeant Gilmore was heard in respect of the representation by the Chief Constable, the pending court case, and in response to questions from Members.

The committee, having taken account of the update provided by Sergeant Gilmore and the representation by the Chief Constable, agreed that:-

- (a) the licence be renewed for a period of 1 year subject to standard conditions; and
- (b) the licence holder's decision letter include a reminder of the requirement to contact East Renfrewshire Council's Licensing Section to advise of any convictions received.

PRIVATE HIRE CAR DRIVER'S LICENCE – APPLICATION FOR GRANT

1660. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 16 March 2021 (Page 1476, Item 1587 refers), when it had been agreed that consideration of the application be continued to a future meeting to allow a decision on the pending court action to be made, the committee considered a report by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement in relation to an application for the renewal of a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (Agenda Item 5 refers).

The applicant, having been invited to attend, was not present.

Inspector Grant and Sergeant Gilmore representing the Chief Constable, who had made an objection in respect of the application, were present.

The report explained that in determining the application it would be for the committee to decide what weight it wished to attach to the objection by the Chief Constable and its relevance to the type of licence being applied for.

Prior to consideration of the application, the committee were asked whether they wished to accept the Chief Constable's request to take account of additional information even though it was considered "out of time". Following discussion, the committee agreed to consider the additional information provided by the Chief Constable.

Sergeant Gilmore was heard in respect of the objection by the Chief Constable, the additional information provided by the Chief Constable, and in response to questions from Members.

Following discussion, the committee agreed that the application be refused on the grounds that the applicant was not a fit and proper person to be the holder of such a licence by virtue of the information provided by the Chief Constable.

PRIVATE HIRE CAR DRIVER'S LICENCE – APPLICATION FOR GRANT

1661. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 16 March 2021 (Page 1476, Item 1585 refers), when it had been agreed that consideration of the application be continued to a future meeting to allow a decision on the pending court action to be made, the committee considered a report by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement in relation to an application for the renewal of a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (Agenda Item 6 refers).

The licence holder, having been invited to attend, was not present.

Inspector Grant and Sergeant Gilmore representing the Chief Constable, who had made an objection in respect of the application, were present.

The report explained that in determining the application it would be for the committee to decide what weight it wished to attach to the objection by the Chief Constable and its relevance to the type of licence being applied for.

Sergeant Gilmore was heard in respect of the objection by the Chief Constable, the pending court case, and in response to questions from Members.

Following discussion, the committee agreed that the application be refused on the grounds that the applicant was not a fit and proper person to be the holder of such a licence by virtue of the information provided by the Chief Constable.

PRIVATE HIRE CAR DRIVER'S LICENCE – APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL

1662. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 13 April 2021 (Page 1497, Item 1608 refers), when it had been agreed that consideration of the application be continued to a future meeting to allow a decision on the pending court action to be made, the committee considered a report by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement in relation to an application for the renewal of a Private Hire Car Driver's Licence (Agenda Item 7 refers).

The licence holder, having been invited to attend, was not present.

Inspector Grant and Sergeant Gilmore representing the Chief Constable, who had made an objection in respect of the application, were present.

The report explained that in determining the application it would be for the committee to decide what weight it wished to attach to the objection by the Chief Constable.

Sergeant Gilmore was heard in respect of the objection by the Chief Constable, the pending court case, and in response to questions from Members.

The committee, having taken account of the update provided by Sergeant Gilmore and the representation by the Chief Constable, agreed that:-

- (a) the licence be renewed for a period of 1 year subject to standard conditions; and
- (b) the licence holder's decision letter include a reminder of the requirement to contact East Renfrewshire Council's Licensing Section to advise of any convictions received.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
LOCAL REVIEW BODY

Minute of virtual meeting held at 2.00pm on 9 June 2021.

Present:

Councillor Annette Ireland (Chair)
Councillor Betty Cunningham
Councillor Angela Convery

Provost Jim Fletcher
Councillor Jim Swift
Councillor Jim McLean

Councillor Ireland in the Chair

Attending:

Andrew Bennie, Planning Adviser (Review 2021/06); Matt Greenen, Planning Adviser (Review 2021/05); Siobhan Wilson, Solicitor (Legal Adviser); Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer (Clerk) and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillor Stewart Miller.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1663. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

NOTICE OF REVIEW – REVIEW 2021/05 – INSTALLATION OF DORMER WINDOWS AT THE FRONT, SIDES AND REAR AT 24 LAGGAN ROAD, NEWTON MEARNS (REF NO: 2021/0024/TP)

1664. The Local Review Body considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted by Mr J Stevenson, against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in respect of the installation of dormer windows at the front, sides and rear at 24 Laggan Road, Newton Mearns.

The decision had been made in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation made in terms of Section 43A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

The Local Review Body, having considered the information previously circulated, agreed that it had sufficient information to determine the review without further procedure.

The Planning Adviser outlined the planning application and reasons for refusal as outlined by the Appointed Officer in the decision notice.

Having heard the Planning Adviser and following discussion, Councillor Ireland moved that the Local Review body uphold the decision to refuse planning permission for the reasons as outlined in the decision notice. In the absence of a seconder the motion fell.

Thereafter Councillor Cunningham seconded by Councillor Swift moved as an amendment that the Appointed Officer's decision be overturned and planning permission approved. Councillors Convery, Fletcher and McClean confirmed that they were in agreement with the proposed amendment.

The Local Review Body therefore agreed that the Appointed Officer's decision as set out in the decision notice of 12 April 2021 be overturned and planning permission approved.

NOTICE OF REVIEW – REVIEW 2021/06 – ERECTION OF SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION AND ERECTION OF DETACHED GARAGE TO SIDE AT 8 RODDINGHEAD ROAD, NEWTON MEARNS (REF NO: 2020/0713/TP)

1665. The Local Review Body considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, relative to a 'Notice of Review' submitted by Mr A Samuel against the decision taken by officers to refuse planning permission in respect of the erection of single storey rear extension and erection of detached garage to side at 8 Roddinghead Road, Newton Mearns.

The decision had been made in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation made in terms of Section 43A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

The Local Review Body, having considered the information previously circulated, agreed that it had sufficient information to determine the review without further procedure.

The Planning Adviser outlined the planning application and reasons for refusal as outlined by the Appointed Officer in the decision notice. The Planning Adviser further outlined that should Members be minded to grant planning permission a suggested additional condition would be that :-

'the development hereby approved shall not commence until samples of the materials to be used on the external surfaces of the building and any other hard surfaces have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall be implemented in accordance with these approved details.'

Having heard the Planning Adviser and following discussion, Councillor Ireland seconded by Councillor McLean moved that the Local Review body uphold the decision to refuse planning permission for the reasons as outlined in the decision notice.

Thereafter Councillor Swift seconded by Provost Fletcher moved as an amendment that the Appointed Officer's decision be overturned and planning permission approved subject to the inclusion of the proposed condition. Councillors Convery and Cunningham confirmed that they were in agreement with the proposed amendment.

There being 2 votes for the motion and 4 for the amendment, the Local Review Body therefore agreed that the Appointed Officer's decision as set out in the decision notice of 24 December 2020 be overturned and planning permission approved subject to the following condition:-

The development hereby approved shall not commence until samples of the materials to be used on the external surfaces of the building and any other hard surfaces have been

submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall be implemented in accordance with these approved details.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 10 June 2021.

Present:

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Chair)	Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Councillor Gordon Wallace
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Dr Frank Angell
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Alan Lafferty	Ms Mary McIntyre
Councillor Jim McLean	Mr Des Morris

Councillor O’Kane in the Chair

Attending:

Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement); Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision); Siobhan McColgan, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager (Developing People); Graeme Hay, Education Senior Manager (Leading Business Change); Joe McCaig, Quality Improvement Officer; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1666. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT

1667. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising on the approaches taken to develop Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) services. The report outlined the steps taken to improve the quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability of provision and experiences for young people.

By way of background, the report explained that the Scottish Government had set a transformational agenda for ELC, published in March 2017, including the expansion of entitlement to free ELC provision from 600 to 1140 hours. In September 2017, the Education Committee had approved the Council’s expansion plan to achieve the targets set.

In March 2020, the Scottish Government announced that they would remove the statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of ELC available to each child from August 2020. However, in June 2020, following consultation with officers, the Education Committee approved the department’s proposal to continue to progress with plans to deliver 1140 hours of ELC for all eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old children from August 2020, albeit in limited fashion, and this had allowed the provision to be delivered ahead of the official timetable.

Details on the quality ratings provided to ELC establishments by the Care Inspectorate were provided in the report. It was noted that the quality of ELC in East Renfrewshire exceeded the national standard with most settings achieving grades of very good or better in every measure. Information was also provided on private and voluntary ELC providers, where all met and, in some cases, exceeded the national standard.

Data was provided on children achieving key developmental milestones in each of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) areas and it was shown that there had been a reversal in the previous reduction in the gap between the results of those areas from the most affluent. Children being unable to attend nursery during lockdown and nursery closures were cited as potential reasons for this reduction. Additional resources had been targeted in primary schools to support all children and young people who had suffered as a result of learning loss over the lockdown.

A similar increase in the poverty measured attainment gap, using SIMD as a characteristic, had been identified in numeracy, with the gap increasing from 9 points in 2019/20 to 13 points in 2020/21. However, there had been a slight decrease in the gap in literacy from 16 points in 2019/20 to 15 points in 2020/21.

Details were also provided on the quality of the early years workforce. Particular mention was made of the "Grow Your Own" pathway which had allowed Council staff to retrain and gain qualifications in the early years field. The diversity of the workforce had also increased as a result with 13 male employees and 21 black and minority ethnic employees now working in the sector.

Councillor Bamforth sought clarification of whether further ELC places would be required in East Renfrewshire to meet demand as a result of the proposed changes to deferral arrangements and whether new establishments would be needed. The Head of Education (Quality Improvement) responded that new nurseries would be required to offer the additional places referred to and this situation was being kept under review.

In response to a question from Councillor Lafferty regarding the difficulty in recruiting staff, the Head of Education (Quality Improvement) once again highlighted the "Grow Your Own" pathway and highlighted the great success in recruiting staff into the sector by investing in training the current workforce to meet the needs of the community.

Councillor Wallace expressed concerns around the attainment gap and asked how it compared with other authorities in response to which the Head of Education (Quality Improvement) indicated that as not all local authorities recorded their data in the same way, like for like comparison was not always possible. Information from the West Partnership, however anecdotal, indicated that the issue was similar across all areas. The Director of Education noted that a clearer picture would emerge when national Curriculum for Excellence data was gathered in the summer.

Councillor Merrick indicated thanks to the department and highlighted the many successes and achievements of officers in this area, particularly in delivering 1140 hours ahead of schedule.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

DEVELOPING THE YOUNG WORKFORCE

1668. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of progress made with Developing the Young Workforce in East Renfrewshire.

Having outlined the background to the production of the local Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Implementation Plan approved by the Education Committee in August 2015, the report explained that the summary that accompanied the report set out the improvements that had been made within East Renfrewshire across schools, colleges and employers to prepare young people for their working lives with evidence of progress, key achievements and next steps being set out under 4 key themes; schools; colleges; apprenticeships; and employers.

The report also drew attention to a number of the key highlights from the progress report including that participation in the national data hub by East Renfrewshire Council had been recognised as excellent practice by Education Scotland. In addition, the ERC participation rate in 2020 was 96.7% against the national average of 92.1% and 96.2% of East Renfrewshire school leavers in 2019-20 were in a positive destination.

Finally the report explained that to reflect the work that had taken place and areas for further improvement the DYW Implementation Plan had been reviewed and updated. The update reflected the current context and covered a 1 year period. A copy of the updated plan accompanied the report as Appendix 2.

In response to a question from Councillor Wallace about foundation apprenticeships and the dropout rates of young people from those, the Head of Education (Quality Improvement) noted that the East Renfrewshire position had been very positive, with the takeup and retention of students very high, which had resulted in an extension in the offer of foundation apprenticeships. Efforts were made annually to adjust the offer to ensure that sufficient capacity was available in the most popular courses and provide potential new courses to reflect the sorts of skills young people were looking for in the current employment market.

Councillor Bamforth reflected on the excellent figures around positive destinations for school leavers in East Renfrewshire and asked further about the increase in the foundation apprenticeship offer. The Head of Education (Quality Improvement) indicated that the number of courses had increased from 12 to 15 for the next session, over a number of levels to allow a wider range of students to gain access.

Councillor Merrick thanked officers for another detailed and evidence based report and pointed out the recognition by Education Scotland of the Council's use of the national data hub as excellent practice. Further, he welcomed that the draft implementation plan had a strong emphasis on equality.

Thereafter, the committee:

- (a) noted the Developing the Young Workforce in East Renfrewshire progress report; and
- (b) approved the updated draft implementation plan for 2021-2022.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

1669. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of the assessment against recommendations made in the *Improving Outcomes for Young People through School* report prepared by Audit Scotland, a copy of which accompanied the report.

The Audit Scotland report had been published in March 2021, following the Accounts Commission's audit on how effectively the Scottish Government, councils and their partners were improving outcomes for young people through school education.

It was noted that there was strong evidence in East Renfrewshire of the Education Department's relentless focus to deliver excellence and equity for all its learners. This was clearly represented by the department's vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*.

The key messages within the Audit Scotland report were detailed. However, it was noted that the report focused on attainment before the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In arriving at their conclusions of performance, Audit Scotland had made a number of recommendations for the Scottish Government, councils and Education Scotland to work together to take forward. There were also some specific recommendations for partners. All were included in the Audit Scotland report. The key messages and recommendations in the report were considered to present no difficulty for the Education Department or the Council. The department's assessment of its current position in relation to the recommendations for it to take forward was attached as appendix 2 to the report.

Councillor Wallace expressed some concern around the number of school leavers achieving literacy and numeracy at level 4, indicating that 4.2% were not achieving that level. In reply, the Quality Improvement Officer indicated that pupils who had not met that measure would be specifically targeted by resources to assist them. Furthermore, an approach to introduce "Application of Mathematics" courses, which provided numeracy and mathematics in a different context, was being implemented. An improvement was expected as a result of that approach.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

IMPLEMENTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE – PROGRESS

1670. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of how children's rights were currently respected and ensured within East Renfrewshire, as well as highlighting key actions being taken to further embed children's rights across the Council.

In particular, the report focussed on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 placed a duty on local authorities to report on the steps they had taken to secure better or further the effect of UNCRC requirements. This had also been incorporated into the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Bill.

The East Renfrewshire Children's Rights Report, a copy of which accompanied the report as appendix 1, outlined the steps that had been taken in East Renfrewshire to promote, support and uphold children's rights. The report detailed how each individual article of the UNCRC was addressed within East Renfrewshire, and a child-friendly version of the document was available to all families.

It was noted that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Bill had been passed by the Scottish Parliament on 16 March 2021. However, the UK Government had referred the Bill to the Supreme Court. An implementation group had been set up to work with partners to assess, review and develop the Council's readiness for the implementation of the Bill should it pass the Supreme Court challenge. The group would produce an action plan, which would be the subject of a future report to the Education Committee and the Cabinet.

Responding to a question from Councillor Merrick on timescales for when the implementation group's action plan would be produced, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) indicated that work was underway with national guidance expected in the summer. The expected timeframe was October/November 2021.

All members agreed that regardless of the legal situation, an approach focusing on the needs of the child or young person was essential and welcome.

Thereafter, the committee:-

- (a) noted current practice within East Renfrewshire underpinning and ensuring children's rights;
- (b) noted the East Renfrewshire Children's Rights Report;
- (c) noted the authority's key actions going forward to respect and ensure children's rights; and
- (d) requested that the Director of Education bring forward a report to the Education Committee setting out the potential implications and actions for the Council in the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law.

VALEDICTORY – FIONA MORRISON, HEAD OF EDUCATION SERVICES (PERFORMANCE AND PROVISION)

1671. Councillor O'Kane advised the committee that this would be the last meeting attended by Fiona Morrison, Head of Education (Performance and Provision), who was retiring from the Council.

He briefly outlined her contribution to education within East Renfrewshire, particularly since becoming Head of Service in 2002, and expressed his personal thanks to her for the help and support she had always given him in his role as Vice-Convener and, latterly, as Convener for Education. Particular reference was made to her work in relation to developing the school estate which she had worked to improve.

Ms Morrison responded in appropriate terms, in the course of which she expressed the view that her employment in East Renfrewshire had been extremely rewarding and fulfilling. She commended the senior management team that had supported her, highlighted the strong partnership working which existed across the entire Council, and praised Elected Members for their continued prioritisation of education.

She concluded by commending her successor, Joe McCaig, to the committee.

POSITION OF CHAIR – COUNCILLOR O’KANE

1672. Councillor O’Kane advised the Committee that, due to his election as a Member of the Scottish Parliament, this would be the last meeting where he would act as Chair as he was stepping down from the position. A new Chair would be appointed at the next meeting of the full Council on 30 June 2021.

Councillor O’Kane thanked all of the officers and elected members, including those not present at the meeting or who had worked with the committee in the past, for their assistance over his time as Chair. He commended the work of the Education Department and celebrated the many successes that had been achieved over his time as Chair.

Members of the committee from all political parties expressed their thanks to Councillor O’Kane for his work as Chair and intimated their congratulations on his election as a Member of the Scottish Parliament.

CHAIR

MINUTE
of
CABINET
(POLICE AND FIRE)

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 17 June 2021.

Present:

Councillor Colm Merrick (Chair)
Councillor Caroline Bamforth

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)
Councillor Barbara Grant

Councillor Merrick in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Murray Husband, Head of Digital and Community Safety; Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Chief Superintendent Mark Sutherland (Divisional Commander), Chief Inspector Alan Gray (Area Commander), and Detective Superintendent Craig Willison, Police Scotland; and Group Commander Alan Coughtrie Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS).

Apologies:

Councillors Danny Devlin, Alan Lafferty and Gordon Wallace.

The Chair welcomed all participants present and advised that Steven Bell had recently been appointed as the Council's Community Safety Manager.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1673. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

POLICE SCOTLAND – PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 2020/21

1674. The Cabinet considered a report by the Divisional Commander, Police Scotland, providing details of the performance of the police over the fourth quarter of 2020/21. The report also provided statistical information in relation to various categories of crimes and offences committed during the reported period together with comparative statistics for the corresponding period in 2019/20.

Chief Superintendent Sutherland recorded thanks to Chief Inspector Brian McGeough and Inspector Stevie Scott and welcomed Chief Inspector Alan Gray in his role as Area Commander and Michelle Grant in her role as Communities Inspector for East Renfrewshire.

Chief Superintendent Sutherland provided an overview of the East Renfrewshire Policing Plan 2020-23 during Quarter 4. He noted the effects of the pandemic on policing, including the implementation of new powers under the Coronavirus regulations. He highlighted a focus on increased partnership working and engagement with the public in response to changes in community concerns such as responding to an increase in levels of youth disorder, online fraud and supporting vulnerable people accessing services which were previously in person. He also noted the decrease in violence, house breaks-ins and domestic abuse during this period. At a strategic level Chief Superintendent Sutherland advised Members of the redesign of the Public Protection Unit focussing on forensic opportunities in reports of non-recent crime. He then brought to Members' attention Police Scotland's public consultation on the use of body worn video for police officers and provided information on the public health approach to policing which was now being implemented within East Renfrewshire.

Chief Inspector Gray reported on the performance of the police against the five local policing priorities contained in the East Renfrewshire Policing Plan 2020-23. He advised that in relation to public protection, sexual crimes in Quarter 4 had reduced from 141 to 111, closer to the average of 116. The associated detection rate for sexual crimes had decreased from 36.9% in the previous year to 32.4% in the current year. In relation to violent crime, there had been an increase of 4 serious assault crimes with 29 being recorded. There had also been an increase in the detection rate for robberies from 45.5% to 81.8%. The number of domestic abuse crimes reported had reduced from 337 to 287, with an increase in the detection rate to 66.6% from the previous year's rate of 55.5%. It was advised that there had been an increase in the detection of drug supply offences, up by 3 to 24. The number of domestic abuse incidents had remained static. The number of homes broken into, inclusive of attempted break-ins, had reduced from 76 to 59. He advised that it was intended to continue to use good forensic awareness and specialist support from Scene Examiners and the divisional Community Investigation Unit to continue the longer downward trend in this area. As previously outlined by Chief Superintendent Sutherland there had been an increase in online fraud and work continued with Trading Standards and the HSCP. There had been an increase in antisocial behaviour and disorder, including youth disorder and work continued with partners in this area. Chief Inspector Gray then reported on the incidents referred to in the report under the areas of violent crime, drug supply and manufacture, crimes of dishonesty, vulnerable road users domestic abuse, adult protection and child protection and young people.

There followed a short question and answer session in the course of which Chief Superintendent Sutherland and Chief Inspector Gray responded to a number of questions and provided clarification on a range of operational issues within East Renfrewshire and the crime statistics recorded in the report.

Following these questions, Chief Inspector Gray advised he would provide Councillor Bamforth with figures relating to online sexual abuse for Quarter 4.

The Cabinet noted the terms of the report.

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (SFRS) PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 2020/21

1675. The Cabinet considered a report by the Group Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), providing details of the performance of SFRS in East Renfrewshire during the fourth quarter of 2020/21. An analysis of the incidents identified in the six areas

for demand reduction that had taken place in each of the Council's five wards during the reported period was outlined in the report.

Group Commander Alan Coughtrie recorded thanks to Area Commander Jim McNeill and advised that David McCarrey would be present at the next meeting in his new role as Area Commander.

Referring to the report, he provided an overview of the activity during the reported period. He advised that there had been a 3% increase in the total number of incidents, with a 16% increase in special services, namely through assisting partners. There had been a decrease in fire and non-fire casualties and a 1% decrease in false alarms. There had been a 27% decrease in accidental dwelling fires with 2 casualties arising from the same incident. Sadly, one of these was a fatality and investigations were ongoing. This was a 25% decrease on the three-year average. In terms of unintentional injury and harm, there had been a 75% decrease year on year, with a 36% decrease on the three-year average. He reported that there had been a marked increase in deliberate fire setting and that a high percentage of these could be attributed to incidents at the Stables, Boylestone Road Barrhead and at the moorland at Fereneze Golf Club between 17/02/21 and 21/02/21. Engagement work had taken place at these areas as a result. There had been 2 non-domestic fires, one deliberate at a barn at Boylestone Road and one accidental at Rouken Glen Council Offices which had been due to a suspected electrical fault. No firefighting action had been required. It was reported that there had been a 40% reduction in Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals during the quarter, a 5% reduction on the 3 year average. The Take 5 campaign had been used in this area, with no further instances of reoccurrence following this being implemented.

Group Commander Coughtrie addressed questions from an earlier meeting of the Cabinet (Police and Fire) advising that there had been 52 incidences of unwanted fire alarm signals over the period of 31 January to 31 March 2021, composed of 18 within educational premises, 11 within residential homes, 6 within hotels and retail and all other activations in individual premises.

Group Commander Coughtrie also intimated that a public consultation would be launched in mid-July regarding automatic fire alarm response and that he would share this with the Cabinet (Police and Fire) at that time.

Group Commander Coughtrie then provided an update on the fire alarm regulation due to come into effect in February 2022, advising that all domestic premises would need to have one smoke alarm in the room most frequently used for general living purposes, one in circulation spaces, one heat alarm in every kitchen and a carbon monoxide detector where there was a carbon-fuelled appliance. In accordance with the new legislation all new builds would be fitted with these alarms and private landlords would have a legal obligation to provide them.

There followed a short question and answer session in the course of which Group Commander Coughtrie provided clarification on a range of operational issues within East Renfrewshire and the statistics recorded in the report.

Elected members thanked Police Scotland and the SFRC for their work during these unprecedented times the report was noted.

MINUTE
of
AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minute of virtual meeting held at 2.00pm on 24 June 2021.

Present:

Councillor Stewart Miller (Chair)	Councillor Annette Ireland
Councillor Barbara Grant (Vice Chair)	Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Angela Convery	Councillor Jim Swift
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Attending:

Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Michelle Blair, Chief Auditor; Claire Coburn, Strategic Services Lead Officer; Nick Hill, Strategic Services Assistant; Linda Hutchison, Clerk to the Committee; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Morven Fraser, Audit Scotland.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1676. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

CHAIR'S REPORT

1677. The Chair reported, and it was noted, that there were no issues which he wished to bring to the committee's attention at this time.

UNAUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2020/21

1678. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 29 April 2021 (Page 1516, Item 1632 refers), when the 2020/21 Annual Audit Plan and timetable for the publication of related documents had been noted, the committee considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) on the unaudited Annual Accounts for 2020/21 which had been submitted for audit to Audit Scotland, and which were attached for consideration in line with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014.

It was reported that the financial position of the Council continued to be satisfactory. All General Fund departmental outturn expenditure had been within budget, with directors having

taking early action to avoid non-essential expenditure during 2020/21, as it had been uncertain until full COVID-19 grant funding was confirmed towards the end of the financial year whether sufficient government grants would be provided to cover COVID-19 pressures. As a result of the approach taken, there had been no need to draw down the £3,500,000 from reserves as planned, and a contribution of £1,964,000 had been made to the Non-Earmarked General Fund Reserve, resulting in a balance of £11,607,000 as at 31 March 2021, representing 4.5% of the annual budgeted net revenue expenditure. This was slightly above the Council's most prudent target of 4%, and would help address the financial challenges facing the Council during 2021/22 and beyond.

The report clarified that significant funding had been awarded to the Council in 2020/21 in respect of COVID-19 and was expected to cover some of these pressures in the current year, with £12,815,000 to be carried forward to 2021/22 under the heading of "Unspent COVID Grants".

It was confirmed that £35,084,000 of capital expenditure had been invested. There had also been an operating deficit of £95,000 on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which had decreased the accumulated surplus balance to carry forward to £2,221,000.

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) highly commended the Chief Accountant and her team for completing the accounts within the planned timescale, commenting on the scale of work involved and particular challenges faced associated with, for example, late notification of the guidance to be followed on the presentation of the accounts, remote working, and the COVID-19 emergency. Councillor Miller echoed these comments.

Whilst referring to key aspects of the report, the Chief Accountant confirmed that the Council's affairs had been managed within its operational budget, highlighting the action taken to avoid all non-essential expenditure pending confirmation and receipt of COVID-19 related grant and also the related impact of this on the use of reserves. Having commented on capital expenditure and the HRA's deficit for 2020/21 but overall surplus balance, she drew the committee's attention to the Management Commentary in the accounts which outlined key messages on the objectives and strategy of the Council and the Council's financial performance during 2020/21. The commentary also indicated issues and risks which might impact on the Council's finances in future, including COVID-19, on which a section had been included.

Various Members expressed their appreciation to the Chief Accountant, Accountancy Team and other officers for what had been achieved.

Councillor Ireland asked if the COVID-19 grant received, which had been carried forward to 2021/22, would be used during the current year and if the purpose for which it would be used was known. The Chief Accountant reported that it was unknown what funding would be received in 2021/22 to address COVID-19 pressures, so the availability of those reserves was useful. The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) added that some funding had been received at the end of 2020/21 specifically for COVID-19 pressures, but the Council had flexibility to determine which specific COVID-19 issues its use could be attributed to. However, she added that some of the funds carried forward were more tightly defined, such as for use by the Education Department to help address the attainment gap. Councillor Ireland welcomed the funds received which could help address future financial pressures.

In response to Councillor Grant who sought clarification on the reimbursement of funds by the NHS to the Council and East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust (ERCLT) for the use of facilities as vaccination and testing centres, the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) confirmed that related discussions had been progressed, a funding agreement had been reached recently, and that the funds would be forthcoming in the near future. In terms of

related accounting arrangements, she indicated that for both the Council and the Trust as appropriate the reimbursement would be attributed to the relevant financial year for which the expenditure had been incurred, as would be the case moving forward.

The committee agreed to note the content of the unaudited Annual Accounts for 2020/21 and that a report on the final accounts and related documents would be submitted to a future meeting.

CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE 2021/22

1679. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 13 August 2020 (Page 1225, Item 1317 refers), when the Code of Corporate Governance updates and actions for 2020/21 had been approved, the committee considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive on progress against improvement actions since then, and seeking approval of a revised Code for 2021/22.

The report reiterated the Council's responsibilities for the conduct of its business, defined what the Code of Corporate Governance was, and explained that the proposed updates took account of guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). The report referred to key requirements with which the Council had to comply and summarised progress on 2020/21 actions, highlighting that five of the seven improvement activities listed in the 2020/21 Code had been completed, and that the remaining activities had been carried forward into the 2021/22 plan. It was clarified that the plan outlining the next steps for Community Choices participatory budgeting events had been delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Furthermore, the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan remained under development.

The updated Code of Corporate Governance for 2021/22, setting out arrangements which fulfilled the seven governance principles outlined in national guidance, was appended to the report. Self-assessment against nationally prescribed criteria had found the Council to be compliant across all principles apart from one relating to managing data. The Chief Auditor had identified that data sharing agreements recorded on information asset registers were not up to date in March 2020, as a result of which a new action relating to the roll out of a replacement Information Asset Register application had been added to the Code.

Having itemised actions to be taken in 2021/22 to further improve compliance with the Code and commented on the Annual Governance Statement to be published in the 2020/21 Annual Report and Accounts, the report concluded that the Council was governed by sound and effective internal management controls, and continued to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. Progress on planned actions for 2020/21 had been posted on the Council's website, as would the 2021/22 Code, subject to it being approved by the committee.

The Strategic Services Assistant highlighted key issues within the report during which he commented on requirements with which the Council had to comply, the extent of the compliance against nationally prescribed criteria, and the actions to be taken to further improve compliance with the Code in 2021/22.

Councillor Ireland sought clarification on the timescale for production of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan in which the committee had an interest in view of its investigation on climate change, and regarding the related Member/Officer Working Group to be established. The Strategic Services Assistant explained why there had been a delay regarding the Strategy and Action Plan linked to the related consultation process adopted for it which had begun and was ongoing, and referred to associated reports submitted to the Cabinet and a briefing on the work provided for Elected Members. He undertook to seek and provide

clarification on the progress made regarding the establishment of the Member/Officer Working Group for circulation to members of the committee. The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) confirmed that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) had started to receive some initial reports on this work, and was looking at how related work could be progressed and funding for early stages of this work.

The committee:-

- (a) noted progress on the 2020/21 Code of Corporate Governance improvement actions;
- (b) approved the Code of Corporate Governance updates and actions for 2021/22; and
- (c) agreed that the Strategic Services Assistant seek and provide further clarification on the Member/Officer Working Group on Climate Change to the Clerk for circulation to members of the committee.

INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2020/21 – IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS – JANUARY TO MARCH 2021

1680. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 18 February 2021 (Page 1422, Item 1534 refers), when it had been agreed to approve revisions to the Internal Audit Annual Plan for 2020/21, the committee considered a report by the Chief Auditor regarding progress made on the implementation of the revised Plan from 1 January to 31 March 2021.

It was confirmed that four audit reports in relation to planned 2020/21 audit work had been issued in quarter 4, information on which was provided. Reference was also made to the quarterly performance indicators (PIs) for the section, some of which were not being met due to COVID-19 restrictions on audit work that could be carried out, and delays in departments responding to audit queries. It was confirmed that there had been one new request for assistance dealt with using contingency time. Although no further information could be provided at present as the investigation was ongoing and had also been referred to the police, an update would be provided on completion of the investigation. Six audits relating to planned 2020/21 audit work were still in progress.

Whilst commenting on the report, the Chief Auditor referred to the challenges associated with pursuing audit work remotely due to COVID restrictions, and confirmed that the number of audits still in progress had now reduced to five and that it was intended to issue further reports during the next few weeks. Having referred to the findings of the audit on Council Tax billing and collection, and the application audit of Integra, the Chief Auditor also referred to the use made of contingency time in the last quarter.

In response to Councillor Grant who sought clarification regarding staffing issues within the section, the Chief Auditor confirmed the position and her intention to try to fill the vacant post that had been held previously by the late senior auditor in the second quarter of the year. General challenges regarding the filling of audit posts were referred to.

The committee agreed:-

- (a) not to seek any of the reports issued during the quarter at this stage; and
- (b) otherwise, to note the report and related comments.

INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGIC PLAN 2021/22 – 2025/26

1681. The committee considered a report by the Chief Auditor on the Internal Audit Strategic Plan for 2021/22 to 2025/26, which included the proposed Annual Audit Plan for 2021/22. It was clarified that the Internal Audit function operated in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

The report explained that the plan had been prepared following consultation with key partners, referred to risk related issues, and clarified, amongst other things, that new audits added to the audit universe included COVID business grants and client monies. Similarly, some audits had been deleted from the universe as they were no longer applicable, had low risk assessments, or had been merged with other audits. It was clarified that 20 audit days had been included in the plan for providing an internal audit service to the ERCLT, with the scope of audits to be carried out using these days to be agreed with the management of the Trust and members of its Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. Resulting audit reports would be issued directly to the Trust's Chief Executive.

Referring to audit needs compared to resources available, the report explained that over the 5-year period of the plan there was a projected shortfall of 148 audit days which was considered manageable but would be kept under review. The current staffing levels of the Internal Audit section were considered adequate at present, subject to the vacant post being filled in the second quarter of 2021/22 which had been assumed when calculating the number of audit days available, but would be kept under review. Whilst making reference to one of the performance indicators for the section measuring direct audit days as a percentage of the total days available the target for which was 75%, the report explained that there was a possibility that this would not be fully met. This would be kept under review and reported on quarterly to the committee.

Whilst highlighting key aspects of the report, the Chief Auditor referred to consultation with both the CMT and Elected Members which had informed the final content of the Plan, and the need to take account of the fact that several audits had been deferred from 2020/21 to 2021/22. Having reiterated her intention to fill the vacant post in her section, and confirmed that progress reports would be submitted to the committee as usual, she cited examples of audits added to the plan, and of those removed from it, such as civic catering, which were considered less relevant. The Chief Auditor also referred to the audit work to be undertaken for the ERCLT and IJB and related reporting arrangements, following which she confirmed there would be no audit reports in relation to some aspects of work undertaken by her section, such as on grant certification in respect of which she would be writing instead to the grant awarding body.

In response to Councillor Ireland who welcomed the intention to audit COVID business grants and asked when the outcome of this work would be reported to the committee, the Chief Auditor indicated that it was possible but unlikely that this work, lasting two to three months and focussing primarily on grants dealt with by the Environment Department, would be concluded in time to enable the outcome to be included in the progress report to be submitted to the committee in September. She added that there had not been any clarity thus far on the likelihood of any national exercise being undertaken that would allow inter-authority checks to take place, such as to identify duplicate claims.

The committee agreed to approve the Internal Audit Strategic Plan for 2021/22 to 2025/26.

NATIONAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

1682. The committee considered a report by the Clerk on the publication by Audit Scotland of a report entitled *Improving Outcomes for Young People Through School Education*, which under the committee's specialisation arrangements had been sent to Councillors McLean and Swift for review. The Director of Education had been asked to provide comments and a copy of his feedback was attached to the report.

It was explained that the Audit Scotland report had been published in March 2021, following audit work on how effectively the Scottish Government, councils and their partners were improving outcomes for young people through school education. Work on the audit had commenced in 2019, paused in March 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, then restarted in October 2020 to look at the impact of COVID-19 on school education and the related response by the Scottish Government, councils and their partners. The report recognised that the situation was fast-changing and only covered actions taken until early January 2021.

Strong evidence in East Renfrewshire of the Education Department's relentless focus on delivering excellence and equity for all its learners was reported, as clearly represented by its vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*. Having made reference to various reports submitted to the Education Committee highlighting key areas the department considered fundamental in its intention to continually improve outcomes for children and young people through their school education, and to succeed in learning, life and work, the report itemised the key messages in the Audit Scotland report. The report had focused on attainment before the disruption caused by the pandemic, compared performance across council areas, and made various recommendations for the Scottish Government, councils and Education Scotland, some of which were to be taken forward collaboratively.

Reference was made to how, in broad terms, the report examined the Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) in literacy and numeracy in both the primary and secondary sectors and related key indicators. The report explained that the Audit Scotland analysis showed that East Renfrewshire performed well and from a very high base, having led developments in a number of areas raised over the years or already taken action to address more recent recommendations. It was stressed that the Education Department was not complacent, as reflected in information provided on its assessment of its current position against the recommendations councils were to take forward, a copy of which was attached to the report, which demonstrated current strengths and intent to improve further. It was concluded that East Renfrewshire Education Department's values-based vision, its culture of continuous improvement, and evidence of positive outcomes and impacts to date, showed that the authority was well placed to address the Audit Scotland recommendations.

The committee agreed to note the report and related comments made.

NATIONAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – DIGITAL PROGRESS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1683. The committee considered a report by the Clerk on the publication by Audit Scotland of a report entitled *Digital Progress in Local Government*, which under the committee's specialisation arrangements had been sent to Councillors Miller and Grant for review. The Head of Communities, Revenues & Change had been asked to provide comments and a copy of her feedback was attached to the report.

The report provided high level comments on the Council's position regarding the areas covered by the Audit Scotland report published in January 2021. It was highlighted that East Renfrewshire had a longstanding commitment to digital transformation, had been instrumental in the establishment of the Local Government Digital Office in 2015/16, and that the Chief Executive was Chair of the Scottish Local Government Digital Transformation Board. The Digital Office and Board had been key contributors to the Audit Scotland report, and the Council had also been actively involved in the national digital partnership forum and key collaborative work streams, a summary timeline for which was provided.

The report itemised recommendations made by Audit Scotland on a range of issues including assessment of progress on digital services; digital leadership; the digital workforce; collaboration and innovation, in respect of each of which comments were provided on the position within the Council. A recent report considered by the Cabinet on 3 June 2021, providing an update on the Council's Modern, Ambitious Programme (MAP) and the Council's digital transformation agenda was attached to the report.

The report concluded that there had been substantial progress made, particularly across the pandemic period, in the delivery of the Council's digital strategy. The Council's aspirations to continue its ambitious modernisation journey remained as important as ever and the pace and scale of change across the Council and HSCP was significant. Prioritisation, resource management and good governance were highlighted as key to the next stages of the digital transformation journey, with a focus on customer experience, business systems and processes, and the use of Office 365 to enhance productivity. This was considered especially relevant as the Council recovered from the pandemic and moved forward into a phase of renewal.

The committee agreed to note the report and related comments made.

NATIONAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT (SDS) – 2017 PROGRESS REPORT – IMPACT REPORT – FUTURE SDS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

1684. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 September 2020 (Page 1278, Item 1377 refers), when the committee had noted a report on key themes within the Audit Scotland report entitled *Self Directed Support (SDS) - 2017 Progress Report – Impact Report*; the HSCP's current SDS implementation position; and that self-evaluation activity was to be undertaken locally to inform the future programme of development; and agreed that, following that self-evaluation, a further update on future SDS development activity should be submitted, the committee considered a report by the Clerk summarising the background to the request for further feedback. A copy of an update on progress in relation to the implementation of SDS within the East Renfrewshire HSCP, which had also been submitted to the IJB Performance and Audit Committee, was attached to the report.

The report explained that evaluation and review work had taken place between November 2020 and March 2021, the findings of which were outlined. These included a recognition that SDS was being used creatively in East Renfrewshire; and that budgets were fair and gave people opportunity and choice when managing their support. Furthermore, the review noted the benefits of an Independent SDS Forum and Carers Centre locally, and it was clear the current relationships were positive and partnership working was valued. The general public were considered to be well informed and knew how to access services within East Renfrewshire.

Social Workers consulted during the review were positive about the model of SDS and would like to ensure continued improvement.

The report also outlined a number of areas for improvement, in particular, the need for the assessment and support plan approval process to be streamlined. A number of gaps in practices and processes were also identified during the review and these were outlined.

The report explained that the review had identified a number of issues in relation to resources and resource allocation. In particular, increased flexibility to use budgets more creatively had been raised by practitioners supporting carers/care recipients, as had issues around resources, and further testing of the Individual Budget Calculator was required, although early indicators were that the model was working well for both individuals and practitioners.

The need to consider how to adequately resource capacity to deliver the review recommendations was referred to. This could possibly be achieved through the realignment of existing staff although it was explained that, should this not be possible and additional resources were required, it would be necessary to demonstrate a clear business case and identify a funding source, potentially on an invest to save basis.

Having emphasised that person-centred and relationship practice was the foundation to social work practice and SDS with clear opportunities to build on existing strengths and drive forward process and practice improvements, the report explained that an SDS steering group had been established to oversee the local implementation programme. The group would be co-chaired by the Head of Service and SDS Forum Manager and membership would include people with lived experience of using SDS, practitioners, managers and finance officers. The group would collaborate to agree and oversee a local implementation plan, highlighting key priorities, achievements and risk to the Directorate Management Team, Performance and Audit Committee and IJB as required.

In response to Councillor Ireland who, having welcomed the report and progress made, sought clarification on the extent to which social workers had been invited to and did contribute to the review or related focus group, the Clerk indicated that she would seek further feedback on this for circulation.

Thereafter, the committee:-

- (a) agreed that the Clerk should seek clarification on the extent to which social workers had been invited to and did contribute to the review or related focus group for circulation to members, as requested; and
- (b) otherwise, noted the report and related comments made.

CHAIR