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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Inverclyde Council</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>1 December 2022</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Chief Executive</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>IC/22/01/01/SJ</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Stuart Jamieson</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712402</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Inverclyde Task Force</b>		

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## 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1  For Decision  For Information/Noting
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council in respect of the Inverclyde Task Force.
- 1.3 At its meeting in April 2022, the Council agreed that a new multi-agency Inverclyde Task Force be established based on agreed terms of reference, reporting to the full Council and monitored through the Inverclyde Alliance local outcome improvement plan (LOIP); and noted that a report updating on the progress of the Inverclyde Task Force would be presented to the December meeting of the Council, and six-monthly thereafter.
- 1.4 The Task Force has been formed and has met on two occasions with the next meeting scheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023. An Officers group has also been created to facilitate multi agency actions and responses between Task Force meetings. In addition, the Local Employment Partnership and the Economy Partnership Groups have been re-purposed to support the Task Force objectives.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council:
- (1) Note the activity of the Inverclyde Task Force and continue to support its purpose.

**LOUISE LONG**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

### 3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In November 2021, the Council Leader and Chief Executive met with the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy to examine underlying long term issues affecting Inverclyde and identify opportunities to address those.
- 3.2 A briefing was presented to the Cabinet Secretary and, following discussion, it was agreed that a new task force be created to examine opportunities and bring partners together to seek solutions.
- 3.3 The briefing paper highlighted a range of key facts about Inverclyde including population rates and deprivation levels.
- 3.4 The briefing also noted the impact of Covid-19 on Inverclyde and funding issues affecting local government in Scotland.
- 3.5 The briefing document also highlighted requests for assistance from the Scottish Government including support for the local economy; the local government settlement; investment in public infrastructure; investment in housing and the Council's commissioning of a report from the Fraser of Allander Institute and the previous ask of the Scottish Government to create a case for special funding for Inverclyde.
- 3.6 The Task Force has been formed and has met on two occasions with future meetings scheduled. Ministerial presence has occurred at both meetings, supported by senior civil servants from both the UK and Scottish Governments, and senior officers from Public Sector Agencies. As well as agreeing the terms of reference, the first meeting received the Fraser of Allander Report - Supporting Economic Recovery in Inverclyde, West Dunbartonshire & Argyll & Bute.
- 3.7 At the first meeting the Task Force recognised the importance of addressing population decline by increasing affordable housing, implementing employment initiatives and improving local infrastructure; supporting economic regeneration by developing a knowledge exchange economy, a strategy of industrial specialisation, addressing a skills mismatch and attracting new high-profile firms to the region; and addressing inequality and poverty by encouraging inclusive growth, building community engagement, introducing employment initiatives retrofitting homes and buildings and introducing social lending initiatives as highlighted in the Fraser of Allander Report.
- 3.8 A copy of the minutes from the first meeting of the Task Force have been attached to the report as appendix 1.
- 3.9 At the second meeting a presentation was made about the current projects which are either underway or at bid stage including Greenock Ocean Terminal, Inchgreen, Inverkip, Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up Fund and the Clyde Green Freeport Bid. During this presentation the important function which Inchgreen Dry Dock could play was discussed. The Inverclyde Chamber of Commerce presented a business survey on their membership views of their challenges in Inverclyde. Officers presented a survey on land and business premises and advised the Task Force on the work of the Local Employability Partnership and the Economy Groups, which are chaired by the Chief Executive and the Interim Director – Environment and Regeneration respectively.
- 3.10 Several actions resulted from the meeting and Officers will present any outcomes from these actions within a future report, as part of the six-monthly cycle, to the Council.

### 4.0 IMPLICATIONS

The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO	N/A
Financial			X

Legal/Risk			X
Human Resources			X
Strategic (LOIP/Corporate Plan)	X		
Equalities & Fairer Scotland Duty			X
Children & Young People's Rights & Wellbeing			X
Environmental & Sustainability			X
Data Protection			X

#### 4.1 Finance

##### Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/a					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (if Applicable)	Other Comments
N/a					

#### 4.2 Legal

N/A

#### 4.3 Human Resources

N/A

#### 4.4 Strategic (LOIP/Corporate Plan)

Additional investment supporting Inverclyde and addressing long term health inequalities would be a crucial element of stabilising population decline in Inverclyde and helping to take steps towards repopulation and the future sustainability of communities.

### 5.0 CONSULTATIONS

5.1 N/A

### 6.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 N/A

**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.

**LM**