

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 4 June 2015.

Present:

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

Councillor Ian McAlpine
Councillor Mary Montague
Councillor Vincent Waters

Councillor Fletcher, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Louise Pringle, Head of Customer and Business Change Services; Iain MacLean Head of Environment (Planning, Property and Regeneration); David Miller, Head of Revenue Services; Candy Millard, Head of Strategic Services; Barbara Clark, Chief Accountant; Jim Malloy, Finance Business Partner, CHCP; Eddie Gray, Senior Officer (Allocation/Sheltered Housing); and Paul O'Neil, Committee Services Officer.

Apology:

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Deputy Leader).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1558. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT FOR 2014

1559. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Officer (Legal & Procurement), providing details of the information requests made to the Council under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004, during the course of 2014. A statistical report detailing the enquiries the Council had received during 2014 was appended to the report.

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

It was noted that during the course of 2014, the Council had dealt with 1,024 requests representing an 11% increase in the number that had been dealt with during the course of 2013. This was the highest number of requests the Council had received since the introduction of the legislation.

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

DRAFT OUTCOME DELIVERY PLAN 2015-18 AND NEW CUSTOMER CARE STANDARDS

1560. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive, providing details on the Council's draft Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP) 2015-18 and seeking approval of a new set of Customer Care Standards. A copy of the ODP 2015-18 was appended to the report.

The report explained that the ODP was organised by the 5 Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) outcomes, sections on supporting organisational areas of Customer, Efficiency and People together with finance information on spending plans. It was noted that the ODP was a 3-year plan which the Council updated annually and was an important document for the Council as it set out its key plans to deliver on commitments in the Single Outcome Agreement and Corporate Statement. Furthermore, it included a set of indicators and targets, which allowed progress to be monitored on a 6 monthly basis together with the inclusion of departmental spending plans.

The report also provided details of a review carried out in respect of the Council's service standards, it being noted that these were last reviewed in 2013 and that a review had recently been undertaken to revise the standards for 2015 onwards. The aim was to provide local residents and customers with clear information about what to expect when they contacted the Council, and how and when services would be delivered to them. Details of the service standards proposed for implementation from 2015 were appended to the report.

The report explained that there had been a significant change from the Council's current 18 service standards highlighting that rather than relating to particular services, the new standards focussed on customer care at the point of interaction between Council employees and residents across all services. The new set of standards also reflected the changing ways residents were communicating with the Council such as the use of social media.

The report concluded by indicating that the ODP demonstrated that the Council had a clear sense of strategic direction and was integrated with the Community Planning Partnerships SOA. Services had been working hard to ensure that performance measures were robust and that they demonstrated what the Council was trying to achieve to make people's lives better in East Renfrewshire.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the content of the draft Outcome Delivery Plan 2015-18;
- (b) **recommended to the Council** that the draft Outcome Delivery Plan 2015-18 be approved;
- (c) noted that the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) would be considered by the Community Planning Partnership Board on 5 June 2015; and

- (d) approved the proposed new customer care standards be implemented across the Council from 2015.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE COLLECTION OF NON-DOMESTIC RATES

1561. The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, advising of new arrangements for Non-Domestic Rates collection and seeking approval to write-off outstanding Non-Domestic Rates and statutory addition balances from 1996/97 to 2004/05 totalling £732,728.17 which amounted to 0.7% of the Non-Domestic Rates bills due for payment during that period. It was noted that the sum had already been included within the Council's bad debt provision.

The Cabinet approved the write-off of £732,728.17 of Non-Domestic Rates and statutory additions, without prejudice to subsequent recovery procedures.

LOCAL SCRUTINY PLAN 2015/16

1562. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive, providing details of the Local Scrutiny Plan for 2015/16 which was formerly titled the Assurance and Improvement Plan. A copy of the Local Scrutiny Plan was appended to the report.

The report explained that in response to the 2007 Crerar report on the 'Independent Review of Regulation, Audit, Inspection and Complaints Handling of Public Services in Scotland' the Scottish Government was committed to developing a simplified and streamlined approach to local government scrutiny by external bodies. This included the need to improve the co-ordination of strategic scrutiny activity between the main scrutiny bodies such as Audit Scotland, Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

It was noted that a Local Area Network (LAN) was established to bring inspectors and auditors together to share all the relevant information held about the Council and to agree a scrutiny plan for the Council. The first Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP), published in July 2010 set out a programme of scrutiny activity for the Council for the period 2010-2013 based on a shared risk assessment, undertaken by the LAN. The AIP had since been updated annually and the last report was considered by Cabinet in June 2014. This year's shared risk assessment had resulted in a shortened and less detailed annual plan entitled the Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16.

The report explained that the Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16 presented a positive external assessment highlighting that this was the third year the Council had achieved the Local Area Network's decision that no external risk based scrutiny was required at a corporate or service level, which served to demonstrate the Council's and employees ongoing commitment to ensure that the Council was continually improving and seeking to deliver better outcomes for its customers and residents.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) commended the Council's positive assessment by the Local Area Network of external scrutiny bodies and noted that the Local Scrutiny Plan for 2015/16 had been published on Audit Scotland's website;
- (b) noted that for the third year running the Local Area Network's conclusion was that 'no scrutiny risk had been identified which required specific scrutiny by the Local Area Network this year';

- (c) noted the planned external scrutiny plan listed in Appendix 1 of the Local Scrutiny Plan; and
- (d) noted that there would be an assessment of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) as part of a national joint review by the Care inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS) in May 2015 and that the Local Fire and Rescue Services for East Renfrewshire would also be inspected in May 2015 by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI).

A PROGRAMME FOR OUR FUTURE COUNCIL

1563. The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, bringing forward plans for a new programme of change for the Council, building on the work of the Public Service Excellence (PSE) Programme and linking with a wider programme of organisational development to ensure that the Council remained a high performing Council that could confidently deliver on its key outcomes for residents in a challenging financial climate.

The report provided details of plans for a new 3-5 year programme of change for the Council, building upon the work of the successful PSE programme which would now be brought to a close having delivered over £4.8 million of year on year recurring cash savings.

Whilst noting that the new programme linked to a wider programme of organisational development based on the Council's 5 capabilities of prevention; digital; modernising; community engagement and data evidence and benchmarking, the report highlighted that the Council's vision of "A modern, ambitious Council, creating a fairer future with all" blended the Council's aspirations to be the best with its goal of working with communities to improve peoples' lives and its commitment to equality of opportunity. The programme would be underpinned by leadership development around a set of shared values explaining the way the Council would work as a caring, trustworthy, innovative, efficient, and person-centred organisation.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) recognised the contribution of the Public Service Excellence (PSE) Programme and all the various teams involved, towards driving change and efficiencies since its introduction in 2009, culminating in cashable savings of at least £4.8 million to date and noted that the PSE programme was now closed;
- (b) noted the progress to develop and organisational development strategy focussed on developing the Council's 5 capabilities – prevention; digital; modernising; community engagement; and data, evidencing and benchmarking;
- (c) supported working towards a new vision for East Renfrewshire Council - 'A modern ambitious Council, creating a fair and future with all';
- (d) noted the dialogue with staff to create a set of shared values to underpin behaviours expected and the work to develop these into a comprehensive leadership and staff development programme; and
- (e) agreed to launch a new change programme for the next 3-5 years to create the modern ambitious Council that the Council wanted to be in the future and contribute necessary budget savings.

SINGLE FRAUD INVESTIGATION SERVICE

1564. The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive, providing an update on counter-fraud arrangements as a result of the Department for Work and Pensions proposals to undertake all benefit fraud investigations including those in respect of Housing Benefit which were currently the responsibility of councils.

The report provided details of the background to the proposal which would involve 3.5 FTE members of staff in counter-fraud activity being transferred to the Department for Work and Pensions in December 2015. In addition, the report set out the practical arrangements and joint working between the Council and the DWP and commented on the existing funding arrangements for the counter-fraud team which were partially met by Housing Benefit Administrative subsidy which also partially funded other Housing Benefit administrative costs.

It was noted that COSLA had asked both the Scottish Government and the Department for Work and Pensions for new burdens funding to meet the functions which the Department for Work Pensions expected councils to retain although to date no commitment had been made by either body.

The Cabinet noted the contents of the report and approved the proposals for the transfer of members of the Housing Benefit Counter-Fraud Team to the Department for Work and Pensions Single Fraud Investigation Service.

HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

1565. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment, seeking approval for the introduction of a minor revision to the Housing Allocation Policy. A copy of the revised policy was appended to the report.

The report highlighted that in a number of months time the first ever council houses would be built by the Council and would be available for let. The proposed change in the allocation policy would mean that existing Council tenants would be considered for the new build properties in advance of other people on the waiting list. It was noted that the rationale for the proposal was to reward the loyalty of Council tenants highlighting that other people in housing need on the waiting list would not be adversely affected as they would be considered for the properties that subsequently became available.

The Cabinet approved the introduction of a revised Housing Allocation Policy.

PROPOSED LEASE OF GRASS PITCHES AT WOODFARM

1566. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment, seeking approval to the proposed lease of the Council-owned pitches at Woodfarm to East Renfrewshire Cricket Club.

The report explained that the Council previously agreed to lease an area of ground at Cowan Park to the cricket club on similar terms. However, in view of the relocation of the replacement Barrhead High School, the site identified for cricket was no longer available.

Whist officers had looked elsewhere within Cowan Park for an alternative site this did not prove possible for a number of reasons. Having considered other potential sites, the pitches

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at Woodfarm were identified as being the most suitable for the cricket club, who were happy to take on the lease for the site under terms similar to those previously agreed by the Cabinet in relation to Cowan Park.

It was noted that the pitches at Woodfarm were not particularly well used at present as they needed improvements to the drainage. Subject to Cabinet approval, the cricket club intended to seek to secure **sportscotland** funding to help improve the pitches with a view to making them a centre for cricket excellence within East Renfrewshire.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the terms and conditions proposed in relation to the lease of the Woodfarm pitches to East Renfrewshire Cricket Club; and
- (b) agreed that delegated powers be granted to the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement), to make the necessary arrangements.

Resolution to Exclude Press and Public

At this point in the meeting, the Leader, seconded by Councillor Montague moved that the Cabinet resolve 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 item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act.

Councillor Waters moved as an amendment that the item be held in public. In the absence of a seconder, his amendment fell.

In accordance with Standing Order 28(e), Councillor Waters asked for his dissent to be recorded.

Thereafter, the Cabinet 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 item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND CARE PARTNERSHIP FINANCE SYSTEM AND PROCESSES

1567. The Cabinet considered a joint report by the Director of the Community Health and Care Partnership and the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer), providing an update on the Community Health and Care Partnership finance systems and processes.

The Cabinet noted the contents of the report.

CHAIR