

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 14 SEPTEMBER 2021

Policy & Resources Committee

Tuesday 14 September 2021 at 3pm

Present: Councillors Ahlfeld, Clocherty, Crowther, Curley, McCabe, Dorrian (for McCormick) McVey, Moran, Rebecchi, Robertson and Wilson.

Chair: Councillor McCabe presided.

In attendance: Interim Service Director Corporate Services & Organisational Recovery, Interim Service Director Environment & Economic Recovery, Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development, Corporate Director (Chief Officer) Health and Social Care Partnership, Interim Head of Legal Services, Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications, Interim Head of Public Protection and Recovery, Interim Head of Homelessness, Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service, Mr C MacDonald and Ms D Sweeney (Legal Services), Mr W Rice (Culture, Communities and Educational Resources), Ms K McCready (Organisation Development, Policy and Communications), Ms A Edmiston and Ms T Bunton (Finance Services), Ms B McQuarrie (Human Resources) ICT Services Manager, and Service Manager Communications, Tourism and Health & Safety.

The meeting was held at the Municipal Buildings, Greenock with Councillors Ahlfeld, Clocherty, Crowther, Dorrian, McVey, Moran, Rebecchi and Robertson attending by video-conference.

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

356 Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest 356

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor McCormick, with Councillor Dorrian substituting.

Councillors Curley, McVey and Rebecchi declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 (Review of the Effectiveness of the Long Term Empty Homes Council Tax Policy).

357 COVID-19 Update with Recovery Plans 357

There was submitted a report by the Interim Service Director Environment & Economic Recovery (1) providing an update on actions taken to mitigate the risks around the COVID-19 outbreak; and (2) reporting on items requiring Committee approval or scrutiny under the expedited procedures.

The Interim Head of Public Protection and Recovery advised the Committee of typographical errors in the report and, accordingly, at paragraphs 2.3 and 3.4 the references to “a further 28 Afghan families” should read “a total of 28 Afghan families”.

Decided:

- (1) that the actions taken to date to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak in Inverclyde be noted;
- (2) that the update to the Organisational Recovery Plan as detailed in Appendix 1 be noted;
- (3) that the progress on the Partnership Recovery Action Plan as detailed in

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Appendix 2 be noted; and

(4) that the development of plans to resettle up to a total of 28 Afghan families in Inverclyde be agreed.

358 Finance Services Performance Report

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There was submitted a report by the Interim Service Director Corporate Services & Organisational Recovery providing an update regarding a number of service and finance related matters and seeking Committee decisions as appropriate.

Decided:

- (1) that the updates provided in the report and the considerable efforts of the officers within the Finance Service over the period of the pandemic be noted;
- (2) that it be agreed to continue using the enhanced eligibility criteria/payment levels for making payments relating to Holiday Meals and Scottish Child Payment – Bridging Payments for the remainder of 2021/22; and
- (3) that the intention to consider the eligibility criteria to be used beyond 2021/22 as part of the 2022/23 Budget be noted.

359 Corporate Policy and Performance Update Report

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There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development providing an update on matters relating to corporate policy and performance.

Decided:

- (1) that (a) the progress which has been made in the delivery of the Corporate Directorate Improvement Plans (CDIP) in year 2 be noted; and (b) the refreshed Corporate Services Improvement Actions for year 3 be approved;
- (2) that (a) the proposal to extend the current Strategic Planning and Performance Management Framework (SPPMF) for a further year (to March 2023) be agreed; and (b) it be noted that proposals for a more streamlined planning approach will be brought to the Committee in due course;
- (3) that the developments in relation to Best Value and Best Value Auditing, and the variety of ways in which Inverclyde Council measures and reports on outcomes be noted; and
- (4) that it be noted that the ongoing progress reporting on the remaining Best Value Assurance Report improvement actions will be via regular CDIP progress reports in addition to separate reports to Committee as appropriate.

360 Revenue Budget Updates

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There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive, Interim Service Director Corporate Services & Organisational Recovery and Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development advising of the 2020/21 Revenue Budget out turn, the 2021/22 projected out turn for the Policy & Resources Committee and the position of the General Fund Reserve Budget including a 2021/2022 COVID update.

Decided:

- (1) that the update in respect of the Policy & Resources Committee budget including the 2020/21 Revenue Budget out turn and the 2021/22 projected overspend of £125,000 be noted;
- (2) that the projected 2021/22 surplus of £30,630 for the Common Good Budget be noted;

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(3) that the overall overspend of £231,000 projected as at Period 4, 31 July 2021 for the General Fund, its overall Earmarked Reserves position and the position of the Free Reserves be noted;

(4) that approval be given to the 2022/23 Budget Adjustments as detailed in Appendix 10 of the report;

(5) that the update relating to COVID expenditure and funding detailed in Appendix 11 of the report be noted; and

(6) that approval be given to the allocation of £1 million towards the Clune Park Estate Purchase Plan and the source of funding be finalised as part of the 2022/23 Budget.

361 Policy & Resources Capital Budget and 2021/24 Capital Programme 361

There was submitted a report by the Chief Financial Officer providing the latest position of the Policy & Resources Capital Programme and the 2021/24 Capital Programme.

Decided:

(1) that (a) the current position of the 2021/24 Policy & Resources Capital Budget be noted; and (b) it be noted that allocations from the £1.6m Cost Pressures Allowance will be reported to future Committees; and

(2) that the current position of the 2021/24 Capital Programme be noted.

362 Supporting Alcohol, Substance Use and Gambling Concerns in the Workplace Policy 362

There was submitted a report by the Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications (a) providing an update on the Supporting Alcohol, Substance Use and Gambling Concerns in the Workplace Policy; and (b) seeking approval for the implementation of the policy.

Decided:

(1) that approval be given to the Supporting Alcohol, Substance Use and Gambling Concerns in the Workplace Policy as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

363 Review of the Effectiveness of the Long Term Empty Homes Council Tax Policy 363

There was submitted a report by the Interim Service Director Corporate Services & Organisational Recovery intimating (a) the outcome of the public consultation and results of the officer review on the effectiveness of Long Term Empty Property and Second Homes (LTE) Council Tax Policy; and (b) seeking decisions regarding the next steps in relation to this matter.

Councillor Curley declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of the board of River Clyde Homes and Councillors McVey and Rebecchi declared a non-financial interest as private landlords. They also formed the view that the nature of their interest and of the item of business did not preclude their continued presence in the meeting or their participation in the decision making process.

Decided:

(1) that the outcome of the review by officers into the effectiveness of the Council's Long Term Empty Property and Second Homes Council Tax Policy be noted;

(2) that the results of the public consultation detailed in the report and appendix be noted;

(3) that it be agreed that aside from the addition of the exemption of properties within the Clune Park Estate from the LTE Levy that no further changes to the policy are

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required;

(4) that it be noted that officers will continue to engage with Registered Social Landlords;

(5) that it be noted that an update report will be provided to the Environment & Regeneration Committee on the discussions with Registered Social Landlords in respect of the linkages between long term empty homes, the Local Housing Strategy and Stock Transfer Agreements;

(6) that it be agreed that a revised Long Term Empty Property and Second Homes Council Tax Policy will be presented to the February 2022 meeting for approval; and

(7) that it be remitted to officers to hold a workshop for Elected Members as part of the development of the revised Long Term Empty Homes Council Tax Policy.

364 Members' Services Review

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There was submitted a report by the Interim Head of Legal Services advising of feedback received following the extended review of Members' support and noting that the staffing complement and resources meet the current scheme of expected tasks.

Decided:

(1) that the feedback from the recent all Members consultation as detailed in the report by noted; and

(2) that it be agreed that the review of Members' Services is now concluded; and

(3) that the Committee's appreciation be conveyed to all Members Services' staff.

365 NRS Mid-2020 Population Estimates, Scotland

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There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development providing details of the latest mid-2020 population estimates published by the National Records of Scotland on 25 June 2021 and to highlight potential issues arising from the data.

Decided:

(1) that the latest mid-year population estimates for Inverclyde and Scotland which show a further decrease in the population of Inverclyde, predominantly as a result of natural change, be noted;

(2) that it be noted that continued depopulation and poor relative performance against other parts of Scotland will impact on future Scottish Government Grant Settlements for Inverclyde;

(3) that it be noted that the Fraser of Allander Institute is carrying out a study into Supporting Economic Recovery for Inverclyde, West Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Councils which are the three bottom ranked mainland Councils for population growth based on the latest statistics;

(4) that it be agreed that the Council will strenuously make the case for radical economic stimuli to be implemented to reverse the continued depopulation within the area in conjunction with Community Planning Partners, Local MSPs and the local MP; and

(5) that it be remitted to officers to submit a further report on potential measures to address depopulation including, if possible, more demographic information on those leaving and coming to Inverclyde, to a future meeting of the Committee.

366 HM The Queen Platinum Jubilee 2022

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There was submitted a report by the Head of Organisational Development, Policy &

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Communications (a) informing Committee of the UK Government's decision to plan a 'four-day holiday weekend' from 2 June 2022 to 5 June 2022 to celebrate the Queen's 70 year reign; (b) to highlight the position of the Scottish Ministers for schools; and (c) to set out the implications locally for holiday arrangements and plans for national celebrations including the opportunity to bid for City Status.

Councillor Wilson left the meeting during consideration of this item of business.

Decided:

- (1) that the holiday arrangements proposal as detailed in paragraph 5.5 of the report be agreed;
- (2) that it be agreed to put in place plans for Inverclyde to support the Platinum Jubilee celebrations by making arrangements to light the Beacon at Lyle Hill on Thursday 2 June 2022, by encouraging the community to 'plant a tree for the jubilee' as part of the Queen's Green Canopy project and other activities; and
- (3) that it be remitted to officers to submit a further report on (a) the benefits and costs of a city bid document for potential submission to the Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition by the 8 December 2021 deadline, consideration of which will include engagement with the local community and with Perth on the outcome of their bid for city status; and (b) the benefits and costs of the establishment of a multi-disciplinary project team to support bids of this type and to undertake wider horizon scanning for further opportunities.