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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>15 August 2023</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital &amp; Customer Services</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>LS/065/23/IS</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Iain Strachan</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712710</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network – Annual Update</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

1.1  For Decision  For Information/Noting

1.2 In September 2022, the Council agreed to become a member of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network, for an initial period of 3 years. As part of this approval it was also agreed that officers would bring back annual reports highlighting the benefits which have arisen during the period of membership. The purpose of this report is to provide that annual report for 2022/23.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report and that the Committee will receive a further annual report in 2024.

**Iain Strachan**  
**Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services**

### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 At the 20 September 2022 meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee it was agreed that the Council should apply to become a member of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network (the Network), for an initial period of 3 years. This application was approved in October, and all councillors advised on 2 November. The Committee's approval of Network membership in September 2022 required officers to bring back annual reports highlighting the benefits which have arisen during the period of membership.  
<https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2487>
- 3.2 The Network, established in 2012, describes itself as "the fastest-growing network in local government", having over 100 councils, organisations and supporters from across the UK. The Network states that member councils are committed to reforming the way they work by building an equal partnership with local people based on the values and principles of the International Co-operative Alliance. In particular, the Network promotes the transformation of communities through community action, community engagement and civic empowerment.
- 3.3 More information on the Network can be found on its website:  
<https://www.councils.coop/about-us/>.
- 3.4 In addition, at its meeting on 1 December 2022, the Council approved Cllr Cassidy's appointment to the Network's Executive Oversight Committee.

### 4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 As reported to the Committee previously, all members of the Network benefit from the following:-
- Access for Elected Members and officers to a wide network of local authorities who share a common purpose;
  - Access to the Network's on-line resources, including case studies, <https://www.councils.coop/case-studies/>
  - The potential to bid for funding to work on a case study, alone or in conjunction with other members;
  - Access to conferences and training events to meet peers from other members;
  - The ability to access a framework of specialist suppliers established by the Network for its members; and
  - The opportunity to raise the Council's profile nationally across the UK.
- 4.2 The Council has taken advantage of these benefits in a variety of ways, including the following:-
- Officers' attendance at the monthly virtual officers meeting;
  - Cllr Cassidy's involvement in the Network's Executive Oversight Committee, and attendance at the Network's annual conference in November 2022, there being no fee for this given the Council's membership;
  - A councillor officer is booked to attend an upcoming free training event on co-operative alternative business models;
  - Sharing of local best practice through the inclusion of two Inverclyde Council case studies in the national publication [CCIN Case Studies Pack - 2023 - Co-operative Councils Innovation Network](#)
  - A successful application by the Council to be a "Policy Prototype", receiving £2,000 funding from the Network, along with advice and experience from other areas. This is to raise the profile of the Council Plan and Partnership Plan, make these documents more accessible and to stimulate public engagement.

4.3 Over the course of 2023/24, and building upon the previous 12 months, officers will endeavour to ascertain if more benefits of Network membership can be realised. However, the first year of membership has been beneficial, especially when the relatively low cost of annual membership and project funding are taken into account. With the notable challenges facing local government and the communities we serve, the ability to access a new network such as this provides the Council with some valuable insights on the work others are taking forward.

## 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

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

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial	x	
Legal/Risk		x
Human Resources		x
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)		x
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights & Wellbeing		x
Environmental & Sustainability		x
Data Protection		x

## 5.2 Finance

Annual membership within 2022/23 was £5,400 with further proposed spend of £12,000 until September 2025, allowing for a small inflationary increase. In September 2023, the Policy & Resources Committee agreed to meet the initial three-year cost through the Project Capacity Earmarked reserve.

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Earmarked Reserve	Projects-Officer Capacity	2023/25	£12k	EMR budget	

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

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

## 5.3 Legal/Risk

There are no legal risks/implications arising from this report.

#### **5.4 Human Resources**

There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

#### **5.5 Strategic**

There are no legal risks/implications arising from this report.

### **6.0 CONSULTATION**

6.1 N/A.

### **7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 N/A.