

Inverclyde Council 2023/24 Revenue Budget - Fairer Scotland Duty Statement

While an impact assessment has been carried out for each individual savings option, as appropriate, in relation to both Equality Impacts and the Fairer Scotland Duty, a wider assessment is also given in relation to the Revenue Budget proposals for Inverclyde Council covering the period 2023/24.

The Budget Gap in 2023/24 is intended to be partly funded through the use of Reserves. This recommendation is based on a desire to see the setting of the Council Budget 2023/24 have as minimal a negative/detrimental impact on the local population as possible - particularly in relation to the ongoing cost of living crisis and those who experience socio-economic disadvantage – and optimise impact in areas of investment/growth.

Inverclyde is an area which faces both material and area-based deprivation, as can be seen from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), as well as lower income levels and a history of socio-economic deprivation over time. The Council therefore acknowledges that it is likely that a significant percentage of our vulnerable residents will reside in SIMD areas. Mindful that those residents could potentially be disproportionately affected by the local impact of global climate change, a significant sum has been allocated to support the delivery of our Net Zero Action Plan 2022/27, one aim of which is to reduce the incidences and impact of flooding in Inverclyde. While the impact of climate change will be seen over a longer period of time than the duration of the investment, it is important to note the positive direction made by Council.

Overall, the March 2023 Budget 2023/24 proposals include the reduction of 46.3 (full-time equivalent [FTE]) Council posts and seven (FTE) Inverclyde Leisure posts, all of which are either currently vacant or can be achieved via voluntary redeployment or voluntary early retirement. However, the Council is aware that, in the current economic climate, it may be the case that employees are reluctant to express an interest in early release.

The Council is aware that disabled people in Inverclyde may disproportionately experience socio-economic disadvantage. Those residents, together with their families and carers, will therefore welcome the significant investment by the Council in a new learning disability facility which will be completed by 2026. Additionally, in terms of supporting vulnerable residents, a significant sum has been identified relating to the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (subject to the approval of the Inverclyde Integration Joint Board at its meeting on 20 March 2023) which aims to reduce the need for crisis intervention and move investment towards prevention and early intervention.

Finally, the decision to reduce as far as possible any savings decisions which would have a direct impact on service delivery, will ensure that critical services and support continues to be delivered to Inverclyde citizens as we progress our recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic as a community. While the Council cannot mitigate against all impacts of the pandemic, the budget decisions being taken ensure a focus on delivering for a fairer Inverclyde in line with the Fairer Scotland Duty.