

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Inverclyde Taskforce Group
Monday 27 June 2022 at 2.00 pm
Via Webex**

PRESENT

Councillor Stephen McCabe	Leader of Inverclyde Council (Chair)
Louise Long	Chief Executive – Inverclyde Council
Councillor Michael McCormick	Inverclyde Council
Councillor Elizabeth Robertson	Inverclyde Council
Councillor Lynne Quinn	Inverclyde Council
Councillor Graeme Brooks	Inverclyde Council
Ruth Binks	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development – Inverclyde Council
Stuart Jamieson	Interim Director – Environment & Regeneration – Inverclyde Council
Jennifer Horn	Regeneration Manager – Inverclyde Council
George Barbour	Service Manager: Communications, Tourism and Health & Safety – Inverclyde Council
Professor Mairi Spowage	Director – Fraser of Allander Institute
Sharon Kelly	Head of Operations (West Region) – Skills Development Scotland
Paul Zealey	Regional Skills Planning Lead – Skills Development Scotland
Mark Spragg	President – Inverclyde Chamber of Commerce
David McCarrey	Area Commander – Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Liz Connolly	Principal – West College Scotland
Hisashi Kuboyama	Development Manager – Federation of Small Businesses
Ronnie Cowan	MP
Stuart McMillan	MSP
Neil Bibby	MSP
Andrew Docherty	Glasgow City Region Lead – CLGU Scotland
Craig Birrell	Scotland Office
John Provan	Scottish Government Official
Ivan McKee MSP	Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise

IN ATTENDANCE

Lisa Mitchell	Chief Executive’s Office
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APOLOGIES

Laurence Rockey	Director – Scotland Office
Councillor David Wilson	Inverclyde Council
Jamie Greene	MSP
Gavin McDonagh	Riverside Inverclyde

ACTION

1. Welcome, Apologies & Introductions

Councillor McCabe (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Councillor McCabe welcome Stuart McMillan MSP as his Joint Chair and advised he looked forward to working together to benefit the citizens of Inverclyde.

Councillor McCabe advised that the Taskforce was initiated from a meeting between Inverclyde Council’s Leader and The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes).

Louise Long advised that the purpose of this meeting is for partners to work

together to improve the Inverclyde economy by creating opportunities for business and residents.

2. Terms of Reference

It was noted the Terms of Reference were approved by the Inverclyde Council Committee meeting on 21 April 2022.

Louise highlighted measurements of success contained within the Terms of Reference include maximising funding opportunities, supporting growth industries to create more green and blue jobs and returning to pre-pandemic employment rates.

The terms of reference were agreed by the group.

3. Presentation by Fraser of Allander Institute

Mairi Spowage gave a presentation on supporting economic recovery in Inverclyde. Mairi highlighted that 3 local authorities (Argyll & Bute, West Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde) face similar challenges including population decline, supporting economic recovery in areas requiring regeneration and addressing issues such as inequality and poverty.

Mairi advised that a 3-stage approach was taken:

- (i) Comprehensive review of literature.
- (ii) Examination of a set of indicators (9 across 4 domains – demographics, industry, poverty and related measures) to compare Inverclyde to all other local authorities in Great Britain and to identify similar “sister” local authorities.
- (iii) Primary research carried out in “sister” areas.

It was highlighted that Inverclyde comes second lowest out of 357 councils across Great Britain in relation to population and industrial decline measures. Similar councils’ outwith Scotland are located in Wales and the North East of England.

It was noted that policymakers were interviewed and it was highlighted that policies implemented to tackle challenges centred around the following:

- policy context
- skills and knowledge economy – governments could provide incentives to education providers to offer courses that may not be in demand now but will be essential to address future challenges
- attracting investment – certain types of policies can encourage the relocation of high profile organisations to a region
- foundational economy – policymakers often neglect the side of the economy that creates and distributes essential goods and services
- infrastructure and housing – there are benefits which come from spending public money in the local economy.

Councillor McCabe thanked Mairi for her presentation and opened up the meeting for questions / comments.

Councillor Quinn asked if Inverclyde was second lowest for just those 9 indicators. Mairi confirmed that this was the case. Inverclyde was identified as needing more assistance than other local authority areas across Scotland and the UK.

Councillor Robertson highlighted that the collaboration of partners is a feature in those local authorities which are successful – this needs to be replicated across Inverclyde. Mairi advised of the importance of investing and developing skills.

Ivan McKee advised that partnerships is a key factor and university and colleges are a part of this. A success factor is about where inward investment will be focussed on. Inverclyde needs to maximise on the assets it already has.

Stuart McMillan advised that population decline in Inverclyde is the key issue. Mairi confirmed that it is a feature and young people need encouragement to stay in local areas and to engage in the local economy. How do we get the best out of young people living in the area? How do we get the labour supply we need and who has the relevant skills?

4. Challenges / Opportunities

Councillor McCabe advised of the importance of taking advantage of opportunities – the meeting was opened up for comments.

Councillors Brooks highlighted affordable housing and queried whether rules can be reviewed in relation to RSLs / stock transfer to allow for more affordable housing in Inverclyde. Councillor Brooks highlighted that the Council of Economic Transformation met last year (chaired by Kate Forbes) and ideas were suggested for economic transformation. Mr McKee advised that the 10 year strategy for Economic Transformation has been published which has 77 actions to be progressed across skills, regional development and productivity etc.

David McCarrey advised of the opportunities to join up services – it is about improving and bringing services together.

Mark Spragg reflected that we needed to stay focused on the key elements that would make the biggest impact.

Liz Connolly advised that West College Scotland are seeking a new campus investment in Greenock and thinks more partnership working can be undertaken. It is about thinking where Inverclyde can position itself for future investments.

Stuart Jamieson highlighted that appropriate office accommodation is in short supply in Inverclyde – it acts as a barrier to those companies wishing to relocate to Inverclyde. Mark Spragg highlighted that his business is unable to relocate to Inverclyde due to lack of suitable properties. Mark advised he is happy to contribute to discussions on what businesses require to relocate to Inverclyde. Councillor McCormick asked if the fiscal policy could be changed in relation to business rates?

Councillor Robertson highlighted that there is a willingness from partners to work together. Inverclyde needs to help itself but it also needs assistance with regional and national partners to move forward.

Councillor Quinn highlighted connectivity issues within Inverclyde which comes up regularly with those individuals who are working remotely. Remote worker hubs could be established to share knowledge and skills. Councillor Quinn asked if we have a review of the skills shortage – do we have further data? It was highlighted that Inverclyde has a high number of creative industries which could be expanded upon.

Ronnie Cowan advised that this group needs to come up with a shared vision and plan for Inverclyde.

Neil Bibby advised of the issues with the ferries contract with Fergusons – these are works that we don't wish to be transferred to other countries but it was highlighted that there are skill gaps in this area.

Craig Birrell advised that the Scotland Office to happy to offer assistance where possible. He suggested if the Taskforce wanted the UK Minister to attend he would advocate this on Inverclyde's behalf.

5. Focus and Frequency of Meetings

Louise thanked everyone for their contributions to this meeting. It was noted that work can be progressed in relation to place and people.

All

Paul Zealey advised that Skills Development Scotland are happy to provide support in relation to the people focus. Paul highlighted that there are labour shortages and skills shortages.

Louise advised that sub structures will be reviewed.

LL

To allow for information to be collated for the next meeting it was agreed for the next meeting to take place in 10 – 12 weeks and thereafter meetings will be arranged for every 8 weeks.

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