

**POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 19 NOVEMBER 2024**

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**Policy & Resources Committee**

**Tuesday 19 November 2024 at 3pm**

**Present:** Councillors Armstrong, Cassidy (for McCabe), Curley, Law, McCormick, McGuire, McVey, Moran, Nelson, Robertson and Wilson.

**Chair:** Councillor McGuire presided.

**In attendance:**

Louise Long	Chief Executive
Alan Puckrin	Chief Financial Officer
Stuart Jamieson	Director Environment & Regeneration
Ruth Binks	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development
Lynsey Brown	Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services
Morna Rae	Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications
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
Allan McDonald	ICT & Customer Service Manager
Gerard Smith	Capital Assets Principal Accountant
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.

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

**532 Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

**532**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor McCabe, with Councillor Cassidy substituting.

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

Agenda Item 8 (Governance of External Organisations – Annual Update and Review) – Councillors Armstrong, Curley, Law and Robertson.

**533 2024/25 Policy & Resources and General Fund Revenue Budget**

**533**

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 2024/25 projected position (2) the projected overspend in the overall General Fund Revenue Budget and (3) the impact this will have on the General Fund Reserve.

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**Decided:**

- (1) that the current projected overspend in the Committee's Revenue Budget for 2024/25 of £304,000, a reduction of £96,000 since the last report, be noted;
- (2) that the projected overspend of £1,012,000 for the General Fund and the projected reserve balance of £3,402,000 be noted;
- (3) that the projected 2024/25 surplus of £10,800 for the Common Good Budget as set out in appendix 5 to the report be noted; and
- (4) that it be noted that the Savings Workstream programme update is provided as part of the Budget Update report later in the agenda.

**534 Policy & Resources Capital Budget and Council 2024/28 Capital Programme 534**

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.

**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;
- (2) that it be agreed to replace £514,000 allocated from revenue reserves to support the 2024/28 Capital Programme with the £514,000 capital grant received relating to the phased implementation of P6/7 Free School Meals;
- (3) that it be noted that there is a proposal in the private papers of this agenda to allocate funding from the capital contingency to the King George VI capital project; and
- (4) that it be remitted to officers to provide a report to a future meeting of the Committee giving consideration to additional funding from the Capital Programme contingency being set aside for future investment needs within the Beacon Arts Centre.

**535 Finance Services Update 535**

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) Housing Benefits & Pension Credit, (2) Housing Benefits Performance, (3) Council Tax on-line forms, (4) changes to Council tax Reduction Regulations, (5) Annual Delivering Differently updates, (6) Annual Insurance Fund report, and (7) replacement of the Finance Management System.

**Decided:**

- (1) that (a) the updates provided in the report be noted, and (b) the recognition by the DWP of Inverclyde Council's consistently high Housing Benefit performance be welcomed;
- (2) that it be agreed to add the review of Schools Catering as set out in appendix 2 to the report to the Delivering Differently Programme;
- (3) that it be noted that as part of the December Finance Strategy, the sustainability of the two current £100,000 internal insurance premium holidays will be reviewed; and
- (4) that it be noted that the triennial actuarial review of the Council's Insurance Fund will be progressed early in 2025 and the results reported to Committee thereafter.

**536 Corporate Policy & Performance Update: September-November 2024 536**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Organisations Development, Policy & Communications providing an update on Corporate Policy and Performance matters relating to (1) Programme for Government 2024/25, (2) a review of the Strategic Planning and Performance Management Framework, and (3) COSLA Excellence Awards 2024.

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The Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications advised the Committee of a typographical error in the report and, accordingly, at paragraph 3.3 the reference to '4 September 2023', should read '4 September 2024'.

**Decided:** that the latest update in relation to Corporate Policy and Performance be noted.

**537 Policy & Resources Committee Delivery and Improvement Plan 2023/26 Performance Report 537**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive providing an update on the progress made in the delivery of the Policy & Resources Committee Delivery and Improvement Plan 2023/26.

**Decided:** that the progress made in the delivery of the Policy & Resources Committee Delivery and Improvement Plan 2023/26 be noted.

**538 Treasury Management – Mid-Year Report 2024/25 538**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Financial Officer (1) advising the Committee of the operation of the treasury function and its activities for the first six months of 2024/25 as required under the terms of Treasury Management Practice 6 ("TMP6") on "Reporting Requirements and Management Information Arrangements", and (2) requesting that the report be remitted to the Full Council for approval.

**Decided:**

- (1) that (a) the contents of the Mid-Year Report on Treasury Management for 2024/25 be noted, and (b) it be noted that a refreshed Loan Charge funding model will be presented to the 5 December 2024 meeting of the Full Council; and
- (2) that it be agreed to remit the report to the Full Council for approval.

**539 Governance of External Organisations – Annual Update and Review 539**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Financial Officer providing the annual update in respect of the governance of external organisations under the remit of the Policy & Resources Committee.

Councillors Armstrong, Curley, Law and Robertson declared connections in this item of business. Councillor Armstrong declared a connection as a Member of the Executive Committee of Inverclyde Voluntary Council of Social Services, Councillor Curley declared a connection as a Director of Inchgreen Marine Park and as a Member of the Board of Riverside Inverclyde, Councillor Law declared a connection as a Member of the Board of the Inverclyde Community Development Trust and Councillor Robertson declared a connection as a Member of the Board of Greenock Arts Guild. They also formed the view that the nature of their connections and of the items of business did not preclude their continued presence in the meeting of their participation in the decision-making process and were declaring for transparency.

**Decided:**

- (1) that the performance for the period November 2023 to October 2024 against the governance oversight process approved by the Policy & Resources Committee in November 2023 be noted;
- (2) that it be noted that this area is part of the 2024/25 Internal Audit Action Plan;
- (3) that the move to a tiered approach and the lighter touch arrangements set out in appendix 4 to the report be approved;
- (4) that approval be given to the principle of mandating the payment of the Real Living Wage by the organisations in appendix 3 to the report pending a report back from officers on the financial and other implications; and

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(5) that it be noted that the report on Councillor representation on the boards of organisations which tender for Council work will be presented to the Full Council by September 2025.

**540 Inverclyde Council Plan Annual Performance Report 2023/24 540**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications seeking approval for the publication of the Inverclyde Council Annual Performance Report 2023/24.

**Decided:**

- (1) that the progress made in the delivery of the Council Plan during 2023/24 be noted; and
- (2) that the publication of the Corporate Plan Annual Performance Report 2023/24 be approved.

**541 Workforce Information and Activity Report 2023/24 541**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications presenting the Workforce Information and Activity Report 2023/24.

**Decided:** that the contents of the Workforce Information and Activity Report 2023/24 be noted.

**542 Annual Update on the use of surveillance powers – The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 (RIPSA) 542**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services (1) seeking approval of an updated version of the Council's RIPSA policy, and (2) providing an overview and update on the use of directed surveillance powers by the Council.

**Decided:**

- (1) that the contents of the report be noted;
- (2) that the updated Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 policy, as detailed in appendix 2 to the report, be approved; and
- (3) that it be noted that a further annual update, including a review of the Regulation of Investigatory powers (Scotland) Act 2000 policy, will be provided in a year's time.

**543 2025/26 Revenue Budget Update 543**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Financial Officer (1) providing an update on the 2025/26 Budget, including latest timelines, progress with savings workstreams delivery and emerging pressures, and (2) seeking decisions in relation to the report.

**Decided:**

- (1) that the addition of a £700,000 pressures allowance to the 2025/26 Budget, based on the latest monitoring reports, be approved;
- (2) that (a) the updated projections and phasing relating to the savings workstreams as detailed in appendix 1 to the report be noted, and (b) the addition of a teachers workstream and schools catering workstream to the overall workstream programme, plus the utilisation of £139,000 of the contingency to fund two projected workstream shortfalls, be agreed;
- (3) that it be noted that the Corporate Management Team and Members Budget Working Group have undertaken a review of earmarked reserves and this will be reported to the Elected Members as part of future Budget update reports;

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- (4) that it be noted that a potentially significant new 2025/26 budget pressure may arise from the potential reduction in protection from the Floor and that, at this time, it is being assumed that the increase in employers' national insurance announced by the Chancellor on 30 October 2024 will be fully funded via Barnet Consequentials and will be passported to Local Government by the Scottish Government;
- (5) that it be noted that the intended special meeting of the Inverclyde Council planned for 19 December 2024 will no longer take place due to the limited time for officers to analyse the detail of the Council's grant settlement whilst allowing sufficient time for elected members to arrive at the potentially important decisions required;
- (6) that it be noted that an All-Member briefing will take place week commencing 16 December 2024 covering the settlement and officers' initial assessment of implications;
- (7) that that delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to release sufficient cleaning employees to deliver the saving required as part of the closure of Hector McNeil House in early 2025 on the basis that the releases meet the Council's value for money criteria; and
- (8) that the limited Budget consultation approach planned as set out in appendix 2 to the report be noted.

**544 Anti-Poverty Fund – Fuel Poverty Payments Proposal 544**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Financial Officer seeking approval for a proposal to create a Fuel Poverty Fund with a specific proposal for the use of this fund for Winter 2024.

**Decided:**

- (1) that the proposals developed by officers regarding Fuel Poverty payments to cover this winter and next, funded from the unallocated balance in the Anti-Poverty Fund, be approved; and
- (2) that (a) the specific proposal relating to the winter of 2024 be approved, and (b) it be noted that officers will bring back a proposal for the 2025/26 winter later in 2025.

**545 Marmot Place Scotland 545**

It was noted that this item had been withdrawn.

**546 SOLACE Improving Local Government Benchmarking Framework 2023/24 (September Refresh) 546**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications providing details of Inverclyde Council's LGBF performance 2023/24 for those measures published as at 30 September 2024.

**Decided:** that the publication of Local Government Benchmarking Framework data for 37 measures and Inverclyde Council's overall strong performance be noted.

**547 NRS Mid-2023 Population Estimates, Scotland 547**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications providing an overview of the latest mid-2023 population estimates, published by the National Records of Scotland on 8 October 2024.

**Decided:** that the national publication of the National Records of Scotland mid-2023 population estimates, and the latest population data for Inverclyde, be noted.

**548 Fair Work First and the Real Living Wage 548**

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There was submitted a report by the Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications and Director Environment & Regeneration (1) providing an update on the impact of Fair work First grant conditionality implemented by the Scottish Government, (2) making proposals for the increase in Modern Apprentice pay to the real Living Wage rate from 1 April 2025, and early implementation of the increased rate for Grade 1 employees.

**Decided:**

- (1) that an increase in Modern Apprentice pay to the real Living Wage from 1 April 2025 be agreed;
- (2) that it be noted that the number of Modern Apprentices employed beyond the current cohort will require to be reviewed in line with the budget requirements;
- (3) that it be noted that where Inverclyde Council administers funding on behalf of the Scottish Government and other national organisations the Fair Work First criteria may also apply; and
- (4) that it be agreed that the 2024 annual increase in the real Living Wage will be implemented early, from January 2025.

**549 Interim Digital and Customer Services Strategy 549**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services seeking agreement to adopt a phased approach to creating a new combined Digital and Customer Services Strategy.

**Decided:**

- (1) that the advice from the CMT to employ a phased approach to creating a Digital and Customer Service Strategy in light of the recently issued Accounts Commission report and the actions identified by the Council's external auditors be noted;
- (2) that (a) Phase 1 of the strategy and action plan be approved, and (b) it be noted that updates on progress will form part of the bi-meeting digital updates to Committee; and
- (3) that it be noted that funding for relevant costs associated with the development of an approach to transformation will be met from the digital earmarked reserve.

**550 Update on the Digital Modernisation Programme and Delivery of the ICT and Digital Strategies 550**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services providing an update on the work of the Council's Digital Modernisation Programme and progress against the Digital and ICT Strategies 2021-2024

**Decided:**

- (1) that the update on the work of the Digital Modernisation Programme, and the projects within it, be noted; and
- (2) that the update on the work of the Council's ICT Service be noted.

**551 Internal Audit – Remit from Audit Committee 551**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services requesting consideration of a remit from the Audit Committee relative to the reporting line for Internal Audit.

**Decided:** that the remit from the Audit Committee be noted.

**552 OD, Policy and Communications Policy Updates 552**

## POLICY &amp; RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 19 NOVEMBER 2024

There was submitted a report from the Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications seeking approval for the following updated policies, (1) First Aid at Work Policy, and (2) Workforce Transport Policy.

**Decided:** that the policies be approved.

**It was agreed in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 as amended, that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items on the grounds that the business involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the respective paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 7(A) of the Act as are set opposite each item.**

Item	Paragraph(s)
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Appendix relative to agenda item 8 providing additional information on governance oversight of external organisations	6
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King George VI Community Hub Update – Remit from Education & Communities Committee	6 & 9
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553	Appendix relative to agenda item 8 providing additional information on governance oversight of external organisations	553
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There was submitted a private appendix providing additional information on governance oversight of external organisations under the remit of the Policy & Resources Committee.

**Decided:** that the appendix be noted.

554	King George VI Community Hub Update – Remit from Education & Communities Committee	554
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There was submitted a report by the Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services requesting consideration of a remit from the Education & Communities Committee relative to the King George VI Community Hub.

**Decided:** following consideration, the Committee agreed to the actions recommended, all as detailed in the private appendix.