

**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**CABINET**

**Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 26 January 2023.**

**Present:**

Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)	Councillor Danny Devlin
Councillor Andrew Anderson	Councillor Katie Pragnell

Councillor O'Donnell in the Chair

**Attending:**

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer); Alison Ballingall, Senior Revenues Manager; Andy Corry, Head of Environment (Operations); Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Jane Corrie, Roads Senior Manager; Mary Docherty, Education Resources Senior Manager; Isabelle Hopkins, Data Management Project Officer; Julie Nicol, Planning and Building Standards Manager; Paul Parsons, Principal Accountant (Capital); John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

(\*) indicates remote attendance.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**289.** There were no declarations of interest intimated.

**ESTIMATED REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2022-23**

**290.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer), detailing the projected revenue budget outturn for 2022/23 and providing details of the expected year-end variances together with summary cost information for each of the undernoted services as at 31 October 2022 and subsequent assessment of pressures arising from COVID-19.

- (i) Education Department;
- (ii) Contribution to Integration Joint Board;
- (iii) Environment Department;
- (iv) Environment Department – Support;
- (v) Business Operations and Partnerships
- (vi) Business Operations and Partnerships – Support Services;
- (vii) Chief Executive's Office;
- (viii) Other Expenditure;
- (ix) Integration Joint Board (IJB) Contribution/Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP); and
- (x) Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer), advised that on the basis of the information, and taking account of forecast Council Tax collection, a year end operational overspend of £0.498m, or 0.2% of the annual budget, was forecast on General Fund services. After adjusting for the HRA, which was funded from rents, the underlying position on departmental budgets was a forecast overspend of £0.389m. The reasons for departmental variances were set out in the report. She outlined that this figure was an improvement of £0.734m from the previous report and reflected departments' efforts to avoid non-essential spending.

It was further outlined that major variances related to unusually high inflationary pressures, particularly impacting on utility and transport prices, as well as contracts where annual payments were directly linked to inflation.

The above figures reflected that £4.4m of ongoing COVID-19 pressures would be covered by using earmarked grant awarded to the Council.

It was explained that the forecast position could still be subject to significant change, for example, if the current year teachers' pay award was settled at a higher level than anticipated or COVID-19 pressures increased.

In addition, the report sought approval for a number of service virements and operational budget adjustments, details of which were outlined. Directors would continue to closely monitor and manage budgets and ensure that spending up to budget levels did not take place.

Discussion took place around savings initiatives within education and the fee for charging electric vehicles, with information provided on those matters.

Thereafter the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the continued financial pressures on operational services arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and that it was expected to cover those from the COVID grant reserve;
- (b) noted the forecast underlying General Fund operational overspend of £0.389m, together with the HRA operational overspend of £0.109m;
- (c) approved service virements and operational adjustments as set out in the notes to the tables accompanying the report and noted the reported probably out-turn position; and
- (d) noted that all departments would continue to closely monitor and manage their budgets and ensure that spending up to operational budget levels did not take place.

## **SCHOOL MEAL DEBT WRITE-OFF**

**291.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Education which sought approval to write-off as irrecoverable sums associated with school meal debt.

It was reported that universal free school meal provision was in place for all pupils in P1 to P5 within primary schools, with further rollout to P6 and P7 pupils expected during the remainder of the current parliamentary term. Younger children also received free meals while accessing their statutory 1,140 hours of free early learning and childcare. Outwith that provision, entitlement was based on parental eligibility for certain benefits, such as Universal Credit.

Discretionary free school meals could also be approved by the Education Department based on local knowledge and information passed on by Head Teachers.

Aberlour Children's Charity had called upon both the Scottish Government and local authorities to agree a debt amnesty for all outstanding school meal debt. It was estimated that some 25,000 children in Scotland were in some level of school meal debt due to their families being unable to afford to pay.

An examination of Parent Pay debt reports up to the end of November 2022 had taken place and showed that the total school meal pupil debt within East Renfrewshire stood at £42,922.58. Around 85% of the individual balances related to debts of £20 or less, which were considered uneconomical to pursue.

Details were provided on the current debt management procedures in relation to school meal debt and Members were reassured that no withdrawal of service was made in respect of school meal debt, ensuring that all children continued to receive a school meal without stigma.

Going forward, subject to national policy developments, further recommendations around school meal debt would be brought to the Cabinet for consideration.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the write off of the following sums, totalling up to £42,922.58 without prejudice to subsequent recovery procedure:
  - historical debt relating to pupils who had since left the relevant school, totalling £26,333
  - current pupil debt, totalling up to £16,589.58; and
- (b) noted that procedures to deal with school meal debt would be updated to reflect national good practice principles for management of school meal debt, which were being developed.

## **DEBT MANAGEMENT – WRITE-OFF OF IRRECOVERABLE FORMER TENANT RENTS AND COURT EXPENSES**

**292.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment which sought approval to write-off former tenant rent and court expenses debt that could not be recovered through the debt collection process.

The Head of Environment (Strategic Services) outlined the proposed write-off sums and that the debts recommended for write-off had previously been included in bad debt provision. Therefore, the write-off had no net impact on the revenue accounts of the Council. He acknowledged that these could be pursued and recovered in future if additional information and opportunities arose.

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

- (a) approved the write-off sum up to the value of £238,467.35 of former tenant irrecoverable rents and court expenses whilst acknowledging these can be pursued and recovered in future should additional information and opportunities arise;

- (b) noted that £198,526.61 of this amount is written off against the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the remaining £39,940.74 is written off against the Non HRA as this was accrued by homeless households placed in temporary accommodation; and
- (c) noted that the write-off of these historic unrecoverable debts will have no net impact on the Council's accounts as provision has been made for the debt, in full, in previous years.

### **DEBT MANAGEMENT FOR COUNCIL TAX, NON-DOMESTIC RATES, SUNDRY DEBT INCOME AND HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS**

**293.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships which sought approval to write-off as irrecoverable sums associated with Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates, sundry debt income and Housing Benefit overpayments. The debts recommended for write-off had previously been included in bad debt provision and, therefore, the write-off had no net impact on the revenue accounts of the Council.

The Senior Revenues Manager advised that every effort had been made to recover these sums and the decision to seek write-off was not taken lightly or without due case. Should any future avenue become available by which to recover those monies, any decision taken by Cabinet would not prevent such opportunities being pursued, hence the recommendation of write-offs "up to" said amounts.

The Senior Revenues Manager outlined the proposed write-off sums and advised that these were in accordance with the Council's Debt Recovery Policy.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the write off of the following sums, totalling up to £491,277.58 without prejudice to subsequent recovery procedure:
  - Council Tax arrears totalling up to £221,327.80
  - Non Domestic rates arrears totalling up to £204,460.71
  - Sundry debt income totalling up to £14,214.10
  - Housing Benefit Overpayments totalling up to £51,274.97;
- (b) noted that the write-off of those sums would have no net impact on the Council's accounts as provision had been made for the debt, in full, in previous years; and
- (c) noted that Water and Sewerage charges totalling up to £74,881.78 were also being written off in discussion with Scottish Water.

### **ADDITION TO CHARGING FOR SERVICES 2023/24**

**294.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet of 1 December 2022 (Page 315, Item 247 refers), when the Cabinet approved various changes to the Council's charges for services, and agreed to delay a decision on charges for garden waste permits, noting that a report on the Garden Waste Scheme would be brought to Cabinet in January 2023 and could include consideration of charges for Service 33 – Garden Waste Permits, the Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the Garden Waste Scheme and Garden Waste Permits.

The Head of Environment (Operations) explained that the main objective of charging for services was to, where possible, ensure that the actual full cost to the department was recovered. This built on the report of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of 21 November 2019, Income Generation and Commercialisation (Page 1025, Item 1108 refers).

It was proposed that, due to above inflation rises in processing costs, gate fees and the rise in fuel costs, a garden waste permit was increased from £40 to £60 per annum. This would, if sufficient participants continued with the scheme, generate revenue that would support the full cost of recovery of the Garden Waste Scheme and also generate a small amount of additional income.

It was further proposed that the current service be enhanced by allowing residents to purchase an additional bin for garden waste, with a limit of 5,000 bins being set for operational reasons. This would have a one off cost of £60, including delivery and would require an additional permit to be purchased at £60 per annum.

The Head of Environment (Operations) clarified that this decision could not be delayed until the Council's budget meeting on 1 March 2023 and the reasons for this were set out in the report.

Having heard from the Head of Environment (Operations) on the proposed charges and the status of composting services, the Cabinet agreed:-

- (a) an increase in the charge for the Garden Waste Permit 2023/2024 from £40 to £60; and
- (b) the introduction of a new charge for an additional garden waste container for participating households of £60 for an additional permit; plus £60 to cover the cost of a new container including delivery.

## **SALE OF HS 0 VEHICLE REGISTRATION**

**295.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships regarding the proposed sale of the Council's HS 0 vehicle registration.

The registration had been in the ownership of the Council since the time of Eastwood District Council. However, it was now expected that the sale of the registration could raise a significant sum. It was proposed that, to protect the Council's interests, an appropriate reserve would be set in consultation with the dealer taking the sale forward.

Following a brief discussion, the Cabinet agreed:-

- (a) to approve the sale of the HS 0 vehicle registration; and
- (b) that it delegated to the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships to agree a suitable reserve figure for the sale.

## **LETTINGS POLICY REVIEW**

**296.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for a reviewed Lettings Policy for council housing. A copy of the revised policy accompanied the report.

The report outlined the terms of the existing Lettings Policy, however, the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) pointed out that there had been unprecedented demand for Council Housing in East Renfrewshire, including increased demand for homeless accommodation. The number of homeless presentations, as compared to previous years, was detailed in the report.

- The report went on to detail the proposed changes following review of the current policy, to better address the needs of those seeking council housing in East Renfrewshire.

It was noted that a consultation on the changes to the policy had taken place to which 191 responses were received. Overall, the responses had been supportive of the changes, but many applicants expressed frustration with the lack of available social housing.

Having heard from the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) on the various reasons for the high level of demand for council housing and, in particular, homeless accommodation, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the current unprecedented demand for council housing in East Renfrewshire Council, in particular the increase in homelessness; and
- (b) approved the proposed changes to the Lettings Policy.

### **CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-2028**

**297.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the new hierarchal approach to Asset Management within the Council and introducing an updated Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) 2023-2028 to replace older versions.

The CAMP sat above all other asset management plans in the new hierarchy and outlined the Council's strategic vision for operating and maintaining physical assets. The report outlined all of the Asset Management Plans that sat within the suite of plans produced by the Council.

The Head of Environment (Strategic Services) introduced the CAMP 2023-2028 and gave a section by section breakdown to Members of the various changes within it from previous iterations. A full copy of the CAMP 2023-2028 was attached as an appendix to the report.

Following a brief discussion on those changes, the Cabinet approved the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2028.

### **FLEET ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-2028**

**298.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for the updated Fleet Asset Management Plan (FAMP) 2023-2028.

The FAMP had been updated to fit into the hierarchy of the Corporate Asset Management Plan and outlined the work being undertaken by the Council in relation to fleet management across the area.

It was noted that the FAMP, which was attached as an appendix to the report, was a live document which would be updated on a 2 yearly basis.

The Head of Environment (Operations) having detailed the main points of the new FAMP to Members and provide detail on the training that would be given to staff in relation to maintenance of fleet assets, the Cabinet approved the Fleet Asset Management Plan 2023-2028.

### **OPEN SPACES ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-2028**

**299.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for the updated Open Spaces Asset Management Plan (OSAMP) 2023-2028.

The OSAMP had been updated to fit into the hierarchy of the Corporate Asset Management Plan and outlined the work being undertaken by the Council in relation to the management of open spaces across its area.

The OSAMP, which was attached as an appendix to the report, was a live document which would be updated on a 2 yearly basis.

Having heard the Head of Environment (Operations) give further detail on the inclusion of cycle lanes and the use of Sustrans funding, the Cabinet approved the Open Space Asset Management Plan 2023-2028.

### **CARBON EMISSIONS REPORT 2021-22**

**300.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet on 27 January 2022 (Page 1759, Item 1871 refers), the Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment, which provided information on the 2021-22 carbon emissions from the Council's operations and outlined how that information would inform the Get to Zero Action Plan. A full breakdown of East Renfrewshire Council's emissions was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Head of Environment (Strategic Services) outlined that each year's figures were being measured against the baseline year of 2019/20, which was established in the previous report to Cabinet on 27 January 2022. Updated guidance had made minor changes to the scope boundaries in 2021/22 compared with those used in the previous report. Any changes as a result of this had been reflected in previous years' figures to ensure consistency and accurate comparison.

The report outlined that the greatest source of Council carbon emissions was from buildings, with a number of reductions being detailed. In particular, waste management had decreased by 85% from the baseline figure.

The Head of Environment (Strategic Services) detailed the range of figures in the report to Members and explained that possible future actions to be taken to further reduce the Council's emissions would be proposed in the Council's Get to Zero Action Plan.

Having heard the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) discuss the achievements and challenges of the long term targets on carbon emissions, the Cabinet noted the Council's carbon emissions for 2021/22.

**THE EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL (A726 GLASGOW SOUTHERN ORBITAL, MAIDENHILL)(PROHIBITION OF DRIVING AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS) ORDER 2023**

**301.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for the making and confirmation of the East Renfrewshire Council (A726 Glasgow Southern Orbital, Maidenhill)(Prohibition of Driving and Pedestrian Access) Order 2023.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the making and confirmation of the East Renfrewshire Council (A726 Glasgow Southern Orbital, Maidenhill)(Prohibition of Driving and Pedestrian Access) Order 2033; and
- (b) delegated to the Director of Environment the implementation of the Order in accordance with the associated statutory procedures.

**THE EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL (A726 GLASGOW SOUTHERN ORBITAL, NEWTON MEARNS – MAIDENHILL JUNCTION)(NO ENTRY) ORDER 2023**

**302.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for the making and confirmation of the East Renfrewshire Council (A726 Glasgow Southern Orbital, Newton Mearns)(No Entry) Order 2023.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the making and confirmation of the East Renfrewshire Council (A726 Glasgow Southern Orbital, Newton Mearns)(No Entry) Order 2023; and
- (b) delegated to the Director of Environment the implementation of the Order in accordance with the associated statutory procedures.

**THE EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL (A726 GLASGOW SOUTHERN ORBITAL, MAIDENHILL)(DESIGNATION OF PROTECTED ROADS) NOTICE 2023**

**303.** The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for the making and confirmation of the East Renfrewshire Council (A726 Glasgow Southern Orbital, Maidenhill)(Designation of Protected Roads) Notice 2023.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the making and confirmation of the East Renfrewshire Council (A726 Glasgow Southern Orbital, Maidenhill)(Designation of Protected Roads) Notice 2023; and
- (b) delegated to the Director of Environment the implementation of the Notice in accordance with the associated statutory procedures.