

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 19 June 2023.

Present:

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

Councillor O'Donnell, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Jamie Reid, Head of Communities and Transformation; Kenny Barr, Senior Programme Manager; Barbara Clark, Chief Accounting; Jane Corrie, Roads Senior Manager; Paul Parsons, Principal Accountant; Alastair Ross, Corporate Landlord Manager; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apology:

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Vice-Chair)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

489. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

REVIEW OF COUNCIL OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

490. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the outcome of the review of the Council's office accommodation portfolio.

On 10 November 2022 (Page 292, Paragraph 226 refers), Cabinet noted the issues surrounding the Council's accommodation portfolio and a proposed approach to a review of that portfolio. It was explained in that report that the two key buildings under consideration for closure were Spiersbridge and Eastwood Headquarters.

The options had been further examined during the process of review and a number of scenarios had been developed and were fully detailed within the report, exploring disposal of either building, works being carried out, services being relocated, and a further option where both buildings were retained.

The Head of Environment (Strategic Services) provided a breakdown of the costs and benefits of each option and explained that the full detail for each was included as Appendix One to the report. Option 2, the retention of Eastwood Headquarters and not renewing the lease of the Spiersbridge office, was proposed as the preferred option from a both financial and non-

financial perspective. It was further proposed that a Capital Project Appraisal be completed and submitted in relation to required works at Eastwood Headquarters.

The Head of Environment (Strategic Services) responded to questions from members relating to the Council's Get to Zero commitments, the sufficiency of parking, particularly in the area of the Barrhead office, and staff and trade union consultation. It was also explained that a Masterplanning process was being undertaken to ensure sufficient facility for parking around the Eastwood Headquarters given the proposal to relocate staff and the construction of the new leisure centre. It was further highlighted that the cost saving to the Council from the proposed changes would be substantial.

Following that discussion, the Cabinet:

- (a) approved the principle of not renewing the lease of the Spiersbridge office when it expires;
- (b) noted the intention to cost and submit a Capital Project Appraisal in relation to Eastwood Headquarters;
- (c) noted the intention to submit an investment bid to progress the design;
- (d) noted the intention to return to Council with more detailed costed options; and
- (e) noted that full year technology/ICT revenue costs to support the 'way we work' programme would be incorporated when compiling pressures for the Council's 2024/25 revenue budget.

INTERIM REVIEW OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN

491. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the outcome of an interim review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan and the measures available to manage the temporary deficit in the years 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Local authorities that are social landlords were required to maintain a 30 year business plan for their HRA. This was the account where all income and expenditure related to the Council's housing was accounted for, including non-domestic assets held by the HRA for either income generation or development purposes and the provision of new council housing.

The HRA had been subjected to a number of pressures, such as inflation and a higher than expected pay increase. Due to the statutory ring-fencing of funds within the HRA, all cost pressures had to be managed within the approved rent increase. While some General Fund resource had been provided by the Scottish Government to cover the 2022/23 pay offer, this funding was not available to the HRA.

It was explained that the Council had changed the way in which it managed loans charges in line with Scottish Government guidance on 3 March 2022. This change had a significant impact on loans charges funded from the HRA, making them significantly higher over the next few years than initially calculated. This situation would be temporary, as some "inherited debt" that the Council took on from its predecessor Councils at the time of Local Government reorganisation was set to be paid off over the following few years. In the 2023/24 budget, a drawdown from reserves of £824,000, potentially reducing to £482,000 at the end of the year, had been approved to manage the situation until a longer term solution could be identified, with a review in the first quarter of the new financial year to consider a range of options.

Each measure being considered to address the deficit was detailed in the report, with all potential options explored in detail and figures provided as to the potential costs and benefits of each approach.

Following discussion, it was clarified that no decision was being taken in this meeting, and that the range of options would continue to be explored.

Thereafter, the Cabinet noted:

- (a) the financial pressures that the HRA business plan faced;
- (b) the various measures available to manage the forecasted deficit in the years 2024/25 and 2025/26 outlined in the report;
- (c) that the rescheduling of inherited debt repayments should reduce the financial pressures over the next few years; and
- (d) the intention to further review aspects of the 30 year HRA business plan in the following months and any potential change to the treatment of loan charges would be submitted, together with any other proposals, to Council for approval.

THE EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL (NEILSTON)(ON-STREET)(WAITING AND LOADING) ORDER 2023

492. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment seeking approval for the making and confirmation of the East Renfrewshire Council (Neilston)(On-Street)(Waiting and Loading) Order 2023.

The Cabinet noted the content of the report, approved and confirmed the making of the East Renfrewshire Council (Neilston)(On-Street)(Waiting and Loading) Order 2023.

UPDATE ON THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

493. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on the achievements of the Digital Transformation Programme during 2022/23 and an overview of plans for 2023/24.

East Renfrewshire Council aimed to be at the forefront of modernisation and digital transformation. The 5 capabilities of Prevention; Empowering Communities; Data; Modernisation; and Digital introduced in 2015 set out the key areas of focus for delivery of outcomes for local people and meet the Council's vision to make lives better for the people of East Renfrewshire.

The Council's Digital Transformation Strategy for 2021 had been approved by Cabinet in June 2021 (Page 1534, Paragraph 1648 refers) and focused on 3 areas: Customer Experience; Business Systems and Processes; and Workforce Productivity. It was launched in April 2022, replacing the previous Modern Ambitious Programme (MAP). A refreshed approach to governance had also been put in place, led by Business Operations and Partnerships, with input from each Council Department, HSCP and East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust as appropriate. Overall governance of the Programme was through the Corporate Management Team and Programme Boards for each of the 3 priority areas met every 6-8 weeks. It was noted that, in April 2023, draft benefit dashboards had been introduced for use in the Programme Boards, with further development required before they could be shared wider.

Substantial progress had been made across 2022/23 to progress the Council's digital ambitions, make efficiencies, improve customer service and modernise the way the Council worked. Key projects in each of the key areas were detailed in the report, with a focus on how those projects had impacted service delivery and customer experience across East Renfrewshire.

In particular, the analogue to digital Telecare service was mentioned as an area that had drawn praise from inside and outside of the Council, and had been an extremely important advancement, leading the way in delivery in Scotland.

The Cabinet noted the achievements and future plans across the 3 areas of the Digital Transformation Programme: Customer Experience; Business Systems and Processes; and Workforce Productivity.

CHAIR