

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 17 SEPTEMBER 2024

Policy & Resources Committee

Tuesday 17 September 2024 at 3pm

Present: Councillors Armstrong, Curley, Law, McCabe, McCormick, McGuire, McVey, Nelson, Robertson and Wilson.

Chair: Councillor McCabe presided.

In attendance:

Louise Long	Chief Executive
Alan Puckrin	Chief Financial Officer
Stuart Jamieson	Director Environment & Regeneration
Lynsey Brown	Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services
Morna Rae	Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications
Tony McEwan	Head of Culture, Communities & Educational Resources
Craig Given	Head of Finance, Planning & Resources (Inverclyde HSCP)
Matt Thomson	Finance Manager (Environment & Technical)
Angela Edmiston	Finance Manager (Corporate Services & Strategic Finance)
Tracy Bunton	Revenues and Benefits Manager
Gerard Smith	Capital Assets Principal Accountant
Carol	Senior Information Governance & Complaints Officer
Craig-McDonald	
Colin MacDonald	Senior Committee Officer
Lindsay Carrick	Senior Committee Officer
Karen MacVey	Members' & Committee Services Team Leader
Rhoda Braddick	Corporate Policy, Performance and Communications Manager

This meeting was held at the Municipal Buildings, Greenock with Councillors Law, McCormick, McGuire and Wilson attending remotely.

The following paragraphs are submitted for information only, having been dealt with under the powers delegated to the Committee.

410 Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest 410

No apologies for absence were intimated.

No declarations of interest were intimated, but certain connections were intimated as follows:

Agenda Item 10 (Freedom of Information Annual Report 2023) – Councillor Curley

411 2024/25 Policy & Resources Revenue Budget, 2023/24 Out-turn and General Fund Revenue Budget Update 411

There was submitted a report by the Chief Financial Officer, Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development and Chief Executive advising the Committee of (1) the Policy & Resources Revenue Budget outturn for 2023/24 (2) the 2024/25 projected position, and (3) a projected overspend in the overall General Fund Revenue Budget and the impact this will have on the General Fund Reserve.

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Decided:

- (1) that the final outturn for the 2023/24 Policy & Resources Budget and current projected overspend for 2024/25 of £400,000 be noted;
- (2) that the projected overspend of £1.192 million for the General Fund and the projected reserve balance of £3.222 million be noted;
- (3) that it be noted that there is an update later in the agenda on progress in addressing the emerging budget pressures;
- (4) that (a) the virement outlined in Section 3.10 and appendix 5 to the report be approved, and (b) the use of the Capacity earmarked reserve, to fund external assistance with the appointment of a new Chief Financial Officer, be approved;
- (5) that the projected 2024/25 surplus of £4,300 for the Common Good Budget, as set out in appendix 6 to the report, be noted; and
- (6) that the 2024/25 Workstream Savings achieved to date and updates from lead officers be noted.

412 Policy & Resources Capital Budget and Council 2024/28 Capital Programme 412

There was submitted a report by the Chief Financial Officer providing the latest position of the Policy & Resources Capital Programme and the 2024/28 Capital Programme as well as reflecting the impact of the 2024/25 Capital Grant settlement confirmed by the Scottish Government on 29 February 2024.

Decided:

- (1) that the current position of the 2024/28 Policy & Resources Capital Budget and the current position of the 2024/28 Capital Programme be noted; and
- (2) that the remit from the Education & Communities Committee regarding a further allocation of £0.022m to the Parklea Branching Out project be approved.

413 Finance Services Update 413

There was submitted a report by the Chief Financial Officer providing the annual debt recovery performance update and updates on the following matters being progressed by the Revenues & Benefits Service (1) Debt Recovery Performance Report 2023/24, (2) Non-Domestic Rates – Empty Property Relief, (3) Transitions to Universal Credit, (4) Scottish Welfare Fund, (5) Discretionary Housing Payments & Policy, and (6) Social Security Scotland.

Decided:

- (1) that the annual debt recover report, the current position of the Non-Domestic Rates Empty Property Relief Budget, the feedback from service users and providers regarding the transition to Universal Credit, the next planned Universal Credit migration and the Social Security Scotland update be noted; and
- (2) that the updated Discretionary Housing Payments Policy changes, as set out in appendix 3 to the report, be approved.

414 Corporate Policy & Performance Update: July-September 2024 414

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development providing an update on Corporate Policy and Performance matters relating to (1) Programme for Government/Verity House Agreement, (2) Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) Excellence Awards 2024, (3) Equalities, and (4) Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network.

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Decided: that (a) the latest update in relation to Corporate Policy and Performance be noted, and (b) it be agreed to receive a further annual report on the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network in 2025.

415 2025/26 Budget Update

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There was submitted a report by the Chief Financial Officer providing an update on the action being progressed by the CMT in relation to addressing the emerging financial pressures reported to the August meeting and to seek decisions in order that matters can be progressed further.

Decided:

- (1) that it be noted that officers are finalising savings proposals to be thereafter considered by elected members in order to address the new pressures on the 2025/26 Budget;
- (2) that the need to review reserves as part of the preparation of the December Financial Strategy to address the projected shortfall in the minimum balance in the unallocated reserve and improve the medium-term sustainability of several funding models be confirmed;
- (3) that it be agreed to support the proposal that, in order to maximise the impact in 2025/26 the Council considers the savings proposals during December; and
- (4) that the planned consultation approach, as set out in section 6 of the report, be noted.

416 Update on Inverclyde Anti-Poverty Initiatives September 2024

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There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development outlining proposals for the Anti-Poverty Initiatives funded by the Inverclyde Council Anti-Poverty recurring budget for the period to March 2027.

Decided:

- (1) that the content of the report be noted;
- (2) that the proposals for both the Warm Hand of Friendship and Duke of Edinburgh until March 2027 be approved;
- (3) that the early termination of the IRISE project with remaining Council funding being returned to the Anti-Poverty ear-marked reserve be agreed; and
- (4) that the update on projects funded by Scottish Government grants be noted.

417 Repopulation

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There was submitted a report by the Director Environment & Regeneration providing an update in respect of the population size, initiatives and further proposals in respect of Repopulation.

Decided:

- (1) that the statistics highlighted in the area of population be noted;
- (2) that the activity of the Health and Social Care Partnership's New Scots Team in respect of their clients be noted;
- (3) that the creation of a community settlement officer post, in part funded by the Scottish Government, be agreed; and
- (4) that it be agreed that the remaining £21,000 from the ear marked reserve will be used for initiatives including place marketing, housing market growth, jobs and enabling infrastructure growth and skills are undertaken with appropriate Inverclyde Alliance workstreams including the development of an economic growth plan.

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- 418 Complaint Handling Annual Report 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024 418**
- There was submitted a report by the Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services providing details of the annual performance of all complaints received and handled by Inverclyde Council, Health and Social Care Partnership, and both Arms-Length Organisations, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde, for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- Decided:**
- (1) that the annual performance of Inverclyde Council's complaint handling procedure be noted; and
 - (2) that the publication of the Annual Complaint Handling Report on the Council's website be approved.
- 419 Freedom of Information Annual Report 2023 419**
- There was submitted a report by the Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services providing details of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by the Council during the period 1 January – 31 December 2023.
- Councillor Curley declared a connection due to submitting a Freedom of Information request during the period covered by the report. He also formed the view that the nature of his connection and of the item of business did not preclude his continued presence in the meeting or his participation in the decision making process and he was declaring for transparency.
- Decided:**
- (1) that the information provided in relation to FOI requests received by the Council during 2023 be noted; and
 - (2) that the publication of the annual performance report on the Council's website be approved.
- 420 OD, Policy and Communications Policy Updates 420**
- There was submitted a report by the Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications seeking approval for the following updated policies (1) Overpayment of Wages and Deductions from Salaries, (2) Recruitment, Selection, Redeployment and Relocation, and (3) Supporting Employee Attendance.
- Decided:** that the updated policies on (a) Overpayment of Wages and Deductions from Salaries, (b) Recruitment, Selection, Redeployment and Relocation, and (c) Supporting Employee Attendance, be approved.