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| Report To: | Policy & Resources Committee | Date: | 31 January 2023 |
| Report By: | Corporate Director, Education, Communities & Organisational Development | Report No: | PR/01/23/MR |
| Contact Officer: | Morna Rae | Contact No: | 01475 712042 |
| Subject: | Corporate Policy and Performance Update Report | | |

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 For Decision For Information/Noting

1.2 This report provides the Committee with an update on several performance and policy matters relating to:

- A corporate approach to national awards;
- Equalities; and
- Results from the Citizens' Panel Autumn 2022 Survey.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- Note the latest updates in relation to Corporate Policy and Performance.

Ruth Binks
**Corporate Director, Education, Communities and
Organisational Development**

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 A Corporate Policy and Performance update report is considered at every meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.

3.2 CORPORATE APPROACH TO AWARDS

3.3 Key national awards for local government include APSE, LGC and COSLA. Gaining this external recognition can increase the profile of a Council, benchmark best practice and boost morale.

These operate alongside more specific awards and recognition processes in which the Council has had success in 2021-22 such as Scottish Library and Information Council Awards, Food for Life Served Here award, Digital Telecare Implementation Award and Rights Respecting Schools Awards.

3.4 The Corporate Management Team have agreed to adopt a corporate approach towards submissions for national awards to ensure that opportunities aren't missed, the quality of submissions is high and multiple Inverclyde submissions aren't being made for one category. This will involve support by the Corporate Policy Team and review by the CMT.

3.5 EQUALITIES

3.6 As Members will be aware, a number of budget saving proposals were considered at the meeting of Inverclyde Council on 15 December 2022, 25 of which have related Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) (nine from the Environment, Regeneration and Resources Directorate and 16 from Education, Communities and Organisational Development Directorate). All these documents, together with a Fairer Scotland Duty Statement (FSD) on the Council's Revenue Budget 2023/25, are available to view on the Council's website:

<https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/council-and-government/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-budget-2023-25>

Further savings will be considered in March 2023. Corresponding EIAs and a FSD Statement will also be published for these, as appropriate.

3.7 Elected Members and Officers were invited to a briefing on 30 November 2022 on the topic of gender-based budgeting. Facilitated by the Scottish Women's Budget Group, the session covered what gender-based budgeting is, how it can be used and what it aims to achieve. The briefing was well attended by both Elected Members and Officers.

3.8 CITIZENS' PANEL AUTUMN 2022 SURVEY

3.9 The Citizens' Panel Autumn 2022 Survey focused on the following topics: Covid-19 recovery – Inverclyde Council events and initiatives; Inverclyde Council Plan 2023/28 and Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33; and digital inclusion.

3.10 The response rate to the Survey was approximately 63%.

3.11 Covid-19 recovery – Inverclyde Council events and initiatives

3.12 We introduced the first part of the Survey by advising Panel members that the Council provided a number of new and additional services to support local residents during the Covid-19 pandemic. The top three services that respondents used were: food deliveries for vulnerable residents – 7%; health and social care support for extremely vulnerable local residents, including those on the *shielding* list – 5%; and the telephone helpline to support residents in need (in partnership with CVS Inverclyde) – 4%.

- 3.13 Just over half (51%) of Panel members said they were satisfied with the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, a very small number (9%) said they were dissatisfied, while 40% chose the *neither/nor* option in response to this question.
- 3.14 Around two thirds (63%) of respondents said they have been well supported by the Council during the pandemic. Where Panel members (37%) indicated that they did not feel well supported by the Council during the pandemic, they were asked to indicate what else they thought could have been done. There were a range of responses to this question including improved communication, stronger enforcement of Covid-19 related rules, and different approaches to closing services.
- 3.15 We then advised respondents that the Covid-19 section of the Council's website has links to essential public health information, including NHS Inform and Public Health Scotland, as well as updates on services in Inverclyde and details of support and advice for businesses and residents. Just over a third (38%) of Panel members told us they had looked at the Covid-19 information on the website and, on the whole, most people (84%) who had done so said they found it helpful.
- 3.16 The top three challenges that respondents faced during the pandemic were: concerns about my family and friends being exposed to Covid-19 – 69%; concerns about being exposed to Covid-19 – 55%; and my or others' adherence to safety measures (handwashing/sanitising; physical/social distancing; enhanced cleaning requirements) – 43%.
- 3.17 Service commentary: Covid-19 recovery – Inverclyde Council events and initiatives

It is pleasing to note that more half (51%) of Panel members were satisfied with the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and that approximately two thirds (63%) of respondents felt they had been well supported by the Council during that time. Similarly, of the Panel members who had looked at the Covid-19 section on the Council's website, the majority (84%) found the information helpful.

3.18 Inverclyde Council Plan 2023/28 and Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33

We introduced the second part of the questionnaire by informing the Panel that the Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22 sets out the ways in which the Council aims to deliver better outcomes for the people of Inverclyde. We explained that the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2017/22 sets out the outcomes that Partnership Planning Partners in Inverclyde, known at the Inverclyde Alliance, seek to improve and which should, in turn, improve the wellbeing and quality of life of the residents of Inverclyde.

- 3.19 We also told the Panel that the Council (and its Partners) need to devise new versions of both Plans and that we would like their views on what should be included in the documents.
- 3.20 Respondents were firstly asked what one thing would make the biggest difference to Inverclyde. The main issues raised were: increasing the number and quality of employment opportunities; improved access to suitable and affordable housing; addressing anti-social behaviour; and improving town centres, including retail and shopping provision.
- 3.21 The Panel was then asked what key policy areas they think the Council, our Partners and communities should develop to make the biggest difference in Inverclyde. The top three responses to this question were: increasing employment levels – 67%; supporting the creation of good jobs with fair pay and conditions – 47%; and reducing drugs and alcohol misuse – 42%.
- 3.22 When asked about the current shared vision across the Council and community in the local area - *Getting it right for every child, citizen and community in Inverclyde* – 86% of Panel members said they agreed with it.

3.23 Service commentary: Inverclyde Council Plan 2023/28 and Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33

The questions posed in the Citizens' Panel are consistent with those that were included in the wider public consultation and the Inverclyde Council Employee Survey 2022. The responses from all three surveys therefore allow us to collate common themes, and this is being compiled in an overall Council and Partnership Plan Consultation Report. This will be used to inform the Council and the Inverclyde Alliance's decision making process on the priorities within these strategic plans in early 2023.

3.24 Digital inclusion

The final section of the Survey centred on the topic of digital inclusion. We introduced this part of the questionnaire by saying that the internet and access to technology are now a huge part of everyday life for many people, both at home and in the workplace, and that we wanted to ask Panel members' views on digital inclusion.

3.25 Ninety-four per cent of respondents told us they have access to the internet at home. The top three devices Panel members use to access the internet at home are: mobile 'phone – 45%; laptop – 32%; and tablet – 27%.

3.26 When asked if they have used the IT facilities at a number of Council buildings, the responses were: library – 29%; school – 15%; and community hub – 12%. Twenty-nine per cent of Panel members also told us that they use the internet to assist with their child's education.

3.27 When asked about their preferred methods of interacting with the Council, the top four responses from Panel members were: telephone – 72%; face-to-face – 66%; Council website – 60%; and email – 57%.

3.28 The next two questions were about the format of Council Tax Bills. Three quarters of Citizens' Panel members receive their Council Tax Bills by post. Just under half (46%) of those respondents said they would be interested in receiving their Council Tax Bill electronically, an increase of 3% from when the question was posed to Panel members in 2018.

3.29 Finally, respondents were asked whether they had heard of *MyAccount*, a simple and secure sign-in service which allows people to set up an on-line account to access the range of public services provided by Councils, the NHS, the Scottish Government and other public service bodies. When asked about awareness of and use of *MyAccount*, the responses were:

| | Autumn 2022 % | Spring 2018 % |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| I am aware of it and have registered | 18 | 2 |
| I am aware of it but have not registered yet | 12 | 4 |
| I am aware of it but do not plan on registering | 9 | 10 |
| I am not aware of it | 61 | 84. |

3.30 Service commentary – digital inclusion

The results from digital inclusion section of the Citizens' Panel Autumn 2022 Survey confirm the Council's understanding of the levels of availability and uptake of internet-based services within the local community. The use of mobile 'phones and tablets is by far the main source of access which confirms the continued move from traditional PC-based devices.

These results will be fed into an updated Customer Services Strategy and will be used as further evidence to support the current ICT and Digital Strategies which aim to provide a wider range of options to interact with the Council, while retaining as many of the existing channels as possible.

The results also have relevance to the Council's Communication Strategy 2023/25 and will inform how we can best ensure residents can easily access services.

Education Services, aware of the wider Council Digital Access Strategy, has considered its operations and the different methodologies required to deliver remote learning and blended learning. Ultimately, in response to the Digital Access Strategy, a new service Digital Learning Strategy has been created which is available to view here:

<https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2393> (agenda item 13).

It is designed to improve the ability of early learning and childcare establishments and schools to work more responsively, flexibly and effectively through the use of digital devices and platforms.

Finally, it is pleasing to note the generally positive direction of travel around Panel members' awareness/use of *MyAccount*, this may be partially attributable to the behaviour change resulting from the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic when people were initially encouraged to minimise face-to-face interaction in the interest of public health.

3.31 Members' Briefing

A briefing on the results of the Citizens' Panel Autumn 2022 Survey and the Council's Employee Survey 2022 has been arranged for Elected Members.

4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Committee note the latest updates relating to the area of Corporate Policy and Performance.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

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

| SUBJECT | YES | NO | N/A |
|--|-----|----|-----|
| Financial | | X | |
| Legal/Risk | | X | |
| Human Resources | | X | |
| Strategic (LOIP/Corporate Plan) | X | | |
| Equalities & Fairer Scotland Duty | | | X |
| Children & Young People's Rights & Wellbeing | | | X |
| Environmental & Sustainability | | | X |
| Data Protection | | | X |

5.2 Finance

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

One off Costs

| Cost Centre | Budget Heading | Budget Years | Proposed Spend this Report | Virement From | Other Comments |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|----------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| N/A | | | | | |

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 implications arising from this report.

5.4 Human Resources

There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

5.5 Strategic

The issues referred to within this report are of relevance to the following Corporate Plan priorities:

Organisational Priority 1: To promote Inverclyde to both residents and visitors alike, as a great place to live, work, study and visit.

Organisational Priority 2: To work collaboratively to enable strong, connected and empowered communities, particularly in areas of deprivation, so that residents have influence and control over the things that matter to them.

Organisational Priority 9: To deliver services that are responsive to community needs and underpinned by a culture of innovation, continuous improvement and effective management of resources.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 None.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.