

MINUTE
of
CABINET

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 7 September 2023.

Present:

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

Councillor O'Donnell, Leader, in the Chair

Attending:

Steven Quinn, Chief Executive; Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Margaret McCrossan, Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer)(*); Andrew Corry, Head of Environment (Operations); Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); John Marley, Principal Traffic Officer; Gillian McCarney, Head of Place; Suzanne Conlin, Senior Housing Manager; Gill Darbyshire, Chief Executive's Business Manager; Craig Geddes, Senior Information and Improvement Officer; Siobhan McColgan, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer.

(*) indicates remote attendance

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

557. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AND RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRESS

558. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive on the annual update of the Council's Strategic Risk Register and a summary of risk management progress. The previous update had been considered by Cabinet on 10 November 2022 (Page 287, Item 220 refers), and by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 30 March 2023 (Page 454, Item 387 refers).

The Strategic Risk register, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, set out the key strategic risks to be considered by East Renfrewshire Council and detailed the actions that management had put in place to manage those risks.

Speaking to the report, the Chief Executive's Business Manager summarised the number of risks and their severity, as well as highlighting where risks had been added or removed from the register, or amended in their wording.

A risk tolerance map was included and the Risk Appetite, which had been approved by the Cabinet on 23 February (Page 400, Item 334 refers) was also included for information.

The Cabinet was reminded that the Strategic Risk Register was reported every 6 months to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee and annually to the Cabinet. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) continued to discuss and review the Register on a regular basis .

In discussing the report, members highlighted some risks where they queried the level of risk attributed, receiving explanations as to why the current level of risk was assigned. These would continue to be reviewed and amended if necessary, with any changes reported back in the normal reporting cycle.

The Cabinet noted the development of the Council's Strategic Risk Register and noted that it was considered a live document and would be updated and amended by the Corporate Management Team as appropriate.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – COUNCIL PERFORMANCE 2022-23

559. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive on the annual statistical report on the Council's performance in dealing with Freedom of Information requests.

The report stated that the Council had received a total of 1,364 requests during the period, 957 of which were under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act and 407 of which were under the related Environmental Information Regulations (Scotland). The full report was attached as Appendix 1.

Members noted the increased number of such requests and the subsequent impact that this had on Council resources in dealing with the increased number of requests.

Thereafter, the Cabinet noted the report.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE END-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022-23

560. The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive summarising the performance of the Chief Executive's Office for 2022/23.

The report detailed the functions carried out by the Chief Executive's Office and provided further detail on some of the operational highlights from the year. The full performance report was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Members recognised the excellent work of the Chief Executive's Office. A particular area of concern for members was the difficulty in recruitment for particular posts, specifically in the field of internal audit. Members received assurances that this was an area of priority going forward to ensure that the working environment at East Renfrewshire Council was attractive and the offer to prospective staff was competitive. Vacant audit posts were due to be re-advertised in the immediate future.

Thereafter, the Cabinet scrutinised and noted the report as a summary of the Chief Executive's Office end-year performance for 2022/23.

UPDATED DRAFT OF EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL'S GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN 2023-2028

561. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships on the updated draft of the Gaelic Language Plan 2023-2028 for East Renfrewshire Council.

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 had been passed by the Scottish Parliament to help to secure the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland. It provided a framework to grow, preserve and sustain the Gaelic language and culture. Bòrd na Gàidhlig were empowered under the Act to issue a statutory notice to any relevant public authority, requiring it to prepare a Gaelic Language Plan.

East Renfrewshire Council had received a statutory notice from Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 5 April 2022, informing that the next edition of the Gaelic Language Plan was due on 1 October 2023, instructing the Council to renew, review and submit the Plan by the date provided.

The draft plan was approved by Cabinet on 11 May 2023 (Page 509, Item 444 refers) and entered a consultation period. Details of the consultation process and the feedback received were provided in the report.

Through the analysis of the feedback, improvements had been made to the Plan, particularly around opportunities for adults to learn Gaelic and more clarity around how the Plan would be resourced.

The Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the updated draft of the Gaelic Language Plan for East Renfrewshire, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, for submission to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for formal approval; and
- (b) noted the funding awarded to the Council through the Gaelic Plans Fund for the purpose of Gaelic Awareness training.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS DEPARTMENT END-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23

562. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships summarising the performance of the Business Operations and Partnerships Department in 2022/23.

The report detailed the functions carried out by the Business Operations and Partnerships Department and provided further detail on some of the operational highlights from the year. The full performance report was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Members recognised the excellent work being done in the department, in particular, the offering of training and support for new elected members provided by the department was highlighted. Furthermore, the Leader asked for some clarity regarding the increased cost of Council Tax collection per property.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:-

- (a) scrutinised and noted the report as a summary of the Business Operations and Partnerships Department's end-year performance for 2022/23; and
- (b) noted that clarification on the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships would provide further information to the Leader on the increased cost of Council Tax collection per property.

LETTINGS POLICY REVIEW

563. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the updated letting targets for existing and new build council housing.

The existing Lettings Policy had been approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 26 January 2023 (Page 363, Item 296 refers). The detail of the proposals, particularly around allocation of accommodation to homeless households, were provided in the report. These had been agreed to remain until the end of Quarter 1 of 2023/24, and it was now proposed that these be kept in place due to the large increase in demand from homeless households.

The current Lettings Policy operated a choice based approach and was fully explained in the report, along with the levels of priority awarded to households in particular cases. It was also highlighted that new build Council homes were more attractive to those seeking accommodation and so existing stock was not receiving the same level of bids. Housing Services were working with homeless households to encourage them to bid on all available council accommodation.

It was confirmed by the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) that the level of demand for social housing was unprecedented and working to meet the level of demand would be a priority for the service going forward.

In discussing the report, members expressed a desire to see the Council provide more social housing where possible. The Head of Environment (Strategic Services) was also asked to provide further information on what action Housing Associations were taking in terms of homelessness and what the Council could do to support them in their work.

It was also confirmed that the Strategic Housing Investment Programme would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting in October.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the ongoing and unprecedented demand for council housing in East Renfrewshire, in particular the increase in homelessness;
- (b) approved the proposed letting targets for existing and new build council housing; and
- (c) noted that the Head of Environment (Strategic Services) would provide further detail to Cabinet on work being done by and with Housing Associations to alleviate the situation.

PROPOSED FLEET PURCHASING POLICY FOR GET TO ZERO

564. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on a new fleet purchasing policy which would support the ambitions set by the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan 2020 and form part of the Council's Get to Zero Action Plan.

The Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan Update 2020 had placed some policy expectations on the public sector fleet: that after 2025, public bodies would no longer operate cars with internal combustion engines (ICE); that between 2025 and 2030, public bodies would have begun and completed ceasing the purchase of new ICE vans and light commercial vehicles; and that by 2030, public bodies were expected to have plans in place that meant no new ICE heavy goods vehicles were purchased.

A recent letter from the Cabinet Secretary had re-iterated that position. However, it was confirmed that there was no legal requirement to fulfil this and no supporting funds from Scottish Government to assist with the transition.

The report detailed the current ICE vehicles in the Council's fleet, as well as highlighting the limited charging capacity within the Thornliebank Depot, which was at 98% of its available electrical capacity. Capital funding of £400,000 had been set aside to provide for the installation of a new sub-station which would better meet the power needs of the depot and allow support for future support of electric vehicles at the site.

The factors considered when reaching the recommendations within the report were set out in the report. The proposed policy applied to cars and vans only and the policy for purchasing heavy goods vehicles would be considered in advance of the requirements to cease purchasing ICE for those types of vehicles in 2030.

Members asked for and were given reassurance that no issues were anticipated in terms of the sub-station construction.

Thereafter, the Cabinet approved the fleet purchasing policy, which would see:-

- (a) an extension of life and use of cars and vans due for renewal in 2025-2027, unless they could be charged within the existing electric vehicle charging infrastructure at Thornliebank Depot;
- (b) no new internal combustion engine cars or vans purchased in 2025/26 and 2026/27;
- (c) all new cars and vans purchased being electric vehicles from 2027/28
- (d) all cars in operation being electric vehicles by April 2027; and
- (e) all vans in operation being electric vehicles by April 2030.

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022-23

565. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment summarising the 2022/23 performance of the Environment Department.

The report detailed the functions carried out by the Business Operations and Partnerships Department and provided further detail on some of the operational highlights from the year. The full performance report was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

In discussion, members recognised the excellent work being done by the Department, in particular the national recognition received for scam prevention work carried out.

The Leader asked for and received clarity on when a report on Clarkston Parklets would be coming to Cabinet.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:-

- (a) scrutinised and noted the report as a summary of the Environment Department's end-year performance for 2022/23; and
- (b) noted that a report would be submitted to Cabinet in October 2023 regarding the Clarkston Parklets.

DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT – PROPOSED INCREASE IN PENALTY CHARGE NOTICE CHARGES

566. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Environment on the justification for increasing the charges for Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) for parking contraventions, under the Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) scheme.

The Road Traffic Act 1991 introduced provisions enabling the decriminalisation of most enforceable parking offences in London, and permitted similar arrangements to be introduced elsewhere in the UK by secondary legislation under the DPE scheme. This allowed a local authority to enforce its own parking policies, including the issuing of PCNs to motorists breaching parking controls in specified areas. This had been adopted in East Renfrewshire in April 2013.

The current level of charges for PCNs was £60, reduced to £30 if paid within 14 days. The Scottish Government had undertaken a public consultation in 2021 on the level of charges associated with PCNs. All local authorities that responded supported an increase in the charges, however, at the time, this was not considered appropriate due to the cost of living crisis.

On 17 February 2023, Scottish Ministers had published revised guidance on PCN charges, which suggested a lower level of £80, reduced to £40 if paid within 14 days, or a higher level of £100, reduced to £50 if paid within 14 days. It was believed that this increase would deter more motorists and reoffenders, improving road safety and the local environment. This would also bring East Renfrewshire Council in line with neighbouring Councils, who would be increasing their charges at the same time.

Further, it was proposed that the observation period for contravening loading restrictions required before a PCN be issued be reduced to 5 minutes from its current 10 minutes. This would allow the parking enforcement officers to more effectively enforce loading restrictions, particularly around schools and shops, and also allow a more effective use of their time.

Members asked questions around the number of parking enforcement officers employed and the makeup of their duties. They also received confirmation that the Environment department would liaise with Communications in order to publicise the changes to ensure residents were aware of the new charges.

It was also stressed that, while the increase in charges could be seen to have an increased income to the Council, the purpose of the increase was to ensure compliance, which would hopefully see a reduction in the issue of PCNs.

Thereafter, the Cabinet:-

- (a) approved the increased charges for Penalty Charge Notices in East Renfrewshire, that may be charged to a motorist parking in contravention of restrictions, to £100, reduced to £50 if paid within the first 14 days; and
- (b) approved the reduction of the observation period for loading and unloading activities, before a Penalty Charge Notice can be issued, from 10 to 5 minutes.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE CULTURE AND LEISURE END-YEAR REPORT 2022-2023

567. The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Education informing the Cabinet of the end-year performance of East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure (ERCL) for 2022-23.

The report detailed the functions carried out by ERCL and provided further detail on some of the operational highlights from the year. The full performance report was attached as Appendix A to the report.

Members expressed their delight at the excellent performance of ERCL over the period.

Thereafter, the Cabinet scrutinised and noted the report as a summary of East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure's end-year performance for 2022-23.

CHAIR

