

Municipal Buildings, Greenock PA15 1LY

Ref: CMD

Date: 5 September 2025

A meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee will be held on Tuesday 16 September 2025 at 3pm.

Members may attend the meeting in person or via remote online access. Webex joining details will be sent to Members and Officers prior to the meeting. Members are requested to notify Committee Services by 12 noon on Monday 15 September 2025 how they intend to access the meeting.

In the event of connectivity issues, Members are asked to use the *join by phone* number in the Webex invitation and as noted above.

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LYNSEY BROWN Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services

#### **BUSINESS**

#### \*\* Copy to follow

1.	Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest	Page
PERF	ORMANCE MANAGEMENT	
2.	2025/26 Policy & Resources Revenue Budget, 2024/25 Out-turn and General Fund Revenue Budget Update Report by Interim Chief Financial Officer, Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development and Chief Executive	р
3.	Policy & Resources Capital Budget and Council 2025/28 Capital Programme Report by Interim Chief Financial Officer	р
4.	Finance Services Update Report by Interim Chief Financial Officer	р
5.	Corporate Policy and Performance Update: April – August 2025 Report by Corporate Direction Education, Communities & Organisational Development	р
6.	Freedom of Information Annual Report 2024 Report by Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services	р
7.	Complaint Handling Annual Report 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 Report by Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services	р

NEW	BUSINESS	
8.	Approach to the 2026/27 Budget Report by Interim Chief Financial Officer	р
9.	Anti-Poverty Initiatives Report by Head of Culture, Communities & Educational Resources	р
10.	Repopulation Strategy 2025-2028 Report by Interim Director - Regeneration	р
11.	Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26 Report by Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	р
12.	Commissioning of Advice Direct Scotland for the Administration of Distribution of a Heating Support Fund Report by Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	р
13.	Review of the Performance Management Framework Report by Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	р
14.	Co-operative Councils Innovation Network Report by Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications	р
REMI	TS FROM COMMITTEES	
ROUT	TINE DECISIONS AND ITEMS FOR NOTING	

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Enquiries to – **Colin MacDonald** – Tel 01475 712113



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 2** 

FIN/54/25/AE/AB

Report No:

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Interim Chief Financial Officer

and Corporate Director
Education, Communities &
Organisational Development and

**Chief Executive** 

Contact Officer: Angela Edmiston Contact No: 01475 712143

Subject: 2025/26 Policy & Resources Revenue Budget, 2024/25 Out-turn and

**General Fund Revenue Budget Update** 

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 □For Decision ⊠For Information/Noting

- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the Policy & Resources Revenue Budget outturn for 2024/25 and the 2025/26 projected position. The report also highlights a projected overspend in the overall General Fund Revenue Budget and the impact this will have on the General Fund Reserve.
- 1.3 In 2024/25, excluding the carry forward of Earmarked Reserves, there was an underspend of £422,000 within the Policy and Resources Committee. This was a decrease in expenditure of £57,000 from the projected outturn reported to Committee in May 2025. More details are provided within section 3.
- 1.4 The revised 2025/26 Revenue Budget for the Policy and Resources Committee is £26,170,000, which excludes Earmarked Reserves. The latest projection is an overspend of £71,000 (0.3%), the details are provided in section 3.5 and the appendices.
- 1.5 The latest projection for the General Fund Budget is an overspend of £566,000. Based on these figures the Council's unallocated Reserves are currently projected to be £0.189million less than the minimum recommended level of £4.0million.
- 1.6 This report also includes updates in respect of earmarked reserves spend and the Councils Common Good Revenue budget.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Note the final outturn for the 2024/25 Policy and Resources Budget and note the current projected overspend for 2025/26 of £71,000.
- 2.2 Note the projected overspend of £566,000 for the General Fund and the projected reserve balance of £3.811 million.

- 2.3 Note the projected 2025/26 surplus of £3,800 for the Common Good Budget set out in Appendix 5.
- 2.4 Note the 2025/26 Workstream Savings achieved to date and updates from lead officers.

Angela Edmiston
Interim Chief Financial Officer

Ruth Binks Corporate Director Education, Communities & ODHR

**Stuart Jamieson Chief Executive** 

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the current position of the 2025/26 Revenue Budget as well as the 2024/25 final outturn and to highlight the main variances contributing to the £422,000 underspend for 2024/25 and the projected overspend of £71,000 for 2025/26.
- 3.2 The revised 2025/26 Revenue Budget for the Policy & Resources Committee is £26,170,000 excluding Earmarked Reserves. This budget does not reflect the agreed 2025/26 pay award that will be transferred from the Pay Inflation Contingency to each Service budget for the next Service Committees.

#### 3.3 2024/25 Outturn (£422,000 Underspend)

The final outturn for the Policy & Resources 2024/25 Revenue Budget, excluding Earmarked Reserves was an underspend of £422,000. This is a decrease in spend of £57,000 from the position reported to Committee in May 2025. The main variances contributing to the net overspend are listed below

The outturn in specific service areas was as follows:

Service	Revised Budget 2024/25 £000	Outturn 2024/25 £000	Variance to Budget £000	P11 Projected Variance £000	Movement Since P11 £000
Finance	6,461	6,436	(25)	(59)	34
Legal	5,607	5,538	(69)	(44)	(25)
Organisational Development, Policy & Communications	2,326	2,276	(50)	(32)	(18)
Chief Executive	348	361	13	16	(3)
Miscellaneous	7,935	7,644	(291)	(246)	(45)
TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE	22,677	22,255	(422)	(365)	(57)

- 3.4 The main variances contributing to the net underspend were as follows
  - a. Combined Inflation Contingency underspend of £211,000 Non Pay inflation underspend of £391,000 off-set with £180,000 overspend for Pay Inflation. Within 2024/25 there had been a reduced call on the Non Pay Inflation contingency due to lower than anticipated calls on the contingency. This has been reflected within 2025/26 budget process.
  - b. Additional Turnover savings of £219,000. This was mainly due to vacancies with the majority now filled.
  - c. Computer Software/Hardware Maintenance overspend £57,000 This pressure has been reported to the Policy and Resources Committee within 2024/25 and the Service are currently reviewing the budget to bring back in line for 2025/26.
  - d. Underspend of £61,000 due to reallocation of centrally held 2023/24 Bad Debt Provision to Services.

# 3.5 <u>2025/26 Projected Outturn - £71,000 overspend 0.3%</u>

The main projected variances contributing to the net overspend are listed below (within appendix 3) –

(a) The Revenues & Benefits section are reporting a £35,000 overspend within Legal Expenses due to the continuing dispute over outstanding Council Tax costs. These costs are associated with one legal case, and updates will be provided in future Policy & Resources Revenue reports.

- (b) Benefits & Allowances £20,000 overspend projected based on the initial subsidy return, mid year return currently being completed and updated projecteion will be reported within the next committee report.
- (c) Projecting an overspend of £67,000 within ICT computer software. Overspend breakdown: £50k reported within 2024/25 with a further £17k due to increased costs for Cyber Security. This pressure continues from the prior year and is under review.
- (d) Projected over-recovery of £38,000 within Income for ICT service recharges for internal maintenance recharges for computer equipment purchased outside of the refresh programme.
- (e) External Licences are currently projecting at an under recovery of £50,000 for liquor and taxi operators. These projections are in line with previous outturns.
- (f) The Senior Officer Capacity budget within Chief Executive Services is currently projecting £100,000 underspend due to in year slippage.

### 3.6 General Fund Budget & Reserves Position

Appendix 6 shows that the General Fund is projecting a £566,000 overspend (excluding Health & Social Care) which represents 0.22% of the net Revenue Budget. All committees are reporting an overspend; Policy & Resources Committee £71,000, Environment & Regeneration of £90,000 and the Education & Communities £405,000.

Appendix 8 shows the latest position in respect of the General Fund Reserves and shows that the projected balance at 31 March, 2026 is £3.811 million which is £0.189 million below the minimum recommended balance of £4.0 million.

#### 3.7 Earmarked Reserves

Appendix 4 gives an update on the operational Earmarked Reserves, i.e. excluding strategic funding models. Spend to 31 July 2025 on these operational Earmarked Reserves is £92,000 (1.62% of projected spend), the majority of the earmarked reserve budgets within the Policy & Resources reserves occur at the end of the year. Appendix 7 gives the overall earmarked reserve position which shows £609,000 (58.48%) slippage against phased budget largely within the HSCP.

#### 3.8 Common Good Fund

The Common Good Budget is projecting a surplus of £3,800 in 2025/26 as shown in Appendix 6 which results in projected surplus fund balance at 31 March 2026 of £144,910.

#### 3.9 Workstream Savings

As part of the 2024/26 Budget process, the Council approved workstream savings of £2.880 million over the 2 year budget. The Corporate Management Team increased the target resulting in a final workstream target of £3.624 million, of which £1.885 million is due to be achieved in 2025/26. The latest position and lead officer update can be found in appendix9.

#### 3.10 Virements

None.

#### 4.0 PROPOSALS

4.1 The Committee is asked to note that officers are currently reviewing the inflation projections and updates will be included in future reports to Committee.

#### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial	X	
Legal/Risk	X	
Human Resources		Χ
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)		Χ
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights		Χ
& Wellbeing		
Environmental & Sustainability		X
Data Protection		Χ

#### 5.2 Finance

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

The Financial Regulations state the responsibility for ensuring Revenue Budgets are not exceeded lies with the Committee and budget holding Chief Officers. All Directorates are reviewing budget overspends to bring budgets back in line with approved budgets.

#### 5.4 Human Resources

There are no specific human resources implications arising from this report.

#### 5.5 **Strategic**

There are no specific strategic implications arising from this report.

## 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The paper has been jointly prepared by the Interim Chief Financial Officer and the Corporate Director Education, Communities, and Organisational Development and the Chief Executive.

# 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 There are no background papers for this report.

#### Policy & Resources Budget Movement - 2025/26

Service	Approved Budget 2025/26 £000	Inflation £000	M Virement £000	Movements Supplementary Budgets £000	Transferred to EMR £000	Revised Budget 2025/26 £000
Finance	6,250					6,250
Legal, Democratic Digital & Customer Services	5,435					5,435
Organisational Development, Policy & Communications	2,450					2,450
Chief Exec	515					515
Miscellaneous	11,520					11,520
Totals	26,170	0	(	0 0	0	26,170
Supplementary Budget Detail Inflation  Virements				0003		
Supplementary Budgets				0		
Total Inflation & Virements				0		

## POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

## SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS

2024/25		Approved	Revised	Projected	Projected	Percentage
Actual	SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS	Budget	Budget	Out-turn	Over/(Under)	Over/(Under)
£000	SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	Spend	
		£000	£000	£000	£000	
9,452	Employee Costs	9,257	9,254	9,267	13	0.1%
719	Property Costs	655	655	655	0	-
1,111	Supplies & Services	1,030	1,032	1,095	63	6.1%
1	Transport & Plant	5	5	5	0	-
1,314	Administration Costs	1,456	1,376	1,319	(57)	(4.1%)
29,976	Payments to Other Bodies	38,637	38,637	38,574	(63)	(0.2%)
(27,740)	Income	(24,870)	(24,789)	(24,674)	115	(0.5%)
14,833	TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE	26,170	26,170	26,241	71	0.3%
	Earmarked reserves		·	0	0	
14,833	Total Net Expenditure excluding Earmarked		·			
	Reserves	26,170	26,170	26,241	71	

#### POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

#### **OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS**

2024/25 Actual	OR JECTIVE ANALYOIG	Approved Budget	Revised Budget	Projected Out-turn	Projected Over/(Under)	Percentage Over/(Under)
£000	OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	Spend	
		£000	£000	£000	£000	
6,371	Finance	6,250	6,250	6,317	67	1.1%
5,336	Legal, Democratic Digital & Customer Services	5,435	5,435	5,549	114	2.1%
2,276	Organisational Development, Policy & Communications	2,450	2,450	2,440	(10)	(0.4%)
-,	Total Net Expenditure Education, Communities & Organisational Development	14,135	14,135	14,306	171	1.2%
361	Chief Executive	515	515	415	(100)	(19.4%)
489	Miscellaneous	11,520	11,520	11,520	0	-
3,126	TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE	26,170	26,170	26,241	71	0
	Earmarked reserves		0	0		
-, -	Total Net Expenditure excluding Earmarked Reserves	26,170	26,170	26,241	71	

#### **POLICY RESOURCES**

#### REVENUE BUGET MONITORING REPORT

# MATERIAL VARIANCES (EXCLUDING EARMARKED RESERVES) POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

#### Appendix 3

#### REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

#### **MATERIAL VARIANCES**

Outturn 2024/25 £000	Budget Heading	Budget 2025/26 £000	Proportion of Budget £000	Actual to 2025/26 £000	Projection 2025/26 £000	Over/(Under) Budget £000	Percentage Variance %
	Finance Services						
	Legal Expenses	23	8	43	58	35	152.2%
23,712	Benefits & Allowances	22,600	7,533	7,907	22,620	20	0.1%
	Legal, Democratic Digital & Customer Services						
	Employee Costs	3,780		· ·	· ·	45	1.2%
	ICT -Supplies and Services Computer Software Maintenance	721	240	764	845	67	9.3%
	ICT - Telephone Line Rental Admin Costs	253		46	160	(93)	(36.8%)
(276)	ICT Income - Telephone Line Rental Income Costs	(253)	(84)	(46)	(160)	93	(36.8%)
(63)	ICT Income - Computer 5 year Refresh	(28)	(9)	(12)	(66)	(38)	135.7%
(281)	Legal Income- Licenses	(338)	(113)	(88)	(288)	50	(14.8%)
	Organisational Development, Policy & Communications						
•	Employee Costs	2,093	614	588	2,045	(48)	(2.3%)
	Chief Executive Services						
	Senior Officer Capacity	190	0	0	90	(100)	(52.6%)
30,292	TOTAL MATERIAL VARIANCES	29,041	9,381	10,304	29,129	31	

#### EARMARKED RESERVES POSITION STATEMENT

COMMITTEE: Policy & Resources

C a t e g	Project	<u>Lead Officer/</u> <u>Responsible Manager</u>	Total Funding 2025/26	Phased Budget	<u>Spend</u> <u>to date</u> 2025/26	Projected Spend	Amount to be Earmarked for 2026/27 & Beyond	<u>Lead Officer Update</u>
r			£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
В	Early Retiral/Voluntary Severance Reserve	Angela Edmiston	<u>2,202</u>	0	0	1,000	1,202	Budget required for releases due to the 2026/28 budget exercise. Projection based on 50% of budget available. Sufficiency of budget in line with savings required needs to be reviewed. Total EMR estimated to fund approx £1.5m employee savings, budget will remain under review during this process.
С	Equal Pay	Morna Rae	100	0	0	0	100	Ongoing reserve held to assist with any Equal Pay legal costs.
С	Digital Strategy	Stuart Jamieson	868	121	46	255	613	2025/26 Committed project costs to date
								£5K Review of School Catering Service £14K ICT Project Officer Post £20K ICHRIS £7K Victoria Forms (Legal)
С	Welfare Reform - Operational	Angela Edmiston	52	0	0	10	42	Used to fund additional employee costs.
С	Anti-Poverty Fund	Ruth Binks	2,351	0	0	1,144	1,207	The Anti Poverty Officers group meets regularly to discuss proposals to utilise the unallocated reserve, which will be presented to future P&R Committees for approval.
В	Loan Charge Funding Model	Angela Edmiston	2,431	0	0	943	1,488	Based on latest finance strategy June 2025.
В	2023/26 Budget Funding Reserve	Angela Edmiston	2,745	0	0	1,245	1,500	Based on approved budget March 2025. £1.245m utilised 2025/26, £1m 2026/27 and £0.5m 2027/28
CFCR	Capital funded from Current Revenue	Angela Edmiston	11,245	0	0	3,100		To suppport exisiting pressures within capital programme, includes £3.75m for Asset Review and £4.4m medium temr support/contingency. Funding will be drawn down over 2025/28 programme.
С	New Ways of Working	Stuart Jamieson	47	14	14	47		Works nearing completion for Finance wing and Banking Hall moves. Balance of fund will be expended and re-charged circa period 5.

#### EARMARKED RESERVES POSITION STATEMENT

COMMITTEE: Policy & Resources

C a t e	Project	<u>Lead Officer/</u> <u>Responsible Manager</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>Funding</u>	Phased Budget	Spend to date	Projected Spend	Amount to be Earmarked for 2026/27 & Beyond	Lead Officer Update
0 1			2025/26	2025/26	<u>2025/26</u>	2025/26		
у			<u>£000</u>	£000	£000	£000	£000	
С	Project Resource	Stuart Jamieson	29	0	0	15	14	Balance of budget to fund recruitment cost of CFO.
С	Covid Recovery - Marketing Post & Support for Discover Inverclyde	Morna Rae	33	8	0	33	0	Funding in relation to the maintenance and development of the 'Discover Inverclyde' website and social media as the source of events and activity for residents and visitors to Inverclyde. Also supportslocal tourism groups and marketing campaigns.
С	Scottish Welfare Fund	Angela Edmiston	491	0	0	5	486	To pay the balance of Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grants expenditure as fundedd by Scottish Government
С	Smoothing Reserve (Service Consession)	Angela Edmiston	298	0	0	-183	481	Phasing over 2023/28 per report FIN/01/23
В	Budget Delivery Reserve	Angela Edmiston	1,177	32	32	760	417	Allocated costs to date for 2025/26: ASN transport (£53k), HR Review (£27k), Winter Gritting (£68k), Finance Officer (£47k), Utility Costs (490k). Also future costs of £350k for Office AMP, £75k due within 2025/26.
С	Student Training Fees	Morna Rae	73	0	0	0	73	The funding is to support professional qualifications and the consequent retention and development of employees. Spend to date across multiple services to develop employees.
С	IRI Smoothing Reserve	Angela Edmiston	946				946	Based on latest Finance Strategy June 2025.
С	Empty Property Relief	Angela Edmiston	75	0	0	0	75	To cover any retrospective applications for empty property relief.
С	Elections 2024/27	Lynsey Brown	231	0	0	0	231	No Election Spend within 25/26
С	Tourism	Morna Rae	270	0	0	270	0	Additional funding for tourism agreed as part of 2025/25 Budget. Activity to be undertaken by Environment and Regeneration/Corporate Communications including development of Tourism Strategy.
С	Transformation	Angela Edmiston	1,500	0	0	0	1,500	Approved Council March 2025, plans to be drafted.
С	Capital Programmes (FMS replacement)	Angela Edmiston	1,200	0	0	104	1,096	Approved Council March 2026, fund will be utilised over period 2025/28 to implement replacement Finance system.
С	Freedom of Inverclyde Event	Morna Rae	25	0	0	0	25	As agreed by June 2025 Council Royal Regiment of Scotland to receive Freedom of Inverclyde. Funding to support event.
	Total Category A		0	0	0	0	0	
	Total Category B		8,555	32		3,948	4,607	
	Total Category C to E		8,589	143	60	1,700	6,889	

#### COMMON GOOD FUND

# REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2025/26

	Final Outturn 2024/25	Approved Budget 2025/26	Budget to Date 2025/26	Actual to Date 2025/26	Projected Outturn 2025/26
	£	£	£	£	£
PROPERTY COSTS	71,332	65,200	22,300	5,800	65,200
Repairs & Maintenance	18,380	17,500	5,800	5,800	17,500
Rates 1	13,413	23,200	7,700	0	23,200
Property Insurance	8,000	3,500	1,800	0	3,500
Property Costs	31,539	21,000	7,000	0	21,000
ADMINISTRATION COSTS	6,200	7,700	500	0	7,700
Sundries	0	1,500	500	0	1,500
Commercial Rent Management Recharge	2,200	2,200	0	0	2,200
Recharge for Accountancy	4,000	4,000	0	0	4,000
OTHER EXPENDITURE	104,358	109,500	44,000	42,960	109,500
Christmas Lights Switch On	8,250	10,500	0	0	10,500
Christmas Decorations	43,700	44,000	0	0	44,000
Gourock Highland Games	29,400	29,400	29,400	29,400	29,400
Armistice Service	8,041	8,300	0	0	8,300
Comet Festival	13,300	13,300	13,300	13,300	13,300
Events	0	4,000	1,300	260	4,000
Bad Debt Provision	1,667	0	0	0	0
INCOME	(204,963)	(186,200)	(60,100)	(60,610)	(186,200)
Property Rental	(228,200)	(234,200)	(78,100)	(78,100)	(234,200)
Void Rents 2	33,164	54,000	18,000	17,490	54,000
Internal Resources Interest	(9,927)	(6,000)	0	0	(6,000)
NET ANNUAL EXPENDITURE	(23,073)	(3,800)	6,700	(11,850)	(3,800)
EARMARKED FUNDS	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE	(23,073)	(3,800)	6,700	(11,850)	(3,800)

Fund Balance as at 31st March 2025

Projected Outturn 2025/26

Expenditure on Port Glasgow Burgh 250th Anniversary approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 13th August 2024

Projected Fund Balance as at 31st March 2026

144,910

#### Policy & Resources Committee

## Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2025/26

Committee	Approved Budget 2025/2026	Revised Budget 2025/2026	Projected Out-turn 2025/2026	Projected Over/(Under)	Percentage Variance
	£,000's	£,000's		Spend £,000's	
Policy & Resources	26,170				0.27%
Environment & Regeneration	22,139	22,139	22,229	90	0.41%
Education & Communities	122,780	123,374	123,779	405	0.33%
Health & Social Care	78,662	78,695	79,354	659	0.84%
Committee Sub-Total	249,751	250,345	251,570	1,225	0.49%
Loan Charges	16,183	16,183	16,183	0	0.00%
Saving Approved yet to be Allocated (Note 1)		0	0	0	0.00%
Workstream Savings Approved (Note 1)	(210)	(210)	(210)	0	0.00%
Service Concession Flexibility	(1,650)	(1,650)	(1,650)	0	0.00%
Contribution from Other Funds	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Earmarked Reserves	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Total Expenditure	264,074	264,668	265,893	1,225	0.46%
Financed By:					
General Revenue Grant/Non Domestic Rates	(224,381)	(224,381)	(224,381)	0	0.00%
Contribution from General Reserves	(1,245)	(1,245)	(1,245)	0	100.00%
Contribution to Reserves	0	0	0	0	100.00%
Integration Joint Board - Contribution to Reserves	0	0	(659)	(659)	100.00%
Net Expenditure	0	594	1,160	566	

Note 1 - Workstream Savings Approved yet to be vired

Earmarked Reserves Position Statement
Appendix 7

## **Summary**

Committee	<u>Total</u> <u>Funding</u> <u>2025/26</u>	Phased Budget	<u>Spend to</u> <u>date 2025/26</u>	Variance Actual to Phased Budget	Projected Spend 2025/26	Earmarked 2026/27 & Beyond	2025/26 %age Spend Against Projected	2025/26 %age Over/(Under) Spend Against Phased Budget
	<u>£000</u>	<u>£000</u>	£000	£000	£000	£000		
Education & Communities	1,357	46	46	0	552	805	8.33%	0.00%
Health & Social Care	9,191	587	66	(521)	2,522	6,669	2.62%	(88.75%)
Regeneration & Environment	6,680	233	228	(5)	2,991	3,689	7.62%	(2.15%)
Policy & Resources	17,144	175	92	(83)	5,648	11,496	1.63%	(47.43%)
	34,372	1,041	432	(609)	11,713	22,659	3.69%	(58.48%)

Actual Spend v Phased Budget

Behind Phasing =

(£609k)

(58.48%)

Only categories B-E included above excluding HSCP with categories C-E only

# Appendix 8

# $\frac{\text{GENERAL FUND RESERVE POSITION}}{2025/26}$

	<u>£000</u>	£000
Usable Balance 31/3/25		4377
Available Funding: Write back of planned use of reserves	7540	
		7540
Projected Surplus/(Deficit) 2025/26	(566)	(566)
Use of Balances Approved 2024:		(566)
Increased support to the Revenue Budget:		
Anti Poverty Initiatives (including employability)	(600)	
Roads Investment ASN Initiatives/Resources	(600) (600)	
Tourism	(270)	
Transformation Capital Programmes (FMS Replacement) Freedom of Inverclyde event Use of reserves for 2025/28 budget	(1500) (1200) (25) (2745)	
		(7540)
Projected Reserve Balance	_	3811

Minimum Reserve required is £4 million

Appendix 9

#### Workstreams Saving Monitoring at July 2025

Saving Title	CMT Lead Officer	Chief Officer Update	Approved Saving 2024/25 £000's	Achieved to Date 2024/25 £000's	Projected Saving 2024/25 £000's	Over achievement/ (Shortfall) 2024/25 £000's	Sa <sup>2</sup>	roved ving 25/26 00's	Achieved to Date 2025/26 £000's	Projected Saving 2025/26 £000's	Total Projected Saving 2024/26 £000's	Over achievement/ (Shortfall) 2024/26 £000's	2026/27 £000's	2027/28 £000's	Est FTE Impact	Balance Remaining £000's
Income Generation Original Target £700k	A Edmiston	5% increases in fees/charges for both 2024/25 and 2025/26 agreed as part of the 2024/26 Budget. Balance anticipated to come from Inchgreen JV no later than 2025/26. £11k identified for 2025/26 relating to uplift in charges for Building Warrant fees. £25K GOT lease review.	250	245	245	(5)		150	293	455	700	0	0	0	0.0	162
Procurement Original target £600k, then £750k, then £805k (to fund Procurement post) now £945k over 24/27 after £140k New target added. Note 2	E Montgomerry	£671k achieved in 2024/25 from the new Residual Waste contract with £80k achieved from the new SWAN contract. This has been phased 50% 24/25 and 50% 25/26 and requires £350k investment from the Budget Delivery emr. CMT have increased the target by £55k in order to help increase capacity within the Procurement Team. Further inrease approved as part of August 2024 savings exercise (£140k) including purchase cards.	710	711	711	1	1	65	65	164	875	0	70	0	(2.0)	169
Energy Original Target £500k , now £1250k	A Edmiston	£800k reduction in gas/electricity budgets over 2023/26 approved as part of the 2024/26 Budgets. Increased by £100k (Jan 2025 Council ) and a further £300k (Feb 2025 P&R)and the position will continue to be monitored given the current volatility. A £50k reduction in fuel costs was applied from 2024/25 based on 2023/24 out-turn. 2026/27 potential saving and IL saving to be reviewed later in 2025. £130k saving identified for Chiller 2026/27	250	250	250	0	11	000	967	1,000	1,250	0	0	0	0.0	33
Asset Management Original Target £400k	E Montgomerry	Initial saving will arise from the demolition of Hector McNeil House as part of the Levelling Up Fund project later in 2024. Officers developing a process for the consideration by members of other proposals which will be presented in October. A report will be presented to the Programme Board February 2025 regarding office proposals. Target slipped over 2026/28 per P&R January 2025. FTE reflects HMH cleaning saving.	50	0	0	(50)		50	0	100	100	0	200	100	3.8	400
Management Restructure Ph3 <b>Original Target £200</b> k	S Jamieson	Update presented to 14.11.24 Programme Board and 19.11.24 P&R Committee agreed to use £104k from the contingency to meet the 31.3.26 projected shortfall. Shortfall updated in line with latest saving proposal, now utilising £65k from contingency balance.	0	0	0	0	2	200	135	135	135	(65)	12	0	2.5	12
Digital & Customer Services Original Target £100k	S Jamieson	A number of projects delivering service improvements progressing . Updated via regular reports to Policy & Resources Committee. Update to 14.11.24 Programme Board and 19.11.24 P&R Committee agreed to use £35k from the contingency to meet the 31.3.26 projected shortfall. In line with latest saving proposal, shortfall increased to £41k funded from contingency.	20	0	0	(20)	:	80	59	59	59	(41)	17	0	2.0	17
Community Learning & Development- Delivering Differently Review Original Target £180k	R Binks	This saving was agreed at the Education and Communities Committee on 21 January 2025.	40	40	40	0	1	40	140	140	180	0	0	0	4.3	0
Schools Catering Review <b>Original</b> Target £120k	R Binks	3.8FTE vacant posts delivering an £80k saving in 25/26 have already been identified and APSE are undertaking a review with the service to identify potential areas for efficencies. This review has been underatken with results pending.	0	0	0	0	1	.00	91	100	100	0	20	0	3.4	29
Over achievement Contingecy Currently £300k	A Edmiston	This reflects the fact that targets exceed the overall allowance in the 2024/26 Budget. Policy & Resources Committee approved the use of £139k on 19.11.24. Phasing updated, £106k required from contingency. Increased target for expected chiller saving 2026/27.	0	0	0	0		800)	0	(194)	(194)	106	0	0	0.0	(194)
Totals			1,320	1,246	1,246	(74)		1,885	1750	1959	3205	0	319	100	14.0	628



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 3** 

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Interim Chief Financial Officer Report No: FIN/55/25/AE/MT

Contact Officer: Matt Thomson Contact No: 01475 712256

Subject: Policy & Resources Capital Budget and Council 2025/28 Capital

**Programme** 

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 ☐ For Decision ☐ For Information/Noting

- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to provide Committee with the latest position of the Policy & Resources Capital Programme and the 2025/28 Capital Programme.
- 1.3 The Policy & Resources Capital Programme has a capital budget over 2025/28 of £6.789m with total projected spend on budget. The Committee is projecting to spend £1.614m in 2025/26 against an approved budget of 1.614m.
- 1.4 The overall 2025/28 Capital Programme budget is £64.725m with projects totalling £67.561m. This represents a £2.836m (4.38%) over allocation. This is within the agreed 5% tolerance. In the current year net advancement of £0.414m, (1.64%) is being reported. Advancement has occurred in the programme within the individual Committees as follows; Environment & Regeneration (£0.274m advancement) and Education & Communities (£0.140m advancement). A further breakdown of this movement can be seen within the individual breakdown per Committee in paragraph 3.12. Expenditure at 30 June was £2.207m.
- 1.5 The Capital Programme reflects changes made as a result of the Scottish Government Capital Settlement for 2025/26.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the current position of the 2025/28 Policy & Resources Capital Budget and the current position of the 2025/28 Capital Programme.

Angela Edmiston
Interim Chief Financial Officer

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 On 6 March 2025 the Council approved the 2025/28 Capital Programme as part of the overall Budget approval. This report shows the revised grant and allocation assumptions for 2025/28.

#### 2025/28 Policy & Resources Capital Position

- 3.2 The Policy & Resources capital budget is £6.789m. The current projection is £6.789m which means total projected spend is on budget.
- 3.3 The approved budget for 2025/26 is £1.614m and the Committee is projecting to spend £1.614m in 2025/26. The spend at 30 June is £0.007m (0.43%) of the approved budget.
- 3.4 PC Refresh Programme The 2025/26 refresh programme is now being planned. In line with Microsoft's decision to withdraw support for Windows 10, a project to identify and replace all devices that will not support Windows 11 is underway. A desktop exercise has identified the majority of these devices will be in the School Estate and phase 1 of the refresh programme will deliver the replacement of these devices. Once complete a more general age and condition review will determine further phases of the refresh project. The project to replace a number of Android Smartphones that were identified as no longer in support for security and functionality updates has been completed.
- 3.5 Server and Switch Replacement Several servers are being upgraded in response to planned system upgrades. Investigations into the Virtual Platform and Telephony are currently underway and a range of network and server replacement programmes are being developed. Several device replacements across the network estate to improve service and support the implementation of SWAN2 have now been completed. Options for improvements to back-up systems are being developed and the replacement of the file storage system in the school estate is being planned.
- 3.6 As part of the 2023/26 budget setting process £4.131m was added to a small existing contingency to meet potential cost increases, fund unforeseen projects and to protect core service delivery from unexpected fluctuations in costs. At the 2025/28 budget setting process, a further £1m was added to this contingency. This budget will be allocated by this Committee following the receipt of relevant reports. To date £3.826m has been allocated by Committee across the following projects; Greenock Town Centre Levelling Up Fund (£1.004m), Dunrod Road (£1.500m),Parklea Branching Out (£0.272m), Inverkip City Deal (£0.300m), Roads Projects (£0.330m), Estate Conditions Surveys (£0.250m) and King George VI Building (£0.200m) leaving an unallocated balance of £1.275m.
- 3.7 As part of the 2024/28 Capital Programme approval in February 2025, £3.75million generated from reprofiling loans charges repayments was allocated towards the refreshed asset management strategies. These are due to be completed by March 2026 and this expenditure is phased accordingly.

#### 2025/28 Capital Programme

3.8 The overall 2025/28 Capital Programme reflects the confirmed 2025/26 capital grant. The 2025/26 allocation is £6.940m, as well as an additional £0.576m for Active Travel Infrastructure Funding, formerly referred to as Cycling Walking and Safer Streets, £0.488m for Climate Emergency and £0.050m for Bus Transformation Fund which are shown on the Capital Grants line of the Appendices. The Capital Programme has been updated to reflect the Grant with corresponding expenditure added where appropriate. An estimate of the 2025/28 Programme, reflecting this settlement and increased estimated Grants in 2026/27 and 2027/28, together with recommendations regarding the use of any available resources were approved by Council on the 6 March 2025.

- 3.9 An over provision of projects against estimated resources of up to 5% is considered acceptable to allow for increased resources and/or cost reductions. Currently the Capital Programme is reporting an over provision of £2.836m which represents 4.38% of the 2025/28 estimated resources.
- 3.10 In terms of the overall Capital Programme, it can be seen from Appendix 2 that at 30 June 2025 expenditure in 2025/26 is currently 8.63% of projected spend. Phasing and projected spend has been reviewed by the budget holders and the relevant Director. The position in respect of each individual Committee is reported in Appendix 2 and in paragraph 3.12 of this report. Overall Committees are projecting to outturn on budget.
- 3.11 In the current year net advancement of £0.414m, (1.64%) is currently being reported. This is due to advancement within Education and Communities Committee (£0.140m) and Environment & Regeneration Committee (£0.274m).
- 3.12 The position in respect of individual Committees for 2025/26 is as follows:

#### Policy & Resources

Expenditure at 30 June 2025 is £0.007m against an approved budget of £1.614m. There has been no slippage or advancement within this committee to date this year.

#### **Environment & Regeneration**

Expenditure at 30 June 2025 is £1.156m against an approved budget of £14.170m. Net advancement of £0.274m (1.93%) and is mainly due to advancement in the RAMP.

#### Education & Communities

Expenditure at 30 June 2025 is £0.246 against an approved budget of £2.960m. Net advancement of £0.140m (4.73%) due to advancement within the Leisure Pitches AMP project (£0.140m)

#### Health & Social Care

Expenditure at 30 June 2025 is £0.798m against an approved budget of £6.433m. There has been no slippage or advancement within this committee to date this year.

#### 4.0 PROPOSALS

4.1 The continued annual shortfall between the Councils core asset investment requirement and the level of Capital Grant continues to put pressure on the wider finances of the Council, however, the 2025/28 Capital Programme remains affordable based on current estimates.

#### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		X
Legal/Risk		Χ
Human Resources		Х
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	Χ	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights		Х
& Wellbeing		
Environmental & Sustainability		X
Data Protection		X

#### 5.2 Finance

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments

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 issues to raise as part of this report.

#### 5.4 Human Resources

There are no HR matters arising from this report.

## 5.5 **Strategic**

The overall Capital Programme contains many projects which contribute to the strategic priorities of the Council. As a result, timeous delivery of projects remains a focus for officers.

#### 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 This report has been prepared based on updates to the relevant Strategic Committees.

#### 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

# COMMITTEE: POLICY & RESOURCES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
<u>Project Name</u>	Est Total Cost	Actual to 31/3/25	Approved Budget 2025/26	Revised Est 2025/26	Actual to 30/6/25	Est 2026/27	Est 2027/28	Future Years
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Policy & Resources								
<u>ICT</u>								
Storage/Backup Devices/Minor Works and Projects	17 351		17		6		0	
Rolling Replacement of PC's  Meeting Room, Videoconferencing & Hybrid Working Equipment	42		351 42		0			
Server & Switch Replacement Programme	286		286		J		_	
Annual Allocation	1,068		0		0	534		
ICT Total	1,764	0	696	696	7	534	534	0
<u>Miscellaneous</u>								
Capital Programme Contingency	1,275	_	918	918	0	357	0	0
Asset Management Strategy	3,750		0		0		_	
Miscellaneous Total	5,025	0	918	918	0	2,107	2,000	0
TOTAL	6,789	0	1,614	1,614	7	2,641	2,534	0

# Appendix 2a

# <u>Capital Programme - 2025/26 - 2027/28</u>

# Available Resources

	Α	В	С	D	G
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Future	Total
	000£	£000	£000	£000	£000
Government Capital Support	6,940	6,104	6,350	-	19,394
Capital Receipts (Note 1)	618	315	315	-	1,248
Capital Grants (Note 2)	4,025	300	300	-	4,625
Prudential Funded Projects (Note 3)	8,210	3,867	2,714	125	14,916
Balance B/F From 24/25	11,204	-	-	-	11,204
Capital Funded from Current Revenue	4,090	4,815	4,433	-	13,338
	35,087	15,401	14,112	125	64,725

# Overall Position 2025/28

Available Resources (Appendix 2a, Column A-E)	£ <u>000</u> 64,725
Projection (Appendix 2b, Column B-F)	67,561
(Shortfall)/Under Utilisation of Resources	(2,836)
(Shortfall)/Under Utilisation of Resources %	(4.38)%

# Classification - Official - Sensitive

# Notes to Appendix 2a

Note 1 (Capital Receipts)	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Future	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Sales	538	315	315	-	1,168
Contributions/Recoveries	80	-	-	-	80
	618	315	315	-	1,248
Note 2 (Capital Grants)	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Future	Total
<del></del>	£000	£000	£000		£000
Government Grant - Place Based Funding	407	-			407
Watt Institute LED Lighting	41	-	-		41
Cycling, Walking & Safer Streets	576	300	300	-	1,176
Shared Prosperity Fund	600	-	-		600
SPT	356	-	-		356
Climate Emergency	488	-	-		488
Boglestone Community Centre	350				350
Peatland Action Trust	286	-	-		286
Recycling Improvement Fund	96	-	-		96
Grieve Road Community Hall - Extension & Upgrade	700	-	-		700
RCGF	75	-	-		75
Bus Transformation Fund	50	-	-		50
	4,025	300	300	-	4,625
Note 3 (Prudentially Funded Projects)	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Future	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Vehicle Replacement Programme	824	1,214	1,214	-	3,252
Borrowing in lieu of VRP Reduction	-	636	-		636
Asset Management Plan - Depots	70	208	-		278
Capital Works on Former Tied Houses	-	199	-	125	324
New Community Hub	5,816	110	-		5,926
Additional Prudential Borrowing to Fund Capital Programme	1,500	1,500	1,500		4,500
	8,210	3,867	2,714	125	14,916

# Appendix 2b

# <u>Capital Programme - 2025/26 - 2027/28</u>

# Agreed Projects

	Α	В	С	D	Е	F	G	Н	I
Committee	Prior	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Future	Total	Approved	(Under)/	2025/26 Spend
	Years						Budget	Over	To 30/06/2025
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Policy & Resources	-	1,614	2,641	2,534	-	6,789	6,789	-	7
Environment & Regeneration	5,419	14,444	16,633	8,365	125	44,986	44,986	-	1,156
School Estate	-	1,903	4,591	5,000	-	11,494	11,494	-	246
Education & Communities (Exc School Estate)	251	1,197	261	120	-	1,829	1,829	-	-
HSCP	1,774	6,433	1,700	-	-	9,907	9,907	-	798
Total	7,444	25,591	25,826	16,019	125	75,005	75,005	-	2,207



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 4** 

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Interim Chief Financial Officer Report No: FIN/51/25/AE

Contact Officer: Angela Edmiston Contact No: 01475 712143

Subject: Finance Services Update

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 ⊠For Decision □For Information/Noting

- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Committee on several matters relating to the Finance Service.
- 1.3 This update to Committee provides updates in terms of the following:
  - Debt Recovery Annual Report Year Ending 31 March 2025
  - Council Tax SMS Messaging
  - Scottish Welfare Fund
  - Social Security Scotland
  - Savings Strategy External Audit Action 2023/24 Accounts
  - Use of Emergency Powers Award of contracts for the Provision of Transport for Children with Additional Support/Medical Needs for 2025/26 and 2026/27

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the various updates from the Finance Service including the role out of SMS text messaging to support the collection of Council Tax from October 2025.
- 2.2 The Committee is asked to approve the inclusion of the Savings Strategy outlined in Appendix 3 in the Councils Medium Term Finance Strategy from December 2025 onwards.
- 2.3 That the Committee note the use of emergency power for the awarding of contracts for the Provision of Transport for Children with Additional Support/Medical Needs for 2025/26 and 2026/27.

Angela Edmiston
Interim Chief Financial Officer

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 The Finance Service covers a wide range of functions ranging from Accountancy, Payables, Treasury/Insurance to Revenues, Benefits Discretionary Payments and Internal Audit. This update covers several areas relating mainly to Revenue Services with an update on the External Audit action point from 20234/24 Accounts Audit, Savings Strategy.

#### 3.2 Debt Recovery Annual Report Year Ending 31 March 2025

There is a requirement within the Financial Regulations for the Committee to consider on an annual basis the performance of the Council in terms of Debt Recovery including the Council's debt recovery partner.

- 3.3 Council tax collection in 2024/25 was 94.8% of Council tax billed which compares with 94.7% in 2023/24. Council tax payers were assisted with a one-off payment to negate an 8.2% increase in 2024/25. The Scottish average collection in 2024/25 was 95.5% with Inverclyde being placed 23 of the 32 councils. The effect of cost-of-living pressures and changes to Debt Recovery Regulations on Council tax collection continued to affect performance. Collection of all prior year Council tax billed since 1993 at 31st March 2025 was 97%, matching the position at the same point in 2024. The Council exceeds the budgeted collection rate for all years up to and including 2019/20.
- 3.4 Payment of Council tax by direct debit in 2024/25 was 82.3% of in year receipts, a slight reduction of 1% on 2023/24. Direct debit continues to be promoted as the preferred payment method. Council Tax online services were replaced in early 2025 with more accessible and user-friendly solutions. The uptake of e.billing increased from 1,705 in January 2025 to 3,552 in July 2025 (108% increase) and the use of Council Tax e.forms which improves the speed at which accounts are updated, and bill payers receive their Council tax Notices, increased by 253% over the same period.
- 3.5 Council Tax debt recovered by the Council's debt recovery partner decreased by 8% following a stronger year in 2023/24 when collection increased by 11%. Non-Domestic Rates debt recovery increased by 116% having declined the previous year by 19%. The surge in Non-Domestic Rates collection in 2024/25 was due to their collection of £400,000 relating to ten late payers with larger accounts. In-year Non-Domestic Rates collection was 95%,1.16% more than 2023/24.
- 3.6 Debt recovery continued to be more challenging with inflationary pressures and higher interest rates affecting disposable income. The protected minimum balance in bank accounts of £1,000 continues to have a particular effect. Appendix 1 shows the level of debt collected against respective years; it also compares total collection with 2023/24.
- 3.7 Services are in place to support those who ask for help by way of spreading payment over 12 months instead of 10, help to claim Council Tax Reduction, discounts and exemptions; and referrals to money and debt advice services. Another advance in the Council Tax administration is a wider use of SMS text messaging explained at section 3.9 of this report.
- 3.8 The gross debt as at 31 March 2025 is £26.118m as shown in Appendix 2. There is a bad debt provision of £22.613m, leaving a net debt of £3.505m.

#### 3.9 Council Tax SMS Messaging

The service currently uses SMS text messaging as a quick and cost-effective method to contact Council Tax (CT) payers for one-off initiatives, most recently to encourage uptake of e-billing. As part of ongoing efforts to improve service efficiency, SMS messaging will be repurposed from early October 2025 to prompt CT payers to pay missed instalments.

- 3.10 In 2024/25, more than 18,000 Reminder Notices were sent. The objectives of the SMS initiative are to enhance the efficiency of Council Tax collection; reduce postal costs by decreasing the number of Reminder Notices sent by post; and to support CT payers in avoiding debt accumulation and Summary Warrant charges.
- 3.11 Messages will be generic and will not contain personal information. They will notify recipients that a Council Tax payment is due and encourage prompt payment to avoid additional costs. Each message will include a link to the Council Tax landing page, which will feature a new section explaining the use of SMS messaging.
- 3.12 The effectiveness of this initiative will be assessed by monitoring the number of in-year Council Tax Reminder Notices issued compared with previous years.
- 3.13 The Committee is asked to note that SMS text messaging will be introduced as a tool to support Council Tax collection from early October 2025.

#### 3.14 Scottish Welfare Fund

The Committee agreed in February, a one-off Fuel Supplement of £100 to be paid as an additional component of the Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grant to support those in fuel crisis who were not eligible for the government Pension Age Winter Fuel Payment or did not receive the Inverclyde Council Pension Age Winter Fuel Payment. Payments have been made to 206 households to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025, totalling £20,600. It was agreed that the policy would be reviewed as part of the development of a proposal for the Fuel Poverty Fund for non-pensionable age households in fuel poverty in the winter of 2025/26. The proposal for a Working Age Winter Fuel Support Scheme 2025/26 is found elsewhere on the Agenda.

3.15 Expenditure on Scottish Welfare Fund, excluding the payment of the one-off Fuel Supplement in the 4 months to 31<sup>st</sup> July was £308,865, exceeding the Scottish Government programme funding at that point by 23%. An earmarked reserve together with Anti-Poverty Funding of £75,000 for 2025/26 will contain costs.

#### 3.16 Social Security Scotland

The Scottish Government has announced the introduction of a new benefit, the Two Child Limit Payment (TCLP) to help mitigate the financial impact of the limit applied to Universal Credit (UC) and Housing Benefit. TCLP will be delivered by Social Security Scotland and will provide a flat-rate monthly payment of £292.81, equivalent to the UC child element for second and subsequent children. This payment will be available to households who do not receive a child element for third or subsequent children born on or after 6 April 2017. Payments will align with UC assessment periods and will be issued monthly.

- 3.17 It is estimated that 33,000 households in Scotland will be eligible for TCLP in 2026.
- 3.18 Social Security Scotland will promote the benefit to recipients of the Scottish Child Payment who meet the eligibility criteria. Eligibility will be confirmed through data sharing with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Applications for TCLP will open on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026.
- 3.19 In general, TCLP will be disregarded for Scottish Social Security benefits. However, it will be counted as income for the purposes of: Council Tax Reduction (CTR) for working-age claimants; Kinship Care Allowance; and potentially, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs).
- 3.20 Further details will be provided in future Finance Update Reports as more information becomes available.

#### 3.21 Savings Strategy

As part of the 2023/24 Annual Audit Report, the External Auditors identified the following action:

We recommend that in view of the availability of a medium term forecast, beyond the two year budget, saving plans should be considered and developed for the medium term as well i.e. beyond the period covered by the latest budget.

This action was allocated to the Chief Financial Officer with a delivery date of September 2025.

- 3.22 The Council currently produces a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which is reviewed and updated every 6 months in June and December each year. The MTFS, alongside regular budget updates, identifies the budget gap in the medium term.
- 3.23 Each year the funding gap is closed by a variety of options. The work required to deliver savings, and their impact can vary dramatically with some being technical savings with no impact on service delivery and others being more difficult requiring extensive consultation with the workforce and communities.
- 3.24 Options adopted in the past and available to the Council to close the budget gap are as follows:
  - Efficiencies / Substitution
  - Charging
  - Recharging
  - Employee Turnover
  - Savings Workstreams
  - Service Specific Savings
  - Adjustments
  - Technical Savings
  - Council Tax
  - Use of Reserves
- 3.25 Appendix 3 attached presents guidance on available options and a process on the approach to closing the funding gap. This process could be further developed to include indicative figures in the medium term to close the projected budget gap identified in the MTFS. It is proposed that appendix 3 should be adopted into the financial outlook section of the MTFS from December 2025 onwards and remain under review for further development.
- 3.26 Use of Emergency Powers Award of contracts for the Provision of Transport for Children with Additional Support/Medical Needs for 2025/26 and 2026/27
  - On 1 July Councillors Clocherty, McGuire, Moran, McCabe and Curley, the Interim Chief Financial Officer, the Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services and the Chief Executive approved the use of Emergency Powers for the award of contracts for the provision of transport for children with additional support/medical needs for 2025/26 and 2026/27. The total annual value of the contracts was £200,000.
- The use of Emergency Powers was required as it was essential the contracts were in place for the beginning of the new term on 19 August 2025 to enable smooth transition from one contract to another, for pick-up points to be confirmed and for parents to be notified prior to beginning of the new term, and this pre-dated the next Policy & Resources Committee meeting. Inverclyde Council has an agency agreement with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) to conduct the procurement process and recommendations for the award of contracts is provided by them, and this was not available for the May Committee cycle.
- 3.28 The use of these powers was also reported to the Education & Communities Committee om 2 September 2025.

#### 4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to note that SMS text messaging will be introduced as a tool to support Council Tax collection from early October 2025.
- 4.2 It is proposed that appendix 3 is adopted into the MTFS from December 2025 to meet the External Audit Action from the 2023/24 audit. This will be reviewed and updated on a 6 monthly cycle as part of the MTFS and reported to Committee.

#### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial	Х	
Legal/Risk		Х
Human Resources		Х
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)		Х
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's		X
Rights & Wellbeing		
Environmental & Sustainability		Х
Data Protection		X

#### 5.2 Finance

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 issues arising from this report.

#### 5.4 Human Resources

There are no HR issues arising from this report.

## 5.5 Strategic

There are no strategic issues.

# 5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

# (a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required and will be completed prior to the Committee
Х	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.

## 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation has taken place with the CMT and MBWG regarding the Savings Strategy.

#### 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 2023/24 AAR – December 2024 Council.

Classification : Official

Appendix 1
Analysis of Debt Recovery Partner Performance 2024/25

Council Tax				
Financial Year	Payments Received			
	£000's			
Pre 2000	4			
2000/01	5			
2001/02	4			
2002/03	6			
2003/04	6			
2004/05	7			
2005/06	10			
2006/07	8			
2007/08	10			
2008/09	10			
2009/10	15			
2010/11	10			
2011/12	16			
2012/13	24			
2013/14	29			
2014/15	25			
2015/16	27			
2016/17	30			
2017/18	36			
2018/19	47			
2019/20	65			
2020/21	96			
2021/22	106			
2022/23	165			
2023/24	506			
2024/25	922			
Total	2189			

Non Domestic Rates				
Financial Year	Payments Received			
	£000's			
Pre 2000	0			
2000/01	0			
2001/02	0			
2002/03	0			
2003/04	0			
2004/05	0			
2005/06	0			
2006/07	0			
2007/08	0			
2008/09	0			
2009/10	0			
2010/11	0			
2011/12	0			
2012/13	0			
2013/14	1			
2014/15	0			
2015/16	0			
2016/17	0			
2017/18	1			
2018/19	0			
2019/20	2			
2020/21	3			
2021/22	42			
2022/23	164			
2023/24	200			
2024/25	488			
Total	901			

	2023/24	2024/25	Difference: 2023/24 - 202	nce: 2023/24 - 2024/25	
	£000's	£000's	£000's		
Council Tax	2391	2189	-202	-8%	
Non Domestic Rates	430	901	498	116%	
Total	2821	3090	296	10%	

# Appendix 2

		Position 31/03/2025 £'000	Position 31/03/2024 £'000	Movement £'000
Council	Тах			
	Gross Debt	20,127	19,244	883
Less:	Bad Debt Provision	18,253	17,782	471
	Net Debt	1,874	1,462	412
Sundry I	Debt			
	Gross Debt	2,032	2,247	(215)
Less:	Bad Debt Provision	633	638	(5)
	Net Debt	1,399	1,609	(210)
Industria	ıl & Commercial Rent			
	Gross Debt	198	148	50
Less:	Bad Debt Provision	140	115	25
	Net Debt	58	33	25
Statutor	y Additions			
<u>Otatator</u>	Gross Debt	3,587	3,422	165
Less:	Bad Debt Provision	3,587	3,422	165
	Net Debt	0	0	0
Long Te	rm Debtors			
	Gross Debt	174	238	(64)
Less:	Bad Debt Provision	0	0	0
	Net Debt	174	238	(64)
Overall 1	- Totals			
3701411	Gross Debt	26,118	25,299	819
Less:	Bad Debt Provision	22,613	21,957	656
	Net Debt	3,505	3,342	163



# **Medium Term Savings Plan**

- 1.0 Each year the Council is legally required to set a balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year and to do that, need to develop robust plans to close the gap between expenditure demands and available resources.
- 1.1 The Council has developed an approach covering a range of options to close the funding gap in previous years and plans to adopt the same principles in future years. For the Council to remain financially sustainable, it is essential that approved savings are delivered in the timescales set at the budget setting process however given the nature of some savings a considerable lead in time may be required to achieve this.
- 1.2 The different options developed can be covered in the following categories. The Council will likely need to adopt several of the options below to close the budget gap identified.
  - Efficiencies/Substitution Efficiencies can produce a monetary saving resulting in a budget reduction or non-monetary, meaning that the Council can deliver more for the same funding. Substitution allows the Council to charge existing core spend to new funding streams resulting in a budget saving. An example of such is a new central funded policy which is currently provided under a local policy.
  - <u>Charging</u> The Council charges for several services. Whilst some fees are set nationally, the Council has discretion over a variety of service delivery areas such as Environmental Services, licensing, parking, burial and cremations, etc.
  - <u>Recharging</u> Where it is appropriate, the Council can charge core service costs to the Capital Programme or other ring-fenced budgets. This is kept under review and can be used, on a time limited basis, to generate savings.
  - Employee Turnover No Directorate remains fully staffed each year.
     Vacancies or gaps between an employee leaving and a replacement starting, is referred to as Turnover. Turnover is based on a percentage of annual budget and increases in line with annual pay awards. This continues to be reviewed to ensure the percentage is at an appropriate level, any increase to the percentage can generate a budget saving.
  - <u>Savings Workstreams</u> The Council developed a savings workstream plan during 2024/26 budget process. Workstreams may cover some categories above such as charging and efficiencies but allows a target to be set and met over a term longer than 1 year. Current workstreams fall under the following categories: Income Generation; Procurement; Energy; Asset Management; Management Restructure; Digital; School Catering Review and CLD Review.

- <u>Service Specific Savings</u> The Corporate Management Team (CMT) will produce a list of potential savings for review by the Members via the Joint Budget Group (JBG) and Members Budget Working Group (MBWG). These savings are likely to be Service reductions or Service redesigns. They will generally require public consultation and employee engagement. It is imperative that the key priority outcomes of the Council plan continue to be met.
- <u>Adjustments</u> Although not a saving, adjustments can help reduce the budget gap. Adjustments include improvements to the Government Grant or over provisions of inflation and pressure contingencies.
- Technical Savings Savings may be achievable due to changes in accounting treatment. An example of such was changes in accounting treatment for Service Concessions (PPP). Reviews of loan charges repayment periods has been undertaken many times in prior years and should be kept under review. Any proposed technical changes need to ensure Best Value is met in the longer term and that a change to accounting treatment can be professionally justified.
- <u>Council Tax</u> The Council can increase Council Tax to help close the annual budget gap unless subject to conditions/freeze by SG. The Council must fund the costs of Council Tax Reduction payments which is netted off the annual increase. Each year Officers review the movement in Band D equivalent properties to identify if there has been a net growth in the overall tax base. It is not anticipated that there will be a significant growth in Band D equivalent properties, but any adjustment will be considered in the budget gap.
- <u>Use of Reserves</u> The Council has used reserves to close previous budget gaps. This is not a process to consider recurringly but as a shortterm solution. The Council approved use of reserves during the 2025/26 budget but has a clear plan to reduce the reliance on use of reserves over the period 2026/28.
- 1.3 During the budget process, new pressures may arise which have not been factored into the projected budget gap. Initially Services will review the current budget to identify any possible virement to contain the pressure going forward. If this is not possible, then a revision to the budget gap will be made.
- 1.4 With the many uncertainties facing Scottish Local Government funding, there is a need for the Council to prepare a medium to long term financial plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). To support this, the Council needs to consider the options to close any budget gap in a medium to long term basis also. The Council has prepared an optimistic, pessimistic and mid-range view of the budget gap between 2026/2029 per table 4a, 4b and 4c in the MTFS.

Budget Gap 2026/29	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
Projected Budget Gap - Mid Range	8.05	8.30	7.20	23.55
Projected Budget Gap - Optimistic	4.35	4.80	4.70	13.85
Projected Budget Gap - Pessimistic	10.85	11.40	12.20	34.45

- 1.5 The mid-range budget gap is adopted for planning purposes during the budget setting process. The Council will consider several options at section 1.2 to close the budget gap. Increasing Council Tax will be considered during the process with a residual budget gap identified that will need to be closed via savings options.
- 1.6 Income from Council Tax accounts for approximately 14% of the Councils revenue resources. An assumed uplift on Council Tax, for demonstration purposes, has been used in the table below. The table reflects the residual savings required to close the budget gap after an assumed uplift in Council Tax of 5%, 7.5% and 10%.

Budget Gap 2026/29				
	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
MIFS June 2025	£m	£m	£m	£m
(For Demonstration)				
Projected Budget Gap - Mid Range	8.05	8.30	7.20	23.55
5% Increase in Council Tax Income	(1.90)	(2.00)	(2.10)	(6.00)
Residual Budget Gap	6.15	6.30	5.10	17.55
Projected Budget Gap - Mid Range	8.05	8.30	7.20	23.55
7.5% Increase in Council Tax Income	(2.85)	(3.08)	(3.30)	(9.23)
Residual Budget Gap	5.20	5.23	3.90	14.33
Projected Budget Gap - Mid Range	8.05	8.30	7.20	23.55
10% Increase in Council Tax Income	(3.80)	(4.20)	(4.60)	(12.60)
Residual Budget Gap	4.25	4.10	2.60	10.95
•				



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 5** 

PR/19/25/KM

Report No:

Report To: Policy and Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Corporate Director - Education,

**Communities and Organisational** 

Development

Contact Officer: Morna Rae Contact No: 01475 712146

Subject: Corporate Policy and Performance Update: April – August 2025

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 □ For Decision □ For Information/Noting

- 1.2 This report provides the Committee with an update on corporate policy and performance matters relating to:
  - The Local Government Benchmarking Framework (May 2025 data refresh).
  - Participation Reguest Annual Report 2024/25.
  - The Gaelic Language Plan Implementation Report 2023/25 and Scottish Languages Act 2025.
  - Verity House Agreement.
  - Smoke Free Policy.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
  - Note the latest performance update relating to the Local Government Benchmarking Framework.
  - Note the publication of the Participation Request Annual Report 2024/25.
  - Approve the submission of the Gaelic Language Plan Implementation Report 2023/25 to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, to meet the Council's statutory duty.
  - Note the update on the Verity House Agreement.
  - Agree that a review of the Inverclyde Council Smoke Free Policy be carried out next year, once the Tobacco and Vapes Bill has progressed through Parliament.

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; the last such report was submitted to the meeting of the Committee on 3 June 2025.

#### 3.2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK

- 3.3 This Committee considered a report on Invercive Council's Local Government Benchmarking Framework 2023/24 performance at its meeting on 3 June 2025. It was noted at that point that data for a small number of measures remained outstanding. The annual LGBF data update carried out in May provides councils with performance information pertaining to Looked After Children and more recently, the three new climate change measures.
- 3.4 Performance data 2023/24 is now available for the following Children's Services measures:
  - Proportion of children meeting developmental milestones.
  - Gross costs of 'children looked after' in residential-based services, per child per week.
  - Gross costs of 'children looked after' in a community setting, per child per week.
  - Proportion of children being looked after in the community.
  - Proportion of child protection re-registrations within 18 months
  - Proportion of Looked After Children with more than one placement in the past year.

Data for the three Climate Change measures, which were added to the framework in 2023, was also published:

- CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport per 1,000 population.
- CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from electricity per 1,000 population.
- CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from natural gas per 1,000 population.

Details of performance, including trend and comparator performance information is provided in appendix 1. The key points are summarised below.

#### 3.5 LGBF Performance 2023/24

- 3.6 The gross cost of children looked after in a residential based service, per child per week, increased by 57% between 2022/23 and 2023/23, rising from £4,165 to £6,562, causing Inverclyde's national ranking to move from 11 to 25. The gross cost of children looked after in a community setting, per child per week, also increased but to a lesser degree, from £361 to £391, resulting in a small change in ranking from ninth to tenth position.
- 3.7 The increase relates directly to the exponential annual **increasing costs of care** for children and young people in residential care, specifically those in high-cost independent residential care, not Inverclyde's Children's Houses. These young people are some of our most vulnerable children with extremely complex needs in which we have statutory duties to protect. Members are aware of the HSCP Children's Services strategy to redesign through transformation to 'rebalance' care by safely reducing the numbers of young people entering residential care. The strategy is focused on investment in intensive community family support, evidenced based practice models (Signs of Safety & Healing) and growth in all forms of family-based care, particularly Fostering and Kinship. Our strategy is underpinned by the Promise and UNCRC. Importantly, progress is being made, for example, paragraph 3.7 highlights the increasing numbers of children being looked after in the community, which evidences a shift in

- the 'balance of care'. Transformation of this scale, to safely recalibrate the care system, takes several years to achieve impact.
- 3.8 The proportion of children being looked after in the community increased from 81.2% to 86.8%, which reflects Inverclyde's commitment to supporting children to remain in their community. Our national ranking improved from the quartile four (26) to quartile three (19).
- 3.9 The proportion of child protection re-registrations within 18 months in 2023/24 was 9%, compared to 0% in 2022/23, however it should be noted that performance in 2022/23 appears an outlier compared to previous years.
- 3.10 The proportion of looked after children with more than one placement in the last year increased from 14% to 25%, which is higher than our family group and the Scottish average, 17.7% and 17.5% respectively. This resulted in Inverclyde moving from the second quartile (11) to the fourth quartile (28).
- 3.11 There are a number of reasons why children may have more than one placement within the statutory Looked After Child framework. Children who are 'looked after at home' then become 'looked after away from home' for their care and protection e.g. with Kinship, Foster Carers or Residential Care. Family support achieving reduction in risk and harm, mean that is safe for children to return home with on-going intensive multi-agency support. These moves would be counted as a number of placements.
- 3.12 Additionally, some children are placed, for example, with a Kinship Carer or a Foster Carer in an emergency pending further assessment. If it is not safe for the child to be quickly returned home, longer term kinship or fostering placements are required. In kinship, while some families can care in an emergency, they are unable to care for longer periods, and not all foster cares are long-term carers but specialise in emergency care for children who need urgent care. However, our priority is always stability for the child by limiting placement moves.
- 3.13 A child is 'looked after at home', which counts as one placement, the child is then placed in care, e.g. kinship care, that's two placements and then the child safely returns home, which is counted as the 3<sup>rd</sup> placement. This is a typical journey in and out of care with the focus being on safety and stability for the child.
- 3.14 The proportion of children meeting developmental milestones improved for the second year in a row, increasing from 75.1% to 79.3%, with performance now close to our family group average 79.8%. In 2023/24 Inverslyde ranked in 28<sup>th</sup> position.
- 3.15 The Committee should also be made aware that the Improvement Service recently published a revision to one other Children's Services measure, 'the percentage of adults satisfied with local schools'. Performance data for this measure, which covers the reporting period 2021/24, was first considered by the Committee on 3 June 2025. The new data, which is the result of a Scottish Government correction, shows improved performance with a satisfaction score of 72.4%, compared to the 67.7% initially reported. Our national ranking has also been revised from 27 to 19, with performance sitting above our Family Group, 70.7% and the Scottish average, 70.9%, whereas it was previously reported as being lower than both comparators.
- 3.16 Of the three Climate Change measures, one shows improved performance. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport per capita (per 1,000 population) reduced from 14.8 tonnes to 10.6 tonnes and was the third lowest (i.e best) in Scotland.
- 3.17 Emissions for the other two Climate Change measures increased. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from electricity per capita (per 1,000 population) increased from almost 31 tonnes per capita (per 1,000 population) to 44 tonnes per capita (per 1,000 population). This moved Inverclyde's national

ranking from three to 13. Emissions from natural gas increased by 47%, rising from 61.5 tonnes to 90.5 tonnes, the fifth highest level in Scotland. This increase is attributable to Inverclyde Council taking responsibility for Inverclyde Leisure's gas and electricity charges from 1 April 2023.

#### 3.18 LGBF Performance 2024/25

3.19 Inverclyde's street cleanliness score fell slightly from 94.1% in 2023/24 to 91.1% in 2024/25. Performance was higher than our family group, 88.9%, but lower than the Scottish average, 91.7%. Inverclyde ranked in the third quartile of all authorities, falling in 18<sup>th</sup> position.

## 3.20 PARTICIPATION REQUEST ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

- 3.21 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 introduced participation requests as a way for communities to proactively initiate dialogue with public authorities around improving services. It was not intended to replace existing participation mechanisms but to provide a potential route for community groups to strengthen their involvement in other processes.
- 3.22 Section 32 of the Act requires public service authorities to produce an annual report on their participation request activity and publish this no later than 30 June each year. Our Annual Report 2024/25, is published on the Council website: <a href="https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/community-life-and-leisure/participation-requests">https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/community-life-and-leisure/participation-requests</a>. Inverclyde Council did not receive any participation requests in 2024/25, which could indicate that existing informal engagement mechanisms are working well.
- 3.23 Information about Participation Requests is available on Inverclyde Council's website, <a href="https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/community-life-and-leisure/inverclyde-community-empowerment/participation-requests">https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/community-life-and-leisure/inverclyde-community-empowerment/participation-requests</a>.
  - Guidance is available which is aimed at helping groups who are interested in making a participation request to Inverclyde Council, along with contact details. The guidance provides an overview of the participation requests process and is based on the national guidance produced by the Scottish Government. The website also contains links to Scottish Government Legislation and Guidance.
- 3.24 While we have participation requests processes and guidance in place, the Council aims to have early dialogue with communities on the issues they are interested in which, we believe, minimises the number of formal participation requests received. This is carried out via a range of established mechanisms:
  - Locality Plans are in place, one in each of Inverclyde's six localities. These have been
    developed with our communities. We carry out Community Conversations and use the
    CONSUL platform to support community engagement.
  - Public engagement and consultation is carried out to influence the development and delivery of our work as a Council and a Community Planning Partnership, including budget engagement.
  - Listening events continued throughout the year, supported by a facilitator and scribe, allowing each participant the opportunity to have their say.
  - There is a focus on digital inclusion so that our communities have the skills, confidence and equipment to participate online.
  - Youth engagement mechanisms have been established to support more young people being involved in democratic decision-making.
- 3.25 On a related matter, earlier this year the Scottish Government published its review of participation requests nationally. The review found that since the introduction of the legislation

in 2017, 55 of Scotland's 77 public authorities, including Inverclyde, have never received a request. The review also found that many public service authorities believe that participation requests should only be used when other engagement channels have failed. In response to its findings, the Scottish Government intends to carry out further engagement with stakeholders to explore these matters further.

# 3.26 GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2023/25 AND THE SCOTTISH LANGUAGES ACT 2025

- 3.27 The Inverclyde Council Gaelic Language Plan 2023/28 received Ministerial approval on 3 July 2023. Section 6(2) of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 enables Bord na Gàidhlig to require a public authority to submit a report on the extent to which it has implemented the measures set out in its plan.
- 3.28 Bòrd na Gàidhlig has written to Inverclyde Council requesting an Implementation Report on the progress made in the delivery of the Gaelic Language Plan over the period 3 July 2023 3 July 2025. The Committee is asked to note that although the Bòrd has the power to formally request an Implementation Report annually, no such request was received in 2024. The deadline for submission to the Bòrd is 3 October 2025.
- 3.29 The Inverclyde Council Gaelic Language Plan Implementation Report 2023/25 has been approved by the CMT and is attached as appendix 2 and a summary is provided below.
- 3.30 Actions that have been noted as complete include:
  - The establishment of Gaelic Medium Education at a secondary level.
  - A positive message on the website that communication from the public in Gaelic is always welcome.
  - Public exhibitions at the Watt Institution are available bilingually, with priority given to those with the highest potential impact.
  - The Inverclyde Gaelic Language Plan is now included within the Council's induction process.

## Actions with an amber status include:

- Gaelic should be embedded into the corporate business of the Council.
- Render the corporate logo in both Gaelic and English at the first opportunity and as part of any renewal process.
- Prominent signage will include Gaelic and English as part of any renewal process.
- Corporate publications, produced in Gaelic and English, with priority given to those with the highest potential reach.
- Recognising and respecting Gaelic skills within the recruitment process throughout the public authority with post adverts that include Gaelic as a requirement will be advertised in both Gaelic and English.
- 3.31 The Scottish Languages Bill, which improves support for Scotland's indigenous languages, Gaelic and Scots, became an Act on 31 July 2025. The Act, for the first time, grants both Gaelic and Scots languages official status in Scotland and aims to protect, promote, and support the use of both languages in public life and education.
- 3.32 The Act will move certain powers from Bord na Gaidhlig to the Scottish Government to broaden the Government's and public authorities' obligations in relation to Gaelic. It also introduces a duty on the Scottish Government to develop a 'national Gaelic language strategy'.

- 3.33 Other measures to enhance the status, education, and cultural promotion of these languages across Scotland include:
  - strengthening of parents' rights to ask their Council for a Gaelic school in their area.
  - introducing educational standards for Gaelic and Scots.
  - supporting the creation of areas of linguistic significance in Gaelic communities so that ministers can better target policies to support the language's growth.
  - enabling parents in every part of Scotland to apply for Gaelic nursery and early years places for their children.
  - ensuring that more qualifications are available in Gaelic.
  - introducing targets on the number of people speaking and learning Gaelic.
- 3.34 For the information of the Committee, at the time of Scotland's Census in March 2022, 0.4% (340) of Inverclyde's population aged three and over could speak, read and write Gaelic, whilst 1.4% (1,064) said that they had some skills in Gaelic.
- 3.35 In relation to the Scots language, almost 23% of Inverclyde's population aged three and over said that they could speak, read and write Scots, whilst 42% (32,251) of Inverclyde's population on Census Day said that they had some skills in Scots.

#### 3.36 VERITY HOUSE AGREEMENT

- 3.37 On 30 June 2023 COSLA and the Scottish Government agreed the Verity House Agreement, a partnership document setting out a vision for a more collaborative approach to deliver their shared priorities for the people of Scotland. The agreement is available here <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-deal-local-government-partnership-agreement/">https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-deal-local-government-partnership-agreement/</a>. Information on the agreement was previously shared with Committee and there is an outstanding remit to provide an update.
- 3.38 The agreed priorities are to:
  - 1. tackle poverty, particularly child poverty, in recognition of the joint national mission to tackle child poverty
  - 2. transform our economy through a just transition to deliver net zero, recognising climate change as one of the biggest threats to communities across Scotland, and
  - 3. deliver sustainable person-centred public services recognising the fiscal challenges, aging demography and opportunities to innovate.
- 3.39 It states that "to address these shared priorities, we have jointly accepted that changes are required to our relationship the way we work together, how we will approach our shared priorities, and how we engage with each other in a positive and proactive manner."
  - It specifically references tangible outputs that are required to support this reset and, since the signing, COSLA officers have been working with civil servants to progress the required actions. These include developing accountability and assurance arrangements that will set out a monitoring and accountability framework; re-establishing the Local Governance Review with a focus on single authority models; the successful embedding of the European Charter of Local Self-Government into Scots Law; the finalisation and agreement of a Fiscal Framework for Local Government; and a rejuvenation of Community Planning through the role of Place Directors in Scottish Government.
- 3.40 The Verity House Agreement includes a commitment that an annual review or 'stocktake' should be undertaken after the first year of the agreement. COSLA and the Scottish Government

progressed this as a joint exercise; producing a joint paper. This is available at Appendix 3. It includes the following overview:

"The VHA, and the good practice it aims to encourage and support in relation to working collaboratively, builds on existing strong relationships in a number of areas. Those areas of positive joint cooperation have continued, and in some instances been enhanced, while new areas of collaboration have been established and encouraged by the impetus the signing of the VHA has provided. . . A candid stocktake reflects that the VHA has not fully resolved or prevented areas of disagreement. It is on public record that difficulties have arisen for example in relation to the Council Tax Freeze for 2024/25, the policy in respect of maintaining and increasing teacher numbers, and key aspects of the scope of the proposed National Care Service. . .Local Government has formally raised concerns in these three areas not just because of the policy intent, but also because of the way in which the policies have been announced and/or developed. The Scottish Government has maintained that delivering these policy areas is consistent with supporting the three priorities in the VHA and has sought to agree these with Local Government through the appropriate mechanisms."

- 3.41 In 2025 the focus has been on the resolution of the areas of dispute outlined above, and, as part of this, the establishment of an agreed dispute resolution process. This is being progressed, supported by monthly meetings between the COSLA Presidential Team and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government.
- 3.42 In May 2025 John Swinney, First Minister addressed COSLA Leaders. He highlighted the importance of collaboration between the Scottish Government and local authorities, the challenges faced in public life and noted considerable progress made between the spheres of Government including positive working relationships through the Verity House Agreement.

#### 3.43 SMOKE FREE POLICY

3.44 The Smoke Free policy is scheduled for review with an updated version to be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting in November 2025. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill is currently progressing through the House of Lords. If enacted this would make provision about smoke-free places and vape-free places. In order that the updated Inverclyde Council Smoke Free Policy takes the changing statutory position into account it is proposed that the timeline for its review is pushed back to 2026.

#### 4.0 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to note the latest updates in relation to the LGBF; Participation Requests 2024/25 and the Verity House Agreement.
- 4.2 The Committee is asked to note the progress made by Inverclyde Council in delivering its Gaelic Language Plan 2023/28 and approve the submission of the Implementation Report 2023/25 to Bòrd na Gàidhlig by 3 October 2025.
- 4.3 The Committee is also asked to agree that the review of the Smoke Free Policy, originally scheduled for November 2025, be carried out once the Tobacco and Vapes Bill has progressed through Parliament.

#### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

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

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		Х
Legal/Risk	Χ	
Human Resources		Х
Strategic (Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33/Council	Χ	
Plan 2023/28)		
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty and Children/Young People's		Х
Rights and Wellbeing		
Environmental and Sustainability		Х
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

The Council has a statutory duty to produce a Gaelic Language Plan and provide a report on its progress, if instructed by Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Following a request by the Bòrd, an Implementation Report covering the period 3 July 2023 - 3 July 2025 must be submitted by 3 October 2025.

#### 5.4 Human Resources

There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

### 5.5 Strategic

The matters referred to in this report are of relevance to the following Council Plan 2023/28 Themes.

- People: Our young people have the best start in life through high quality support and education
- **Place**: Communities are thriving, growing and sustainable.
- Performance: High quality and innovative services are provided, giving value for money.

### 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 None.

## 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK - INVERCLYDE COUNCIL PERFORMANCE

		F	Performance	)	Scotland	Family		Rank	
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	1	Group	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
CHILDRE	N'S SERVICES			•			ш		
Ref	Title								
CNH08a	Gross Costs of 'Children Looked After' in residential-based services per child per week	£5,458	£4,165	£6,562	£5,282	£5,822	22	11	25
CNH08b	Gross Costs of 'Gross Cost of "Children Looked After" in a community setting per child per Week	£244	£361	£391	£475	£391	3	9	10
CHN09	Proportion of children being looked after in the community	86.3%	81.2%	86.8%	88.8%	87.0%	21	26	19
CHN17	Proportion of Children meeting developmental milestones	74.3%	75.1%	79.3%	83.3%	79.8%	31	29	28
CHN22	Proportion of child protection re- registrations within 18 months	10.4%	0.0%	9.0%	5.8%	6.8%	23	1	24
CHN23	Proportion of Looked After Children with more than 1 placement in the last year	10.0%	14.0%	25.3%	17.5%	17.7%	5	11	28
CLIMATE	CHANGE							·	
CLIM03	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions from transport per capita per 1000 population	37.7t	14.79t	10.59t	28.67t	17.96t	29	4	3
CLIM04	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions from electricity per capita per 1000 population	37.25t	30.97t	44.12t	48.15t	48.44t	5	3	13
CLIM05	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions from natural gas per capita per 1000 population	67.86t	61.52t	90.53t	56.17t	64.50t	22	19	28

# LGBF data 2024/25 has been published for the following Environmental Services KPI:

	Performance		Scotland	Family		Rank			
		2022/23	2023/24	2024/25		Group	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
ENVIRONME	ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES								
ENV03c	Street Cleanliness Score	83.9%	94.1%	91.1%	91.7%	88.9%	31	12	18



# **APPENDIX 2**

# Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Section 6(2) of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 enables Bòrd na Gàidhlig to require a public authority to submit a report on the extent to which it has implemented the measures set out in its plan.

This monitoring report should detail progress on:

- Commitments that have a timescale for completion for each reporting year and;
- Any details on progress on commitments that have been designated as ongoing or throughout the lifetime of the plan.

There is no requirement for public bodies to use this template. Providing evidence is submitted as detailed above, reports can be submitted in a format suitable to individual public authorities.

# Name of Organisation:

Inverclyde Council / Comhairle Inbhir Chluaidh

## Date of report:

August 2025

## Reporting Period (including day/month/year):

03/07/2023 – 03/07/2025. This reflects the period from receipt of Ministerial approval in July 2023. It covers a two-year period as the Bord did not request an Implementation Report in 2024.



# **Inverclyde Council** Gaelic Language Plan 2023/28

Implementation Report 2023/25

This implementation report tracks the progress made by Inverclyde Council in delivering its Gaelic Language Plan 2023/28. An assessment of the progress that has been made over the reporting period July 2023 – July 2025 is provided for each action within the Plan along with an overall status icon for ease of reference.

## Icon symbol key:



Complete



Ongoing & on track



Initial target date not achieved



## **HIGH LEVEL AIMS**

## **INCREASING THE USE OF GAELIC**

## High Level Aim 1: Increasing the use of Gaelic

Aim 1: Support existing and new Gaelic language and culture groups in the Inverclyde area to help grow the use of Gaelic in the community.

- Offer free online space, training and support for local Gaelic groups to use the CLD learning platform
- Hold 2 cultural celebration evenings per year
- Hold 2 Inverclyde Gaelic meetings per year to make links across the Gaelic language, cultural and social activities.

# Progress:



During the reporting period 2023/25, the Inclusive Communities Service (formerly called Community Learning and Development) continued to work alongside the Inverclyde Gaelic Learners Group and to support and promote Gaelic through a range of adult education activities related to Gaelic language and culture. The related priorities of the Inclusive Communities Service are:

- To promote and celebrate Gaelic's contribution to Scottish cultural life.
- To strengthen Gaelic as a language of the family and community.

Gaelic courses, at both beginner and intermediate level, are advertised on a dedicated CLD page as well as on social media. Additional learning resources for Speak Gaelic are also held on the Moodle based CLD Inverclyde website. : Course: FACE to FACE Classes CLD Inclusive Communities

In partnership with the Invercied Gaelic Learners Group, two cultural celebrations and promotion events were held in April and June 2024, with a further event taking place in March 2025, delivered by a local historian on the topic of 'Invercied Gaelic Place Names'.





Screenshot from Inclusive Communities website offering Gaelic classes

# <u>High Level Aim 2</u>: Establish Gaelic learning and usage opportunities for Council staff, utilising existing staff skills and resources, with the aim of increasing the use of Gaelic internally.

- Continue to promote the availability of national Gaelic courses to all employees and encourage uptake
- Development of a Gaelic awareness resource for front line employees
- Conduct an internal audit capacity at least once during the lifetime of the plan to establish the level of skills that exist across the authority
- Develop the Council's intranet page promoting Gaelic

# Progress:



Where the Council is made aware via the Bord, or any other national network, of Gaelic courses that are available, these are advertised to all employees via both the HR&OD Service and Corporate Communications. All training requests are considered within the context of available resources, which is the case for all training needs identified.

Plans for a second internal capacity audit of employee Gaelic skills are being considered alongside a wider Employee Survey due to be carried out later this year. The rationale for this is that a higher response rate is likely to be achieved than if the Internal Capacity Audit is carried out as a standalone survey. This will provide more robust data on the level of Gaelic skills within the organisation.



Inverclyde Council's employee intranet, ICON, includes a page dedicated to our Gaelic Language Plan, which is published in both languages, and a separate Gaelic Learning Resource intranet page, which provides links to national and local learning opportunities as well as online resources.

The Gaelic teachers continue to be involved in a number of staff development activities and attend CLPL sessions from Education Scotland, Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. 'An t-Alltan' sessions have been accessed online where possible.

As an attainment authority Gaelic staff have participated in detailed literacy and numeracy training and have translated strategies and resources for use within Gaelic medium. SEAL and other numeracy assessments have been translated into Gaelic to support assessment.

The Gaelic nursery staff have been trained in delivering Bookbug sessions and have been undertaking professional learning sessions to develop their Gaelic literacy skill through Newbattle Abbey College in partnership with Ceòlas, South Uist. Funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Gaelic medium staff are involved in developing resources and topic boxes to support learning in a number of curricular areas.

A member of Gaelic medium staff has been showcased on the Teach in Scotland website as a GME practitioner, encouraging other people into teaching.

#### INCREASING THE LEARNING OF GAELIC

**<u>High Level Aim 3:</u>** Increase the numbers of children accessing Gaelic Medium Early Years Education each year.

- Update information on Council website.
- Promote offer at enrolment review communication strategy around admissions with regards Gaelic Medium Education

# Progress:



Gaelic medium education is provided in the nursery setting at Whinhill. When registering, Inverclyde Council website includes the option of GME and information on registering for GME is prominent on the Inverclyde GME webpage. Information on the website has been



enhanced, is kept up to date and is provided bilingually. External links to Comann nam Parant and Fiosrachadh do Pharantan have been added to enable parents to easily access a wealth of information.

Gaelic is promoted across all establishment channels to increase awareness of Gaelic Medium Education in Inverclyde. Information aimed at nursery and early years parents encourages the consideration of GME for their children. Whinhill has developed a leaflet encouraging parents to consider Gaelic medium education for their children. This is shared locally and through social media.

Whinhill and education services have worked alongside Bòrd na Gàidhlig to run information evenings in order to promote enrolment.

Inverclyde GME website includes information about Whinhill and links to the establishment's own website. The webpage signposts all things Gaelic across the Inverclyde community and beyond.

Inverclyde Libraries, as part of our Children and Young People offer, distribute Gaelic language Bookbug Bags to families interested in Gaelic. The Gaelic Bookbug Bags contain Gaelic copies of the books in addition to the English language books and associated resources.

High Level Aim 4: Increase the numbers of children accessing Gaelic Medium Education at primary level by at least 15% each year.

- Establish a catchment area for GME provision
- Review and update information on Council website.
- Promote offer at enrolment- review communication strategy around admissions with regards GME

# Progress:



Gaelic medium education is provided at Whinhill Primary School. When registering, Inverclyde Council website includes the option of GME and information on registering for GME is prominent on the Inverclyde GME webpage. Information on the website has been enhanced, is kept up to date and is provided bilingually. External links to Comann nam Parant and Fiosrachadh do Pharantan have been added to enable parents to easily access a wealth of information.

Inverclyde GME website includes information about Whinhill and links to the establishment's own website. The webpage signposts all things Gaelic across the Inverclyde community and beyond. In addition, Gaelic is promoted across all establishment channels to increase awareness of Gaelic Medium Education in Inverclyde.

Whinhill and education services have worked alongside Bòrd na Gàidhlig to run information evenings in order to promote enrolment.



The catchment area for Whinhill was established in 2022 and the catchment area for Inverclyde Academy was established in 2024. We now have an offer of Secondary GME within Whinhill catchment secondary school Inverclyde Academy, providing a GME from Early Years through to the end of secondary school.

Whinhill is rigorous in its promotion of Gaelic experiences in the school across many media outlets which also supports an increase in the use of Gaelic in the wider community:

- The school has produced a promotional leaflet which is distributed at outlets in the community.
- Social media (school website, Twitter and YouTube) is used to promote Gaelic within Inverclyde and showcases what is being done as a school. This includes day-to-day classwork, school initiatives and videos.
- Information is tweeted in both English and Gaelic, and video titles and content are bilingual where appropriate.
- The school's name and welcome message on the school website is bilingual and there is a range of detailed information about GME available to all. There are also external links to more information on Gaelic and the benefits of GME.

The number of pupils enrolled in GME in primary and secondary in Inverclyde is shown below.

GME Pupil Numbers	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Nursery	10	5	9	6	<5
P1	5	7	<5	9	<5
P2	10	5	<5	<5	9
P3	5	9	5	<5	<5
P4	7	5	9	5	<5
P5	<5	7	<5	9	5
P6	<5	<5	7	<5	9
P7	<5	<5	<5	7	<5
S1	0	0	0	0	<5



High Level Aim 5: Explore opportunities, in partnership with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and with neighbouring authorities, within the first 18 months of the plan and make appropriate recommendations for the development of Gaelic Medium Education provision at secondary level within the Inverclyde Council area.

- Conduct a Parental Consultation
- Discussions with Education Scotland and Bord
- Discussions with neighbouring authorities
- Implementation of agreed actions

Progress:

Neighbouring authorities were consulted prior to authority consultation.

A secondary catchment area for Gaelic education at Inverclyde Academy, beginning academic year 2024 was approved by the Education and Communities Committee on 23rd January 2024.

#### **Gaelic Medium Education**

Following a statutory consultation between October – November 2023, which included public meetings, GME provision was established within Inverclyde Academy. It commenced in academic year August 2024, with support from the Bord and Education Scotland. Less than 5 children have taken up a place in the school and a teacher is now in post.

Inclusive Communities supported the partnership discussions around GME secondary provision in Inverciyde. The Service also supported the creation of a promotional video for Secondary Gaelic Medium Education within Inverclyde, working with pupils to share experiences of Gaelic in Inverclyde Academy. This was completed in February 2025.

Inclusive Communities are working to develop a 'Gaelic Basic Phrases' class for a group of teachers within Inverclyde Academy.

Secondary provision will continue to work closely with cluster school Whinhill and will further develop transition with a particular focus on those pupils who are continuing with their Gaelic immersion to ensure continuity and progression. There is planned cluster working.



Secondary provision will begin to develop partnerships with partners including parents, other secondary schools with GME provision, Gaelic organisations, colleges, community learning and development, and others in the wider community including local employers and businesses to assist staff to take forward other contexts of the curriculum.

Secondary provision will establish links with parent groups.

Inverclyde Education Services continue to consult with our Gaelic Advisory Group. Members include Bord, Parents, Council Officers, SLT from Whinhill and Inverclyde Academy.

## **High Level Aim 6:** Increased numbers of children at both primary and secondary level by:

The Council will deliver Gaelic as L2 or L3 in at least 40% of schools by 2028.

# Progress:



1+2 languages approach is used in P4-7 in Whinhill Primary School. A Gaelic teacher supports these classes and class teachers pick up words and phrases and encourage their daily use within and out with the classroom. As part of the 1 + 2 Strategy, children in P4-7 pupils are learning Gaelic and are confidently using Gaelic words and phrases in the correct context.

We continue to offer support to other schools to encourage engagement in Gaelic as L2 or L3. All schools have been offered the opportunity to participate in GLPS CLPL and to engage with the L2 online offer from Argyll and Bute/ Highland.

Inverclyde 1+2 Blog continues to be developed where links to helpful resources and information can be found. This resource is being designed around different contexts for learning within second level of Curriculum for Excellence. Training has been offered to all schools. Aspects of social studies and literacy are covered through different topic-based approaches. There are also discrete Gaelic language resources, and a number of support materials. In order to teach specific aspects of language there are also links to a range of resources from Go! Gaelic. Schools are able to access these resources following training.

With our new Secondary teacher now in post, an offer of GLE will be considered for our young people in Inverclyde Academy.



## High Level Aim 7: Increase the number of adults learning Gaelic in Inverclyde.

Using the new Speak Gaelic language framework we will deliver A1 and A2 learning provision to 30 learners per year.

- Train staff in Speak Gaelic language framework
- Deliver 1 x A1 Speak Gaelic course per year
- Deliver 1 x A2 Speak Gaelic course per year
- Monitor and evaluate provision
- Support progression to B1 level for learners achieving level A2

# Progress:



Inverclyde Council employs 2 Gaelic part time staff to undertake duties relating to a range of Gaelic priority areas in line with the local Gaelic Language plan and priorities as set out by the Scottish Government. The main services on offer include:

- Delivery of A1 Speak Gaelic
- Delivery of Scottish History with Gaelic course
- Support for intermediate learners who have progressed under the previous Gaelic Framework

In 2023/24, the Council's Community Learning and Development Service planned and delivered:

- 4 Gaelic classes, with 21 beginner learners in 2 Speak Gaelic A1 face to face Gaelic Classes. These services started in April -June 2023 and September 2023 to March 2024. Classes have been delivered face to face and also online during December February with agreement from the group to negate weather issues. We have provided support to 9 Gaelic learners at intermediate levels, utilising resources from Speak Gaelic A2 resources via a 2 classes between April 2023– March 24.
- A Scottish History with Gaelic class. 10 learners engaged in our provision which ran April 2023 March 2024.



- The lead worker contributed to the national CLAD Review group for proposed tutor training, standardisation work and family learning week. CLD staff participated in 2 online meetings throughout the year focusing on work such as the constitution of the group and future plans. This work has largely stalled due to staff changes in key local authorities.
- Staff have also promoted Gaelic at 4 local events over the calendar year as well as social media promotion for A1 Speak Gaelic.

#### In 2024/25:

- One cohort of 18 learners started A1 Speak Gaelic from Sept June 2025.
- One ongoing Gaelic A2 group for existing Gaelic learners from Sept to November with 8 learners attending. One A2+ group of learners were referred to Clann Ghaidhlig due to viability of existing class due to low numbers. We are hopeful to boost these A2 cohorts in the coming years with a stronger group of A1 learners progressing their learning.
- Scottish History with Gaelic took place from Sept 2024 March 2025 with 13 learners attending.
- In total, 39 learners participated in Gaelic based provision with 70 attending cultural events

#### PROMOTING A POSITIVE IMAGE OF GAELIC

High Level Aim 8: Gaelic becomes embedded into the corporate business of the council.

# **Progress:**



Developments in relation to Gaelic continue to be reported via the Corporate Equalities Group, which is chaired by a Corporate Director and has cross Council membership and the Inverclyde HSCP. National and local updates relating to Gaelic are also reported to the Council's Policy and Resources Committee and the Education and Communities Committee. We recognise that Gaelic is not fully embedded into the corporate business of the Council as yet and continuing to deliver our Corporate Services actions will help to develop this.



## **CORPORATE SERVICES AIMS**

#### **STATUS**

Corporate Services Aim 1: Aim to render the corporate logo in both Gaelic and English at the first opportunity and as part of any renewal process.

Design the Inverclyde Council logo in Gaelic and incorporate within all corporate documentation, published documents and the Council website

Progress:

The corporate logo has been rendered in Gaelic, however further discussion is required to formalise the approach to its use in corporate documentation.

**Corporate Services Aim 2:** Prominent signage will include Gaelic and English as part of any renewal process.

- Carry out an audit of existing signage
- Any new/existing road signs to be reviewed and will be considered for bilingual signage
- Other appropriate corporate signage will be considered for bilingual signage when due for refresh
- The new Inverclyde Cruise Centre will have signage in Gaelic

# **Progress:**



A number of new bilingual signs have been installed, including at Inverclyde Academy where internal and external signage has been updated. A new external, bilingual sign was also installed at Whinhill Primary School.

There has been no renewal of corporate signage in the reporting period.



### **COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC**

**Corporate Services Aim 3:** Positive message that communication from the public in Gaelic is always welcome.

- Appropriate text to be added to Council's promotional / information literature and leaflets.
- Develop the Council's website pages in relation to Gaelic to indicate that communication from the public in Gaelic is welcome.
- Further develop a page on the Council's intranet with the aim of promoting Gaelic to employees

# Progress:



The Inverclyde Council 'Contact Us' webpage has been updated to refer to communication in Gaelic. This is shown in the screenshot below.

# **Specific Enquiries**

If you wish to contact a specific service area online select from our list of online contact forms under Related links on this page.

We welcome correspondence in Gaelic and endeavour to respond in Gaelic, acknowledging receipt within 20

Tha sinn a' cur fàilte air conaltradh sgrìobhte sa Ghàidhlig agus nì sinn ar dìcheall freagairt sa Ghàidhlig, a' leigeil fios gun d' fhuair sinn an conaltradh agaibh taobh a-staigh 20 latha-obrach.

Screenshot from Inverclyde Council's Contact Us page

The Council's employee intranet, called ICON, includes a page dedicated to the Inverciyde Gaelic Language Plan 2023/28, which is published in both languages and also a separate Gaelic Learning Resource page, which provides links to both national and local learning opportunities and online resources.



<u>Corporate Services Aim 4:</u> Written communication in Gaelic is always accepted (post, email and social media) and replies will be provided in Gaelic in accordance with the general policy.

- The council will procure access to a Gaelic translation service and identify relevant written document which should be produced in Gaelic
- Encourage staff to use a bilingual email signature

# Progress:

The Council uses a professional Gaelic translator, and all translated materials are subject to independent proof reading prior to publication.

The Council website 'Contact Us' page (see previous page) invites correspondence in Gaelic and gives the timescale for reply.

The use of a bilingual email signature will be considered as part of the wider discussions on the use of Gaelic branding of the Council logo.

<u>Corporate Services Aim 5:</u> Where Gaelic speaking staff can provide this service, they are supported to do so, and the service is promoted to the public.

- Carry out a review of the Council's Translation Services
- Carry out a review of the Council's Interpretation Services
- Development of a Gaelic awareness resource for front line employees
- Customers who speak Gaelic will be able to request translation in the language

# Progress:

Some progress has been made in this area, however the review of Translation Services and Interpretation Services has not been carried out as yet due to staff shortages.



Less than 0.7% of Inverclyde's population have Gaelic speaking skills and no requests for a service in Gaelic were received from the public during the reporting period.

The Council's employee intranet, called ICON, includes a page dedicated to our Gaelic Language Plan, which is published in both languages and a separate Gaelic Learning Resource page, which provides links to both national and local learning opportunities and online resources.

Inverclyde Council accepts all forms of communication and if a reply was requested in Gaelic, translation services would be secured to provide this.

Corporate Services Aim 6: Opportunities to hold public meetings bilingually or in Gaelic are regularly explored and promoted. The council will procure access to a Gaelic translation service and identify relevant written document which should be produced in Gaelic.

- Where requested and relevant, the Council will ensure that all public meetings are offered in a range of languages, and with 3 weeks' notice source access to an interpreter(s) to support this.
- Where meetings are on Gaelic issues they will be promoted bilingually
- Gaelic events will be notified to Gaelic community groups



Prior to any public meeting, members of the public are requested to notify the Council of any individual requirements and the Council will endeavour to meet these requirements. To date there has been no requests to hold public meeting bilingually.

As there is an well-established partnership with the Gaelic Learner Group, this means that they are kept up to date with events and there are examples of the group being involved in the organising of events.



## **INFORMATION**

<u>Corporate Services Aim 7:</u> High profile news releases and all news releases related to Gaelic are circulated in both Gaelic and English.

- Corporate Communications will engage with Gaelic medium publications / BBC Alba to view preferred receipt of press releases
- Increase joint working across Council services to promote news releases related to Gaelic, helping to ensure a wider reach
- Where a media release is required for a Gaelic event, this will be provided in both languages, subject to a translation service being available within the required timescale

# Progress:

There were no high profile news releases relating to Gaelic in the reporting period. Where the Corporate Communications is involved in the promotion of Gaelic events these will be advertised in both languages.

<u>Corporate Services Aim 8:</u> Gaelic content distributed regularly through social media, guided by the level of actual and potential users.

- Review the use of languages other than English issued by the Council on social media
- Increase joint working across Council services to promote Gaelic content via social media, helping to ensure a wider reach
- Events in Gaelic will be shared on social media in both languages, subject to a translation service being available in the required timescale

# Progress:

Whinhill uses both Gaelic and English when communicating on social media, and Gaelic is used as appropriate on school correspondence.



Gaelic is used in school newsletters, Whinhill school website, on twitter and in a variety of publications. Visibility of Gaelic around the school has increased, and the language is given equal prominence to English on displays and in assemblies. Where appropriate, communication with parents includes details bilingually.

Inverclyde Academy have started to include Gaelic on social media, engaging in World Gaelic Week and sharing a promotional video for Secondary Gaelic Medium Education.

A social media audit of the Council is being carried out during summer 2025.

Corporate Services Aim 9: Gaelic content should be available on the public authority's website, with emphasis given to the pages with the highest potential reach. Review the use of languages other than English issued by the Council on social media.

Update GME webpage to ensure that information on Gaelic education is easily accessible and up to date.

# Progress:

This action has been delivered. The GME webpage is kept up to date with the most recent information and published bilingually. The page can be found here: Gaelic Medium Education - Inverclyde Council

**Corporate Services Aim 10:** Gaelic content should be available on the public authority's website, with emphasis given to the pages with the highest potential reach.

- Review the Gaelic web page to identify how it could be developed to encompass a wider range of information, with a view to providing a higher profile of Gaelic in Inverclyde
- Publish details of public consultation on key corporate documents bilingually





According to Scotland's Census 2022, 0.6% of Inverclyde's population can read Gaelic. The Council has not received any requests for web pages to be provided bilingually.

A review of the Gaelic web page has been carried out and the range of information provided expanded to include details of other national websites and resources. A review of the wider web pages has also been undertaken and it was agreed that no further Gaelic content in addition to that already online (Council Plan 2023/28, the Gaelic Language Plan and our Gaelic Education pages) is required at the present time.

No key corporate documents were published in the reporting period (the public consultation on key strategic plans i.e. Council Plan 2023/28 and the Partnership Plan were undertaken in 2022 which falls outwith this reporting period.)

<u>Corporate Services Aim 11:</u> Corporate Publications - Produced in Gaelic and English, with priority given to those with the highest potential reach.

- Carry out a review of the Council's Translation Service
- Carry out a review of the Council's Interpretation Service
- Ensure that all Corporate publications offer a translation service to the public, including the option of Gaelic
- Develop guidelines for staff regarding the availability of translation services
- Information regarding Gaelic Education and Gaelic school activities will be promoted bilingually

## Progress:



Some progress has been made in the delivery of this action.

The review of Translation Services and Interpretation Services has not been carried out due to staff shortages.

Information regarding Gaelic Education is available bilingually on the Council website and Gaelic school activity is also promoted bilingually via social media and when appropriate in communications with parents.



<u>Corporate Services Aim 12:</u> A process is in place to ensure that the quality and accessibility of Gaelic language in all corporate information is high.

• High level of translation services requires to be continued.

# Progress:

For all Gaelic translation (outwith of Gaelic education), the Council uses an independent translation service, which includes separate proof reading of all material. This ensures a high level of translation services.

<u>Corporate Services Aim 13:</u> Opportunities to deliver public exhibitions bilingually or in Gaelic should be explored on a regular basis, with priority given to those with the highest potential impact.

- Bilingual texts for labels and signs will be included as these are replaced
- Incorporate bilingual text into panels and exhibitions planned from 2023 onwards.

# Progress:

The Watt Institution currently has two public exhibition spaces which display bilingual descriptors / stories for each exhibition. A related image is provided below.



longnadh - ainmear, faireachdainn de dh'iongantas no de mheas, air adhbharachadh le rudeigin brèagha, sònraichte no air nach eilear eòlach.

This longnadh gu tríc co-cheangailte ri bhith nad pháiste. Am nuair a tha a h-uile rud úr agus an saoghal lan de rudan nach eil thu air fhaicinn, air faireachdainn no air nach d' fhuair thu eòlas fhathast. Tha cuid de na cuimhneachain as tràithe a th' agan co-cheangailte ri bhith a' tadhal air Talgh-tasgaidh is Gailearaidh Ealain MhicillEathain còmhla r im 'a' thair, an neach-ealain Seamas Viait. Chùm sinn oirmn a' tighinn an seo gu bliadhna a bhàis, agus e 30 bliadhna a dh'aois.

Fiù 's a-nıs, nuair a bhìos mì a' tadhal air an àite, chi mì fhothast mì fhin mar nighean anns na seòmraichean sin ... a' gabhall iongnadh...

B' urrainn dhomh eiubhaí air feadh an t-saoghaíl an seo. A' faicinn mathain, leómhannan is crogallan, mumaidh Éipheilteach dealain de glaiste fo ghlainne, dealbhan de dhaoine neo-aithnichte agus dùthchannan cèin, agus nas fhaisge air an dachaigh, modaílean de shoilthichean a sheòl air abhainn Chluaidh. Bha an taigh-lasgaidh a' faireachdann mar an cruinne-cè beag aige fhèin, (tha e fhathast) ian charactaran, àiteachan, bheathaichean is nìthean, saoghaí de rudan rin lorg air a tharraing a-steach do dh'aon togalach.

The na h-obraichean ealain a thagh mil a' cur nam chuimhne gu bheil mì air a bhith a' coimhead air dealbhan nas fhaide na tha cuimhne agam. Chan eil e gu diofar an e Cadeil, Boudin no Peplos a bh' sen, bhliodh m' athair a' bruidhinn fum mu sealain ann an dòigh a bha cho fior nàdarra, is nach do cheasnaich mì a-ràmh cho cudromach 's a bha i nam bheatha. Cha bhithinn ann neach-ealain as aonais. Tha mì ag ionndrainn nan còmhraidhean a b' àbhaist a bhith againn agus ag ionndrainn mar a b' àbhaist dhomh thèin a bhith nuair a bha mì còmhis ris. Tha mòran chuimhneachain atna as seòmraichean ain. Is beag a bha fios agam an uair sin gun robh mì air an t-slighe gu bhith nam neach-ealain mar-thà.

Chòrd am MacillEathain ri m' athair mar thoradh air a mhiann do-sheachaidh airson a bhith a' faighinn a-mach mun t-saoghail timcheail air, saoghai a pheantath e. Chùm e a longartas neochiontach tro a bheatha fhada air fad. Bha fios aige, mar a tha fios agam fhèin a-nis, gu bheil thu an dà chuid ned phàiste agus nad inbheach mar neach-ealain.

Nuair a thig mi an eac, the e deconan ge thur nam chulmhn—cho math ris a' bhuaidh cho mòr a thug e al mo bheaths nuair a bha mì òg.

Taisbeanadh air a chur ri chèile le Alison Watt

Wonder - n. a feeling of amazement or admiration, caused by something beautiful, remarkable, or unfamiliar

To have wonder is often associated with being a child. A time when everything is new and the world is full of things you have yet to see, feel or experience. Some of my earliest memories involve visiting the McLean Museum & Art Gallery with my father, the artist James Wett. We continued to come here together until the year he died when he was 90 years old.

Even now, whenever I visit, I can still see myself as a girl in these rooms... wondering ...

I could travel all over the world here. Seeing bears, lions and crocodiles, an Egyptian mammy, butterfiles trapped beneath glass, paintings of unknown people and foreign countries, and closer to horne, models of ships which sailed the river Clyde. The museum fall like its own little universe, (it still does) full of characters, places, animals and objects. A world of discovery distilled into one building.

Ny cholco of works for this exhibition, is a reminder that I have been looking at paintings for longer than I can remember. Whether It be Cadell, Boudin or Peplos, my father would talk to me about art in a way that was one entirely natural, that I never questioned is importance in my life. I wouldn't be an artist without him. I miss the conversations we used to have and the person I used to be when I was with him. These rooms carry many memories for ms. Little did I know back then that my path to being an artist was already set.

The McLean appealed to my father's insatiable appetite for discovering the world around him, a world he painted. He retained his childlike ourlosity throughout his long life. He knew as I now know, that as an artist you are both child and adult.

Coming here will always remind me of him and his great influence on my young life.

An exhibition cureted by Alison Watt



Example of a bilingual descriptor now on display at the Watt Institution.



## **STAFF**

Corporate Services Aim 14: Conduct an internal audit of Gaelic skills and training needs through the life of each plan.

- Carry out a survey of employees to ascertain the number of employees that have knowledge and understanding of Gaelic language every 3 years.
- Review results and identification of potential areas for development

# Progress:

The second Gaelic internal audit of employees was originally scheduled for summer 2024, however with plans being developed for a wider Employee Survey in 2025 it was agree that this should be put on hold. The opportunity to include questions on Gaelic skills as part of this wider Employee Survey is currently being reviewed. The rationale for this is that the full employee survey is much more likely to achieve a higher response rate and as such, will provide us with more robust workforce data.

**Corporate Services Aim 15:** Knowledge of the public authority's Gaelic language plan included in new staff inductions

The Inverclyde Gaelic Language Plan to be included within the Council's induction process.

# Progress:

The Gaelic Language Plan is included in the mandatory 'policies' section of the Council's induction course. This means that every new employee should read the Plan as part of their initial induction when joining the Council.

<u>Corporate Services Aim 16:</u> Gaelic language skills training and development offered to staff, particularly in relation to implementing the public authority's Gaelic Language Plan.



- Work in partnership with partners and other authorities to continue to offer training to GME Early Years and Primary Staff and offer GLE support to all Primary staff.
- Look to extend GLE offer of training to Secondary modern languages practitioners.
- Continue to promote the availability of national courses and encourage employee uptake

# Progress:



The Gaelic teachers continue to be involved in a number of staff development activities and attend CLPL sessions from Education Scotland, Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. 'An t-Alltan' sessions have been accessed online where possible.

Whinhill has made links with other Gaelic medium establishments such as West Primary and Sandbank Primary for professional dialogue.

Additional links have been made with other Gaelic medium services in a wider context

Gaelic medium staff have engaged in moderation activities with other GME establishments through the West Partnership.

Nursery staff have been working towards their Fàs qualification.

Gaelic PT and one class teacher have undertaken Streap Gaelic Medium Education Post Graduate Certificate through the University of Aberdeen and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

A member of Gaelic medium staff has been showcased on the Teach in Scotland website as a GME practitioner, encouraging other people into teaching.

1+2 languages approach is used in P4-7 in Whinhill Primary School. A Gaelic teacher supports these classes and class teachers pick up words and phrases and encourage their daily use within and out with the classroom. As part of the 1 + 2 Strategy, children in P4-7 pupils are learning Gaelic and are confidently using Gaelic words and phrases in the correct context.

We continue to offer support to other schools to encourage engagement in Gaelic as L2 or L3. All schools have been offered the opportunity to participate in GLPS CLPL and to engage with the L2 online offer from Argyll and Bute/ Highland.

Inverclyde 1+2 Blog continues to be developed where links to helpful resources and information can be found. This resource is being designed around different contexts for learning within second level of Curriculum for Excellence. Training has been offered to all



schools. Aspects of social studies and literacy are covered through different topic-based approaches. There are also discreet Gaelic language resources, and a number of support materials. In order to teach specific aspects of language there are also links to a range of resources from Go! Gaelic. Schools are able to access these resources following training.

With our new Secondary teacher now in post, an offer of GLE will be considered for our young people in Inverclyde Academy.

Our Secondary teacher is supported to complete necessary qualifications which will lead to a full time permanent post with the authority.

Inclusive Communities are working to develop a 'Gaelic Basic Phrases' class for a group of teachers within Inverclyde Academy.

<u>Corporate Services Aim 17:</u> Gaelic awareness training offered to staff, with priority given to directors, board members, councillors and staff dealing directly with the public.

- Review the feedback from the Internal Capacity Audit to inform appropriate actions to develop in this area.
- Investigate whether an appropriate national resource is available (subject to cost)
- Review whether Elected Members' personal development training programme could incorporate Gaelic awareness training
- Further development of Gaelic information on the Council's intranet and or internet to assist in raising awareness of Gaelic to employees
- Promotion of national Gaelic events to employees

## Progress:

The feedback received from the Internal Capacity Audit was reviewed as part of the development of the Gaelic Language Plan 2023/28 and actions incorporated into the GLP 2023/28 where appropriate.

Whilst training opportunities are publicised to all employees, Gaelic awareness training sessions have not been carried out separate to this. Discussions with external providers have taken place regarding delivery of awareness training, however no suitable provider could



be found within existing resources. Should external funding become available, this will be revisited. The next internal capacity audit will help to ascertain if employees have an appetite for training of this nature.

The current Elected Member training programme does not include Gaelic awareness training for the same reason.

Where the Council has been made aware of training opportunities in relation to Gaelic language skills these have been advertised to employees by both the HR&OD Service and the Corporate Communications Service. All training requests are considered within resources and the needs of the organisation.

Information on Gaelic resources has been developed and a dedicated page is now available on the Council's intranet, ICON. The page includes links to national and local learning opportunities to progress Gaelic skills.

**Corporate Services Aim 18:** Recognising and respecting Gaelic skills within the recruitment process throughout the public authority.

Post adverts that include Gaelic as a requirement will be advertised in both Gaelic and English

#### Progress:



Gaelic is currently specified only in the job / person description where the role has a specific Gaelic function associated with it. Currently job descriptions for posts that include Gaelic skills are only published in English and efforts will be made to ensure that future posts which incorporate Gaelic are advertised bilingually.

<u>Corporate Services Aim 19:</u> Gaelic named as an essential and / or desirable skill in job descriptions in order to deliver the Gaelic language plan and in accordance with the Bòrd na Gàidhlig recruitment advice.

• An additional 3 posts will include Gaelic as desirable within their job description and at least one post will be designated as Gaelic essential by the end of this Plan.





Job profiles are reviewed as a matter of practice when a post becomes vacant, where there is a substantive change in the post/ job description, or as part of a service redesign. Reviews carried out to date have not identified the need to add Gaelic to any additional job descriptions over and above what is already in place.

A new teaching post at Inverclyde Academy, has been created, to support the delivery of GME at secondary level. The overall timescale for the delivery of this action is 2028.

#### Corporate Services Aim 20: Bilingual or Gaelic only job adverts for all posts where Gaelic is an essential skill.

- All advertisements for Gaelic specific roles will include reference to it being desirable for knowledge and fluency of the language
- Post adverts that include Gaelic as a requirement will be advertised in both Gaelic and English

#### **Progress:**



As referred to in action 18, Gaelic is specified in the job / person description where the role has a specific Gaelic function associated with it. Currently, job descriptions for posts that include Gaelic skills are only published in English and efforts will be made to ensure that future adverts for posts which incorporate Gaelic are advertised bilingually.

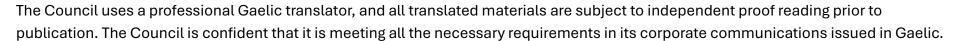


#### **GAELIC LANGUAGE CORPUS**

<u>Corporate Services Aim 21:</u> The most recent Gaelic Orthographic Conventions will be followed in relation to all written materials produced by the public authority.

Continue to engage professional translation services for all Gaelic content

#### Progress:



#### **Corporate Services Aim 22: Place-names**

Gaelic place name advice from Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba is sought and used.

Any new place names will be introduced with advice from Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba

#### Progress:

The Council will continue to follow this practice as and when required.

# **Verity House Agreement – Stocktake One Year On**





#### Verity House Agreement – Stocktake One Year On

#### 1. The Verity House Agreement (VHA) commits that:

By the end of August 2024, we will have jointly considered the first year of implementation of the Verity House Agreement and the Fiscal Framework as a whole, and agreed any alterations or addendums required to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of these two key documents.

While this commitment envisaged that the Fiscal Framework would also be operational and therefore reviewed as part of this process, both parties agree that while work continues to deliver that Framework, a review of the VHA at this juncture is helpful.

This paper has sought views from across the Scottish Government and COSLA, as the representative body for Scottish Local Government, and focuses on the areas most directly linked to the three shared priorities.

The aim of this paper is to draw out and reflect on the successes and challenges related to the operation of the VHA. It identifies the good practice and different ways of working which have supported improved relationships and delivery on our shared priorities, either during this first year or historically. The paper also looks at areas of change which could ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the VHA.

#### 2. Background

The VHA sets out how we will strengthen partnership working to better deliver improved outcomes for Scotland. The Scottish Government and COSLA remain committed to developing and agreeing a fiscal framework for Local Government and developing robust accountability and assurance arrangements as part of the VHA. All these elements are required in order to realise and sustain the aspirations as set out in the New Deal with Local Government and support a mutually respectful and trusting working relationship between Local Government and the Scottish Government.

The VHA focuses on addressing three shared priorities to:

- Tackle poverty, particularly child poverty, in recognition of the joint national mission to tackle child poverty.
- Transform our economy through a just transition to deliver net zero, recognising climate change as one of the biggest threats to communities across Scotland.
- Deliver sustainable person-centred public services recognising the fiscal challenges, ageing demography and opportunities to innovate.

It is noted here that whilst the new First Minister has set out four key priorities these are consistent and do not divert from those of the VHA.

#### 3. Overview of Year One

The VHA, and the good practice it aims to encourage and support in relation to working collaboratively, builds on existing strong relationships in a number of areas. Those areas of positive joint cooperation have continued, and in some instances been enhanced, while new areas of collaboration have been established and encouraged by the impetus the signing of the VHA has provided. In policy areas where there has been disagreement over aims and delivery, or where this has emerged, the VHA has provided a benchmark against which both spheres of government consider their actions and approach.

A candid stocktake reflects that the VHA has not fully resolved or prevented areas of disagreement. It is on public record that difficulties have arisen for example in relation to the Council Tax Freeze for 2024/25, the policy in respect of maintaining and increasing teacher numbers, and key aspects of the scope of the proposed National Care Service. These matters continue to be discussed and raised in portfolio level and strategic engagement between both spheres of government.

Local Government has formally raised concerns in these three areas not just because of the policy intent, but also because of the way in which the policies have been announced and/or developed. The Scottish Government has maintained that delivering these policy areas is consistent with supporting the three priorities in the VHA and has sought to agree these with Local Government through the appropriate mechanisms.

In February 2024, the COSLA Presidential Team, in view of these areas of disagreement, requested the development of a more detailed dispute resolution procedure to support the VHA and create a mutually respectful and trusting relationship. Such a procedure has been discussed, and options developed which are the subject of further consideration.

Notwithstanding the areas of disagreement and challenge, there has been a marked improvement in formal and informal engagement at a senior ministerial/political level, supported by a broadening and deepening of official led collaboration. The principles for ways of working set out in the VHA provide an important guide to those relationships, both public and private, and a focus on the purpose of our joint working to deliver better outcomes for communities.

This works well where there is a recognition that both spheres of government can, and do, bring ideas to the table that support a constructive dialogue about where both national and local approaches each have an important role to play. As accountability and assurance arrangements continue to be developed, the importance of a shared understanding of, and mutual respect for, the democratic mandates held by both ministers and councillors will support effective joint working towards our shared priorities.

#### 3.1 Successes of the VHA

As recognised above there have been notable successes of the VHA which have either come about since its signing or were in train but have been bolstered and enhanced by it. Most significantly the continued constructive and collegiate discussions on Local Government pay. Examples of other successes across the three priorities have been set out below.

#### **Tackling Poverty**

**Governance and Shared Leadership:** We have built, maintained and improved our approach to joint and shared governance, ensuring that our partnership is at the heart of overseeing how we deliver. This includes:

- Positive working relationships are a key feature of the joint work on Child Poverty and the Tackling Child Poverty Programme Board as part of the governance structure in place for delivery of Best Start, Bright Futures (BSBF) and is a strong demonstration of a collective approach.
- Partnership working on outcomes and measurement following on from the Children, Young People and Families Outcomes Framework being endorsed by COSLA's Children and Young People's Board.
- Continued improvement of our shared governance groupings both strategic and operational – to deliver the No One Left Behind (NOLB) policy. The VHA has enabled discussions between officials and officers on increasing flexibility in funding provided by grant offer letters (i.e. not part of LG finance settlement) for the NOLB Employability funding.

**Evidence based policy development:** In keeping with the VHA we have sought to engage early in key areas of policy assessment and development. That has not always been easy given the nature of some challenging discussions:

- we ensured engagement and involvement with COSLA on the official led Zero Based Review on BSBF in the summer of 2023.
- in education, officials sought to explore options and ways forward to present alternative solutions to an approach of regulating for a minimum number of learning hours.

**Delivery and impact:** Our shared ambitions need to be underpinned by delivery with impact, while it is early days, we are keeping the focus on how we move to action and measure that impact so that we know we are on track:

- Local Authorities are major delivery partners for our Child Poverty ambitions and for the measures as set out in BSBF, not only because of their statutory requirements under the Child Poverty Scotland Act 2017, but given they deliver in local communities.
- Delivery of the Scottish Recommended Allowance for foster and kinship care in August 2023 through partnership and collaboration.

#### Transforming our economy through a just transition to deliver net zero

**Governance and Shared Leadership:** We have built dialogue and relationships in new areas across economy as well as deepening our work together on net zero. Key in the past year has been:

- Open, trusted discussions at senior level, including political leaders, as well as follow up on specifics e.g. small business support and strategic engagement on National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) and the Growth Plan.
- Earlier more direct engagement in the Programme for Government and agreement on the climate delivery framework.

**Evidence based policy development:** we have drawn on the wide range of experience and expertise across partners in local government and the private sector to support development of policies which can deliver impact but be workable:

- Constructive discussions in relation to the Circular Economy Bill, described by COSLA Environment and Economy Spokesperson as an "excellent and leading example of working in the spirit of and implementing the Verity House Agreement".
- Ongoing constructive engagement and collaboration around the development of the Circular Economy and Waste Route Map to 2030, published for its second consultation in January 2024.

**Delivery and impact:** Our shared ambitions need to be underpinned by delivery with impact, while it is early days, we are keeping the focus on how we move to action and measure that impact so that we know we are on track:

- The Scottish Government continues to work closely with COSLA and local government, through the governance and oversight of the Recycling Improvement Fund. Now in its fourth year, the Fund has invested over £63 million to date in a range of local authority infrastructure projects to support improvements in recycling.
- In 2023, the Scottish Government and Scotland's councils agreed to provide joint funding to establish the Scottish Climate Intelligence Service (SCIS). The SCIS is a multi-year national programme to deliver a platform that will enable a consistent approach to data collection which consequently may be used to inform positive climate action. The Service will build capability and capacity across Scotland's councils to deliver net zero and realise the wider benefits of effective climate action. The service is match funded by Scottish Government and LAs. This is a positive example of Scottish and Local Government pooling resources/funding to help achieve a shared goal.

#### Delivering sustainable person-centred public services

**Governance and Shared Leadership**: Delivering effective public services and better outcomes for people across both spheres of government relies wholly on collective leadership and dialogue, as we work through the challenges we are facing. Key areas of that collective approach in the past year have been:

Positive working relationships, regular engagement, with a shared understanding
of the breadth of the role Local Government has through prevention and
intervention, has led to a truly collaborative approach to developing and
implementing the Suicide Prevention Strategy.

- Development of the collaborative approach taken with COSLA, in leading the delivery of the "Joint Statement of Intent and Next Steps for Adult Social Care".
- Work on Digital Health and Care Strategy and the Data Strategy for Health and Social Care has benefitted from a working relationship which is based on mutual trust and respect, and a recognition of the need for effective and responsible joint leadership as we work on our shared priorities.
- The shared national and local commitment to keep The Promise has been supported by the VHA through the development of the National Promise Progress Framework; connections drawn on governance and reporting; and sharing of information and tripartite working with the Promise Scotland and wider partners.

**Evidence based policy development:** supporting the transformation of public services in Scotland will require close collaborative working between both spheres of government, and there has been some crucial work delivered in the past year:

- Democracy Matters 2 national engagement process was launched jointly in August 2023 and forms part of the wider Local Governance Review.
- The Scottish Learning and Improvement for Adult Social Care and Community
  Health was developed by a Steering Group, co-chaired by COSLA, SOLACE and
  the Scottish Government. Consensus was reached with COSLA on the preferred
  model for the National Social Work Agency through a joint options appraisal
  exercise. There is agreement that neither national nor local government can
  address these in isolation.
- Led by COSLA and the Strategic Team for Anti-Racism, Directorate for Equality, Inclusion & Human Rights the Gypsy/traveller Action plan is a strong demonstration of working based on mutual trust and respect, and consultation and collaboration at an early stage.

**Delivery and impact**: Our shared ambitions need to be underpinned by delivery with impact. While the agreement is still in its early days; we are continuing to jointly focus on how we action and measure impact so that we know we are on track:

- The 2023 Programme for Government committed to providing additional funding to enable childcare workers delivering funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in private and third sector services at least £12 per hour from April 2024. Scottish Government and COSLA worked jointly to support delivery of the commitment through local authorities as part of the sustainable rates setting process for 2024-25.
- The ELC Outcomes and Measurement Framework project aims to define and deliver an outcomes and measurement framework for funded ELC in Scotland – which is owned and supported jointly by the Scottish Government, local government, and sector delivery partners.
- Delivery of the Scottish Recommended Allowance for foster and kinship care in August 2023 through partnership and collaboration.

In addition, we have increased the flexibility to local government in funding, baselining almost £1 billion of funding in 2024-25, including £564.1 million of education and ELC funding. This included £521.9 million in ELC expansion funding which was previously ringfenced within the Specific Revenue Grant.

#### 3.2 - Challenges related to the operation of VHA

Both spheres of government have worked to practically embed and use the VHA principles in both new work and existing areas of dialogue and collaboration. That has not been straightforward, particularly where some policies and programmes of activity were already underway and well advanced in both thinking and implementation. This has meant there are areas where work has been reframed around the approach the VHA promotes, to encourage the two spheres of government to work together.

Early, open and regular dialogue and the support of the Local Government Relationship team in the Scottish Government and Corporate Team in COSLA, has helped to navigate some of the challenges that exist. This remains a work in progress. However, as the principles of the VHA are embraced over time and the agreement's principles are adopted and followed from the outset of policy development, these "retrofitting" experiences in some policy areas should become less necessary.

The principles in the VHA are high level and therefore, in the course of their application, will continue to need to be interpreted and applied to different circumstances. The VHA itself states that it is a high-level framework and a statement of intent for how the working relationship and partnership between the spheres of government should operate. It is therefore inevitable that at times each sphere of government, and other stakeholders, will interpret that its provisions should have been applied one way or another to different events. There may not always be absolute agreement on the course of action required.

While there are a number of examples of challenges from the past year which are outlined below, these instances could be more consistently captured in future years through the work of the COSLA Corporate Team and Scottish Government Local Government Relationship team. As we progress, they will seek to play a more central role in supporting engagement through the development of further guidance and supporting a more coherent and consistent approach to partnership working.

Taking the above into consideration the following examples have been highlighted as areas of challenge related directly or indirectly to the operation of the VHA. These are also examples of opportunities to build on the principles of the VHA and understand what is needed to be able to move forward in a positive and proactive way, which enables meaningful and effective delivery of our shared priorities for the benefit of our communities.

#### Organisational understanding

• There is scope for better organisational understanding of respective structures and ways of working. For example, a need for Local Government to better understand the scale and interconnectedness of Scottish Government directorates and Public Bodies, and a need for Scottish Government to improve their understanding of Local Government, its breadth and scale and the competing demands placed on it by directorates and Public Bodies. There is also a need for Scottish Government to better understand the role of COSLA as the membership body established by Councils to negotiate and represent Local Government on a cross-party consensus-basis.

It may be the case that meaningful compromise cannot or will not always be found on certain issues where there is varied impact across Councils for COSLA to represent an absolute collective view and therefore for the Scottish Government to respond to.

There is also a challenge in addressing the Local Government position in favour of local variation and flexibility, when that can be construed as an automatic barrier against discussing national policy. There is a need to be clear respectively about evidence, to build understanding, and to address openly the opportunities of both local flexibility and national policies or frameworks that enable and empower local systems and partners to implement in a manner that address local challenges with a view to achieving overall national progress and improvement.

#### **Historical Areas of Disagreement verses VHA principles**

• The ongoing disagreement about the policy on the maintenance of teacher numbers demonstrates that the VHA has not effectively supported the resolving of historical issues. This is especially the case where there are competing national and local democratic mandates for ministers and councillors to deliver whether they be Programme for Government, manifesto, parliamentary, Council or Locality plan commitments. From a Local Government perspective, the decision to remove Regional Improvement Collaboratives, without having first seen the evidence, added to this challenge as there was no prior consultation or warning. Both spheres of government have statutory duties to deliver improvement in education. This is proving difficult to reconcile as Ministers consider that to drive forward their priorities for improvement and reform requires more than the principles of the VHA. Councils view ministerial actions to ring fence or remove specific funding as a barrier to achieving the aim of improving education by preventing the best use of resources that meet the needs of children, young people and their families determined by local circumstances. The Scottish Government has put forward several proposals and compromise options for an Education Assurance Board, which to date have been rejected by COSLA Leaders. The Scottish Government sees establishing such a forum as critical to making progress on improving outcomes for children and young people. There is agreement that compromise is required but an understanding of the separate, yet shared role and democratic mandates of local and national politicians is required.

Agreement on outcomes measures and an effective Accountability and Assurance arrangement is critical to achieving shared national ambitions through effective local delivery that can be agile and responsive to the needs of the service user.

#### **Resource and Capacity**

 We have seen the impact of limited resource and capacity across Scottish Government and COSLA, leading to both the Fiscal Framework and Accountability and Assurance Arrangements work being delayed significantly.

The capacity challenges have also been evidenced in feedback from a range of policy areas. Given the rapidly evolving and broad circular economy policy landscape, there are capacity challenges to ensure ongoing, crucial local government input in many aspects of policy development and delivery. The Scottish Government-Local Government Strategic Steering Group for Circular Economy and Waste is a key joint initiative to manage this challenge, providing shared oversight and ensuring timely, targeted input at the right level in key areas.

#### Local by default, national by agreement seen as a barrier

 The maxim of local by default, national by agreement is designed to promote early proactive engagement and discussion between Scottish Government and COSLA to consider how best to deliver effective shared national priorities. There is an understanding that local flexibility is important, coupled with an equal understanding that there will be certain approaches that benefit from and are able to be delivered in a consistent way.

The National Care Service is a continued area of challenge, while both spheres of government agree on the need for improvement, there has been a view across Local Government that the approach taken reflects a lack of trust in local systems and a firm belief that the intention is simply to remove duties and services from local democratic control, which fails to recognise the integrated nature of local services and therefore the negative impact on the ability to maintain them, should parts of the workforce be removed. At the same time, the Scottish Government is concerned that without strong shared accountability and transparency and an ability to more actively

support local systems as necessary and appropriate, under the aegis of a National Care Service Board, there cannot be an improvement to the services people see being delivered. As this is being worked through, consistent with the joint framework, there is an absolute agreement by both spheres of government that improvement is required and a willingness to work together on the best solution to deliver which respects both party's democratic roles and mandates and the shared commitment to deliver our priorities.

#### **Transparency and Accountability**

There is a challenge for both spheres about the ability to assess progress and deliver transparently, understand how funding has been used for the stated purpose, and hold each other to account. Scottish Government have had this challenge from both Parliament and through stakeholders' groups – e.g. National Advisory Council on Women and Girls. Local Government experiences this challenge from not only Scottish Government but from scrutiny bodies, local communities and Parliament.

Trust is built where there is transparency and scrutiny which supports all parties, including democratically elected individuals in Councils and Parliament, to effectively understand and challenge progress or the lack thereof. Mutual trust is central to the VHA.

#### 3.1 – Learning

Understanding how success has been reached and what works well is imperative to the success of the VHA and overcoming the challenges encountered. Teams from both COSLA and Scottish Government were asked to share examples of good practice and different ways of working which have supported better relationships and delivery. To illustrate these, we have pulled together the key actions and words that were repeated throughout the feedback.

ongoing engagement communities of practice open and supportive compromise local authority networks gress shared knowledge evidence based close working share progress place based actively share good practice welcome feedback working logether community led solutions data modified or streamlined highlight issues constructive and pragmatic challenge variation based on local need shared governance Errust

#### 3.4 – Looking forward

With a focus on continuous improvement and to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the VHA, the following areas will be a priority focus over the next year:

- Shared governance A key priority for Scottish Government and COSLA over the coming year will be to identify opportunities to improve our partnership approach, both in terms of action and accountability, to fully reflect the shared responsibilities of both the Scottish Government and Scotland's Councils.
- Resolution There is a collective need to come together in spaces such as
  Education and Health and Social Care to reset the relationship approach and
  understand the shared accountability and individual and collective statutory
  responsibilities, so that the public and Parliament are able to hold Councils and
  Ministers to account respectively.
- Engagement How both spheres of government can continue to engage meaningfully and collectively in respect of services or parts of the system which require improvement of the whole system to ensure shared priorities are delivered.

The next focused pieces of work that will support the above at the strategic level are agreement and implementation of the Accountability and Assurance arrangements and further progressing the Fiscal Framework.

#### 3.5 - Strategic Engagement

Building on a pre-existing Engagement Plan, the VHA commits local and national government to regular meaningful forms of strategic engagement to ensure any issues are highlighted and progress is being made towards the three shared priorities. The VHA sets out the following as a guide to engagement for each year:

- Bi-annual First Minister and COSLA President Meeting
- 4 x Political Meeting including Presidential Team, COSLA Leadership Sounding Board and select Cabinet Ministers
- 5 x Strategic Review Group Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, Minister for Public Finance and COSLA Presidential Team
- Monthly Relationship Meetings membership same as SRG meetings

There have been Ministerial re-shuffles since the Strategic Engagement formalisation in 2021 which has meant Ministerial membership has varied. Engagement is crucial to the success of the relationship and VHA. This stocktake provides an opportunity to review the current range of meetings to ensure the frequency of the meetings supports the desired outcomes and compliments the policy lead engagement of other portfolio Ministers and Spokespeople. We agreed the importance of building on the successful political meeting held earlier this year on the theme of NSET, and plan for two of these a year with a clear theme and purpose that allow for early proactive engagement, with a focus on open and honest dialogue about the delivery both locally and nationally of our shared priorities.



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government St Andrew's House Edinburgh EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83601-981-7 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, November 2024

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA PPDAS1525150 (11/24)

www.gov.scot



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 6** 

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital Report No: LS/036/25

& Customer Services

Contact Officer: Carol Craig-McDonald Contact No: 01475 712725

Subject: Freedom of Information Annual Report 2024

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 □ For Decision □ For Information/Noting

1.2 This is an agreed routine annual monitoring report to provide the Policy & Resources Committee with details of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by the Council during the period 1 January – 31 December 2024.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
  - (1) Notes the information provided in relation to FOI requests received by the Council during 2024.
  - (2) Approves the publication of the annual performance report on the Council's website.

Lynsey Brown Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) provides a right of access to recorded information held by Scottish public authorities subject to certain conditions and exemptions which are set out in the FOISA.
- 3.2 The Scottish Information Commissioner has since April 2013 asked all Scottish public authorities to provide statistics on Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and requests under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs), the number of Subject Access Requests received, details of reviews dealt with, and exemptions/exceptions applied on a quarterly basis. These statistics are available on the Scottish Information Commissioner's website at <a href="http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/">http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/</a>.
- 3.3 Statistical reports on how the Council has dealt with information requests are presented to Committee on an annual basis.

#### 4.0 ANNUAL REPORT

- 4.1 During 2024, a total of 1267 information requests (1044 requests under FOI and 223 under EIRs) were received by the Council. The annual report on performance during 2024 is appended to this report.
- 4.2 Section 2 of the appended report provides a comparison with the number of FOI and EIR requests received by the Council from 2016 to 2024. Members will note that, in comparison with volumes received during 2023, that there has been a 1.36% increase in the overall number of FOI/EIR requests dealt with by the Council. The volume of requests being received is at a more consistent level. There is also a noted increase in the number of EIRs, 223 were made in 2024 which is largely due to a more accurate categorisation of the requests.
- 4.3 Section 3 of the appended report details in full the source of applicants who submitted requests over the course of the year. The top three sources of applicants who submit FOI requests are recorded as Individuals at 37%, Media and Newspaper Sources at 17.52% and Commercial Firms at 15.7%. Additionally, 7.10% of requests came under the category of 'Others' however, this cannot be further quantified from the source of the requests.
- 4.4 The Council's performance in relation to FOIs and EIRs for on time, late and failed to respond rates, as well as percentages of key performance indicators which is used by the SIC when comparing performance of other Scottish local authorities, are detailed in section 4 of the appended report. The Council responded to 93% of information requests on time and had a failure rate of 7% for responding late or failing to respond to information requests during 2024. This reflects a 2% increase on the failure response rate which is still within the accepted 10% threshold for this KPI. The Council is continuing to work on improving the time taken to respond to requests, following the intervention that was opened by the SIC in 2022, and reported to Committee with the 2021 Annual Report on 15 November 2022. The intervention was closed by the SIC on 18 May 2023. The Council continues to use the actions that that were implemented as part of the intervention action plan given how effective they were in improving performance.
- 4.5 FOI/EIR requests are dealt with within existing staff resources and are recorded and co-ordinated centrally by Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services. In addition, Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services deal with any requests which are specific to the service and all of the corporate requests, the preparation and submission of quarterly statistical returns to the SIC and quarterly monitoring reports to the Corporate Management Team (CMT). This is supported by staff within the directorates who deal with service specific requests. The Information Governance Team was redesigned in June 2024 which has centralised resources for both the HSCP and the Council's information governance responsibilities and includes the collation of FOIs for both areas. It has been

- noted that the volume of corporate responses that were being managed throughout 2024 increased by 37% when compared to 2023.
- 4.6 Quarterly reports on progress throughout the year are submitted to the CMT for overall review, to highlight any actions on a service specific basis and to ensure awareness of the impact on staff resources.
- 4.7 The information management system Workpro has been in use throughout 2024 for the processing of FOI requests. Benefit from the system continue to be realised in terms of how we are responding to and managing the FOI requests across all services and in particular timescale management using the reporting function within the system. Further training was delivered to support the ongoing development of knowledge for some officers who deal with FOI requests.
- 4.8 Monitoring of performance continues to be undertaken using the Day 15 FOI work progress report which was implemented in January 2022 and through the use of the FOI workflow summary which has improved officer understanding of the FOI process.
- 4.9 The Information Governance Team continues to work with services to ensure that the improvements made on the response timescales following the closure of the SIC intervention on the 18 May 2023 are sustained. Quarterly performance on response timescales is noted in the table below along with the comparison data dating back to 2021.

the companson dat	a dating back to 202	l			
Period	FOI/EIRs responded to within Statutory Timescale	% On time	FOI/EIRs responded to out with Statutory Timescale	Requests not responded to	% of failed to respond within statutory timescale rate
Jan - Mar 2021	152	82.6%	32	0	17.4%
Apr - Jun 2021	155	68.9%	70	0	31.1%
Jul - Sept 2021	180	79.6%	43	3	20.4%
Oct - Dec 2021	269	85.4%	43	3	14.6%
Jan - Mar 2022	324	90%	33	3	10%
Apr - Jun 2022	344	91%	29	2	9%
July - Sept 2022	280	89.2%	32	2	10.8%
Oct - Dec 2022	395	94.7%	22	0	5.3%
Jan – Mar 2023	367	91.6%	28	6	8.4%
Apr – Jun 2023	348	92.3%	21	7	7.7%
July – Sept 2023	346	95.3%	17	0	4.7%
Oct – Dec 2023	407	96.67%	14	0	3.32%
Jan – Mar 2024	454	95%	25	3	5%
Apr – Jun 2024	327	91%	17	0	8.42%
July – Sept 2024	241	92%	14	1	8%
Oct – Dec 2024	414	96%	18	1	4.16%

4.10 During 2024, applicants formally requested the Council to review it's decisions on 7 FOIs and 9 EIRs. This provides a degree of quality assurance as the vast majority of requests resulted in an initial response which satisfied the applicant. Further detail on the reviews and appeals received during 2024 can be found in section 8 of the attached report.

#### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial	Х	
Legal/Risk	Х	
Human Resources		Х
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	Х	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights &		Х
Wellbeing		
Environmental & Sustainability		Х
Data Protection		Х

#### 5.2 Finance

All costs associated with dealing with FOI and EIR requests, reviews, and appeals and SARs are contained within existing budgets.

FOISA makes a limited provision for refusing requests which incur an excessive cost, and partially for recharging those that would cost the authority more than £100 to process. The EIRs allow for full recharge of the cost of dealing with requests.

As noted by Committee in May 2023, information on the time spent and estimated costs of dealing with FOI and EIR requests across the Council is no longer reported annually to Committee.

#### One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

#### Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

#### 5.3 Legal/Risk

The Council is legally bound to comply with FOISA and the EIRs. The Scottish Information Commissioner has powers of enforcement which can be used where a public authority is consistently failing to comply with the legislation.

#### 5.4 Human Resources

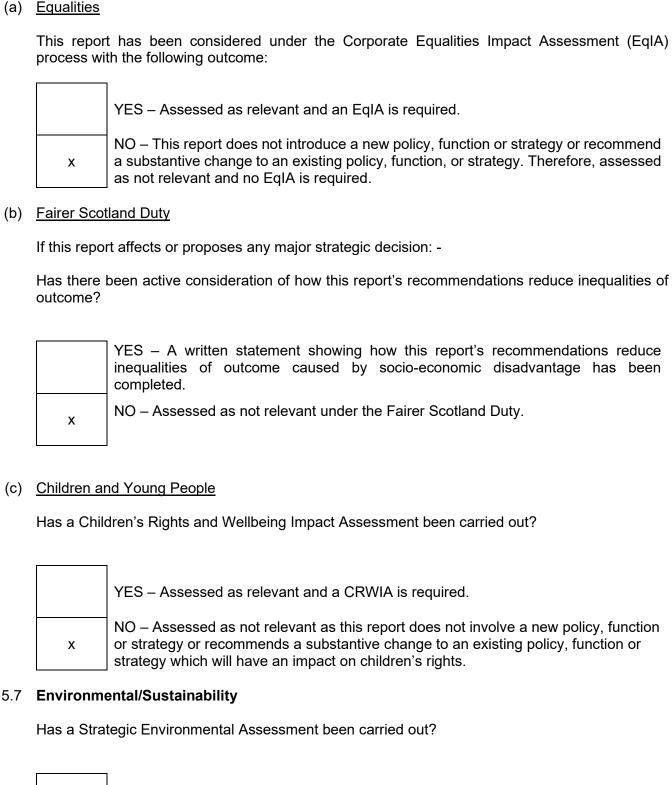
There are no human resource implications directly arising from this report

#### 5.5 Strategic

This report helps deliver the outcomes in the Council Plan Theme 3 Outcome: Performance – high quality and innovative services are provided, giving value for money.

#### 5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

#### (a) Equalities



YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.

х	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy, or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.
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#### 5.8 **Data Protection**

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
Х	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

#### **6.0 CONSULTATION**

6.1 None.

#### 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

# **Appendix 1**

# Inverclyde Council

# Freedom of Information Annual Performance Report 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

# Contents

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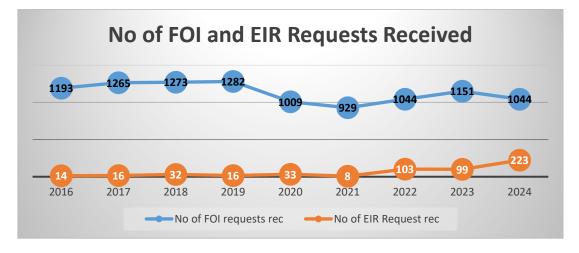
#### 1. Introduction

This report outlines the volume of information requests received during the period 1 January to 31 December 2024 and provides a performance review across the Council's processing of these requests. It also considers the use of exemptions, fees, reviews, and appeals.

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) and the associated Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs) provide a statutory right to access information that is held by Scottish Public Authorities. FOISA encourages openness and accountability and helps to build trust between the Council and the public it serves.

#### 2. Volume of requests received

Inverclyde Council (including the HSCP) received 1267 requests for information in 2024 compared to 1250 received in the previous year. This figure represents an 1.36% increase in the number of information requests received during 2024. This total comprised of 1044 requests under FOISA (1151 in 2023) and 223 under the EIRs (99 in 2023). This is an increased number of EIRs which is largely down to more accurate categorisation of these requests.



#### 3. The Nature of requests

The requests for information have been received from a variety of sources as noted in the table below. The top three sources of requests have been received from individuals -37%, media and newspaper sources -17.52% and Commercial Firms -15.7%. Additionally, there were 7.10% of requests associated under the category of Others - however this cannot be quantified from the source of from the requests. The information was not recorded in 25 requests which we received and responded to.

Source of request	% of requests 2024	% of requests 2023	% Of requests 2022	% Of requests 2021
Individual	37%	36.6%	37.80%	42.9%
Commercial Firm	15.7%	8.3%	9.41%	18.3%
Media / Newspaper	17.52%	12.3%	15.07%	15.7%
Parliamentary Assistant	10.81%	15%	14.82%	9.28%
Charity / Third Sector	1.57%	2.7%	3.31%	4.2%

Source of request	% of requests 2024	% of requests 2023	% Of requests 2022	% Of requests 2021
Legal Firm	2.05%	1.3%	2.44%	2.5%
Other	7.10%	11.6%	14.20%	1.3%
Students	1.26%	0.6%	0.44%	1.28%
Trade Union	0.94%	0.88%	0.44%	1.17%
Researchers	2.92%	5.36%	1.48%	1.06%
Client	0.47%	0.88%	0.52%	0.4%
Employee	0%	0.0007%	0.44%	0.3%
Political Party MSP	0.86%	0.96%	0.44%	0.1%

#### 4. Performance

The table below compares the Council's responses to FOIs and EIRs for on time, late and failure to respond rates as well as percentages of key performance indicators which are used by the Scottish Information Commissioner (SIC) when comparing performance with other Scottish local authorities. The statistics reflect what was reported to the SIC at the time of submitting the Council's statistical return. The Council responded to 93% of information requests on time and had a failure rate of 7% for responding late or failing to respond to information requests during 2024. An increase is evident in the number of FOIs/EIRs response failure rate when comparing the key performance indicators in 2024 to the previous year. The Council ended the year with 3 requests, which were not responded to, and 85 requests which were responded to late. Those FOIs which were not responded to and have subsequently been issued will reflect in the late response statistics and may differ to what was reported as part of the quarterly provision of the Council's statistical updates to the SIC, as they would have been classed as a failure to respond at that time.

No of requests received	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
No of FOIs rec in calendar year	1193	1265	1273	1282	1009	929	1044	1151	1044
No of EIRs rec in calendar year	14	16	32	16	33	8	103	99	223
Total requests rec in the year	1207	1281	1305	1298	1042	937	1147	1250	1267

On time Response Performance numbers and %	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
No of responses issued within timescales during the year	1010	1063	1042	1144	820	748	1049	1174	1179
Percentage of requests answered within timescale	86%	92%	84%	91%	80%	80%	91%	94%	93%

FOI not responded to failure rate numbers & %	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
No of requests where we failed to respond during the year	0	0	0	0	15	4	7	8	3
No of responses issued late during the year	151	95	197	119	187	188	116	56	85
Failure rate for responses issued during the year%	14%	8%	16%	9%	20%	20%	9%	5%	7%

There can be various reasons why requests are not always responded to on time. For example, a request might relate to information needed from schools during the holidays,

performance may be impacted by key staff absence or changes or there may be difficulties in collating responses to complex requests. Services are continually reminded to have contingency plans in place in such circumstances.

During 2024, there was a continued focus on the Council's performance when responding to FOIs, The Council has continued to apply more stringent measures within services to ensure the appropriate timely actions are taken when responding to requests. These measures sit alongside a Day 15 report that is issued weekly to senior managers to highlight cases that may require assistance from managers to expedite a prompt response to requests. The Corporate Management Team, along with the Information Governance Team, supports the focus on key actions required each week and this has assisted with the improved performance seen in the last 2 year's statistics, which show the best performances when compared to the last 7 years.

### 5. Exemptions

Most requests which have been responded to (939 (74%) have resulted in full disclosure of all the requested information. However, for some requests some information is exempt from disclosure in terms of FOISA or the EIRs. In such instances, FOI or EIR exemptions and exceptions are applied. The table below provides further information on the use of these exemptions and exceptions. Partial disclosures, where some but not all information was released, accounts for 133 (10%) of information requests. The Council relied on exemptions or exceptions for all requested information in 54 (4.26%) information requests received, although this is largely attributable to information sought not being held by the Council or being otherwise accessible through other sources, such as already being published on the Council or Scottish Government website.

Section	Exemption / Exception Cited	No of times cited
Section (12)	Excessive cost of compliance	10
Section (17)	Information not held	152
Regulation 10(4)a		
Section (25)	Information otherwise accessible	25
Regulation 6(1)b		
Section (26)	Statutory Prohibition	0
Section (27)	Future Publication	1
Section (30)	Substantial prejudice	1
Section (33),	Commercial interests and the economy	2
Regulation 10(5)e		
Section (34)	Investigations	0
Section 35	Law Enforcement	0
Regulation 10(5)b		
Section (36)	Confidentiality	3
Regulation 10(5) d		
Section (39)	Health and Safety	0
Section (38)	Personal Information	25
Regulation 11		
Regulation 10 (4) b	Manifestly unreasonable	2
Regulation 10 (4) c	Request formulated in too general a manner	0
Regulation 10 (4) e	Confidentiality of commercial or industrial information	1
Regulation 10 (4) f	Adverse effect on third party interests	1

#### 6. Fees

FOISA makes limited provision for refusing requests, which incur an excessive cost and for partially recharging those that would cost the authority more than £100.00 to process. The EIRs allow for the full recharge of the cost of dealing with requests in accordance with a published charging schedule. The table below sets out the number of requests where fees notices were issued. If the applicant does not pay the fees notice within a certain period of time, the request will not be progressed. The Council tends to release the information in most cases without a fee. In relation to EIRs, services are encouraged to charge for information, particularly when a significant amount of information is requested.

Quarterly Period	No of Requests where fees notices issued	No of requests fee notice not paid	No of Requests where fees notice paid
Jan to Mar 2024	0	0	0
Apr to Jun 2024	0	0	0
Jul to Sept 2024	0	0	0
Oct to Dec 2024	0	0	0

#### 7. Time and Cost Involved in Responding to FOIs

All costs associated with dealing with FOI/EIR requests, reviews, and appeals are contained within existing budgets.

#### 8. Reviews and Appeals

Of the 1267 information requests received in 2024, applicants formally asked the Council to review its decisions on 7 FOI and 9 EIR requests. The table below outlines the outcome of the reviews. If the applicant remains dissatisfied after the internal review, they have the right to appeal to the SIC. 5 appeals were submitted to the SIC in 2024. The SIC has issued decision notices for all 5 appeals, 2 of which were in response to the Council's failure to respond to requests within statutory timescales. Appeals submitted and determined in 2024 are detailed below.

Type of review	Number of reviews
No of requests for internal reviews	7 FOIs & 9 EIRs
Outcome of internal reviews:	
- upheld the Council's decision	6
- partially upheld the Council's decision	6
- did not uphold the Council's decision	4
- internal review submitted outside of timescale	0
Appeals to Scottish Information Commissioner (SIC)	5
<ul> <li>Awaiting request for submissions from SIC</li> </ul>	0
<ul> <li>Notification of application and the Council has supplied</li> </ul>	0
submissions as requested	
Outcome of SIC Appeal:	
-upheld the Council's decision	2
-did not uphold the Council's decision	2
-partially upheld the Council's decision	1
-withdrawn by applicant	0

#### 9. Conclusion

The Council's performance during 2024 improved steadily each quarter, with one quarter where volumes and pressures were evident in increasing the late response rate although this is still within the KPI threshold tolerance. This evidences that the close monitoring process that was implemented in early 2022 to support the improvements required to statutory response timescales is continuing to have an effect. While performance has slipped very slightly in 2024, overall performance has levelled out and continues to be positive, compared to that seen in 2020/2021. During the year, training has been delivered to support FOI designated officers and those officers involved in responding to requests to refresh knowledge and support confidence in the application of exemptions and exceptions. The 2024 statistics demonstrate that the improvement actions put in place continue to be followed. A more consistent level of performance is being delivered. Work will continue to ensure that these improvements are sustained.

Ongoing work on policy, procedures and training will also support continuous improvement of the Council's performance in meeting its statutory obligations.



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 7** 

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital Report No: LS/097/25

& Customer Services

Contact Officer: Carol Craig-McDonald Contact No: 01475 712725

Subject: Complaint Handling Annual Report 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 ⊠For Decision □For Information/Noting

- 1.2 This is an agreed routine annual monitoring report to provide the Policy & Resources Committee with details of the annual performance of all complaints received and handled by Inverclyde Council, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), and both Arms-Length Organisations (ALEOs), Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde, for the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 1.3 The appended report (appendix 1) provides the annual complaint handling statistical information for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The report has been prepared by the Council's Information Governance Team and provides the following information:
  - i. Performance Information.
  - ii. Analysis of complaint activity; and an
  - iii. Update on learning from complaints.
- 1.4 The SPSO has provided statistical information on the Council's complaint handling during the above period, which is included in section 4.10 of this report. There have been no cases involving the Council or the HSCP investigated by the SPSO in this reporting period.
- 1.5 The Council remains committed to investigating, learning from, and taking appropriate action where it is found that standards have fallen below the level expected or where it is recognised that services could be improved.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
  - (1) notes the annual performance of Inverclyde Council's complaint handling procedure; and
  - (2) approves the publication of the Annual Complaint Handling Report on the Council's website.

Lynsey Brown Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Local Authority Complaint Handler Network (LACHN) is a national forum for local authority complaint handlers to meet quarterly to assist in the development of professional practice in relation to complaint handling. The Council's Senior Information Governance and Complaints Officer represents Inverclyde Council at this forum. The Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) attends these meetings to support the ongoing development of complaint handling within local authorities and to achieve consistency in approach.
- 3.2 There is a requirement for Councils to report complaint handling performance for ALEOs. Inverclyde Council has two ALEOs, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde, and they both require to report on complaints handled. Inverclyde Council is adhering to the reporting requirements for ALEOs set out by the SPSO.
- 3.3 Inverclyde Council supplies complaint handling statistical data to the SPSO on a quarterly basis. The draft report is issued to LACHN for discussion at the network meeting and any inconsistences in data interpretation and analysis is resolved before the formal annual submission to the SPSO each year.
- 3.4 Inverclyde Council, the HSCP and both ALEOs implemented revised model complaint handling procedures on 1 April 2021.

#### 4.0 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Inverclyde Council, the HSCP, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde received and handled 294 complaints and closed 279 complaints within the relevant period.
- 4.2 Section 3 of the appended report provides a comparison of the complaint handling performance by the Council from 2020/21 to 2024/25. Members will note that, in comparison with volumes received during 2023/24, there has been a slight decrease in the overall number of complaints dealt with by Inverclyde Council and Inverclyde Leisure, although the number of complaints dealt with by the HSCP shows a 15.06% increase.
- 4.3 Sections 3.6 to 3.8 of the appended report show the breakdown of complaint volumes per area and the percentage of complaints per service area against the total number of complaints received for the reporting period. The numbers remain low within some services. However, they are proportionately higher in those services that have historically received higher complaint volumes based on the nature of work undertaken. The Chief Executives Office, Organisational Development, HR and Communications Service and Riverside Inverciyde were the only areas who did not receive a complaint over the course of the reporting period.
- 4.4 Sections 3.9 3.12 of the appended report show the outcome of complaint investigations at each stage of the complaint handling procedure by area, the collective view of which is summarised below:
  - 62 complaints were upheld across all complaint stages.
  - 69 complaints were partially upheld across all complaint stages.
  - 102 complaints were not upheld across all complaint stages: and
  - 43 complaints were resolved across all complaint stages.
- 4.5 Sections 3.13 to 3.18 of the appended report detail the Council's responses to complaints at each of the complaint stages and the average timescales for resolving complaints. Timescale management across all stages of the complaint handling procedure is a necessary improvement action for the Council and the HSCP in order to improve performance and build on some of the improvements made over the course of the last 12 months. Complaints should be escalated timely to the appropriate stage

- of the complaint handling procedure. This allows adequate time to conclude the investigation and will support the improvements required for stage 1 complaints.
- 4.6 Stage one of the complaint handling procedure should be attempted where there are straightforward issues which are potentially easily resolved with little or no investigation. This should be completed within five working days. If the service user remains unhappy following the stage one complaint investigation, they can request that their complaint be escalated to stage two of the procedure. The performance of complaints handled at stage one of the complaint handling procedure has been summarised in the table below.

Stage 1 Complaints	Indicators 2024/25	Indicators 2023/24	Trend when comparing to 2023/24
No of complaints closed	175	188	A decrease of 7.42% stage 1 complaints – 13 complaints
% Of complaints closed on time within 5 days (including cases where a time extension was approved)	67.4%	84.7%	A decrease of 17.3% for on time responses
Average number of days taken to close complaints	5.5 days	4.3 days	An increase by 1.2 days average time taken to close S1 complaint.

Outcome of complaints	No of cases 2024/25	%	No of cases 2023/24	%	Trend when comparing to 2023/24
No of complaints upheld & as % of all stage 1 complaints	49	28%	60	31.7%	A decrease of 3.7%
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all stage 1 complaints	36	20.6%	29	15.3%	An increase by 5.3%
No of complaints not upheld & as a % of all stage 1 complaints	49	28%	72	38%	A decrease of 10%
No of complaints resolved & as a % of all stage 1 complaints	41	23.4%	28	14.8%	An increase of 8.6%

4.6 A stage two complaint is for complex complaints, or for serious issues where a thorough investigation will be undertaken. It should also be used for complaints that cannot be resolved at stage one of the procedure. This typically requires a more thorough investigation to establish facts prior to reaching conclusion and allows 20 days for the investigation to be completed. The performance of complaints handled at stage two of the complaint handling procedure has been summarised in the table below.

Stage 2 Complaints	Indicators 2024/25	Indicators 2023/24	Trend when comparing to 2023/24
No of complaints closed	91	74	An increase of 18.68% complaints – 17 complaints
% Of complaints closed on time within 20 days & where we applied time extension	84.6%	59.5%	A 25.1% increase for on time responses
Average number of days taken to close complaint	18.4 days	21.5 days	A 3.1 day decrease in days to close complaint

Outcome of complaints	No of cases 2024/25	%	No of cases 2023/24	%	Trend when comparing to 2023/24
No of complaints upheld & as % of all stage 2 complaints	12	13%	11	14.9%	A decrease of 1.9%
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all stage 2 complaints	28	30.4%	20	27%	An increase of 3.4%
No of complaints not upheld & as a % of all stage 2 complaints	51	55.4%	41	55.4%	No change in the %
No of complaints resolved & as a % of all stage 2 complaints	1	1.11%	2	2.7%	A decrease of 1.6%

4.7 Escalated stage two complaints are ones where the service user remains dissatisfied with the way the Council dealt with their complaint at frontline resolution, the complainant can request a detailed investigation under stage two of the complaints handling procedure. This allows 20 days for completing the investigation. This must be undertaken before the complainant can take their complaint to the SPSO to review. The performance of complaints handled at escalated stage two of the complaint handling procedure has been summarised in the table below. It is noted that the HSCP have not seen any complaints escalate from stage 1 to stage 2 during the year.

Escalated Stage 2 Complaints	Indicators 2024/25	Indicators 2023/24	Trend when comparing to 2023/24
No of complaints closed	13	9	An increase of 30.76% complaints – 4 complaints
% Of complaints closed on time within 20 days & where we applied time extension	84.6%	67%	A 17.6% increase in those complaints meeting timescale
Average number of days taken to close complaints	18.6 days	17.4 days	An increase of 1.2 days

Escalated stage 2 outcomes	No of cases 2024/25	%	No of cases 2023/24	%	Trend when comparing to 2023/24
No of complaints upheld & as % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	1	7.7%	3	33.3%	A 25.61% decrease
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	6	46.2%	5	55.5%	A 9.3% decrease
No of complaints not upheld & as % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	5	38.5%	1	11.1%	A 27.4% increase
No of complaints resolved & as a % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	1	7.69%	0	0%	A 7.69% increase

4.8 Section 4 of the appended report provides an update on Customer Satisfaction Surveys for complaint handling to gain insight on how well the Council is managing complaints. The SPSO has now advised that the Customer Satisfaction Survey is optional, rather than mandatory for the Council to enrich its understanding of how it is managing complaints. Therefore, views will be obtained on the Council's approach to this optional requirement before any development work is progressed.

- 4.9 Section 5 of the appended report provides an overview of service improvement recording which commenced in November 2016. This has been embedded within services and is reported quarterly to Directorate Management Teams. During 2024/25 the HSCP have been noting their service improvements, thereby now meeting the requirement to report this information. Care requires to be exercised in the sharing of these matters as some of the learnings are specific to the individual care. The Council publishes learnings taken from complaints on a quarterly basis, along with statistical information, in compliance with the SPSO's expected requirements of all Scottish local authorities.
- 4.10 Section 6 of the appended report provides detailed information on the complaints which were taken to the SPSO.

**Inverclyde Council:** The SPSO received 13 complaints for Inverclyde Council which is one more case than the SPSO reviewed last year. Four complaints were dealt with under the advice stage and not taken further and 9 complaints were dealt with at early resolution stage. No complaints were investigated. The SPSO recognised that the Council had demonstrated good complaint handling in 6 of the complaints they reviewed.

**HSCP:** The SPSO received 3 complaints for the HSCP which is a reduction of 5 complaints when compared to last year. All the complaints were reviewed at early resolution stage and not taken further. One complaint was recognised as an example of good complaint handling, one complaint was reviewed and noted that insufficient benefit would be gained from further investigation, and one complaint's subject matter was not in the SPSO's jurisdiction. No complaints were investigated in the period.

This reflects a reduction of 4 complaints received by the SPSO for the HSCP and the Council's performance showed an increase by one complaint being received for a review by the SPSO in the 2023/24. It is also an indication of good complaint handling where a right of review was exercised, as the complainant remained dissatisfied with the Council's handling of their complaint.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman – Complaints Determined by Authority and Outcome (Tab 4 Joint Health & Social Care Cases Determined and tab 6 Local Authority) https://www.spso.org.uk/statistics-2024-25

- 4.11 The Council is responsible for ensuring the services provided by Inverciyde Leisure and Riverside Inverciyde meet the required standards and adhere to the complaint handling procedure. In doing this, the Council must establish mechanisms to identify and act on any complaint handling performance issues found.
- 4.12 Inverclyde Leisure implemented their complaint handling procedure in March 2017 and have provided their management information for inclusion into the Council's quarterly and annual reporting requirements to the SPSO.
- 4.13 Riverside Inverclyde implemented their complaint handling procedure from 1 April 2018 and provide quarterly statistical information for inclusion in the reporting for the Council. The volume of complaints from this ALEO continue to be limited with an entire year noted where no complaints were received.
- 4.14 Section 7 of the appended report explains that quarterly reports on progress throughout the year are submitted to the Directorate Management Teams for overall review and any actions on a service specific basis and to ensure awareness of the impact on staff resources.
- 4.15 Section 8 of the report provides a short update on positive comments that are received from service users by the Customer Services. This covers the recognition of where employees are recognised for excellent work in the opinion of services users using Council services.

- 4.16 Section 9 of the report provides a short update on the training carried out cover the course of the year as part of our commitment to ensure staff are equipped to deal with complaints both where they are new to the Council as part of their induction and for existing employees as part of their continuous professional development.
- 4.17 Section 10 of the report provides the summary on the conclusion for the years performance and an outlook for the focus and improvements required in the coming performance year 2025/26. The Council has procured and implemented a new complaint handling relationship management system, Workpro, through the Digital Modernisation Project Board. Implementation was finalised in November 2024. This new system, together with the recent centralisation of resources and expertise to handle complaints for the HSCP and the Council within the Information Governance Team has added resilience to the processing of Council and HSCP complaints.

#### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

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

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		Х
Legal/Risk		Х
Human Resources		Х
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	Х	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights &		Х
Wellbeing		
Environmental & Sustainability		Х
Data Protection		Х

#### 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	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

#### 5.3 **Legal/Risk**

There are no legal or risk implications arising from this report.

# 5.4 Human Resources

There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

# 5.5 Strategic

This report will help deliver the outcomes in the Council Plan Theme 3 – Performance - high quality and innovative services are provided giving value for money.

# 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Corporate Management Team has been consulted on this report.

# 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.



# **Inverclyde Council**

# Annual Report Complaint Handling Performance covering

1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

Classification: Official

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1** Inverciyde Council, along with all other Scottish Local Authorities, follows a model complaint handling procedure (MCHP) which was created by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). This report demonstrates how Inverciyde Council has performed against the 8 key performance indicators that are set by the SPSO. It provides an overview of improvements made to services along with positive feedback from service users.

# 2. THE COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

- 2.1. Inverciyde Council co-ordinates the reporting of complaints to the SPSO and this includes the HSCP, Inverciyde Leisure and Riverside Inverciyde. Each area is responsible for recording their own complaints and providing their management information to Inverciyde Council to enable the consolidated statistical report to be produced quarterly and annually.
- 2.2. The procedure provides a quick, simple, and streamlined process with a strong focus on local, early resolution. This enables issues or concerns to be dealt with as close as possible to the event which gave rise to the service user making the complaint. As far as possible, the complainant should be actively and positively engaged with the process from the outset.
- **2.3.** Stage one of the complaint handling procedure should be attempted where there are straightforward issues which are potentially easily resolved with little or no investigation. This should be completed within 5 working days. If the service user remains unhappy following the stage one complaint investigation, they can request that their complaint be escalated to stage two of the procedure.
- 2.4. Stage two of the complaint handling procedure should be used for those matters which are complex, or for serious issues where a thorough investigation will be undertaken. It should also be used for complaints that cannot be resolved at stage one of the procedure. This typically requires a more thorough investigation to establish facts prior to reaching conclusion. The complaint points and resolution outcome sought is agreed with the complainant. This complaint should be completed within 20 working days. Should the service user remain unhappy with the investigation of the stage 2 complaint they can exercise their right of review and request the SPSO to look at the issues raised and determine whether they can investigate the matter further.
- **2.5.** Escalated stage two of the complaint handling procedure can be used where the service user remains dissatisfied with the way the Council dealt with their complaint at frontline resolution. The complainant can request a detailed investigation under stage two of our complaints handling procedure. This must be undertaken before the complainant can take their complaint to the SPSO to review.
- **2.6.** The SPSO reviews complaint outcomes that are referred to them by the service user and decide whether they should investigate the complaint.

# 2.7. Child Friendly Complaints Handling

2.7.1. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Children (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 (UNCRC Act) all public services must give children and young people under the age of 18 the change to have their say about anything that affects them. This has brought notable changes for some services in relation to complaints received from and about children, in respect of how complaints are managed. Most of the UNCRC Act provisions came into force on 16 July 2024. The SPSO developed the Child Friendly Complaints Principles, Child Friendly Complaints Handling Process and Parental Guidance which were adopted by the Council in July 2024. The Information Governance team is working with relevant internal services to update the complaint handling procedures over the course of 2025/26 to ensure compliance with this new legislation.

# 3. SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT HANDLING PERFORMANCE BY SPSO INDICATORS

Indicator 1: the number of complaints received per 1,000 of the population.

- 3.1. To allow a fair comparison to be made across all 32 Scottish Local Authorities, this indicator looks at the figure of "Complaints per 1,000 of the population". The total number of complaints received by Inverclyde Council per 1,000 of the population in Inverclyde Council during the reporting period 1 April 2024 31 March 2025 was 3.8 complaints. There is no change in this indicator when comparing to the same period last year. The population of Inverclyde is estimated to be at around 76,700 residents.
- **3.2.** This means that there were 3.8 complaints per 1,000 of the population, or one resident in 263 made a complaint about services. A comparison of this indicator over the past 2 years is shown in the table below.

Table: Number of Complaints received per 1,000 of the population

Year	No of Complaints	Complaints Per 1,000 of the population
2024/25	294	3.8
2023/24	288	3.8

Indicator 2 the number of complaints closed at each stage of the complaint handling procedure.

**3.3** In the reporting period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 Inverciyde Council, Inverciyde Leisure and the HSCP received and managed 294 complaints and closed 279 complaints. It should be noted that Riverside Inverciyde did not receive any complaints. The table below shows the percentage of complaints received at each stage of the complaint procedure.

Table 1: 2024/25 No of complaints closed at each stage and the percentage of complaints closed at each stage of the procedure.

Area	No of stage 1 Complaints rec & closed	Stage 1 % of all closed complaints	No of Stage 2 Complaints rec & closed	Stage 2 % of all closed complaints	No of Esc Stage 2 complaints rec & closed	Esc stage 2 % of all closed complaints
Inverclyde Council	124	62.0%	66	33%	10	5%
HSCP	41	59.4%	25	36.2%	3	4.33%
Inverclyde Leisure	10	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Collective Total	175	62.5%	91	32.6%	13	4.6%

Note: Inverclyde Council had a further 2 complaints handled at stage 1 of the complaint handling procedure where a time extension was used this resulted in the complaints being responded to on-time. The HSCP used a time extension for 1 complaint at stage 1 and for 3 complaints at Stage two of the complaint handling procedure.

Table 2: 2023/24 – No of complaints closed at each stage and the percentage of complaints closed at each stage of the procedure.

Area	No of stage 1 Complaints rec & closed	Stage 1 % of all closed complaints	No of Stage 2 Complaints rec & closed	Stage 2 % of all closed complaints	No of Esc Stage 2 complaints rec & closed	Esc stage 2 % of all closed complaints
Inverclyde Council	148	72.5%	47	23%	9	4.4%
HSCP	23	33.9%	30	66.1%	0	0%
Inverclyde Leisure	17	85.7%	0	14.3%	0	0%
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Collective Performance	188	67.3%	77	27.3%	9	5.4%

- 3.4 Inverciyde Council has handled 19.35% less complaints this performance year at stage one of the complaint procedure when comparing to same period last year and 28.78% more complaints at stage 2 of the complaint handling procedure. The uplift in stage 2 complaints may be attributable to the complexity of complaints we have received over the course of the year which includes some of the child friendly complaints we received too. The HSCP has seen an increase of 23.18% complaints being handled at stage 1 of the complaint handling procedure when comparing to last year which is a positive to note. The HSCP has also seen 3 complaints escalate to stage 2 of the complaint handling procedure for the first time in the HSCP area since the work was centralised into the Information Governance team on 1 June 2024.
- **3.5** The tables below show the number of complaints received and closed in total, as well as at each stage of the complaint handling procedure for each area over the last 2 years for comparison purposes.

Table: Complaints received by each in total and at each stage of the complaint handling procedure.

Total number of complaints rec'd & closed by each area	2024/25	2023/24
Inverclyde Council	211	209
HSCP	73	61
Inverclyde Leisure	10	17
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0
Total number of complaints rec'd & closed by each area at stage 1	2024/25	2023/24
Inverclyde Council	124	148
HSCP	41	23
Inverclyde Leisure	10	17
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0
Total number of complaints rec'd & closed by each area at stage 2	2024/25	2023/24
Inverclyde Council	66	47
HSCP	25	30
Inverclyde Leisure	0	0
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0
Total number of complaints rec'd & closed by each area at esc stage 2	2024/25	2023/24
Inverclyde Council	10	9
HSCP	3	0
Inverclyde Leisure	0	0
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0

3.6 The tables below provide a monthly breakdown of complaints closed within each service area covering the reporting period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The numbers below exclude complaints that were considered by the service areas to be invalid complaints, and it also excludes those complaints which were received and withdrawn part way through the process. Riverside Inverclyde, Chief Executives Office and Organisational Development, Policy & Communications did not receive any complaints during 2024/25.

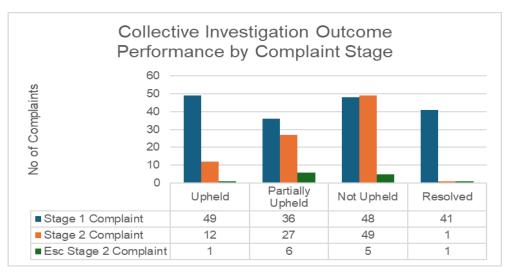
Table: Breakdown of complaints received only by all service areas covering 2024/25

Service Area	Total Complaints Received in 2023/24	Total Complaints Received 2024/25
Chief Executives Office	2	0
Education	50	77
Culture, Communities & Educational Resources	16	6
Organisational Dev, Policy & Comms	1	0
Finance	33	29
Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer	9	9
Physical Assets	1	3
Regeneration & Planning	6	5
Environmental Services	36	36
Public Protection	25	12
Physical Assets Roads	27	23
HSCP	61	69
Inverclyde Leisure	17	10
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0

# Indicator 3 Outcome of Complaint Investigation

3.7 The graph below outlines the outcomes of investigations of all complaints at each of the complaint stages. For every complaint the Council investigates, the service user will be contacted and an explanation of the outcome of the complaint investigation will be confirmed as being either upheld, not upheld, partially upheld, or resolved.

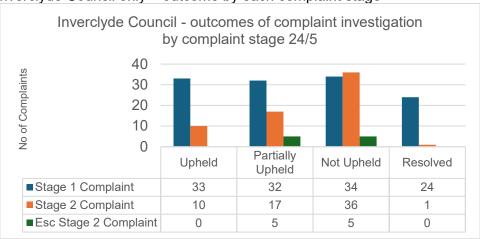
Chart 1: Collective performance for complaint Investigation outcome % by each complaint stage all areas.



**3.8** In summary, of all the complaints investigated the outcomes reached at each stage of the complaint procedure are detailed in the table below for the last 2 years:

Complaints outcomes for all stages of the procedure	2023/24 % & No	2024/25 % & No
Upheld	26% - 74 complaints	22.5% - 62 complaints
Not Upheld	35% - 114 complaints	36% - 102 complaints
Partially Upheld	32.63% - 54 complaints	25% - 69 complaints
Resolved	5.83% - 30 complaints	15.5% - 43 complaints

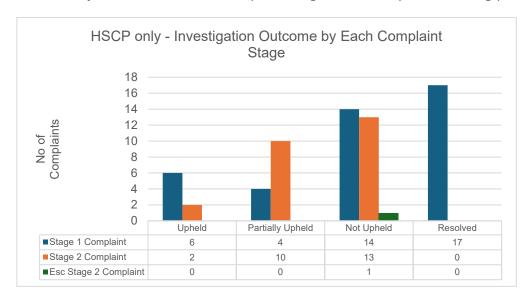
Chart 2: Inverclyde Council only - outcome by each complaint stage



**3.9** In summary, of all the complaints investigated the outcomes reached at each stage of the complaint handling procedure are summarised in the table below:

Complaints all stages outcome	2023/24	2024/25
analysis	% & No	% & No
Upheld	14% - 56 complaints	14% - 43 complaints
Not Upheld	45.27% - 78 complaints	45.3% - 78 complaints
Partially Upheld	33.87% - 44 complaints	33.9% - 54 complains
Resolved	6.97% - 28 complaints	7% - 25 complaints

Chart 3: HSCP only – outcome of each complaint stage of the complaint handling procedure



**3.10** In summary of all the complaints investigated the outcomes reached at each stage of the complaint handling procedure are summarised in the table below:

Complaints all stages outcome	2023/24	2024/25
analysis	% & No of complaints	% & No of complaints
Upheld	4.77% - 4 complaints	18.6% - 8 complaints
Not Upheld	44% - 35 complaints	39.4% - 28 complaints
Partially Upheld	15.4% - 12 complaints	27.7% - 14 complaints
Resolved	2.5% - 2 complaints	13.8% - 17 complaints

**3.11** In respect of Inverclyde Leisure, all the complaints investigated were upheld in 2024/25 and the comparison data for the previous year is summarised in the table below.

Complaints all stages outcome analysis	2023/24 % & No of complaints	2024/25 % & No of Complaints
Upheld	76.5% - 13 complaints	100% - 10 complaints
Not Upheld	17.6% - 3 complaints	0
Partially Upheld	5.9% - 1 complaints	0
Resolved	0	0

# Indicator 4 – average timescales for resolving complaints.

3.12 The table below outlines each service areas performance on the average time taken to close complaints at each stage of the complaint handling procedure. The key performance indicators for complaints that are managed at stage 1 of the procedure should be closed by day 5 or sooner. Complaints managed at stage 2 or escalated stage 2 should be closed by day 20 or sooner. The only exception to this is where a time extension is used at any complaint stage which allows a further 5 days on top of the key performance indicator.

Area	No of complaints stage 1	Stage 1 ave time to close complaint	No of complaints stage 2	Stage 2 ave time to close complaint	No of complaints esc stage 2	Esc Stage 2 ave time to close complaint
Inverclyde Council	124	5.9 days	66	14.7 days	10	16.3 days
HSCP	41	5.3 days	25	29.4 days	3	29.7 days
Inverclyde Leisure	10	4.7 days	0	-	0	-
Riverside Inverclyde	0	-	0	-	0	-
Collective Council	175	5.5 days	91	18.4 days	13	18.6 days

**3.13** Inverclyde Council's collective performance measures on timescale management across all stages of the complaint procedure and covering the last 2 years for comparison purposes is shown in the table below.

Table: Collective complaint handling average timescale for resolving complaints

Stage 1 Frontline Resolution	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints received	189	175
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	160	118
% Complaints meeting timescale (inc complaints that were time	84.7%	67.4%
extended & completed on time)		
No of complaints closed at stage 1 as a % of all complaints closed	69.5%	62.7%
Ave working days taken stage 1 complaints	4.3 days	5.5 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints received	74	91
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	48	61
% Complaints Meeting timescale (inc complaints that were time	59.5%	67%
extended & completed on time)		
No of complaints closed at stage 2 as a % of all complaints closed	27.2%	32.6%
Ave working days taken stage 2 complaints	21.5 days	18.4 days
Escalated Stage 2 Investigation	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints received	9	13
No of complaints – closed at escalated stage 2 within 20 days	6	10
% Complaints Meeting timescale (inc complaints that were time	66.7%	84.6%
extended & completed on time)		
No of complaints closed at escalated stage 2 as a % of all complaints	3.3%	4.7%
closed		
Ave working days taken escalated stage 2 complaints	17.4 days	18.6 days

Table: Inverclyde Council performance – average timescale for resolving complaints.

Stage 1 Frontline Resolution	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints – closed at stage 1	148	124
% Complaints Meeting timescale (5 days) inc those time extended	83.6%	73.1%
(10 days)		
Ave working days taken stage 1	4.6 days	5.9 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints – closed at stage 2	47	66
% Complaints Meeting timescale (20 days) inc those time extended	78.5%	79.7%
(25 days)		
Ave working days taken stage 2	15.6 days	14.7 days
Stage 2 Escalated Investigation	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2	9	10
% Complaints Meeting timescale (20 days) inc those time extended	66.7%	90%
(25 days)		
Ave working days taken esc stage 2	17.4 days	16.3 days

3.14 For the first time in five years, Inverclyde Council's stage 1 complaint performance has exceeded the 5-day key performance indicator for the period 2024/25, ending the year on 5.9 days. Analysis of the complaints that exceeded timescales has been carried out and a key theme that has been established from this review was that services were not progressing the complaint to stage 2 of the complaint handling when it becomes apparent that they could not close the complaint by day 5 or using a time extension, therefore in each case they remained at stage one and the complaints were responded to late. In all the complaints reviewed, all complaints would been responded to on time if they had been progressed to stage 2 of the complaint handling procedure. Services must take focused action to ensure all service areas are handling complaints at the correct and appropriate stage of the complaint handling procedure which will support improving their timescales management for stage 1 complaints. It is positive to note that the Council managed to respond to its stage 2 and escalated stage 2 complaints within the timescales for the period 2024/25. The collective performance for the average time taken to close stage 2 and escalated stage 2 complaints has fluctuated over the course of the last five years although it has positively finished the year on 18.4 days for stage 2 and 18.6 days for escalated stage 2 complaints.

Table: HSCP performance- average timescale for resolving complaints

Stage 1 Frontline Resolution	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints – closed at stage 1	23	41
% Complaints Meeting timescale (5 days) inc those time extended (10 Days)	100%	41.5%
Ave working days taken stage 1	4.7 days	5.3 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints – closed at stage 2	30	25
% Complaints Meeting timescale (20 days) inc those time extended (25 days)	46.7%	24%
Ave working days taken stage 2	32.1 days	29.4 days
Stage 2 Escalated Investigation	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2	0	3
% Complaints Meeting timescale (20 days) inc those time extended (25 days)	0	0
Ave working days taken esc stage 2	0	29.7 days

- 3.15 When comparing the performance achieved by the HSCP in the period 2024/25 the average days taken to resolve complaints in stage 1 has increased by 0.6 days. It is also noted that the number of complaints received at stage one has increased by 43.90% when compared to the 2023/24. There is a noted 20% reduction in the number of complaints received at stage 2 of the complaint procedure and 2.7 days reduction in the number of days taken to resolve complaints at stage 2 when comparing to 2023/24. There have been 3 complaints escalated to stage 2 of the complaint handling procedure, and these complaints have also exceeded the 20-day timescale.
- 3.16 Whilst there is a noted improvement in the performance achieved this year, the key performance indicators for timescale management across all 3 stages of the complaint handling procedure still require further improvement in the year ahead as the HSCP performance has affected the collective performance reported within the Council's statistics. It has been promising to see the improvements coming through in the quarterly performance updates, but performance fluctuated over the course of the year, so consistency is key to help embed the improvements across the area.
- 3.17 Some specific themes that have affected the HSCP's performance have been during periods when HSCP services were under considerable pressure with service areas seeing the highest volume of complaints. The complexity of some of the complaints being received has been a noted area impacting performance, this has been evident in some of the thorough and considerable investigations being undertaken. There have been increased numbers of Freedom of Information Requests and Subject Access Requests, due to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry and the Redress Scheme. Additionally, some duplication has been encountered with enquiries from MSPs also being raised whilst complaints are ongoing. Lastly, as also noted in the Council's performance, there have been instances of officers not handling complaints at the correct stage of the procedure. All of these matters have impacted the averages seen in the performance this year.
- **3.18** Training has been rolled out across the HSCP on the importance of complaints, together with support from the management team and greater collaboration within service areas supporting the improvements required. The training programme saw many officers completing the SPSO training to support the ongoing improvement actions.

Table: Inverclyde Leisure performance – average timescale for resolving complaints

Stage 1 Frontline Resolution	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints – closed at stage 1	17	10
Complaints Meeting timescale (5 days) inc those time extended (10 Days)	100%	100%
Ave working days taken stage 1	1.7 days	4.6 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints – closed at stage 2	0	0
% Complaints Meeting timescale (20 days) inc those time extended (25 days)	0	0
Ave working days taken stage 2	0	0
Stage 2 Escalated Investigation	2023/24	2024/25
No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2	0	0
% Complaints Meeting timescale (20 days) inc those time extended (25 days)	0	0
Ave working days taken esc stage 2	0	0

**3.19** Inverclyde Leisure positively handled all the complaints which they received within stage one of the complaint handling procedure and within timescales. Limited feedback

can be directed for improvement although one observation would be the small number of complaints reported over the course of the year and the reduction of recorded complaints when comparing to previous year. This is to support ensuring staff in leisure establishments are reminded of the processes to ensure complaints are being recorded within leisure establishments.

- **3.20** It should be noted that Riverside Inverclyde has not managed any complaints over the course of the last 5 years.
- 3.21 We will require to be mindful as we progress through 2025/26 when monitoring the performance improvements we are seeking for complaint handling timescales of the likelihood of more complaints being taken through stage 2 of the complaint procedure due to Child Friendly Complaints being implemented into our complaint handling procedures. These complaints have proven to be more complex and require more processes to be followed before the investigation can commence to ensure we are complying with the UNCRC Act. This may put further strain on performance particularly for the Education Service, Education establishments, and the HSCP, as these areas will be affected most by this legislation and they also receive the higher number of complaints about matters that affect children.
- 3.22 It is the cumulative effect of all these contributing factors that has made it difficult to recover the performance in the year 2024/25. Too many complaints were not managed within the correct stage of the complaint handling procedure resulting in the key performance indicator exceeding 5 days across the Council and the HSCP. Within the HSCP too many complaints were also responded to out with the 20-day timescale for both stage 2 and escalated stage 2 of the complaint handling procedure despite some of the noted improvements with their performance in particular quarters. Lastly, following the implementation of the new complaint handling system there were some transitional teething issues noted in a small number of complaints, in that the process was not followed correctly to allocate a complaint, which delayed the allocation of a small number of complaints. In summary, both the Council and the HSCP require services to take focused action for timescale management when handling their complaints at all stages. All service areas need to ensure they are handling complaints at the correct stage of the complaint handling procedure, which will support improving their timescales management for stage 1 complaints.

Indicator 5 - Performance against timescales for Stage 1 Complaints:

3.23 The Council aims to close all stage 1 complaints within 5 working days. In 2024/25 the collective performance noted for stage 1 complaints was that 175 complaints were closed, with 116 of these closed within timescale. This equates to a 66.3% response within timescale rate. A further 3 (1.7%) complaints were closed after an extension was agreed with the service user.

Table 1: Number of complaints closed within timescale as a percentage at stage 1.

Period	No of Complaints	No of Complaints closed within timescale	%	No complaints with time extension used	%
2024/25	175	116	66.3%	3	1.7%
2023/24	189	150	79.4%	10	5.3%

# Indicator 5 – collective performance against timescales for Stage 2 Complaints

**3.24** The Council aims to close all stage 2 complaints within 20 working days. In 2024/25, the collective performance noted for stage 2 complaints was that 91 complaints were closed, with 60 of these complaints closed within timescale. This equates to 64.4% response within timescale rate. A further 5 (5.4%) complaints were closed after an extension was agreed with the service user. There is noted lower use of time extensions over the course of the year.

Table 2: Number of complaints closed within timescale as a percentage at stage 2.

Reporting period	No of complaints closed	Within timescale	%	No with extension	%
2024/25	91	60	65.2%	5	5.4%
2023/24	74	44	65.2%	4	5.4%

# Indicator 5 – collective performance against timescales escalated stage 2 complaints.

3.25 The Council aims to close all escalated stage 2 complaints within 20 working days. In 2024/245, the collective performance noted for escalated stage 2 complaints was that 13 complaints were closed, with 9 of these complaints being closed within timescale. This equates to a 69.2% response within timescale rate. A further 2 (15.4%) complaints were closed after an extension was agreed with the service user. There has been lower use of time extension over the course of the year.

Table 3: Number of complaints closed within timescale & percentages escalated stage 2.

Reporting period	No of complaints closed	Within timescale	%	No with extension	%
2024/25	13	9	69.2%	2	15.4%
2023/24	9	6	66.7%	0	0%

Table: Showing each areas performance against timescales at each stage of the complaint handling procedure.

	Stage 1 no	No of Stage 1	% Include	No of	%
	of closed	complaints within	time ext.	complaints	
	complaints	timescale	complaints	with time ext.	
Inverclyde Council	124	89	73.1%	2	1.6%
HSCP	41	17	41.5%	1	2.4%
Inverclyde Leisure	10	10	100%	0	0%
	Stage 2 no	No stage 2	% Include	No of	%
	of closed	complaints within	time ext.	Complaint with	
	complaints	timescale	complaints	time ext.	
Inverclyde Council	66	51	79.7%	3	4.5%
HSCP	25	6	24%	3	12%
Inverclyde Leisure	0	0	0%	0	0%
	Esc Stage 2	No of esc stage 2	% Include	No of	%
	no of closed	complaints within	time ext.	complains with	
	complaints	timescale	complaints	time ext.	
1 1 0 "			000/	4	400/
Inverclyde Council	10	9	90%	1	10%
HSCP	10 3	0	90%	1	33%

**Indicator 6 - Extensions to Complaint Timescales** 

**3.26** The complaint handling procedure allows officers to seek an extension to the timescales permitted for stage one and stage two complaint investigations. The maximum period permitted to extend the timescale of a complaint is 5 days for both complaint stages. This indicator reports the number and percentage of complaints at each stage of the procedure, which were closed after an extension to the 5 days, or 20-day timescale was authorised. There has been reduced use of time extensions despite the timescale pressures seen across stage 1 and stage 2 of the complaints handled.

Complaint stage	No of extensions agreed
Stage 1 complaints	3 extensions were agreed
Stage 2 complaints	5 extensions were agreed
Escalated stage 2 complaints	2 extensions were agreed

#### 4 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

4.1 The SPSO recommended that all Local Authorities should be completing customer satisfaction surveys with service users regularly to gain true insight on how well they are managing complaints. The SPSO has now advised that the Customer Satisfaction Survey is optional rather than a mandatory requirement for the Council to enrich their understanding of how well it is managing complaints. Therefore, views will be obtained on the Council's approach to this optional requirement before any development work is progressed.

#### 5 LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

**5.1** The Council is committed to reflecting on occasions when it does not get it right to highlight opportunities for improvement. As such, where a complaint has been upheld or partially

- upheld, the service determines what actions are required to support improvement and prevent a repeat of circumstances that led to the complaint.
- 5.2 Service improvement recording commenced in November 2016 for Inverclyde Council only. This has been embedded within services and is reported quarterly to Directorate Management Teams. During 2024/25 the HSCP have been noting their service improvements thereby meeting this requirement. Following the implementation of the new complaint handling system Workpro in November 2024 tracking of this information can be undertaken in a centralised way going forward providing officers record the information in the complaint handling system. Care requires to be exercised in the sharing of these matters as some of the learnings are specific to the individual care.
- 5.3 The Council shares learnings taken from complaints on a quarterly basis with the Directorate Management Teams, along with statistical information, in compliance with the SPSO's expected requirements for the Council. A selection of the learnings is published on the Council's website each quarter along with the quarterly statistics although there have been some noted delays in this being actioned timely due to pressure within the wider team. Each year the annual report is prepared and presented to the Corporate Management Team for review and scrutiny to conclude the performance reporting for the year.

# 6 SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN (SPSO) - RIGHT OF REVIEW

**6.1** Following a stage two investigation and written response, if a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint investigation, they have a right of review through the SPSO. The table below outlines the number complaints received at the SPSO for Inverclyde Council and HSCP.

Table: Complaints received by the SPSO for a review

Year	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Inverclyde Council	13	12	10	12	7	15
HSCP	3	7	1	4	3	11

- **6.2** The SPSO reviewed 13 complaints for Inverciyde Council of which 4 complaints were reviewed at the advice stage and these complaints were not taken forward. A further 9 complaints were reviewed at the early resolution stage of the procedure. The outcome of these reviews were as follows:
  - 6 complaints were recognised as examples of good complaint handlling;
  - 2 complaints were reviewed and insufficient benefit would be gained from further investigation of the complaint;
  - 1 complaint SPSO were unable to proceed with the investigation.
- **6.3** The SPSO reviewed 3 HSCP complaints of which 3 were conducted at early resolution stage and not taken forward.
  - 1 complaint was recognised as an example of good complaint handling,
  - 1 complaint reviewed and noted that insufficient benefit would be gained from further investigation of the complaint;

• 1 subject matter not in jurisdiction.

**6.4** . The table below outlines the SPSO's published statistics for Inverclyde Council.

Table: SPSO breakdown by reviews by stage and outcomes for Inverclyde Council

Stage	Outcome Group	Inverclyde Council
Advice	A&G - Complaint submissions - mature	1
	A&G - Complaint submissions - premature	1
	A&G - Enquiries	2
	Unable to proceed	0
	Total	4
Early Resolution	Cause and impact test not met (s 5 (3))	0
	Discretion – Alternative action proposed	0
	Discretion – Alternative route used or available	0
	Discretion – Good complaint handling	6
	Discretion – Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation	2
	Discretion – Referred back	0
	Discretion – Resolved - both parties satisfied with proposed outcome	0
	Member of the public test not met (s 5 (6))	0
	0	
	Right of appeal to court/tribunal/Scottish ministers (s 7 (8))	0
	Subject matter not in jurisdiction	0
	Time limit (s 10)	0
	Unable to proceed	1
	Total	9
Investigation	Fully upheld	0
	Not duly made or withdrawn	0
	Not upheld	0
	Some upheld	0
	Total	0
Total		13

**6.5** The SPSO reviewed three complaints for the HSCP and no complaints were investigated. The table below outlines the SPSO's published statistics for the HSCP.

Table: SPSO breakdown by reviews by stage and outcomes for HSCP

Stage	Outcome Group	Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership
Advice	A&G - Complaint submissions - mature	0
	A&G - Complaint submissions - premature	0
	A&G - Enquiries	0
	Total	0
Early Resolution	Cause and impact test not met (s 5 (3))	0
	Discretion – Alternative action proposed	0
	Discretion – Alternative route used or available	0
	Discretion – Good complaint handling	1
	Discretion – Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation	1
	Discretion – Referred back	0
	Discretion – Resolved - both parties satisfied with proposed outcome	0
	Premature	0
	Right of appeal to court/tribunal/Scottish ministers (s 7 (8))	0
	Subject matter not in jurisdiction	1
	Time limit (s 10)	0
	Unable to proceed	0
	Total	3
Investigation	Fully upheld	0
	Not duly made or withdrawn	0
	Not upheld	0
	Resolved	0
	Some upheld	0
	Total	0
Total		3

# 7 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

**7.1** The Council reports and publishes its complaint statistics quarterly and annually in line with performance indicators published by the SPSO along with a selection of improvement actions that will be taken as a result of complaints investigated.

# 8 COMPLAINT HANDLING SYSTEM

8.1 The Council implemented the new complaint handling system in November 2024 part way through quarter 3 of the performance year. The implementation of the system, while successful, placed additional pressures on the Information Governance Team in respect of the project development involved in introducing a new system and transitioning over to the new system for the Council. It has been a transitional period for all service areas for the recording and reporting of complaints within the new process. The new system has improved the process and reporting functionality that we have access to and increased

the resilience and stability of the system. The system enhances the option for recording information in a more granular way as well as the benefits to manage changes more efficiently. The system also includes service improvement tracking to support services recording this information following a complaint. Given the new system was introduced part way through quarter 3 this has meant that the legacy system was still in use for the majority of the year, therefore we have been running two parralel sets of data to produce reports. Officers are getting familiar with the process and over time this will become more embedded in it's use. It will also enable Services to have increased opportunities to learn from complaints and use this information to inform service improvements.

#### 9 POSITIVE COMMENTS

9.1 Throughout the year the Council receives positive comments and compliments from service users across all services. These recognise where employees have gone above and beyond the normal standard of service delivery and these compliments are shared with the service teams concerned directly by the Customer Service Centre to ensure staff receive balanced feedback relating performance.

#### 10 TRAINING

- 10.1 Complaint handling training forms part of the induction process for all new staff joining the Council. Line managers identify which new staff require training, which involves completion of the complaint handling procedure e-learning module followed by attendance at a digital or face-to-face training course on the more practical aspects of dealing with complaints using the complaint handling procedure. Each year, the Education Service provides an induction training programme to all relevant staff who will be required to deal with complaints which also includes training on the use of the complaint handling system
- **10.2** Refresher training is provided on a regular basis on request from service areas and where it is deemed necessary. This includes the use of the complaint handling system which has been undertaken with the introduction of a new complaint handling system this year. All training is tracked using personal individual development plans. A total of 164 hours training has been delivered during 2024/25 for the Council.

#### 11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Council is committed to investigating, learning from and taking action as a result of individual complaints where it is found that standards have fallen below the level expected and where services could be improved. By listening to the views of service users who make a complaint, the Council can improve its services.
- 11.2 In the coming year, the key action is again for services to focus on reducing the time taken to respond to complaints at each stage of the complaint handling process. This is particularly relevant when the Council is seeing an increase in the complexity of

complaints received by it. Balancing the need to deal with complex complaints timeously together with the implementation of child friendly complaints (which involves more steps to be carried out before the investigation commences) alongside all other priorities and challenges facing the Council will be essential, whilst also managing the resources required to support this.

11.3 The Council has incorporated the handling of complaints using the the Child Friendly Complaint procedure, this is sitting alongside the Model Complaint Handling Procedure. The principles of the Child Friendly Complaint Procedure underpin how to handle and investigate complaints involving children in a way that respects their rights under UNCRC Act. Parental Guidance has been provided by the SPSO to support parents understand what they can expect from the Council when they raise a complaint about matters affecting their child either directly or on their behalf. A training programme specific to Child Friendly Complaints is being devised for officers who handle complaints to develop their skills further to ensure they adapt their approach when appropriate paying regards to the child's rights. A holistic approach is being taken to complaints that are incoming to the Council which have been identified as child friendly complaints, to ensure we can learn from these and incorporate learnings into the training materials which are under development



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 8** 

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Interim Chief Financial Officer Report No: FIN/50/25/AE

Contact Officer: Angela Edmiston Contact No: 01475 712143

Subject: Approach to the 2026/27 Budget

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1 1	⊠For Decision	☐ For Information/Noting
1.1		

- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an initial assessment of the short to medium term budget position of the Council and to seek decisions on elements of the approach to be taken in determining the March 2026 (2026/27) Budget.
- 1.3 When the March 2025 (2025/26) Budget was agreed it was estimated there was a £16.35 million funding gap, before any increase in Council Tax, over the period 2026/28. This projected gap remained at this level in the June Financial Strategy, a further £7.2 million gap being identified for 2028/29, bringing the total funding gap to £23.55 million for the three-year period 2026/29.
- 1.4 At the budget setting March 2025, the Council approved £1.245 million use of reserves to balance the 2025/26 budget. The projected funding gap of £23.55 million for 2026/29 is based on negating the use of the £1.245 million reserves over the same period.
- 1.5 The recently issued Scottish Government Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Fiscal Sustainability Delivery Plan (FSDP) confirms the financial challenges facing the Scottish Government in both revenue and capital resources and this confirms that the challenging financial environment for local government is likely to continue.
- 1.6 In consultation with the Members Budget Working Group (MBWG), the Corporate Management Team (CMT) have considered several areas regarding the approach to the 2026/27 budget setting and have proposed the following recommendations for consideration by the Committee:
  - Budget period propose a rolling 2-year revenue budget (2026/28). The purpose is to set a minimum 1 year budget with the aim to identify savings towards progressing balancing the second year. This will include the standard 3 year capital programme covering 2026/29.
  - Council Tax proposal to give early consideration of a Council tax increase and provide illustrative representations of 3 levels of uplift to Council tax; 5%, 7.5% and 10%.
  - Savings propose a review of the savings identified but not previously taken and that the CMT should develop further saving options. Agree that a workshop should be undertaken with the MBWG to review statutory / non statutory delivery of services.
  - Public Consultation –propose a detailed public consultation commencing January 2026, closing early February 2026.
  - 2025/26 pay award propose that the IJB receive a share of the additional Scottish Government funding of 1% agreed pay award

1.7 To support the budget development, the Council operates the Delivering Differently programme. The CMT are currently reviewing the projects which will be presented to the MBWG prior to an update report to November 2025 Policy & Resources Committee.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee note the latest assessed two year funding gap faced by the Council and the key messages from the Scottish Government MTFS which confirm that the significant financial challenges facing the Council remain.
- 2.2 It is recommended the Committee approve the proposals contained in the report as follows:
  - 1. That the Council develops a rolling two year Revenue Budget, setting a minimum one year budget with savings developed to progress balancing the second year budget.
  - 2. That the Council develops a three year Capital Budget covering the period 2026/29.
  - 3. That the Council gives early consideration to the level of Council tax for 2026/27.
  - 4. That the Council approves that a share of the additional Scottish Government pay funding for 2025/26 is passported to the IJB once funding has been confirmed.
  - 5. That the Council notes the proposed timeline for the public consultation.
  - 6. That the Chief Executive be given delegated authority to progress Voluntary Early Release (VER) trawls associated with new saving options developed by the CMT on the understanding that releases will be made only on the approval of Committee/Council.
- 2.3 The Committee note that an update to the Delivering Differently Programme projects will be presented to the November Policy & Resources Committee.

Angela Edmiston
Interim Chief Financial Officer

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council approved the 2025/26 Revenue Budget and 2025/28 Capital Programme on 6 March 2025. The revenue budget was balanced, after adjustments, via the approval of £3.383 million of savings, an 8.5% increase in Council Tax and the use of £1.245 million from Reserves. The Capital Programme included a further £1.0 million to the Capital Contingency funded from the improved Capital Grant awarded in 2025/26. This resulted in a £2.890 million over provision of projects which was an over provision of 4.4% but remained within the 5.0% over provision limit set by the Council.
- 3.2 The Annual Accounts for 2024/25 were considered by the Audit Committee on 26 June 2025 and the last projected out-turn position reported to the Policy & Resources Committee in June 2025 was a £0.046 million underspend against the approved budget with surplus reserves of £0.052 million over and above the £4.0 million contingency. The Council approved fully utilising free reserves as part of the budget decisions taken in March 2025 and this decision was reflected in the June 2025 Policy & Resources Committee report. The unaudited accounts are reflecting a similar position to the last Policy & Resources report, with a slight increase on free reserves of £0.325 million. In line with previous years this position may change as the Annual Accounts are finalised.

# 3.3 Scottish Government Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Scottish Government Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was published 25 June 2025 alongside a new Fiscal Sustainability Delivery Plan (FSDP). The MTFS reflects the impacts of the UK Spending Review announced on 11 June 2025. The conclusions of the Scottish Spending Review will be published alongside the 2026/27 Scottish Budget in December 2025. The Spending Review is expected to set out indicative resource spending plans up to 2028/29 and capital spending plans up to 2029/30. The main points to note from the MTFS are:

- Growth in overall funding for the Scottish Government budget is set to increase by 0.8 % per annum in real terms.
- Total funding in 2025/26 is £485 million higher than reported in May. This increase is mainly a result of additional funding carried forward to 2025/26, the UK Government changes to the winter fuel payment in England and Wales and lower borrowing costs than planned.
- The resources projected funding and estimated spending is expected to grow from a balanced budget position in 2025/26 to a funding gap of £2.6 billion in 2029/30.
- The capital block grant is expected to decrease by 1.1% in real terms between 2025/26 and 2029/30.
- The capital budget is projecting a £1.1 billion budget gap in 2026/27 rising to £2.1 billion by 2029/30.
- Assumptions for pay are based on the Public Sector Pay Policy published in December 2024.
   This allowed employers flexibility to configure 3 year pay proposals within a 9% pay envelope commencing 2025/26. Thereafter, pay is assumed at a CPI inflation rate of 2% from 2027/28.
- Health and Social care spend has grown faster than predicted at the last MTFS, 5.6% compared to 4%. The forecast is updated to assume a nominal growth rate of between 5% and 5.4% across the forecast period.

The MTFS confirms the challenging financial position faced by the Scottish Government and this year published the FSDP which sets out the actions that will be taken to close the resources and capital budget gaps. The actions noted are:

- A reduction in public sector workforce of 0.5% per annum over 5 years projecting savings increasing from £0.1 billion to £0.7 billion per year over the 5 year period.
- Wider public sector efficiencies, reforms and revenue raising projecting savings of £0.6 billion to £1.5 billion per annum over the 5 year period.
- Increasing public value with a target saving of between £0.3 billion and £0.7 billion per year over the 5 year period.

- 3.4 The CMT and MBWG met and considered several areas relating to the approach to setting the budget in March 2026. Consideration was given to the following:
  - Potential Budget Period. The last multi year settlement from the Scottish Government occurred in 2013/16. The Scottish Government's MTFS states that the Spending Review will include indicative resource spending plans up to 2028/29 and capital spending plans up to 2029/30 alongside the 2026/27 Scottish budget. This may result in the Scottish Government considering a multi year settlement.
  - Council Tax. Raising Council Tax is a potential step to closing the budget gap. It may be beneficial to consider an increase in Council Tax rates when developing savings proposals to close the budget gap. As part of the March 2025 budget, the Council approved an increase of 8.5% to Council Tax. A 1% increase in Council Tax will now generate approximately £380,000 of revenue for the Council. For illustrative purposes, the table below demonstrates the impact on the residual budget gap if increases on Council Tax of 5%, 7.5% and 10 were applied. It should be noted, to close the 2026/27 budget gap of £8.05 million would require an increase on Council Tax of approximately 21%.

Budget Gap 2026/29				
	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
MTFS June 2025	£m	£m	£m	£m
(For Demonstration)				
Projected Budget Gap - Mid Range 5% Increase in Council Tax	8.05	8.30	7.20	23.55
Income	(1.90)	(2.00)	(2.10)	(6.00)
Residual Budget Gap	6.15	6.30	5.10	17.55
Projected Budget Gap - Mid Range 7.5% Increase in Council Tax	8.05	8.30	7.20	23.55
Income	(2.85)	(3.08)	(3.30)	(9.23)
Residual Budget Gap	5.20	5.23	3.90	14.33
Projected Budget Gap - Mid Range 10% Increase in Council Tax	8.05	8.30	7.20	23.55
Income	(3.80)	(4.20)	(4.60)	(12.60)
Residual Budget Gap	4.25	4.10	2.60	10.95

- 2025/26 Pay Award. The 2025/26 pay award has been agreed at 4%, which is 1% higher than the Council allowed for in the budget strategy. The extra cost will be funded by the Scottish Government and consideration was given to whether a share of the extra funding should be passported to the IJB as it was with the 2024/25 pay deal.
- Savings. A significant number of savings options will be required to close the funding gap.
   CMT have a list of savings options previously presented and not taken with work also
   underway with the MBWG on statutory and non-statutory service provision to review potential
   options. The CMT oversee the Delivering Differently Programme and approved Workstreams,
   and will continue to review projects and identify new projects where possible. An update to
   the Delivering Differently Programme is due to be reported to Policy & Resources Committee
   in November 2025.

Public Consultation. Savings proposals to close the funding gap will require a sufficient timescale for consultation with the JBG, MBWG and members of the public. Three options for the consultation process were discussed with the MBWG. Option 1 proposes consultation in September/October 2025 with results reported to Policy & Resources Committee in November 2025. Option 2 proposes consultation in October 2025 with results reported to Council in December 2025. Finally, option 3 proposes a more focused consultation January/ February 2026 with results reported to Council February 2025.

# 3.5 Capital Programme

At the 2025/26 budget setting and June Finance Strategy, it was highlighted that there is a need to start addressing the size of the Council's physical asset base as part of the coming budget to reduce pressure on the programme. During the budget process, £1 million was added to the Capital contingency from the improved Government Grant. This has subsequently been allocated to the Greenock Central Levelling Up Fund (LUF) project resulting in a reduced capital contingency balance of £1.2 million.

3.6 The position reported at the March budget setting, shows an overall shortfall in the Capital Programme of £2.89 million to maintain existing infrastructure. This shortfall in resources is prior to any additional funding or new projects which elected members may want considered, or any major Net Zero investment post 2025/26.

#### 4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 Following consultation with the MBWG, the CMT propose the following recommendations.
- 4.2 The CMT propose to set a rolling two year Revenue budget. The Council faces a budget gap for 2026/28 of £16.35 million. There is recognition that setting a two year Revenue budget may be difficult, therefore, it is recommended a rolling two year Revenue budget to be set. The objective is to set at least a balanced one year Revenue budget with savings being progressed to balance the second year if possible. The CMT recommend a three year Capital budget covering 2026/29.
- 4.3 The Committee is asked to consider the level of Council Tax increase for 2026/27. 1% increase on Council Tax will raise approximately £380,000 of Council Tax income. For illustration, the impact on the budget gap if Council Tax was increased by 5%, 7.5% and 10% can be seen at the table in section 3.4 above. The Committee is asked whether consideration of the indicative level of Council Tax will be made alongside the savings and form part of the public consultation.
- 4.4 The proposed pay agreement is a two-year deal with 4% for 2025/26 and 3.5% for 2026/27. The Scottish Government has provided assurances that they will fund any associated costs over 3%. Like the 2024/25 pay deal, the Scottish Government may expect that a proportion of this is passported to the IJB for social care employees. The CMT would recommend passporting a share of the Scottish Government funding to the IJB once the sum has been confirmed.
- 4.5 The Committee are asked to note that the Delivering Differently projects are required to be updated and will be reported to November Policy & Resources Committee.
- 4.6 The Committee are asked to agree that the Chief Executive be given delegated authority to progress Voluntary Early Release (VER) trawls associated with new saving options developed by the CMT on the understanding that releases will be made only on the approval of Committee/Council.

# 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

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

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial	Х	
Legal/Risk	Х	
Human Resources	Х	
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	Х	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights		Х
& Wellbeing		
Environmental & Sustainability		Х
Data Protection		Х

#### 5.2 Finance

The 2026/27 Budget will require a significant level of support from Finance and other services.

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
HSCP	Employee Costs	2025/26	TBC	NA	Share of funding from Scottish Government 2025/26 pay contribution.

# 5.3 Legal/Risk

The budget process carries with it several legal requirements especially around savings and consultation. It is important that sufficient time and capacity is set aside to ensure these are complied with correctly.

The main risks relate to the continued volatility and uncertainty around some of the cost drivers in the budget especially around non-pay inflation. The development of options and regular updates to MBWG/Committee and the Council ensures that officers regularly review the position.

#### 5.4 **Human Resources**

Based on the estimated 2026/28 funding gap, the employee impacts of the remaining savings and the addition to this from new savings developed, it is clear there will be the need for several VER trawls. This will require detailed discussions via the Joint Budget Group and the potential requirement for increased funding to meet the costs of early releases. During the 2024/26 budget process, the Council approved enhancement to the voluntary severance policy. The enhanced conditions related solely to releases relating to the 2024/26 budget, the enhanced conditions will end on 31 March 2026 and employee releases after 31 March 2026 will revert to the substantive voluntary severance conditions.

# 5.5 Strategic

The Council Plan should be considered when developing savings proposals.

#### 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The CMT and MBWG have been consulted on this report.

#### 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Scotland's Fiscal Outlook: The Scottish Government's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025 The Scottish Government's Fiscal Sustainability Delivery Plan - 2025



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 9** 

Report To: Policy and Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Head of Culture, Communities &

**Educational Resources** 

Report No: PR/21/25/TM

Contact Officer: Tony McEwan Contact No: 01475 712828

Subject: Anti-Poverty Initiatives

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 ⊠For Decision ⊠For Information/Noting

- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with new proposals for the use of Anti-Poverty Initiatives funded by the Inverclyde Council Anti-Poverty recurring budget for the period to March 2027 and to update the committee on the mentoring partnership with the Wise Group.
- 1.3 It is proposed that the Policy and Resources Committee:
  - delegates powers to the Corporate Director of Education, Communities and Organisational Development to allocate up to £50K of the funding to projects linked to food insecurity over the 2025/26 and 2026/27 winter periods; and
  - approves funding to support tenancies for homeless households as outlined in Appendix 2 to this report.
- 1.4 The report also provides the Committee with information relation to the emerging work on relational support with the Wise Group.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee:
  - approves delegated powers for the Corporate Director of Education, Communities and Organisational Development to allocate up to £50K of Anti-poverty funding to projects linked to food insecurity over the 25/26 and 26/27 winter periods;
  - approves that funding of £75K be allocated to support tenancies for homeless households; and
  - notes the ongoing work with the Wise Group.

Tony McEwan
Head of Culture, Communities & Educational Resources

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 In 2021 Inverclyde Council and HSCP agreed to create a £1.08 million recurring budget to fund a range of local initiatives to mitigate the impact of poverty and deprivation levels that were reported in the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2020. The Full Council in December 2022 agreed a £600k saving from the Council's portion of the recurring anti-poverty budget of £830k, leaving £230k. It also agreed to add in existing Education funding for various education initiatives relating to anti-poverty, totalling £259k. Following reviews of the annual recurring funding as part of budget exercises, the total recurring anti-poverty budget available for 2025/26 is £472,000. This funding is allocated to Service Committee budgets and monitored through regular budget monitoring reports to Committees.
- 3.2 In addition to the recurring budget there is an Anti-Poverty earmarked reserve made up of the carry forward from previous years' Anti-Poverty funding, together with additional funding from reserves, agreed by Members as part of the 2024/25 and 2025/26 budget processes. In 2025/26 this earmarked reserve is £2,351,000, of which £788,000 is currently unallocated. The Policy and Resources Committee has been keen that officers continue to review existing projects and also that they bring forward new proposals for the unallocated Anti-Poverty budget. New proposals are detailed in section 4 below.
- 3.3 Appendix 1 to this report gives a financial overview of the Anti-Poverty earmarked reserve budget. This demonstrates that if the new projects proposed in this report are agreed there remains £663,000 unallocated. A further report is planned later in 2026 detailing the impact of the spend from this budget.

#### 4.0 PROPOSALS - NEW PROJECTS

- 4.1 Food insecurity: previously the Council has delegated powers to the Corporate Director of Education, Communities and Organisational Development to allocate funding to projects linked to food insecurity, this includes funding to support local foodbanks. It is recommended that delegated power is given again to provide up to £50K to support to foodbanks, food larders, community fridges and other organisations actively providing access to food and operating over the winter periods of 2025/26 and 2026/27.
- 4.2 Supporting Tenancies for Homeless Households: When clients are assessed as unintentionally homeless, and have secured a permanent offer of housing, the next step is to settle them into their new homes. The HSCP has two Resettlement and Support Workers (RSWs) whose principal role this is to support these households and assist by applying to the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) for vital goods that are essential to enable these households make their house a home. Due to recent changes in the Scottish Welfare Fund regulations, people are no longer provided with awards for carpets or washing machines, except for certain health conditions such as severe mobility, skin conditions or have children experiencing the same. It is therefore proposed to allocate £75K from the Anti-poverty fund to support approximately 100 tenancies over the next 3 years. Appendix 2 gives an overview of the project and associated costs.
- 4.3 Partnership with the Wise Group: The Scottish Government has provided funding to the Wise group to deliver Relational mentoring Support. This project aims to work in partnership with key public services and third sector organisations across local authority areas that have been identified as experiencing significantly higher levels of child poverty than the national average. Relational Mentoring Scotland is dedicated to creating and sustaining pathways out of poverty by fostering enduring, trust-based relationships that empower families. The Wise group pairs professionally trained mentors with families to provide personalised support. After a successful meeting with members of the officer Anti-poverty group the Wise group are now delivering a consistent weekly presence at the B-Hive, enabling closer engagement with families and improved referral pathways to specialist support. Work has continued with local services such as the New to Scotland team to strengthen partnerships and address barriers faced by newly arrived individuals in accessing timely support. Dialogue with housing and support providers has focused on continuity of care and community integration. Plans are also in place to re-establish a regular

presence at Greenock Job Centre to bridge support gaps and connect individuals with available services to aid their journey out of poverty.

# 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

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

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial	Χ	
Legal/Risk		Χ
Human Resources		Χ
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	Χ	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights		Χ
& Wellbeing		
Environmental & Sustainability		Х
Data Protection		Х

# 5.2 Finance

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Anti-Poverty EMR	Food Poverty	2025/27	£50,000		Funded from AP EMR unallocated balance
	Homelessness Support	2025/28	£75,000		Funded from AP EMR unallocated balance

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

N/A

# 5.4 Human Resources

N/A

# 5.5 Strategic

This supports the outcomes of the council and partnership plans.

# 5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

# (a) Equalities

•	ort has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) with the following outcome:
	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.
Х	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required.
Fairer So	cotland Duty
Has there	e been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of ?
	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty.
Children	and Young People
Has a Cl	nildren's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?
	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
Х	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights.
Environ	mental/Sustainability
Has a St	rategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?
	YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.
	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.
Data Pro	otection
Has a Da	ata Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?
	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
Х	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

(b)

(c)

5.7

5.8

# 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 None.

# 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

Anti Poverty Earmarked Reserve	Appendix 1
Funding 2025/26	
2024/25 EMR Underspend	£1,751,000
New Funding - Anti Poverty Initiatives (including Employability) (agreed 6 March 2025)	£600,000
	£2,351,000
Agreed Expenditure	
	Total Budget
Additional Food Insecurity Funding Scottish Welfare Fund 3 Year Clothing Grant 3 Year Clothing Grant Primary 4 Year Free School Meals Duke of Edinburgh Warm Hands of Friendship	£7,000 £75,000 £300,000 £126,000 £189,000 £120,000 £264,000
Fuel Poverty Grieve Road Pantry 01/01/25-31/03/26 (agreed 4 February 2025)	£382,000 £40,000
Playschemes (agreed 3 June 2025)	£60,000
Proposed Expenditure	
Food Poverty	£50,000
Homelessness Support	£75,000
Unallocated Budget	£663,000
	£2,351,000

# **Appendix 2 Homelessness Support**

#### **Background**

When people are assessed as Homeless, unintentionally, and have secured an offer of permanent housing, the next step is to settle them into their new homes. The HSCP has Resettlement and Support Workers (RSW) within the Housing Options and Homelessness Advice Service whose principal role is to assist in procuring these tenancy essential items.

Both employees assist the client by applying to the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) for vital goods to enable them to make their house a home, increase the sustainability of their tenancy and ultimately preventing tenancy failure and repeat homelessness.

Inverclyde Council amended the SWF priority level from high to medium priority during the pandemic which allowed the approval of more grants and the payment of more generous grants.

However, the priority level has since returned to high priority in August 2021, increasing the threshold for meeting grant criteria and resulting in fewer applicants receiving awards for carpets or a washing machine, except for certain health conditions such as severe mobility issues, skin conditions or have children experiencing the same.

#### Financial overview

Reviewing 35 pepole recently housed, only 5 of them (14%) were awarded carpets and washing machines via the SWF.

Working on an average homeless applicant being assigned a 1 bedroom property, below is the costing for carpets and actual cost for a washing machine:-

Carpets £500Washing Machine £250.92

• Total £750 (rounded off for ease)

If we were to be successful with securing this funding, which equates to approx. £2500 per month, this could provide entirely carpeted homes for an additional 4 people per month **or** washing machines to an additional 10 people per month.

#### The difference it can make – Resettlement and Support Workers (RSW)

Both employees confirm that when people receive grants for carpets or washing machines there is a reduction in anxiety with the client immediately. An uncarpeted home can increase noise to neighbours; it will be colder in the winter therefore more money to be spent on fuel to keep warm. A house with no washing machine means trips to a launderette, and the costs associated with that may be prohibitive.

# The difference it can make – Rapid Rehousing Support Worker (RRSW)

The rapid rehousing support team's main objective is to empower individuals to achieve long-term stability and self-reliance, this funding would improve tenancy sustainment by creating a stable home environment. With almost all supported service users coming from a position of financial hardship, many of the things that we take for granted when moving into our new home may seem out of reach.

By providing these often-overlooked necessities, we can directly alleviate material deprivation and enhance dignity among our most vulnerable households.

A well-equipped home reduces stress, prevents housing crises, and fosters an environment of long-term stability for tenants. This investment would not only combat the immediate impact of poverty incurred by moving but also builds the foundation for self-reliance and tenancy sustainment.



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 10** 

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Interim Director - Regeneration Report No: PR/24/25/NM/JH

Contact Officer: Jennifer Horn Contact No: 01475 715573

Subject: Repopulation Strategy 2025-2028

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 ⊠For Decision ⊠For Information/Noting

- 1.2 This report presents the Proposed Inverclyde Repopulation Strategy 2025-2028 (Appendix 1) for approval.
- 1.3 The Strategy is intended to provide a programme of activity on tackling depopulation, utilising Inverclyde Council and Scottish Government funding, the latter being provided as part of a national programme of activity to combat population decline within a programme of funded pilot areas, which includes Inverclyde, to trial initiatives to combat population decline. The Strategy also identified links with other key policy documents that will be delivering impact in tackling population decline and seeks to provide a coherent mapping of activity.
- 1.4 The report seeks approval of the Repopulation Strategy 2025-2028 including action plan, which will become a live document; and to update the Alliance Board of the Strategy for information and to support co-delivery of the strategy.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
  - i) approves the Repopulation Strategy noted in appendix 1;
  - ii) agree to present an update to the Alliance Board to advise partners and secure support for the delivery of the strategy.

Neale McIlvanney Interim Director – Regeneration

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 Inverclyde has experienced one of the most sustained patterns of depopulation in urban Scotland over several decades. Since 1981, the area has lost approximately 22,000 residents. More recently, between 1998 and 2021, Inverclyde's population declined by 8.9%, making it the local authority with the highest negative change in Scotland, compared to a national population growth of 8.2%.
- 3.2 The most recent decade (2011 and 2021) saw a further 5.6%, decrease. As of 2022, Inverclyde's estimated population was 77,280. This figure is projected to fall to 72,280 by 2028, a decrease of 6.1% over six years. While there has been a small rise in net migration in recent years, this has not been enough to offset natural population decline. Without intervention, longer terms forecasts suggest an additional 13% decline by 2040.
- 3.3 The drivers of depopulation in Inverclyde reflect complex, urban specific challenges including the legacy of deindustrialisation, economic restructuring, housing issues and outward migration of younger residents.
- 3.4 It is not only the fall in population that presents challenges, the demographic makeup also presents future challenges. Inverclyde is experiencing significant demographic shifts, with over one in five residents aged 65 or older (22.8% in 2023), compared to the Scottish national average. The number of children under 16 is projected to decline by 15%, while the working-age population is also expected to fall by 15% over the coming decades. Young adults, particularly those under 25, continue to leave Inverclyde in steady numbers, often for work or education. Additionally, 39.5% of households are single-person households, a figure linked to an ageing population and declining birth rates.
- 3.5 The shift in demographics and declining population has wide reaching implications for the area's economy, public services, housing and community wellbeing.
- 3.6 The Scottish Government's Addressing Depopulation Action Plan (2024) identifies Inverclyde as a key urban area for targeted repopulation activity. Inverclyde Council has strengthened its approach by embedding population sustainability within the 2023-2028 Council Plan. Aims to address depopulation in Inverclyde can be seen throughout many of the Council's strategies and plans.
- 3.7 To support the delivery of the agenda, a dedicated Community Repopulation Officer was appointed in March 2025, part funded through the Scottish Government's Addressing Depopulation Grant. This has been supported through Invercelyde Council.
- 3.8 There has been an evaluation of previous studies, interventions, and recommendations from the 2019 Repopulation Strategy, along with current activity aimed at addressing depopulation within Inverclyde. This includes reviewing updated data sources, the 2022 Census, mid-year 2024 statistics, local benchmarking indicators, stakeholder feedback, and national, regional and local council policy documents and plans to assess whether the underlying drivers of depopulation have changed.
- 3.9 Though it is clear progress has been made since 2019 but also highlighted areas where further action is needed as well as some actions remaining outstanding, and which have been adopted under the proposed Strategy.

#### 4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 It is recommended that Committee approve the proposed Repopulation Strategy (Appendix 1) which sets out strategic actions for 2025–2028).
- 4.2 The actions set out in this strategy are within the following key themes:
  - Undertaking focused research to advance the Council's strategic understanding of the
    drivers of depopulation and short, medium and long term interventions to progress
    sustainable population increase together with a clear understanding of the resources
    required to respond to depopulation in the medium to long term to inform future strategies.
  - Development of a coordinated view of the network of plans, policies and strategies that can positively support repopulation and influencing future policies to ensure all policy levers are being utilised and coordination of activity is taking place through development of an effective monitoring toolkit.
  - Implementation of tangible initiatives to tackle population decline in the short term –
    including place marketing, business support and support for families moving to Inverclyde
    and support for new to Scotland residents across economic development, communities
    and education services.
- 4.3 To achieve the actions budget for repopulation is a total of £120k which comprises of £90k from Inverclyde Council Earmarked Reserves and a £30k grant from Scottish Government which must be spent by the end of the financial year. The Scottish Government grant has already supported £30k of investment in activity contained in the Action Plan during financial year ending March 2025.
- 4.4 The Community Resettlement Officer is already in post and has assembled the Strategy and engaged widely with partners to inform interventions. The residual funding is allocated within the Strategy to actions aligning with the strategic objectives set out in 4.2. It is recognised that while the resource/funding available through the programme is welcome and will make a difference, there will require to be future iterations and potentially further and more significant resources allocated to addressing depopulation. As such, the strategy seeks to inform the future through research, partnership working and direct interventions. As a result of the funding timescales (i.e. 2 years), the Strategy has been developed with a short lifespan in order that the output of the programme informs the next iteration of the Council Plan and other strategic policies. It is intended that the Action Plan within the Strategy will be 'live' so that periodic updates can be provided to government, partners (e.g. through Alliance Board) and so that as the officer advances proposals in collaboration with partners, any new identified actions or resources can be added to the Plan.
- 4.5 It is also clear in the challenge, that this cannot be 'solved' by the Council alone and requires multi-service, multi-agency and community support. Population decline can only be reversed with everyone working together, in their policies and practices, to embed solutions that promote repopulation, and do not negatively impact re-population efforts. As such, it is also recommended that this work is presented to the Alliance Board to update community planning partners and seek buy in and support to a co-delivery model whereby partners all work to address depopulation.

### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

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

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial	Х	

Legal/Risk		
Human Resources	Х	
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	Х	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights	Х	
& Wellbeing		
Environmental & Sustainability		
Data Protection		

### 5.2 Finance

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
	Repopulation	2025- 2027	£30k of Scottish Government Funding £63k of Council		
			allocated EMR		

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

None.

### 5.4 Human Resources

A temporary post was created and recruitment was successful for the Repopulation Officer.

### 5.5 **Strategic**

De-population has far ranging consequences across Council services and beyond.

### 5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

### (a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

x YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.

	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.
Fairer Scot	land Duty
Has there to outcome?	peen active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of
	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty for the following reasons: Provide reasons why the report has been assessed as not relevant.
Children ar	nd Young People
Has a Child	dren's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?
	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
Х	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights.
Environme	ental/Sustainability
Has a Strat	tegic Environmental Assessment been carried out?
	YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.
Х	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.
Data Prote	ection
Has a Data	Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?
	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
Х	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

(b)

(c)

5.7

5.8

### **6.0 CONSULTATION**

6.1 Throughout the delivery of the Strategy, broad engagement will be vital to success. It is envisaged that the programme of work will have its own governance model to coordinate activity within the Council, and to allow the Government monitoring and evaluation to be complete. However, it is also envisaged that this item should be presented to a future Alliance Board to update partners and to seek cooperation from partners to delivery.

In addition, within the research it is envisaged that lived experience focus groups will be established to focus on young people, new Scots, and population groups that are most likely to leave Inverclyde or be attracted to move to Inverclyde. This research will be critical to focusing future interventions on areas of biggest impact.

### 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Appendix 1: Inverclyde Repopulation Strategy 2025-2028

# **Appendix 1**

# **INVERCLYDE COUNCIL – REPOPULATION STRATEGY 2025-2028**



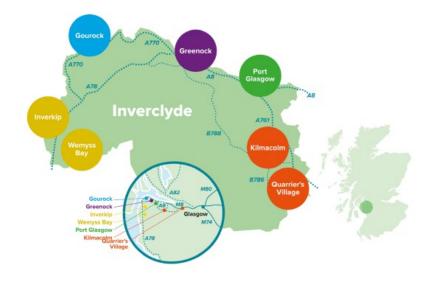


### Introduction

This strategy provides a focus for supporting strategic effort to stop population decline in Inverclyde.

The continued natural decline, people moving to other parts of Scotland, and a heavy reliance on international migration have all had a long-term impact on Inverclyde's socio-economic profile and taking action to stop population decline is vital to creating a sustainable and prosperous Inverclyde.

The Council has embedded population sustainability as a key focus of its **2023–2028 Council Plan** and it is an accepted priority within a wider network of policies and strategies at a local, regional and national level. In particular, the **Scottish Government's Addressing Depopulation Action Plan (2024)** has a focus on Inverclyde as a key area for repopulation, recognising that the requirement to support the reversal of population decline in Inverclyde is of national significance.



This strategy seeks to align the collective efforts of those policy drivers and our partners to make a difference and provide a coherent work programme for the Community Repopulation Officer, appointed in 2025, partly funded through the Scottish Government's Addressing Depopulation Action Plan.

This timeline for the strategy has a short-term horizon (2025-2028) to reflect that funding availability through the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan provides funding for the recruitment of a population officer for two-year period; that the funding available, inclusive of Council funding, provides a basis to deliver some small-scale interventions alongside research to advance our understanding of strategic medium-long terms interventions which may require significant resource to deliver.

While this strategy sets out how Inverced Council, working with partners, will use this opportunity to build a strong, coordinated approach to tackle depopulation, it is intended that a strategy refresh is undertaken for beyond 2028 and to tie in with the Council Plan refresh that will take place, looking beyond 2028, building on research, lessons leaned and successes of short-term interventions.

This Repopulation Strategy is about creating the right conditions for change. It focuses on coordinating policy, attracting investment, and directing effort where it can have the biggest impact in housing, economic opportunity, place-making, and community well-being. It also outlines a plan for focused community engagement highlighting the need to work with residents and partners to design solutions that are relevant, inclusive, and sustainable.

### **Vision and Strategic Objectives**

Our vision is to reverse population decline and foster a vibrant, inclusive, and economically resilient Inverclyde that attracts and retains residents of all ages and backgrounds.

Underpinning the vision, a series of strategic objectives have been identified to coordinate policy development and interventions to tackle population decline. The Strategic objectives for this strategy are set out as follows:

- 1. Enhance Inverclyde's appeal as a place to live, work, and invest.
- 2. Support sustainable communities with improved infrastructure and housing options and services.
- 3. Promote inclusive economic growth and job creation.
- 4. Strengthen local identity and pride through culture, heritage, and community engagement.
- 5. Undertake a phased approach to action by establishing strategic priorities and a short-medium programme of action, while undertaking research and analysis to inform medium to long term interventions.

Vision: To reverse population decline and foster a vibrant, inclusive, and economically resilient Inverclyde that attracts and retains residents of all ages and backgrounds.

### **Background**

Invercive has seen one of the most sustained urban depopulation trends in Scotland for decades. Since 1981, the area has lost approximately 22,000 residents. Between 1998 and 2023, Invercive's population declined by 8.5%, the sharpest decline of any Scottish local authority over that period. This contrasts with national growth of around 8%. Notably, the decade between 2013 and 2023 saw a further fall of 5%.

After decades of decline, new data from the National Records of Scotland shows that Inverclyde's population has grown for two years in a row. The mid-2023 estimate is 78,780, up 0.5% from 2022. By mid-2024, the population reached 78,880, a 0.6% increase since Census Day 2022. While these are small gains compared to other areas in Scotland, they represent a significant shift for Inverclyde.

"Between 1998 and 2023,
Inverclyde's population
declined by 8.5%, the
sharpest decline of any
Scottish local authority over
that period. This contrasts
with national growth of
around 8%."

### **Drivers of Population Change**

Analysis of the NRS components of population change highlights the following:

- Natural change remains negative: From 2022 to 2024, deaths outnumbered births, causing a loss of 1,051 people (2022–23: -548; 2023-24: -503).
- Migration is driving growth: During this period, net migration added 1,580 people, more than offsetting natural decline.
- International migration contributed most, with a net gain of 950 in 2022–23 and 730 in 2023-24.
- Migration within Scotland led to a small net loss (-80 in 2022-23; -160 in 2023-24).
- Migration with the UK was slightly positive (+80 in 2022-23; +30 in 2023-24).
- Inverclyde's population grew by 530 between 2022 and 2024, despite ongoing natural decline.

### **Demographic Profile**

Inverclyde's demographic structure continues to reflect long-term trends of ageing and outmigration of young adults:

- 15.4% of the population is aged under 16 (Scotland: 16.2%).
- 61.6% are of working age 16–64 (Scotland: 63.3%).
- 23% are aged 65 and over (Scotland: 20.5%).

This means Inverclyde has an older population than the national average. Although every Scottish council area has seen an increase in people over 65 in the last decade, Inverclyde depends more on international migration to balance its numbers, making its population structure more vulnerable.

### Why is it important to reverse depopulation?

A shrinking and aging population puts pressure on services, housing, and the local economy. This reduces the number of working-age residents needed to support the economy.

If young people continue to leave and fewer families choose to stay or move to the area, schools, businesses, and community facilities will likely struggle to thrive.

By creating a demographic balance that attracts and retains younger people, families, and working-age residents, along with supporting older residents, Inverclyde can build more sustainable communities. This will help safeguard services and create a stronger foundation for future growth.



### **Strategic Case**

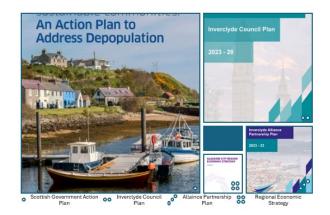
A comprehensive strategic case has been prepared to outline work that has been undertaken over the last decade on population decline in Invercive, covering various research and analysis pieces. The Strategic Case provides information on key trends causing decline, drivers, mitigation and opportunities, and reviews best practice in other areas. It also provides an overview of the range of activities that have already taken place or are planned. The Strategic Case analyses gaps in delivery from previous strategic recommendations, and this has been critical to underpinning the Action Plan in this strategy, which seeks to take positive short-term action to implement those priorities.

The Strategic Case is presented as Appendix 1 to this Strategy and provides extensive additional background information.

# **Policy Context**

Tackling depopulation in Inverclyde is an established strategic priority that is reflected in local, regional and national strategies.

A summary of the policies delivered through existing policies and strategies is provided as follows:



Policy	Key Policy Provisions
Inverclyde Council Plan 23/28	The Council Plan focuses on housing led regeneration, creating jobs, improving local services and tackling inequality under themes of People and Place to combat population change.
	The Council Plan identifies as a key challenge that from 2023 there is "an anticipated population reduction of 5% over the next 5 years, driven by there being fewer births than deaths".
	The Council Plan lifecycle to 2028 provides an appropriate timeline to match the cycle of this strategy. Given the funding support for repopulation is short term, and the actions in this strategy have been aligned to that, it is considered that there will be benefit in aligning the outcomes from this strategy with the development of the next Council Plan.
Inverclyde Alliance Plan	The Alliance is a partnership including a range of local partners (Council, NHS, college, police, third sector). The plan commits to making Inverclyde a healthier, fairer place where people want to stay or move to.
	The Alliance Plan 2023-33 includes a strategic objective of "Growth in our working age population by encouraging people to stay here and attracting new people to settle here".
	It is recommended that feedback and updates to the Alliance Board is a critical element of the strategic approach to tackling population decline as it depends on action across the range of partners on the Alliance. This is considered further in the Action Plan.
Inverclyde Socio	A special partnership to deal with job losses and population decline. It identifies projects and investments that can bring more jobs and skills, support for business and homes.
Economic Taskforce	While only some key asks of the Taskforce have to date been met, the existence of the Taskforce has been useful in gaining special regional priority status for Inverclyde and the Taskforce is evolving to continue to ensure partners contribute to the socio-economic challenges facing Inverclyde, including population decline.

Local Housing	The Local Housing Strategy guides the management and delivery of strategic housing in Inverclyde. This covers provision of new development of all tenures, housing-led
Strategy	regeneration and fuel poverty. It is governed by a strategic partnership of registered social landlords, development interests and community partners. It works allied to the LDP in meeting strategic housing needs.
	It is recognised that there are systematic challenges in the housing sector in Inverclyde and the recent Housing Summit sought to gain traction amongst partners to reinvigorate development interest and apply innovation solutions to stimulating the housing market. It is recommended that the Action Plan within this strategy identified effective means of monitoring progress as the influence this population will have is significant.
Inverclyde	The draft Growth Plan is intended to stimulate economic growth by prioritising key actions that will transform and grow our economy. Within a series of missions, Mission 3
Economic Growth Strategy (2025) - Draft	explicitly focuses on reversing population decline and linking this to affordable housing, fair work (Real Living Wage), and Community Wealth Building. The draft Plan is currently undergoing engagement with partners and key agencies to build support to delivering actions in the key theme areas of the Plan, and the drafting of this was predicated on their being identified actions emerging from the repopulation strategy.
Inverclyde Local Development Plan	This is the 'land use' plan, which sets out rules for new development. It aims to make Inverclyde more attractive by improving town centers, transport, and infrastructure, encouraging people to live and work here. The currently adopted LDP is dated 2019 and a refreshed LDP is underway. This will require to align with NPF4 (below). One of the key challenges facing the LDP is stimulating housing delivery from a baseline of near zero. Currently the Council has a land supply that is greater than estimated need and it is anticipated the LDP will review whether the right land allocations are made to stimulate delivery. It is recommended that the repopulation officer works closely with the LDP team to integrate and embed repopulation principles in key policy strands of the LDP.
Glasgow City Region – Economic Strategy	The regional economic strategy recognises that some communities within the city region are suffering from depopulation, whilst others are suffering from too much demand. It looks to work with partners on targeted programmes that address local challenges by providing jobs for local residents, access to the right skills needed for local employers, connectivity to employment opportunities and resilient housing provision.
	Inverclyde Council is working with the City Region to adapt the regional economic strategy to reflect that Inverclyde was recognised as having special priory status within the city region to combat the range of socio-economic challenges affecting Inverclyde, including depopulation.
Supporting and enabling sustainable communities: An Action Plan to Address Depopulation	Depopulation within urban communities in Scotland is most apparent in Inverclyde, where a 5.6% population decline has been observed between 2011 and 2021. As set out in the opening chapter of this Action Plan, it is generally considered that the drivers of depopulation are different in urban settings compared to rural areas. The effects of post-industrialisation and deprivation are understood to have played a pivotal role in driving demographic and population change in the area, but the Scottish Government recognises the opportunity, through this Action Plan, to set out initial action which will be delivered in partnership with Inverclyde Council, focusing on locally identified priorities to enable future population attraction and retention measures to be successful. The work of the Inverclyde Socio-Economic Taskforce has identified a number of investment proposals to generate growth in the local economy, with the aim of stabilising the population. The Scottish Government participates in the Taskforce and will consider all proposals for action in detail. That work complements the wide range of other work being delivered by the Scottish Government and partners which will support wider strategic objectives for the area, such as the Glasgow City Region City Deal. Through a funding model similar to that being used to retain the Community Settlement Officers in Argyll and Bute, the Highlands, and Na h-Eileanan Siar, the Scottish Government will partner with Inverclyde Council to deliver a Community Settlement Officer focused on addressing depopulation in Inverclyde. The role will acknowledge opportunities identified locally to support the retention of new cohorts of people in the area, such as those granted asylum.
National Planning Framework 4	NPF4 requires Local Development Plans (LDPs) to plan for housing needs and provides support for the use of abandoned or underused places set out in a place focused strategy. NPF4 recognises that reversing depopulation is a strategic priority and includes policies reflective of the differing needs across Scotland. NPF4 encourages

sustainable development that helps support existing communities and resettlement in previously declining areas. The document aligns with wider planning policies like net zero, inclusive economic development, 20-minute neighborhoods and protecting biodiversity.
The emerging Inverclyde LDP will require to form a development plan for Inverclyde with the NPF4.

### **Key Considerations:**

- There is a broad and accepted prioritisation of addressing depopulation within local, regional and national policy. The vision and strategic objectives in this strategy reflects common aspirations across these documents
- Notwithstanding the policies above, which have a direct reference to depopulation, there will be a more extensive policy system beyond this, including through Alliance partners, Health and Social Care partners, agencies and private and third sector organisations. It would be beneficial for a comprehensive policy audit to be undertaken to provide a clear understanding of all the policy interventions in place to combat depopulation, to identify gaps in policy provision that can be enhanced through adaptation and to work with partners to identify gaps in policy, particularly where additional interventions can be identified and implemented.
- Particularly with regard to housing and development opportunities, and reflecting on the recent Inverclyde Housing Summit, there is a
  strategic link between the Local Housing Strategy and the emerging Local Development Plan. Those strategic documents have a
  fundamental role in provision of housing options and supporting delivery of new development, as well as wider delivery of placemaking
  solutions including relationship between population and demand on infrastructure. While the Action Plan within this strategy is focused on a
  25-28 horizon, prioritising advancing research of interventions, the Action Plan for this strategy should include development of a
  population impact toolkit to track impact of actions within those documents on supporting repopulation. This should not be a
  replication of action or action tracking in those documents, but a strategic toolkit to understand the wider impact of the priorities within
  those strategies.

### **Action Plan 2025-2028**

As set out above, the Action Plan has a focus up to 2028. Tackling population decline is multi-faceted and complex. The Strategy intends to make a meaningful difference by development of research and analysis of the issue and short-term interventions. The actions set out in this strategy are within the following key themes:

- Advancing the Council's strategic understanding of the drivers of depopulation and short, medium and long term interventions to tackle depopulation
- Developing a clear understanding of the resources required to respond to depopulation in the medium to long term to inform future strategies
- Development of a coordinated view of the network of plans, policies and strategies that can positively support repopulation and influencing future policies
- Development of an effective monitoring toolkit
- Implementation of tangible initiatives to tackle population decline in the short term.

Given that the population officer will oversee the implementation of many of the actions through engagement with partners, it is anticipated that the action plan will operate as a live action plan, so that as new initiatives or resources emerge, they can form part of the Action Plan.

The interventions associated with this strategy are set out in the following Action Plan:

Action	Lead Delivery Partner	Description	Timescale
		Policy, Governance and Research	
Repopulation Strategy	Inverclyde Council (Repopulation Officer)	A Repopulation Strategy will be developed to prioritise actions to combat population decline and inform future strategies. This will include enhancing the evidence base, enhancing policy interventions and establishing a programme of pilot interventions as part of the Scottish Government's Depopulation Action Plan.  Resources – Utilisation of Inverclyde Council/ SG Population Fund through officer time	September 2025
Repopulation Policy Audit	Inverclyde Council (Repopulation Officer)	A comprehensive review of plans, policies, strategies to identify where policies can be enhanced to have greater impact on halting depopulation.  Resources – Utilisation of Inverclyde Council/ SG Population Fund through officer time	March 2026
Repopulation Monitoring Toolkit	Inverclyde Council (Repopulation Officer)	We will develop a dynamic monitoring toolkit for measuring and reporting on the impact of the LHS and LDP in delivering the vision and strategic objectives of this strategy.  Resources – Utilisation of Inverclyde Council/ SG Population Fund through officer time	March 2026
Population Research	Inverclyde Council/ GC Intelligence Hub	<ul> <li>We will undertake targeted research to fill gaps in existing research to design medium- and long-term interventions/ projects that are targeted and measurable in the following areas:</li> <li>Youth Retention: Opportunity to link with Employability and Housing Strategy to look at the needs and aspirations of Young People in Inverclyde, primarily Greenock and port Glasgow as Priority Place areas. Linking economic development, housing and young people.</li> <li>Business Needs: Engagement with a range of local employers will take place to identify recruitment barriers to local employers and opportunities to match individuals moving to Inverclyde with work opportunities.</li> </ul>	March 2026

Formation of Re-population Partnership	Inverclyde Council	Lived Experience Engagement: The research will involve listening to people's experiences- a variety of participatory research methods such as focus groups and interviews to obtain qualitive data necessary to help us understand better and inform projects/interventions.  Resources – Utilisation of Inverclyde Council/ SG Population Fund (est. £7.5k) / partnership with GCR Intelligence Hub (currently undertaking research)  We will bring together key Council and HSCP services as well as key partners across our communities to monitor progress in implementation of this action plan and provide a strategic input on themes emerging from research undertaken.	Quarterly from September 2025
		Resources – Utilisation of Inverclyde Council/ SG Population Fund through officer time	
		Project Initiatives	
Re-population Officer	Inverclyde Council	We will recruit an officer for 2 years to work towards re-population of Inverclyde. The officer will work with the Scottish Government repopulation service, undertake all programme reporting requirements and deliver a range of initiative set out within this action plan.  Resources – £93K SG Grant/Inverclyde Council Repopulation Funds	March 2025
Place Marketing	Inverclyde Council	A suite of marketing materials will be produced to support the promotion of Inverclyde, including to target audiences that will boost the tourism sector and Inverclyde as a place to live, work and invest in. Materials will promote Inverclyde to the housing development sector. Materials produced will be shared with partners and social media channels. Other media channels will be explored dependent on resources.  Resources - £7.5k SG Grant/Inverclyde Council Repopulation Funds. It is anticipated that the funding can be supported through Greenock Town Fund and Inverclyde Tourism funding.	Marketing Resources developed – December 2025 Promotion - ongoing
Business Start- Up Grant	Inverclyde Council	Provide business grant support for local residents (current or new) to set up a business within commercial premises in Inverclyde, or from their own home (at a slightly lower grant rate). This is an established grant mechanism, and the funding will be increased to encourage new and existing residents to invest in Inverclyde and create new jobs.	2025-2028 (demand dependent)

		Resources - £40K SG Grant/Inverclyde Council Repopulation Fund / Inverclyde Council Regeneration Funds	
New Scots	Inverclyde	There is a range of ethnic minority communities already present in Inverclyde engaging to identify	2025-2028
Grant	Council	skilled work opportunities. We will provide a contribution to costs to allow ethnic minorities to move	(demand
		into work and skilled work opportunities, for example by contributing to costs of certificates of sponsorship.	dependent)
		Resources – £6K SG Grant/Inverclyde Council Repopulation Fund	
Relocation	Inverclyde	A grant programme will be established to provide support to working families moving to Inverclyde	2025-2028
Support	Council	to assist in promoting Inverclyde as a family-friendly place to live for workers in the central/west of	(demand
		Scotland. Grant will be claimable to contribute to moving costs.	dependent)
		Resources - £10k SG Grant/Inverclyde Council Repopulation Fund	
Lower Port	Inverclyde	The Lower Port Glasgow Masterplan will:	October 2025
Glasgow	Council	Align with the growing growth december along the spine by the spine of the short of the Contribution	
Masterplan		• Align with the requirement to decarbonise Inverclyde's housing stock by 2045 in line with Scottish Government proposals, assessing the scale of work required over the next 20 years to ensure	
		housing in the Lower Port Glasgow area achieves a Net Zero standard.	
		Ensure a joined-up vision for the area is presented and take a holistic view of key sites located	
		within the Lower Port Glasgow PPA along with redevelopment opportunity.	
		• Ensure multi-tenure development, encouraging repopulation and regeneration within Inverclyde.	
		Resources – £30K SG Grant/Inverclyde Council Repopulation Funds	
Modern	Inverclyde	Employability Services will provide wage subsidy support to local employers hiring local residents	2025-2028
Apprentice	Council	(current or new) into apprenticeships. It has been proven that those undertaking an apprenticeship	(demand
Wage Subsidy		are more likely to remain in their hometown than those who undertake a degree, who are more likely	dependent)
		to move away to find suitable employment.	
		Resources – £30K core employability funds	
Town Centre	Inverclyde	We are participating in a national programme led by Scottish Futures Trust and Scotland's Towns	Ongoing
Living	Council/	Partnership to identify and promote town centre living opportunity sites to a forum of developers to	
	Scottish	secure partnerships to deliver town centre living opportunities. The programme is not currently	

Support to Study	Futures Trust/ Scotland's Towns Partnership  Inverclyde Council	funded, although partners indicate funds may emerge as part of programme development. IC officers are currently promoting through liaison with development sector.  Resources – Officer Time (Greenock Town Fund/ Housing Strategy)  A small grant programme will be established to support learners who stay in Inverclyde but travel outwith for education and training purposes. The provision will allow a grant to support costs of studying over a 2-year period for college, university.  Resources - £6k SG Grant/Inverclyde Council Repopulation Funds	2025-2028 (demand dependent)
Support for ESOL Community	Inverclyde Council	<ul> <li>Transitioned Inclusive Communities ESOL services to offer intensive courses up to 8hrs per week for over 120 learners per year. This provision level ranges from Pre A1 to B1 level only.</li> <li>Create a viable alternative to West College Scotland provision where classes are capped at 3 per year supporting 60 learners (Inclusive Communities receive over 250 referrals a year).</li> <li>Inclusive Communities offer up to B1 ESOL level (SQA Level 4) with everyone referred assessed within 2 weeks.</li> <li>Create an ESOL Weekly Plan for each learner to maximise English learning opportunities and integration activities with key partners in the New to Scotland Team.</li> </ul> Resources – Inverclyde Council Inclusive Communities	Ongoing
Inclusive Curriculum	Inverclyde Council	<ul> <li>All settings have had anti-racist education as a focus for improvement within their plans. A support guide was compiled, to provide a step by step guide to the development of anti-racist education.</li> <li>An equalities coordinator network has been established which works to:         <ol> <li>Reinforce our commitment to equalities consistently across all settings and further develop a more inclusive curriculum.</li> <li>Ensure we are acting to meet our legislative duties, as outlined in The Equality Act 2010 and GTCS Standards for Equality and Diversity.</li> <li>Facilitate support for staff directly involved in delivering the Equality Outcomes.</li> <li>Offer an opportunity to showcase good practice and improvements that relate directly to one or more of the Protected Characteristics.</li> <li>Engage with staff, pupils and families on equalities issues.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	Ongoing

<ul> <li>We work closely with partners such as WOSDEC, Tie and Education Scotland to continue to support the development of a more inclusive curriculum, and best practice is shared on an ongoing basis across the network.</li> <li>Equalities coordinators are presently working to develop and implement their own equalities policies, making use of guidance from Education Scotland.</li> <li>Staff participate in a wide range of professional learning delivered locally and nationally.</li> <li>An S2 project has been developed where all S2 pupils now engage in learning about Inverclyde's link to the trans-Atlantic slave trade.</li> </ul>
Resources - Inverclyde Council Education

## **Engagement**

A broad base of stakeholders and community insight has been drawn from existing datasets and engagement exercises, including the Local Development Plan (LDP) Evidence Report (Inverclyde Council, 2025), Community Learning and Development's (CLD) Community Conversations data (Inverclyde Council, 2024), and Collective Architecture's participatory workshops (Collective Architecture, 2025). This approach ensures that community priorities and local voices are embedded in the strategy while avoiding duplication or over-consultation and recent consultations have already provided rich insight into community priorities around housing, regeneration, services and quality of life.

In order to maximise resources, the evidence gathering stage that has been undertaken will continue, however, will be broadened within the action plan by research and focusing on target groups through the lived-experience analysis, focus on young people and on new Scots. A targeted and meaningful community engagement programme will be developed as part of the repopulation partnership, research, and development of interventions. By sequencing engagement, we can focus time and funding on targeted, meaningful dialogue that adds value rather than repeating what is already known.

It is recommended that the strategy is presented to the Alliance Board as well as the Repopulation Partnership to be set up to ensure both operational and strategic focus on progress.

### **Monitoring & Evaluation**

Progress on the strategy will be monitored through both local and national frameworks. Inverclyde Council will provide regular updates to the Scottish Government using there ADAP framework, ensuring that the work helps inform national policy development. Development will also be reviewed locally through the Community Planning Partnership, providing accountability and alignment with wider community and partner priorities.

The strategy is intended to be a living document: we will adapt it as we go through the process of learning, responding to new challenges and opportunities. The repopulation strategy will also be aligned with the renewal of the Inverclyde Council Plan in 2028, ensuring that repopulation remains embedded as a long-term priority across the partnership.



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 11** 

PR/22/25/RB/MR

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Corporate Director - Education, Report No:

**Communities and Organisational** 

**Development** 

Contact Officer: Morna Rae, Head of Contact No: 07385434459

Organisational Development, Policy and Communications

Subject: Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26

### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 ⊠For Decision ⊠For Information/Noting

1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the Scottish Government Programme for Government (PfG) 2025/26 and the implications for, and action required by, Inverclyde Council. More information is provided in the Appendix.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the publication of the Scottish Government PfG 2025/26.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the Committee notes the implications of the Programme for the Council, together with what action is required in response to the publication.
- 2.3 It is recommended that the Committee notes that the relevant actions from the PgG 2024/25 will be incorporated into the Committee Delivery and Improvement Plans (CDIPs) 2023/26, as appropriate, and agrees to receive a report on the updated Policy and Resources CDIP 2023/26 for approval.

**Ruth Binks** 

**Corporate Director - Education, Communities and Organisational Development** 

### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 On 6 May 2025, the Scottish Government published a document entitled 'PfG 2025/26 Building the Best Future for Scotland'. It is available to view here: PfG 2025/26.
- 3.2 The publication sets out the Scottish Government's policy and legislative goals for the parliamentary year 2025/26. The PfG 2025/26 is the final one of the current Scottish Government, given that the next Scottish Parliament elections must be held no later than 7 May 2026.
- 3.3 The Programme comprises four key themes:
  - Growing the Economy
  - Eradicating Child Poverty
  - Tackling the Climate Emergency
  - High Quality and Sustainable Public Services.
- 3.4 The Appendix outlines the Programme's initiatives which have implications for the Council, mapped against the Themes of the Council Plan 2023/28, together with details of the appropriate Council Directorate.
- 3.5 It should be noted that there are actions included in the PfG 2025/26 which will have a financial impact on the Council; examples include widening access to higher education for students from the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities; the recruitment, retention and training of the additional support needs workforce; the commitment to restore teacher numbers to 2023 levels; the introduction of the new Care Leavers payment; and the provision of person-centred alcohol and drug services. Further details of the financial impact of the Programme on the Council will be included in reports prepared as part of the forthcoming Budget-setting process.

### 3.6 Growing the Economy

This section of the Programme comprises 11 initiatives which will impact on, or require a response from, the Council.

3.7 Some of workstreams concern streamlining access to information; for instance, via the removal of dated national planning advice. Others support the delivery of one or more of the Themes of the Council Plan 2023/28, an example of which is the improvement of processes for communities to buy land and assets.

### 3.8 Eradicating Child Poverty

This section of the Programme comprises 41 initiatives which will impact on, or require a response from, the Council.

3.9 Some of the workstreams in this section comprise a number of projects grouped under a theme; for example, there are two sub-actions which aim to provide help with childcare costs and support parents to get on in work. Meanwhile, there are five sub-actions under the heading of 'safe, warm homes' including the provision of general housing adaptations to disabled tenants, and an investment in homelessness prevention pilots.

### 3.10 <u>Tackling the Climate Emergency</u>

This section of the Programme comprises 11 initiatives which will impact on, or require a response from, the Council.

3.11 The majority of the workstreams in this section relate to the Environment and Regeneration Directorate. Initiatives include support for households with energy bills, peatland restoration, and banning the sale and supply of single use vapes from 1 June 2025.

### 3.12 High Quality and Sustainable Public Services

This section of the Programme comprises 30 initiatives which will impact on, or require a response from, the Council.

- 3.13 Six of the workstreams in this section relate the Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership, examples of which include early intervention and prevention support for adults who are experiencing mental health issues, and three sub-actions which aim to reduce harm and deaths caused by drugs and alcohol.
- 3.14 Education is also a key focus in the High Quality and Sustainable Public Services section of the PfG 2025/26 with initiatives including an investment in the Scottish Attainment Challenge, plans for a summit on Additional Support for Learning, and a funding commitment to restore teacher numbers to those of two years ago, as mentioned in Paragraph 3.5. Meanwhile, all Directorates will be involved in the delivery of six actions in this Section, principally around the implications of the Scottish Government's strategy for Public Sector Reform which was published on 19 June 2025.

### 3.15 Legislative Programme

Prior to the Summer 2025 recess, the Scottish Government introduced two Bills. On 3 June 2025, The Crofting and Scottish Land Court Bill was published, with the aim of simplifying legislation to make crofting regulation less onerous. The Building Safety Levy - which will provide funding to tackle unsafe cladding on buildings - was introduced on 5 June 2025.

- 3.16 Additionally, the Scottish Government intends to introduce the following Bills in 2025/26:
  - Budget
  - Children and Young People (Care) (Scotland)
  - Contract (Formation and Remedies)
  - Digital Assets
  - Heat in Buildings
  - Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures.
- 3.17 It should be noted that the Scottish Government has indicated that the proposed new misogyny law will not now be progressed and will instead be incorporated into hate crime legislation; the following text on Page 6 of the Appendix refers: 'Legislating to add the characteristic of Sex to The Hate Crime Act to ensure that women and girls have the same protections in law as other groups covered by the Act'.
- 3.18 The relevant actions from the PfG 2024/25 will be incorporated into the CDIPs 2023/26, following which the documents will be submitted to the appropriate Service Committees for approval.

### 4.0 PROPOSALS

4.1 It is proposed that the Committee considers the details included in the Scottish Government PfG 2025/26, as well as the implications for the Council and action required in response to the document.

### 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			Χ
Legal/Risk			X
Human Resources			Χ
Strategic (Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33/Council Plan 2023/28)	Х		
Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty			Χ
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			Х
Environmental and Sustainability	•		Χ
Data Protection			Χ

### 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 Ce	ntre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A						

### 5.3 Strategic

The matters referred to in this report are of relevance to a number of Themes of the Council Plan 2023/28, as outlined in the Appendix.

### 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Corporate Management Team was consulted on the contents of this report.

### 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

### **APPENDIX**

# Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26 mapped with the Council Plan 2023/28 Themes

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
1. Growing the Economy		
Delivering <b>affordable homes</b> across Scotland	Place	Environment and Regeneration (ER)
Investing in a fair social security system and helping people into work	People	ER
Funding the <b>Small Business Bonus</b> so that thousands of small businesses pay no business rates	Place	Chief Executive (CE)
We will <b>boost planning capacity</b> and <b>reduce barriers to delivery</b> , by:		
<ul> <li>Providing local authorities, through the Planning Hub, with additional capacity and expertise, prioritising action where evidence shows they are having challenges with meeting timescales or where there are delays in producing local plans</li> </ul>	Place Performance	ER
Removing all dated national planning advice to declutter the system	Place Performance	ER
Supporting our rural community - We will <b>support farmers</b> , <b>crofters</b> , <b>and fishers</b> to capitalise on Scotland's unique position, by:		1
<ul> <li>To help improve the processes for communities to buy land and assets, launching a consultation on proposals from the review of community right to buy powers and deliver £7 million through the Scottish Land Fund, enabling more community groups to purchase assets</li> </ul>	Place Performance	Education, Communities and

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
		Organisational Development (ECOD) CE
Skills for success – We will work with partners to <b>secure a long-term and sustainable future for further and higher education</b> , developing our skills system for the future, including by:		
<ul> <li>Widening access to higher education for students from the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities – towards our goal of 20% of all entrants being from the 20% most deprived communities by 2030</li> </ul>	People	ECOD
<ul> <li>Establishing a national Recognition of Prior Learning system - formally acknowledging an individual's skills and knowledge gained through work experience, training, or other learning outside of formal education</li> </ul>	People	ECOD
<ul> <li>Introducing a new Scottish Government-led approach to national skills planning, and strengthen regional skills planning, to ensure that post school provision becomes more responsive to Scotland's strategic skills needs and priorities</li> </ul>	People	ECOD ER
<ul> <li>Reviewing and improving school-age and adult careers support, including better information on career choices, job prospects and earnings</li> </ul>	People	ECOD ER
Supporting schools to access film and screen learning – so Scotland has the workforce to meet the demands a £1bn film and screen industry will create	People	ECOD
2. Eradicating Child Poverty		
Delivering a £2 million national pilot to support free bus travel for people seeking asylum	People	HSCP
Delivering £1 million to all local authorities to deliver holiday playschemes and activity provision for disabled children	People	ECOD
Helping hard pressed families with the costs of childcare, supporting more parents to get on in work including:		1

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
<ul> <li>Designing and delivering childcare services for priority families working in 23 'Early Adopter Communities' across six LA areas</li> </ul>	People	ECOD
Expanding our 'Extra Time' programme, providing <b>funded breakfast and after school and holiday clubs</b> across Scotland, supporting 5,000 children families most at risk of poverty	People	ECOD
Helping people with advice to reduce their costs and increase their incomes from social security – with increased investment to over £15 million for <b>free income maximisation and debt advice</b> , including:		
<ul> <li>Supporting 105 organisations, in 33 partnerships, to provide financial advice for people in accessible settings like hospitals and community centres</li> </ul>	People	CE HSCP
Working in partnership with COSLA to empower Councils with the information they need to improve recovery of CT debt – strengthening data sharing so they can act earlier to identify households which may be eligible for CT reduction and wider support	People	CE
Whole-family support – Our commitment to increase funding flexibility to better enable partners to deliver <b>whole family support</b> is being <b>rolled out initially to a core group of local authorities</b> , with the intention of extending to other parts of Scotland quickly thereafter. We will build on this over the coming year so more people benefit, including:		
<ul> <li>Expanding Fairer Futures Partnerships to Shetland, North Lanarkshire and Fife – alongside eight existing partnerships – and work to identify further adopters, to maximise incomes and support people into sustained employment or education</li> </ul>	People	CE ER ECOD
Funding the Wise Group's relational mentoring programme, providing wraparound support to an additional 2,000 low-income households	People Place	ER HSCP
<b>Helping people into work</b> – We will help people remain in work and strengthen pathways into employment for those furthest from the labour market by:		<u> </u>
<ul> <li>Reviewing the delivery of employability programmes to maximise their effectiveness and bring forward proposals ahead of the Budget 2026/27, including consideration of a national model</li> </ul>	People	ER ECOD

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
<ul> <li>Supporting disabled people to move into sustainable employment through Specialist Employability Support from Summer 2025. This will ensure 'place and train' models are in place across all 32 LA areas, supporting closer working between employability provision and employers</li> </ul>	People	ER ECOD
<ul> <li>Investing in Parental Employability Support in every LA area, with over £40 million made available to Local Employability Partnerships in 2025/26</li> </ul>	People	ER ECOD
<ul> <li>Funding pilot projects that will develop actions employers can take to implement inclusive recruitment practices – including flexible working, support for disabled employees, and supporting people at risk of economic inactivity</li> </ul>	People	ECOD ER
<ul> <li>Working with schools during the academic year 2025/26 to amplify good practice that supports school leavers to enter positive destinations, piloting with local authorities that have the lowest rates of school leavers entering positive destinations</li> </ul>	People	ECOD ER
Safe, warm homes – we will ensure more people can access good, affordable homes including:		
<ul> <li>More than doubling the budget – from £8.25 million to almost £21 million – to deliver around 8,500 general housing adaptations to disabled tenants, so they can live independently in their home</li> </ul>	People Place	ER
<ul> <li>Delivering an equivalent of Awaab's law in Scotland – ensuring landlords promptly address issues that are hazardous to tenants' health. Subject to the passage of the new Housing (Scotland) Bill, we will bring forward secondary legislation to develop timescales for investigation and commencement of repairs that are hazardous to tenants' enjoyment of their homes, starting with damp and mould.</li> </ul>	Place	ER
Tackling homelessness by implementing the new Housing (Scotland) Bill which, if passed, will improve outcomes for those at risk of homelessness and strengthen tenants' rights, including through the introduction of a system for longer term rent controls, and removing the legislative constraint on the level of CT premium that can be applied to second and long-term empty homes	People Place	Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) CE
<ul> <li>Investing £1 million in a fund administered by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and Homeless Network Scotland, bringing together registered social landlords, third sector organisations and community partners to prevent homelessness and protect tenants' rights</li> </ul>	People Place	ER

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
<ul> <li>Investing £4 million in homelessness prevention pilots in 2025/26, helping duty bearers to prepare for the new legislation and to implement the 'ask and act' duties effectively</li> </ul>	People Place	HSCP
<b>Early child development</b> – supporting babies, children, and young people through the early, formative years of their life, including:		<u> </u>
Embedding early conversations on preparing for pregnancy into routine health care, to optimise preconception health and care	People	HSCP
By the end of 2025, <b>meeting our breastfeeding stretch</b> aim to reduce drop off at 6-8 weeks, with babies in Scotland now being breastfed for longer, and inequalities reducing	People	HSCP
Improving take-up of Child Health Reviews and developing a health visitor learning site	People	HSCP
Building on initiatives which supported the <b>creation of over 40 new childminding businesses</b> in 2024/25 – expanding this across 28 local authorities, backed by £1.6 million	People Place	ER
<b>Keeping The Promise</b> – We will ensure that we meet the ambitious outcomes set out in The Promise progress ramework, including:		
<ul> <li>Introducing a new Care Leavers payment from 1st April 2026 – a one-off £2,000 payment to help improve the financial security of young people leaving care</li> </ul>	People Place	HSCP ECOD
Bringing forward The Children and Young People (Care) (Scotland) Bill that will support delivery of The Promise	People	HSCP
Publishing a new vision for kinship care by the end of 2025	People	HSCP
Uprating of the Scottish Recommended Allowance for eligible foster and kinship carers, providing an extra £1.9 million, which is expected to benefit more than 9,000 children	People	HSCP
<ul> <li>Responding to the Reimagining Secure Care report by June 2025 - setting out the Scottish Government's future vision for secure care</li> </ul>	People	HSCP

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
Testing our approach to Bairns' Hoose across ten areas – providing safe, trauma-informed environments for child victims and witnesses to get the support and recovery services they need – ahead of incremental national rollout from 2027	People	HSCP
Ensuring equality – We will take action to make Scotland a fairer and more equal country for everyone, including:		
Creating safe spaces for the LGBTQI+ community - funding work that tackles discrimination and upholds the human rights of this group, including through the Equality and Human Rights Fund, and progressing actions within the Non-Binary Equality Action Plan	People	ECOD
<ul> <li>Applying fair work principles – including provision of flexible and family friendly working practices and actions to address workplace inequalities – to public sector funding</li> </ul>	Performance	All Directorates
<ul> <li>Ensuring a whole Government programmatic approach to tackling gender inequality through development and delivery of an Equality Strategy for Women and Girls</li> </ul>	People	ECOD
<ul> <li>Launching the Anti-Racism Observatory for Scotland which will work with Government, public bodies and communities to deliver on our vision to tackle systemic racism in Scotland</li> </ul>	People	ECOD
<ul> <li>Accepting the recent UK Supreme Court judgment, a Scottish Government working group is considering its impact on policies, guidance and legislation to ensure we are ready to take all necessary steps when the Equality and Human Rights Commission publishes its revised Code of Practice and updated guidance</li> </ul>	People	All Directorates
<ul> <li>Legislating to add the characteristic of Sex to The Hate Crime Act to ensure that women and girls have the same protections in law as other groups covered by the Act</li> </ul>	People	All Directorates
<ul> <li>Taking forward the actions in the Hate Crime Strategy Delivery Plan until May 2026, protecting against the spread of hatred and prejudice</li> </ul>	People	All Directorates
<ul> <li>Having guaranteed the Access to Elected Office Fund in law, supporting people with disabilities to stand for election, we will work with electoral administrators to deliver improvements in accessibility for those with sight loss voting in elections, in time for the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections</li> </ul>	People	CE

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
<ul> <li>Continuing our commitment to embed equality and human rights across the Scottish Government and the wider public sector we will publish our mainstreaming framework which will include an action plan and toolkit, setting out practical steps to achieve this ambition. This will be complemented by enhancing the effectiveness of the Public Sector Equality Duty as it operates in Scotland.</li> </ul>	People	ECOD CE
Upholding and promoting rights – We will work with partners on specific, targeted actions to:		<u> </u>
Develop counter interventions to the threats to our democratic system	Performance	CE
Create positive relationships and engage people across society on the issues	Performance	CE
Work with partners to engage their own networks to strengthen democratic (foundations)	Performance	CE
<ul> <li>Use the Scottish Government's convening power to advance the dialogue around, and progress the solutions to, the issues identified</li> </ul>	Performance	CE
3. Tackling the Climate Emergency		
Working with the UK Government to <b>reform</b> the <b>consenting process</b> through the <b>Planning and Infrastructure Bill</b> – <b>reducing timescales</b> to make <b>decisions</b> about whether <b>large scale energy generation and network infrastructure</b> can proceed and how communities can engage earlier in the process	Place	ER
<b>support</b> transport services, people and business to <b>reduce</b> their <b>emissions</b> and adapt to climate change, including:		
<ul> <li>Introducing a new pilot grant scheme to help households without off-street parking to install cross-pavement electric vehicle (EV) charging solutions</li> </ul>	Place	ER
Supporting 20,000 households to save up to £500 on energy bills per year, by investing £300 million in 2025/26 to help households and other building owners install energy efficiency and clean heating measures	Place	ER

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
Introducing a Heat in Buildings Bill, setting targets for installing clean heating systems by 2045 – giving a clear signal to home and buildings owners to act when upgrading their heating system, including provisions to support development of heat networks	Place	ER
Improving our public-facing schemes, by simplifying the application process and ensuring that Home Energy Scotland is recognised as a single access point – streamlining the process and making it easier for households to access support	Place	ER
Establishing statutory targets to improve biodiversity	Place	ER
Increasing the scale and pace of peatland restoration to at least 12,000 hectares, up from a current target of 10,000, this year and creating at least 10,000 hectares of woodlands - which will include over 4,000 hectares of native woodland	Place	ER
Through our Adaptation Scotland programme, starting adaptation training services for sectors particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change	People Place	ER
Providing training, resources and support through our Climate Action Schools	People Place	ECOD
Using Scotland's Climate Week to celebrate and showcase climate action from government, business and individuals to build a sense of community, collaboration and agency in tackling the emergency	People Place	ECOD ER
Banning the sale and supply of single use vapes from 1 June 2025 to reduce vaping among non-smokers and young people and tackle their environmental impact	People Place	ER ECOD
4. High Quality and Sustainable Public Services		l
Continuing to build on the offer of adult mental health early intervention and prevention support in local communities, through our Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults	People Performance	HSCP
Doing all we can to <b>reduce harm and deaths caused by drugs and alcohol</b> - developing a longer-term approach:		

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
<ul> <li>Full implementation of the Medication Assisted Treatment Standards and the development of a national specification</li> </ul>	People	HSCP
• Increasing residential rehab capacity by 50%, to 650 beds, and being ambitious beyond our publicly funded placements to 1,000 per year by 2026	People	HSCP
<ul> <li>Investing a further £2.5 million in person-centred alcohol and drug services, including £1m to provide specific support to develop services for mothers who use drugs and their babies</li> </ul>	People	HSCP
Our <b>Accelerated National Innovation Adoption pathway</b> , and working in partnership with the NHS, universities and industry, establishing:		
Funding the payment of at least the Real Living Wage to all adult and children's social care workers who are delivering direct care in commissioned services, and early learning and childcare workers delivering funded hours, backed by £950 million	People Performance	All Directorates
Investing up to £200 million in 2025/26 in the Scottish Attainment Challenge programme – with an aim to see the poverty related attainment gaps in primary school literacy and numeracy narrow by around 30% over 2016/26	People Performance	ECOD
<b>Supporting</b> the <b>recruitment, retention and training</b> of the <b>additional support needs workforce</b> , backed by an additional £29 million in 2025/26 in <b>local and national programmes</b>	People Performance	ECOD
Holding a data summit with all local authorities in Scotland on Additional Support for Learning focused on recommending actions for improving consistency of identification, support and reporting of children's needs at a local level	People Performance	ECOD
Providing local authorities (with) £186.5 million to deliver our joint commitment to restore teacher numbers to 2023 levels, freeze learning hours, and reduce class contact time	People Performance	ECOD
Working with the teacher unions, and COSLA to agree our approach to delivering a reduction in class contact time at pace – helping to ease teacher workload and create space for them to drive improvement and reform and improve outcomes	People Performance	ECOD
We will drive improvement in relationships and behaviour (in schools) by:		

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
<ul> <li>Launching a national campaign on attendance in autumn of 2025, to support improved attendance at school</li> </ul>	People	ECOD
Setting high expectations for all for learners, publishing new national guidelines on the use of consequences as part of positive approaches to relationships and behaviour	People	ECOD
Supporting Time for Inclusive Education, including their new Digital Discourse Initiative – supporting schools to equip children and young people with skills to navigate digital media and counter the impacts of disinformation and online hate	People	ECOD
<ul> <li>Implementing the Relationships and Behaviour in Schools Joint Action Plan 2024/27 with local authorities, and report annually to Parliament on improvement</li> </ul>	People	ECOD
Reforming the curriculum, qualifications and assessment – We will set out a single combined timeline for this reform in June 2025, providing clarity about next steps for the education system, as well as:		l
<ul> <li>Establishing Qualifications Scotland and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, subject to passage of The Education (Scotland) Bill</li> </ul>	People	ECOD
Establishing the Centre for Teaching Excellence, hosted by the University of Glasgow, and deliver its full offer to teachers in the 2025 school year	People	ECOD
Continuing the Curriculum Improvement Cycle to update and strengthen Scotland's national curriculum for every child and young person	People	ECOD
Ensuring the removal of written exams in more practical subjects and the piloting of digital onscreen assessment from 2025/26	People	ECOD
Working with Qualifications Scotland to rationalise the qualifications offer in the senior phase	People	ECOD
(To <b>reduce</b> the) level of <b>anti-social crimes</b> we will do more by:		

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
Suspending use of concessionary travel cards on a temporary and potentially permanent basis as a result of anti-social behaviour when using the card	People Place	ECOD
Implementing year three of the Violence Prevention Framework	People	ECOD
A <b>safe, sustainable transport system</b> we will support our network to become more available, affordable, and accessible		
Continuing to deliver the major vessels programme with MV Glen Rosa at the Ferguson Marine shipyard, MV Isle of Islay and three other vessels at the Cemre shipyard expected by Summer 2026, and beginning work to deliver seven new electric ferries	Place	ER
<ul> <li>Making it easier for people to walk, wheel, and cycle on everyday journeys by delivering projects through our 2025/26 sustainable travel programmes, including the new Bus Infrastructure Fund</li> </ul>	Place	ER
<ul> <li>Making our roads safer and reducing the numbers killed or injured, through delivery of 20 mph speed limits on appropriate roads by the end 2025/26 and of road safety funding for road authorities</li> </ul>	People Place	ER
We will <b>publish</b> our <b>strategy</b> for <b>Public Service Reform in June 2025</b> which will set out the actions we will take, with <b>local government</b> , public bodies, the third sector and trade unions, to <b>improve public services</b> .		
Digitisation, automation, sharing, and reduction of back-office functions and estates, and leveraging procurement opportunities	Performance	All Directorates
Public bodies working closer together through our clusters programme and, where appropriate, starting consolidation of public bodies through our review of the service delivery landscape – ensuring we protect resources that support front line services	Performance	All Directorates
Streamlining service delivery, using data and evidence, to join up services, reduce duplication and make it easier for people to access the services they need	Performance	All Directorates
Empowering staff and organisations to remove barriers and deliver more effectively including supporting the third sector as a key delivery partner	Performance	All Directorates

Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025/26	Council Plan 2023/28 Theme(s)	Directorate
Shifting focus and expenditure towards agencies and services which take a prevention-first approach	Performance	All Directorates
We will make it easier for communities to make decisions about the places they know best and empower local systems to integrate and transform services in line with local priorities. As part of the conclusion of our joint review of local governance with COSLA:		
we will undertake a further public consultation exercise in Summer 2025 on devolving parking fines to local authorities	Place Performance	ER



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 12** 

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Corporate Director Education, Report No: PR/18/25/LR

**Communities & Organisational** 

Development

Contact Officer: Lesley Robertson Contact No: 01475 712703

Subject: Commissioning of Advice Direct Scotland for the Administration of

Distribution of a Heating Support Fund

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1	⊠ For Decision	☐For Information/Noting
1.1		

- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for Inverclyde Council to commission Advice Direct Scotland (ADS) to deliver a Heating Support Fund to eligible working-age residents at risk of fuel poverty during winter 2025/26.
- 1.3 Following Committee approval of a £600,000 Heating Support Fund in November 2024, a working-age fuel support scheme has been developed with a proposed allocation of £382,200 for winter 2025/26. This proposal builds on previous pension-age support and targets a significant service gap for working-age households facing fuel hardship
- 1.4 It is proposed that Advice Direct Scotland manage the distribution of the fund, using their grant administration expertise and established infrastructure to deliver cash-first assistance to qualifying residents efficiently and securely.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Approve the commissioning of Advice Direct Scotland to deliver The Working Age Winter Fuel Support Scheme 2025/26.
- 2.2 Agree the allocation of £382,200 from the Heating Support Fund to ADS, which includes a direct award of £33,160 to ADS to administer the fund.
- 2.3 Instruct officers to implement the delivery model and monitoring mechanisms and to provide an interim expenditure report within 3 months of the fund launch. It is recommended that the scheme is closed to new applicants if, or when the fund is exhausted.
- 2.4 It is recommended that the Committee approve the proposal to withdraw the supplementary £100 Scottish Welfare Fund fuel cost crisis grant payment, coinciding with the launch of The Working Age Winter Fuel Support Scheme 2025/26.

Ruth Binks Corporate Director

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 Fuel poverty remains a significant challenge in Inverclyde, exacerbated by rising energy costs, inflationary pressures, and the cost-of-living crisis. Many households, particularly those in low-income working-age groups face difficulties in affording adequate heating. While Inverclyde Council has successfully supported low-income pension-age households through dedicated winter payments, a service gap has persisted for working-age households who do not qualify for similar national support schemes such as the Winter Fuel Payment.
- 3.2 National research and local insight from Inverclyde's Anti-Poverty Partnership and HSCP Advice Services indicate a growing concern around energy affordability, debt, and energy supplier inaccessibility. These issues have been compounded by wider socioeconomic pressures, leaving many residents vulnerable to cold homes, disconnection, and negative health outcomes.
- 3.3 In response to these challenges, the Policy and Resources Committee approved the creation of a £600,000 Heating Support Fund in November 2024, funded from the Anti-Poverty Earmarked Reserve. This fund aims to deliver targeted assistance to residents most at risk of fuel poverty and financial hardship. Informed by the learning from the 2024/25 pension-age scheme which disbursed £217,800, the Council has developed a proposal to allocate £382,200 of this fund to support around 2,500 working-age households during winter 2025/26.
- 3.4 The Council's approach supports a wider strategic ambition to promote financial inclusion, reduce inequality, and deliver crisis mitigation through efficient and compassionate interventions. Commissioning an experienced national partner to administer the scheme allows for a streamlined delivery model with secure payments, data insights, and access to specialist advice services.
- 3.5 A key feature of this model is the 'cash-first' approach, paid directly to applicants' bank accounts which aims to preserve dignity and flexibility for recipients. Where appropriate, applicants will also be offered a utility credit alternative or a hybrid model.
- 3.6 Applications will be accessible through multiple channels, including an online portal, by telephone, paper forms, and referrals from trusted partners such as HSCP Advice Services, East Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau, and local support organisations. Advice Direct Scotland will manage application processing, eligibility checking, payments, and reporting.
- 3.7 A robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be embedded, tracking distribution metrics, user demographics, outcomes, and referral uptake. Feedback surveys will be used to assess applicant experience and inform future improvements. Anonymised data will support ongoing poverty profiling in Inverclyde.
- 3.8 The delivery cost is capped at 9.5% of the scheme value (£33,160). This represents value for money and enables high-quality delivery while retaining a significant share of funds for direct payments to households in need.
- 3.9 A one-off fuel cost supplementary payment of £100 for new Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grant applicants has been provided since 5th February 2025. The decision to make the supplementary payment was made based on the policy being reviewed later in 2025/26 with a proposal for the balance of the Anti-Poverty Heating Support fund. The Working Age Winter Fuel Support Scheme 2025/26 helps a wider group of low-income households, which if agreed, officers recommend that the Scottish Welfare Fund supplement is withdrawn.

#### 4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 It is proposed that Advice Direct Scotland (ADS) be commissioned to deliver The Working Age Winter Fuel Support Scheme 2025/26. ADS has extensive experience in delivering energy and crisis support at scale, with a proven track record in grant administration, case management, and direct engagement with energy providers
- 4.2 The proposed eligibility criteria are as follows:
  - Resident of Inverclyde
  - Under state pension age
  - Responsible for paying household fuel bill
  - Have a gross annual household income under £27,000
  - Be a care experienced young person with a gross annual income under £32,000

Applicants must also meet one of the following criteria:

- Household includes a child(ren) aged under 5
- Household includes a disabled person or someone with long-term health conditions, evidenced by the award of a non-means tested disability related benefit, such as, Adult Disability Payment or Child Disability Payment.
- Applicants are a carer (formal or informal). Evidenced by a self-declaration of who they
  care for and the help they give with evidence of Carer Support Payment or Attendance
  Allowance received by the person for whom care is provided or evidenced by a specified
  professional or by an agreed support agency.
- Applicant is aged 16–24 and living independently
- Has been assessed as living in exceptional circumstances and approved for the grant by HSCP Inverclyde Advice Service or by a Trusted Partner approved by HSCP Inverclyde for the specific purpose of endorsing applications for the Inverclyde Working Age Winter Fuel Support Scheme 2025-26.
- 4.3 It is proposed to provide a level of support according to household composition:
  - £100 for single-adult households
  - £150 for households with two or more adults
  - £200 for households with dependent children.

The support will be provided as a one-off payment, with each qualifying household eligible to receive no more than one payment.

- 4.4 If Committee agree the proposed Working Age Winter Heating Support Fund 2025/26, it is proposed to simultaneously withdraw the £100 Scottish Welfare Fund fuel cost crisis grant supplement.
- 4.5 If agreed, Officers will provide Committee with an interim report on expenditure within 3 months of the fund launch, which may recommend amendments to the qualifying criteria if the scheme is over or under subscribed. In the event of the fund being exhausted before the timing of the report, Officers propose closing the scheme to new applicants.

#### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial	Χ	
Legal/Risk	Χ	
Human Resources		Χ
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	Χ	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights	Χ	
& Wellbeing		
Environmental & Sustainability		
Data Protection	Χ	

#### 5.2 Finance

£382.2k from Anti-Poverty Fund. Delivery cost = £33,140 (9.5%)

As a result of this proposal, the proposal to terminate the £100 fuel supplement will mean that an additional £15K remains within the Scottish Welfare Fund programme fund and can be allocated to other priorities.

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Anti-Poverty EMR	Other Expenditure	2025/26	£382,200		£33.2k delivery cost with up to £349k of grants.

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments

#### 5.3 **Legal/Risk**

The risk associated with the payment of grant funds will be mitigated through a combination of robust financial controls and contractual safeguards. Payments will be released on a staged basis, thereby reducing the risk to the Council. In addition, the contract will include a specific clause protecting the Council in the event of an insolvency or similar occurrence, ensuring that any unspent or recoverable grant funds are returned to the Council.

#### 5.4 Human Resources

There are no HR implications arising from this report

#### 5.5 Strategic

Aligns with Anti-Poverty and Council Plan

#### 5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

Targeted support for high-risk groups

#### (a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

Х

YES - Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.

NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.

#### **6.0 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the following
  - Corporate Management Team
  - HSCP Advice Services
  - Anti-Poverty Officer Governance Group

#### 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Inverclyde Fuel Support Proposal
  - Anti-Poverty Fund Fuel Poverty Payments Proposal
  - CMT Advice Direct Scotland March 2025 Report



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 13** 

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Corporate Director, Education, Report No: PR/20/25/KMcC

**Communities and Organisational** 

Development

Contact Officer: Morna Rae Contact No: 01475 712146

Subject: Review of the Performance Management Framework

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 □ For Decision □ For Information/Noting

1.2 The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval for the updated Performance Management Framework.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve the updated Performance Management Framework, appended to this report in Appendix 2.

Morna Rae Head of OD, Policy and Communications

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 To support the implementation of a new Council Plan 2023/28, the Committee Plans 2023/26 and annual Service Plans from April 2023, a new Performance Management Framework was developed and approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 21 March 2023.
- 3.2 The Performance Management Framework helps to ensure that as a Council we:
  - Set out clearly what it is we want to achieve.
  - Focus resources on the right outcomes.
  - Are aware of where things are going well and where improvement is needed.
  - Report on progress to both internal and external audiences.
  - Use performance information and targets to drive continuous improvement.
  - Demonstrate Best Value.
  - Work openly, transparently and in an accountable way.
- 3.3 The update of the Performance Management Framework is the next stage in the review of the wider Strategic Planning and Performance Management Framework, carried out in early 2025.
- 3.4 The review of the Framework is also included in the Policy Review Schedule, with a due date of September 2025.

#### 4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 A summary of the proposed changes to the Performance Management Framework is set out in Appendix 1, with the updated Framework provided in Appendix 2.
- 4.2 No major changes are proposed to the framework, however the attention of the Committee is drawn to the following proposed amendments:
  - Reference to the self-assessment of Best Value performance, carried out by the ECMT in April 2024, has been added.
  - Details of the Audit Scotland SPI Direction have been updated to refer to Direction, published in December 2024, which superseded the SPI Direction 2021.
  - Details of the new HSCP Strategic Plan 2024/27, including performance arrangements for the four new strategic priorities, has been added.
  - The addition of information on the review of the SPPMF and the recommendations that were agreed earlier this year.

#### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

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

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		Χ
Legal/Risk		X
Human Resources		Χ
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	Χ	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights		Χ
& Wellbeing		

Environmental & Sustainability	Χ
Data Protection	Χ

#### 5.2 Finance

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 associated with this report.

#### 5.4 Human Resources

There are no human resources implications associated with this report.

#### 5.5 **Strategic**

A robust performance management framework supports the delivery of the Council Plan Theme of Performance: 'High quality, innovative services are provided, giving value for money'.

#### **6.0 CONSULTATION**

6.1 None.

#### 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

# APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF PROPOSED REVISONS TO THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK, AUGUST 2025

Performanc	Performance Management Framework				
PAGE	TITLE	PROPOSED CHANGE			
Throughout		Change from Corporate Policy, Performance and Partnerships Team to Corporate Policy, Performance and Communications Team			
Cover page		Date of review updated			
1	Document Control	Insertion of a Document Control page			
5	SPI Direction	Updated to reflect the publication of a new SPI Direction 2024 and its contents			
6	Best Value	Updated to include reference to the Best Value self-assessment that was carried out in April 2024 and a link to the Council's Best Value webpage.			
9	Committee Delivery and improvement Plans 2023/26	Details of the annual refresh expanded to include reference to KPIs and Risks in addition to the existing reference to action plan refresh.			
9	HSCP Strategic Plan	Updated to reflect the publication of a new HSCP Plan 2024/27 and the approval of 4 new strategic actions. Details of performance management and reporting arrangements also added.			
14	Citizens' Voice	Removal of reference to Communication and Engagement Groups and addition of new Community Conversations Weeks			
14	Managing Risk	Contact details changed from Chief Internal Auditor to Corporate Risk Advisor			
19	Reviewing the Performance Management Framework	Updated to reference the SPPMF review carried out in early 2025 and the agreed recommendations arising from the review			

2025

# Inverclyde Council Performance Management Framework



CORPORATE POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

July 2025



# **DOCUMENT CONTROL**

# **Document Responsibility**

Policy Title	Corporate Group	Service	
Performance	Corporate Quality	OD, Policy and	
Management Framework	Improvement Group	Communications	

## **Change History**

Version	Date	Comments
1.1	March 2023	Approved by P&R Committee
1.2	February 2024	Updated to improve accessibility and name change of Pentana to Ideagen
1.3	July 2025	Updated to reflect: - New SPI Direction 2024 - New HSCP strategic Plan 2024/27 - Review of the PMF in 2025 and recommendations

## **Distribution**

Corporate Management Team, Heads of Service, ICON, Corporate Quality Improvement Group

# **Policy Review**

Updating Frequency	Next Review Date	Responsible Officer
2 years	March 2027	Head of OD, Policy and
		Communications

# **Policy Review and Approval**

Name	Action	Date	Communication
Policy & Resources			
Committee			

## **APPENDIX 2**

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## 1. Introduction and purpose

This Performance Management Framework (PMF) sets out the arrangements by which we plan, deliver, review and improve on what we aim to achieve, both as a Council and in partnership through the delivery of the Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33, the Inverclyde Council Plan 2023/28 and the Committee Delivery and Improvement Plans 2023/2026.

The core purpose of the framework is to drive continuous improvement and deliver improved outcomes so that we deliver our **Vision of Success for All: Getting it right for every child, citizen and community**. The framework helps to ensure that as a Council we:

- Set out clearly what it is we want to achieve;
- Focus resources on the right outcomes;
- Are aware of where things are going well and where improvement is needed;
- Report on progress to both internal and external audiences:
- Use performance information to drive continuous improvement;
- Demonstrate Best Value; and
- Work openly, transparently and in an accountable way.

#### 1.1 What is Performance Management and why is it important?

Effective performance management focuses on improvement and change and comes from a clear idea of where we want to be, the impact that we want to have and how this will be achieved. As resources tighten and demand for services increase, it is essential that the Council is able to assess whether it is delivering its services effectively and whether positive progress is being delivered. Elected Members, the public and external scrutiny bodies also require meaningful information to allow them to assess performance through a balance of quantitative and qualitative information, recognising that numbers alone do not tell the full story and that the context is equally important.

The diagram below, extracted from the Local Government Association's "Performance Management Guide for Local Authority Officers", shows how performance management can influence improvement and progress at various levels of a Council.



Source: "Performance Management Guide for Local Authority Officers", Local Government Association

#### 2. National Context

This section provides information on the national context that provides the overarching umbrella under which our performance management framework operates.

#### 2.1 National Performance Framework

The Sottish Government's <u>National</u> Performance Framework aims to:

- create a more successful country
- give opportunities to all people living in Scotland
- increase the wellbeing of people living in Scotland
- · create sustainable and inclusive growth
- reduce inequalities and give equal importance to economic, environmental and social progress

The framework has informed the development of the Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33 and the Council Plan 2023/28.



#### 2.2 Best Value

Best Value is a statutory duty set out in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 and applies to all public bodies in Scotland. Its purpose is to ensure that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.

A new approach to Best Value auditing was implemented in 2023, which included the integration of Best Value fully into annual audit activity. The inspection process also includes a thematic approach to audit work focusing on the themes in the Best Value guidance. The Best Value statutory guidance, published in March 2020, can be downloaded here: <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-value-revised-statutory-guidance-2020/">https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-value-revised-statutory-guidance-2020/</a> Another aspect of the new approach is the introduction of a Controller of Audit report, covering all 32 Councils over the four-year period 2023 to 2027. These reports will include a focus on the pace and depth of continuous improvement in the Council.

#### Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) Direction 2024

The Accounts Commission has a statutory power to define the performance information that Councils must publish for performance comparison and benchmarking purposes. This is done through the publication of a Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) Direction. The current Direction was published in December 2024 and relates to financial years beginning 1st April 2025, 2026 and 2027.

Whilst broadly setting out the areas that Councils should report on, the Direction is not prescriptive in specifying which performance indicators meet the requirements of Best Value, leaving this to a Council's discretion to improve the range of information that it publishes in a way that reflects the local context and improvement. The range of performance information a Council reports is also subject to audit. The Direction schedule is provided below:

#### SPI 1: Improving local services and local outcomes

Each council will report information about its performance in a way that enables that council, other councils, the Accounts Commission, local residents and communities, and any other interested parties to draw comparisons and make judgements in relation to:

- i) that council's performance over time, and
- ii) the performance of different councils in a given period of time.

For the purposes of (i) above, reporting against a particular indicator or set of indicators should include a time series that is appropriate for the particular indicator/s chosen, typically covering a period of at least three years but taking account of:

- internal factors such as council plans and other strategic or budget decisions, and
- external factors such as national policy changes and any extraordinary events.

For the purposes of (ii) above, councils should ensure:

- comparisons are made against councils that are similar in relevant respects, such as budget size, urban/rural classification, and demographic or socioeconomic characteristics, and
- their choice of indicators including whether they have adopted LGBF or other indicators or a combination and their performance data are robust, consistent and comparable, and complemented by narrative context where appropriate.

The Commission expects councils to maximise the use of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) as a primary means of facilitating comparisons, alongside or in conjunction with other locally appropriate measures of performance. Councils should be transparent as to why specific measures have been chosen for local benchmarking and performance reporting purposes, particularly where they have chosen not to use LGBF indicators.

In satisfying the requirements set out in this Schedule, the Commission requires each council to ensure that its reporting meets the following three criteria:

- **Balanced**, in respect of areas in which performance has improved and those in which it has not improved or has declined. It is important to avoid reporting in a way that is, or could reasonably be perceived as being, selective, misleading or biased.
- **Timely**, in the interests of transparency and to enable the council to respond promptly where remedial action is required. It should be possible for councils to publish an annual performance report within nine months and no later than twelve months after the end of the respective year. In addition, councils should be updating and reviewing information on their performance on a quarterly basis (or otherwise as determined by data availability or reporting cycles), and where possible making that information publicly available.
- Accessible, and able to be easily understood by all citizens. For example, councils should
  publish summaries to communicate key messages, produce easy-read versions of reports
  wherever possible, and make appropriate use of technology to display performance
  information in a variety of formats whilst adhering to statutory requirements in relation to
  equalities.

Councils' performance information reporting shall cover the four key areas set out in the remainder of this document. In meeting these requirements, councils should take cognisance of current statutory guidance on Best Value.

To ensure that statutory obligations are being met, Inverclyde Council will carry out a corporate self-evaluation each year, with a focus on the delivery of Best Value, and will report on its performance to the public via the Council website. In 2024, a Best Value 'Checklist', developed by the Improvement Service was used to as the overarching framework for the self-evaluation, in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The report can be found here: <a href="Inverclyde Council Best Value - Inverclyde Council">Inverclyde Council Best Value - Inverclyde Council</a>

#### 2.3 The Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)

Local Government Benchmarking Framework - Inverclyde Council



The LGBF is a benchmarking tool designed to encourage Councils to examine and understand why variations in cost and performance occur.

To facilitate more useful learning and improvement Councils are arranged in 'family groups' to allow comparison between those that are similar in terms of the type of population that they serve (e.g. relative

Publication of the LGBF forms part of each Council's statutory public performance reporting. A report on our performance in relation to the LGBF is considered by both CMT and the Policy and Resources Committee annually and performance reported via the Council's website here:

deprivation/affluence) and the type of area in which they serve them (urban, semi-rural, rural).

More information on the LGBF, including details of performance for all Scottish Councils can be found on the Improvement Service website: https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/home

#### 3. Local Context

The Council's performance management framework includes the strategies, plans, Pls, targets and standards that enable the performance of the Council to be monitored to ensure the best possible outcome for customers, residents and communities.

The Council's strategic plans and how they fit together is shown in the strategy map below and is often referred to as the 'Golden Thread', which is a way of describing how each element links together, from the National Performance Framework to team and individual objectives.

The Inverciyde Council Financial Strategy is integral to the process, running from the Council Plan down to individual employee personal development plans.

National Performance
Framework

Partnership Plan

Council Plan

Committee and
Service Plans

Team
plans

**PDPs** 

Diagram 1: The planning framework "The Golden Thread"

#### 3.1 Partnership Plan 2023/33

The Inverciyde Alliance brings together the Community Planning partners for Inverciyde. The Partnership Plan sets out the shared commitment by Inverciyde Alliance partners to work together towards their collective aims, with a particular focus on tackling inequalities and the added value of partnership working. A new Partnership Plan was approved in early 2023 for the 10-year period 2023/2033. The Partnership Plan focuses on the following key themes:

Theme 1: Working People
Theme 2: Healthy People
Theme 3: Empowered People
Theme 4: A Supportive Place
Theme 5: A Thriving Place

#### 3.2 Council Plan 2023/28

The Council's purpose, priorities and values are set out in the Council Plan 2023/28. It also shows how Inverclyde Council contributes to the strategic priorities for the area, as set out in the Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33.

The Council Plan reflects various environmental factors, including the drive to achieve Net Zero, economic climate, demographics and local need. It has been driven by robust community consultation where local priorities were identified by residents. Based on the feedback received, the following key themes have been developed:

#### Theme 1: People

- Our young people have the best start in life through high quality support and education;
- Gaps in outcomes linked to poverty are reduced;
- People are supported to improve their health and wellbeing;
- More people will be in employment, with fair pay and conditions; and
- Our most vulnerable families and residents are safeguarded and supported.

#### Theme 2: Place

- Communities are thriving, growing and sustainable
- Our strategic housing function is robust;
- Our economy and skills base are developed;
- We have a responsive business premises supply; and
- Our natural environment is protected.

#### Theme 3: Performance

- High quality and innovative services are provided, giving value for money
- Our employees are supported and developed

#### 3.3 Committee Delivery and Improvement Plans 2023/26

In March 2023, the Council moved to a new model for Directorate and service planning to support the delivery of the Council Plan 2023/28 and set out more explicitly the linkages between actions, strategic priorities and local outcomes, as well as reflecting the new approach to Best Value. The planning reporting structure is shown in the table below:

Plan Name	Scope	Reporting to:
Environment and Regeneration Delivery and Improvement Plan	Physical Assets     Regeneration, Planning and Public Protection	Environment and Regeneration Committee
Education and Communities Delivery and Improvement Plan	Communities and Educational Resources     Education Services	Education and Communities Committee
Policy and Resources Delivery and Improvement Plan	<ul> <li>Finance</li> <li>Legal, Democratic, Digital and Customer Services</li> <li>Organisational Development, Policy and Communications</li> </ul>	Policy and Resources Committee

The Delivery and Improvement Plans cover the period 2023/26 and capture:

- Actions derived from the Council Plan strategic priorities, cascaded to individual Directorates / services.
- Corporate self-evaluation improvement actions.
- Priorities relating to areas of strategic service delivery.
- Improvement actions from External Audit Reports.
- Strategic improvement actions arising from Service Review.
- Key Performance Indicators linked to the delivery of action plans.
- LGBF measures of strategic importance to the Committee.

Although a three-year rolling plan, the action plan, KPIs and Risks will be reviewed on annual basis with performance reports considered by the CMT prior to every second Committee meeting.

#### 3.4 Service Delivery and Improvement Plans

Each Head of Service should produce a Service Delivery and Improvement Plan annually. This is to ensure that there is a consistent corporate approach to service performance and improvement in place. The plan should set out its linkages to Council priorities with a focus on:

- Key actions / workstreams that the Service will be delivering in the forthcoming year.
- Service self-evaluation improvement actions (e.g. arising from PSIF assessment).
- Lower level KPIs monitored by the Service that are not reported to Committee.
- LGBF indicators with benchmarking data for the service

Progress in the delivery of the Service Delivery and Improvement Plans should be monitored by Directorate Management Teams on a quarterly basis.

#### 3.5 Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan 2024/27

The Health and Social Care Strategic Partnership Plan, 'People and Partnerships, Making a Difference (2024-27)' is the equivalent to the Council's Committee Delivery and Improvement Plans, however it includes all health and social care services. The Plan sets out four new strategic priorities to be delivered over its lifetime, each supported by identified strategic actions:

- Provide early help and intervention.
- Improve support for mental health, wellbeing and recovery.
- Support inclusive, safe and resilient communities.
- Strengthen support to families and carers.

These priorities complement the five themes of the Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33.

A robust monitoring process is in place to assess and report on the progress of the Strategic Partnership Plan

Progress against each strategic action is collated and reported to the Inverclyde Integration Joint Board and the Strategic Planning Group every six months. Action updates are collected through priority group meetings. Four focused meetings, one for each priority, are held with action leads across the HSCP to discuss progress. This provides robust updates and helps to effectively demonstrate close partnership working across HSCP service areas and with partners. The Ideagen performance management system is used to manage performance.

As well as supporting 6 monthly reporting of the progress of our strategic plan, this approach supports the completion of our Annual Performance Report.

#### Outcomes framework

To further evidence the impact of the Strategic Partnership Plan, a robust outcomes framework is under development. This framework identifies appropriate outcome measures that help evidence the impact of our strategic actions. A draft framework is in its later stages of development; with further work ongoing to validate the measures.

#### **National Indicators**

Integration Joint Boards are required to report against two national datasets, the National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes (containing 23 national indicators) and the Ministerial Strategic Group framework (17 indicators). The frameworks are employed by all Scottish HSCPs and demonstrate the impact of integrated working.

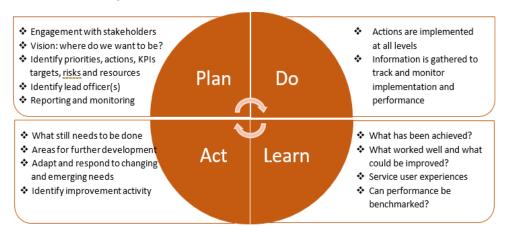
These frameworks are published nationally and reported annually in the Annual Performance Report.

The HSCP Strategic Plan can be downloaded from the Council's website here: https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/strategies-policies-and-plans

## 4. Planning for Improvement

#### 4.1 Plan, Do, Learn, Act

Our approach to performance management is based on a continuous cycle of 4 activities: **Plan, Do, Learn, Act**. This cycle ensures an integrated approach to performance management and planning.

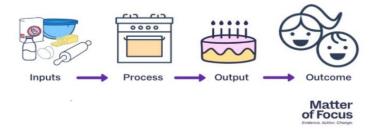


#### 4.2 Measurable outcomes

Outcomes based approaches have been promoted in Scottish policy over a number of years with the aim of improving public services by focusing on the concerns of individuals. An outcome is the change that it is hoped will be achieved by delivering a project or initiative, i.e. the difference that will be made and should include words such as increase, decrease, reduce and improve.

When measuring outcomes, it is important to use qualitative assessment through engagement with customers and stakeholders, however this is often not enough and demonstrating achievement of outcomes through use of data and performance measures helps to provide a factual evidence base. Proxy measures may also need to be used to evidence delivery of outcomes. Outcomes should not be confused with inputs, like staff time, resources, or outputs and activity.

The diagram below, produced by Matter of Focus, shows the relationship between inputs, process, output and outcome:



An outcome is the end result of a chain of events that starts with inputs and processes, leads to an output (in this case, the birthday cake) which then leads to an outcome (happy children). What we're talking about when we're focusing on the outcome is the happy child, not the cake.

Source: What are outcomes?, Matter of Focus home of OutNav (matter-of-focus.com)

#### 4.3 Developing Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are central to a robust performance management framework. KPIs must be fit for the purpose of strategic planning to ensure that the Council is measuring the right things, delivering meaningful outcomes and has a direct line of sight to the activities that are underway. When identifying performance measures, it is vital to link strategically to the Council's overall aims and intended outcomes and understand how they fit into the broader vision.

As data can influence decisions that are taken at all levels of the organisation it must be robust, accurate and reported in a timely manner. Data which is partial, incomplete or inconsistent does not allow for proper consideration of risk and learning.

#### KPIs should be:

- Linked to vision, strategy and actions.
- Comparable over time and be able to be benchmarked wherever possible.
- Informed by national and local priorities.
- From a reliable data source.

#### 4.4 Setting targets

Setting targets allows us to work towards improving our services and achieving our goals. The target is the level of achievement expected over the period being reviewed, i.e. what you are aiming for. Targets can help to:

- Promote accountability.
- Manage a service.
- Stretch performance.
- Support self-improvement.

When setting targets to achieve continuous improvement, consideration should be given to comparable past and present performance data and trends, benchmarking with similar services/Councils and national trends.

Targets must be set at the outset of the Plan or project / initiative and approved by the Head of Service. They should be reviewed annually, giving consideration to recent performance, new policy developments and national benchmarks to ensure that they remain relevant and challenging. All proposed changes to targets will be reviewed by the CMT as part of their scrutiny of the year end performance reporting. The KPI data submission pro-forma (Appendix 1) should be used to record and advise of changes to the annual targets.

#### Thresholds

Target setting enables performance reports to be produced with a RAG status (red, amber, green). In addition to RAG status, the Council also monitors direction of travel in the short and long-term using the performance management system, Ideagen Risk (formerly called Pentana). More information on the performance management system can be found in section 5.1.

Thresholds are used to calculate the status of an indicator, i.e. red, amber or green with a percentage variance or deviation from the target value to determine RAG status. Broadly, for the majority of the Council's indicators a 5% tolerance level is applied. This means that where the value is more than 0% but below 5% of the target value, then the status will be amber and if the value deviates from target by 5% or more, then the status will be red.

It is not appropriate to set a 5% tolerance range for every PI, depending on the nature of what is being measured and based on performance trends, it may require to be lower or higher, however the Service must be able to explain why a 5% threshold has not been applied.

For all indicators however, targets and tolerance levels should be specific and realistic. The symbols used by Ideagen Risk to report performance are shown below.

Table of symbols used by Ideagen Risk shown below.

PI Status							
	Performance is adrift of target by 5% or more						
	Performance is below target, but is within a set tolerance level (between 0-5%)						
<b>②</b>	Performance is at target level, or above						
	Performance is being monitored but no target has been set (data only PI)						
Short term	n and long-term trend status						
	Improving performance (short term = annual change, long term = 5 years)						
	No statistical change in performance						
-	Performance has declined (short term = annual change, long term = 5 years)						

#### Peer Review of Targets

As an additional performance management check, targets set by services will be reviewed by a peer group of officers to ensure that they are set at an appropriate level. This will provide an additional level of quality assurance and help to maintain performance standards.

#### 4.5 The importance of being SMART

When setting actions and indicators, it is important that these are **SMART**. This provides a clear, structured approach to meeting objectives and goals.

### **SMART**

**Specific**: The PI or action indicates exactly what result is expected do that performance can be judged accurately

**Measurable:** Progress can be gauged through measurable goals or for PIs, data is available or is collected relatively easily

**Achievable:** Reasonable expectations are set, not aspirational

**Relevant:** The action or measure is important to the intended audience and is clearly related to the service being measured

**Timely:** Information or data is available frequently enough to have value in making decisions and information is available at times when it is needed

#### 4.6 Challenge and Review

Challenge and review occurs at all levels of the organisation and includes self-assessment, reviewing past performance, benchmarking and listening to the customer experience.

#### a) Self-assessment

Self-assessment allows organisations to challenge existing performance, and to identify strengths, spot gaps and areas for improvement to inform planning. Performance monitoring, customer surveys, external and internal inspection and review all provide a service with valuable information on 'where you are now' and can help to identify where improvement or further development is required as you go towards 'where you want to be'.

Integral to the process of self-assessment is the requirement that performance is evaluated against sound evidence, which can include:

#### Performance Information

Accurate, reliable KPIs provides the basis for making objective assessments and informed judgements about service performance and the prospects for improvement.

#### Customer Expectations

Planning should be driven by what serves residents and customers best. Consultation and engagement should be integral to planning and self-evaluation.

#### Audit and Inspection

Details of any recent audit and inspection reports, whether internal or external, should also be used along with any areas for service improvement identified.

#### Self-assessment frameworks

All services of the council use a self-evaluation tool that best suits need. The Council has a corporate commitment to driving quality and delivering excellence using the Public Service Improvement Framework. Services that do not have a formal self-evaluation framework in place are required to undertake a PSIF assessment at least once every 3 years and develop an Improvement Plan based on an evaluation of service strengths and areas for improvement.

#### Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA)

An SNA brings together a wide range of demographic, social and economic data on Inverclyde's population and helps to inform business planning by highlighting the most critical areas to focus on.

#### b) Benchmarking

Benchmarking performance with other local authorities, or those that deliver the same or a similar service is a key part of the performance management framework. Benchmarking enables an organisation to identify its strengths and encourages a continuous review of progress in target areas. Core elements of benchmarking include:

- A systematic process that is planned, resourced and carried out with a degree of rigour.
- A learning process where the core purpose is to understand why current performance levels are where they area, how well others perform in the same service area and why some services or organisations achieve better results.
- Supporting change and improvement within a service or organisation based on the knowledge of what constitutes achievable best practice.

Details of Inverclyde Council's Local Government Benchmarking Framework performance, published by SOLACE and the Improvement Service, is available here:

#### Local Government Benchmarking Framework - Inverciyde Council

A wide variety of benchmarking activity takes place across the Council in addition to the Local Government Benchmarking Framework, including, but not limited to:

- APSE
- The Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS)
- CIPFA
- The West Partnership
- Scottish Local Authority Economic Development Group
- Validated self-evaluation

#### c) Capturing the Citizen's Voice

Understanding the needs of users, citizens and the wider environment is of vital importance to performance management and it is equally important to gather in depth qualitative insight from citizens, alongside standardised KPI data.

There is a wealth of detailed feedback from specific surveys and consultation exercises available. Inverclyde Council uses a variety of citizen consultation and engagement approaches including:

- Inverclyde Citizens' Panel
- Community Conversation Weeks
- Listening Events
- Budget Consultation
- Compliments, Complaints and Comments data

#### 4.7 Managing Risk

Risk Management is a key part of an organisation's strategic management and is complementary to performance management. It is the process whereby organisations methodically address the risks attached to their activities to achieve sustained benefit within each activity and across the portfolio of all activities. Effective risk management will allow the Council to:

- Have increased confidence in achieving its desired outcomes.
- Contain threats to an acceptable level.
- Take informed decisions about exploiting opportunities.

Inverclyde Council has a Risk Management Strategy and a Risk Assessment and Prioritisation Framework and these should be followed when identifying and managing risk and mitigating actions.

For further information and support in relation to risk management please contact Inverclyde Council's Corporate Risk Advisor.

## 5. Performance monitoring and management

#### 5.1 Ideagen Risk (formerly called Pentana)

Performance is recorded and reported using an online performance management system, Ideagen Risk, a cloud-based performance management software system which is accessible remotely and from any device. The Council has 50 user licences and unlimited 'view only' licences.

Ideagen Risk supports the Council's performance management in the specific areas of managing Actions; KPIs and Risk and links these together to track the work being undertaken and the resulting impact. Performance reports can be generated at scheduled intervals or as required for review at team or management meetings, as well as Committee meetings. Reporting of progress should include a narrative against objectives and performance indicators to give a holistic view of the progress made.

Data stored on the system should be underpinned by robust metadata to ensure data quality and integrity. Metadata provides detail of what data is being collected, from what source and how / when it is calculated. Appendix 1 contains a pro-forma where metadata information can be recorded. The protocol to be followed in the use of Ideagen Risk is set out in Appendix 2.

The roll out across Inverciyde Council is led by the Corporate Policy, Performance and Communications team, supported by colleagues in the Directorates. If you would like more information, please contact the Corporate Policy Team at the following email address: <a href="mailto:corporate.policy@inverciyde.gov.uk">corporate.policy@inverciyde.gov.uk</a>

#### 5.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The Council is ultimately accountable to the public for its performance, therefore defined roles and responsibilities are important to ensure effective performance monitoring and management. These will vary across the Council and are set out below:

Role	Responsibility
Full Council	Agree the Vision and direction of the Council.
Elected Members, Committees	Responsible for making decisions, and approving, reviewing and scrutinising delivery and performance within a given service/subject area.
Corporate Management Team	Strategic responsibility for managing and challenging performance in relation to the Council's priorities, including the Committee Delivery and Improvement Plans. Sets the culture and organisational practice and drives continuous improvement by embedding the PMF. Ensures corrective action is taken to deal with areas of poorer performance and risk. Responsible for supporting and advising Councillors on performance matters.
Directorate and Senior Management Teams	Responsible for the management and delivery of Service Plans. Set Service objectives, performance indicators, milestones and targets. Accountable for operational performance and ensuring that their service contributes to the Council's overall strategic priorities. Undertake quality assurance of their data throughout the year and track and report on performance to the CMT and Committee. Implement performance improvement tools to support improvement in service delivery.

Role	Responsibility
Team Leaders	Support the Senior Management Team in delivering key objectives. Develop and deliver team plans and manage performance. Reinforce the link between organisation and individual objectives to team members. Support colleagues to understand their role in continuous improvement.
Employees	Contribute to the delivery of Plans through the completion of allocated tasks. Take responsibility for individual performance and development and understand how their work contributes to the delivery of the Council's key priorities. Employees should feel able to contribute to performance improvement activity.
Citizens' and Service Users	The Council is ultimately accountable to the public for its performance and has a mechanism for providing feedback on performance and use of Council services. The public can express its views on how the Council operates via participation in partnership and Council-led consultation and engagement exercises.

## 6. Scrutiny

#### 6.1 Elected Member Scrutiny

Enhancing Elected Member scrutiny and oversight of performance is pivotal to the success of this Performance Management Framework. Elected Members have a key role to play in scrutinising improvement activity through the Committee process including:

- Approving the Council Plan, Financial Strategy and other high-level strategies and annual reports;
- The scrutiny of performance reports; and
- The approval and scrutiny of action plans developed in response to inspection or audit actions.

#### 6.2 Management Scrutiny

Ideagen Risk enables the creation of scorecards, trend dashboards and performance portals aligned to our strategic priorities. Performance scorecards and trend dashboards on the Council Plan and Committee Delivery and Improvement Plans will be monitored and actioned by the CMT at appropriate intervals depending on the nature of the Plan, whilst Service Plan performance will be monitored by the Senior Management Team on a quarterly basis.

The CMT will review and approve performance reports prior to their submission to Council Committees.

Managers will also receive a wide range of service specific management and operational information reports on a weekly and monthly basis.

#### 6.3 Public Performance Reporting

Inverciyde Council is committed to ensuring that accountability, transparency and openness is embedded throughout the organisation and in our public performance reporting. The Council strives to continuously improve the quality of information that it publishes to the public. All information should be easy to find, accessible and easy to read.

A wide range of performance information is published on the Council's website which can be found here: <a href="https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/council-and-government/performance">https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/council-and-government/performance</a>

All reports relating to Best Value and external annual audit reports should also be made available to the public on the Council's website.

The annual performance reporting calendar for the Council's high-level plans and progress reports is provided on the next page.

# 6.4 Performance Reporting Calendar

Report	Committee / Board	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Partnership Plan Annual Report	Inverclyde Alliance Board												
Partnership Plan progress reports	Inverclyde Alliance Board												
Local Children Poverty Action Annual Report	Inverclyde Alliance Board												
Council Plan Annual Report	Policy & Resources Committee												
Council Plan progress reports	Policy & Resources Committee												
Financial Strategy – 6 monthly report	Policy & Resources Committee												
Workforce Information and Activity Report	Policy & Resources Committee												
People and OD Strategy Action Plan update	Policy & Resources Committee												
Inverclyde Council Annual Complaints Report	Policy & Resources Committee												
Local Government Benchmarking Framework	Policy and Resources Committee												
Freedom of Information Annual Report	Policy & Resources Committee												
Annual Procurement Report	Environment & Regeneration Committee												
Climate Change Strategy Annual Report	Inverclyde Council												

## 7. Reviewing the Performance Management Framework

Building a review of the SPPMF supports the Council's commitment to continuous improvement. A review was carried out at the end of December 2024 - January 2025 and took the form of a survey to capture the views of Elected Members, Service Managers and the Extended Corporate Management Team.

The review findings were that the original objectives of the Performance Management Framework are largely being met, particularly with regard to supporting the role of Elected Members in monitoring performance.

The following areas for improvement were identified and have been included as actions in the Policy and Resources Committee Plan in 2025/26:

- Implementation of an annual briefing on the Council Plan 2023/28.
- Develop new ways to communicate and promote the aims of the Council Plan 2023/28.
- Ensure that strategic plans and performance reports are clear and easy to understand.

The next review will carried out in March 2027.

## 8. Further information and support

For more information on anything contained within this Framework, please contact the Corporate Policy, Performance and Communications team, e-mail: <a href="mailto:corporate.policy@inverclyde.gov.uk">corporate.policy@inverclyde.gov.uk</a>

1. Service Name:

# Appendix 1: KPI data submission pro-forma

2.	Description of KPI:		
3.	Please provide details of	performance below:	
Р	erformance 2021/22	Performance 2022/23	Performance 2023/24
		L	
4.	Please provide details of	the annual target below:	
Ta	arget 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Target 2024/25
5.	If the target has changed	please provide details of why	<b>:</b>
^	Han the about to toward	h a a a si a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a	.f. Comico 2 /places amount
6.	yes or no)	been signed off by the Head o	or Service? (please answer
7.	Please provide details of	the data source for audit purp	ooses
•	Diagon municipa detaile of	annaissa Minassa ahan sa isa sa sa sa	fa
8.	performance has declined	any significant change in per d.	rormance, particularly where
9.	Has the data been approv	ved for submission by the Hea	nd of Service (please answer
	yes or no)		W.
40	Proforma completed by:		
10.			
	Signature:		
	Designation:		
	Date:		

# Appendix 2: Ideagen Risk (formerly called Pentana) protocols

# A) Roles

4 'roles' have been set up, each with varying levels of permission, n.b. the 'All User' permission is the default permission allocated by Ideagen Risk to all system users.

User Role:	Permission level:
Site Administrator	The user has unrestricted access to Ideagen Risk, including the ability to create and manage user accounts and assign new users to an appropriate role. Site Admin are also responsible for maintaining an accurate record of the number of licences issued and general housekeeping of the system.
Advanced User	Advanced User responsibilities include the creation of Actions, PIs and Risks on the system, including assigning responsibilities; setting up triggers and schedules; create and run reports, develop scorecards and strategy maps, queries and development of portals. Advanced Users should ensure that the correct visibility is set for Actions, Risks and PIs. Advanced Users cannot add new users to Ideagen Risk. The number of advanced users on the system is currently restricted.
Actions, Risk or PI Updater	This permission will be held by the vast majority of Ideagen Risk licence holders. Users are restricted to updating Actions, Risks and Pls that are assigned to them or managed by them. Any changes to an Action, Risk or Pl that are required other than basic editing/ updating should be referred to an Advanced User. The process for this is shown below.
All staff view only	This permission assigns the user <b>view only</b> access to the Actions, Risks and PIs on the system. Users can only view data where the visibility is designated as 'All Staff View Only'. This role is a basic 'view only' role for HSCP and Council employees only (does not include Elected Members, Board Members Partners etc.). All Staff View Only should be the default visibility setting for all new Actions, PIs and Risks.
All users	Ideagen Risk automatically assigns all new users to the system to the default 'All User' role. Users cannot be removed from this role and whilst no permissions are allocated to this role, any Action, Risk or PI where visibility is set to 'All Users' rather than 'All staff view only" on the system will be visible to everyone. Management of user permissions should be via roles 1-4 described above.

## B) Adding and changing Actions, Pls and Risks

New actions or PIs can only be added to Ideagen Risk by site admin or advanced users who have received the appropriate training. Please contact the Corporate Policy, Performance and Communications Team to request details of advanced users in your service. From time to time, it may be necessary to amend the information on the PMS to reflect changing circumstances.

The procedure to be followed for the most likely changes is set out below:

Action:	Procedure:
Request to have a new Action Plan, KPIs or Risk to be added to Ideagen Risk.	Contact Corporate Policy team in the first instance to discuss requirements, timescales, reporting schedule set up, licences required and roles etc.
Changes to action delivery date.	Requests to change delivery dates must be emailed from the Team Leader (indicating that they have Service Manager approval) to the Corporate Policy Team with an explanation. A note will be added to Ideagen Risk to explain the reason for the change in date. Dates on the system will then show the original due date and the new due date.
Cancelling or postponing an action	An action should only be cancelled or postponed with the agreement of the line manager (who should also be the person responsible for managing the action). To have an action cancelled or postponed contact the Corporate Policy Team with the reason for cancelling or postponing. If it is postponed, please state when it will be taken forward. It is the responsibility of the service to ensure that it is incorporated in the relevant plan for the new date.
Setting and changing PI targets	Targets must be set by the service and signed off by the Head of Service. Annual targets set for future years must be reviewed to ensure they remain challenging but realistic. They should be revised where necessary and an explanation recorded in the note field.
Changes to Risks	As the Risks on Ideagen Risk are directly linked to other plans and strategies, changes to Risks can only be made with the approval of the Chief Internal Auditor.

This document has been produced by:
Corporate Policy, Performance and Communications Team,
Organisational Development, Policy and Communications,
Municipal Buildings, Greenock
PA15 1LY



**AGENDA ITEM NO: 14** 

PR/23/25/RB/MR

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee Date: 16 September 2025

Report By: Head of Organisational Report No:

**Development, Policy &** 

**Communications** 

Contact Officer: Morna Rae Contact No: 01475 712923

Subject: Co-operative Councils Innovation Network

#### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 ⊠For Decision □For Information/Noting

- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to request approval of continued membership of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network.
- 1.3 The Network contains members from across the UK and promotes the transformation of communities through community action, community engagement and civic empowerment.
- 1.4 At the 20 September 2022 meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee it was agreed that the Council should apply to become a member of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network for an initial period of 3 years.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee
  - Agrees to continue membership of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network until 2027.

Morna Rae

**Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications** 

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 At the 20 September 2022 meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee it was agreed that the Council should apply to become a member of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network (the Network), for an initial period of 3 years. This application was approved in October, and all councillors advised on 2 November. The Committee's approval of Network membership in September 2022 required officers to bring back annual reports highlighting the benefits which have arisen during the period of membership. These updates have been provided to Committee.
- 3.2 The Network, established in 2012, is a non-party-political active hub for co-operative policy development, innovation and advocacy. The Network states that member councils are committed to reforming the way they work by building an equal partnership with local people based on the values and principles of the International Cooperative Alliance. In particular, the Network promotes the transformation of communities through community action, community engagement and civic empowerment. More information on the Network can be found on its website: https://www.councils.coop/about-us
- 3.3 In addition, at its meeting on 1 December 2022, the Council approved Cllr Cassidy's appointment to the Network's Executive Oversight Committee.
- 3.4 All members of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network benefit from the following:
  - Access for Elected Members and officers to a wide network of local authorities who share a common purpose;
  - Access to the Network's on-line resources, including case studies, <u>https://www.councils.coop/case-studies/</u>
  - The potential to bid for funding to work on a case study, alone or in conjunction with other members;
  - Access to conferences and training events to meet peers from other members;
  - The ability to access a framework of specialist suppliers established by the Network for its members; and
  - The opportunity to raise the Council's profile nationally across the UK.
- 3.5 The Council has taken advantage of these benefits in a variety of ways, including the following:
  - Promotion of Inverclyde through the inclusion of Inverclyde Council case studies in the annual Network publications;
  - Cllr Cassidy's involvement in the Network's Executive Oversight Committee, and attendance at the Network's annual conferences, there being no fee for this given the Council's membership; and
  - A successful application by the Council to be a "Policy Prototype", receiving £2,000 funding from the Network, along with advice and experience from other areas. This has enabled development of graphically designed versions of the Council Plan and Partnership Plan, to make these documents more accessible and to stimulate engagement. These have been used at a variety of events including Clyde Conversations and employee workshops. The equipment purchased will also support future graphic design work within the Council.
- 3.6 There has been limited involvement by officers at the Network officers meetings due to capacity limitations. While officers have accessed the resources on practice underway in other local authorities there has not yet been an opportunity to implement these within Inverclyde. Contact have been made with other local authorities who are working on similar issues. The Network plans to change its approach to meeting agendas by having more focused thematic sessions. This may mean that officers find it easier to take part in shorter and more relevant meetings going forward.

3.7 In addition to the "Policy Prototype" funding that the Council has taken advantage of the Network also supports "Policy Labs". Policy Labs are bigger collaborative pieces of work that CCIN members will work on together (involving a minimum of four member organisations). Applications will be considered for funding of up to £20,000, dependent on their scale and ambition. If CCIN membership continued there is potential for a future Inverclyde Council application to take advantage of this funding.

#### 4.0 PROPOSALS

4.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee agrees to continue membership of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network until 2027.

#### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

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

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial	Χ	
Legal/Risk		Х
Human Resources		Х
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	Χ	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights		Х
& Wellbeing		
Environmental & Sustainability		Х
Data Protection		Х

#### 5.2 Finance

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
Non pay inflation contingency		October 2025	£5400		The Network has indicated that it has no plans to increase its membership fee levels.

#### 5.3 **Legal/Risk**

Not applicable.

#### 5.4 Human Resources

Not applicable.

#### 5.5 **Strategic**

The reports relates to the Council Plan themes of "Communities are thriving, growing and sustainable" and "High quality and innovative services are provided, giving value for money."

#### 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 Not applicable

#### 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 The 22 September 2002 report on Inverclyde Council joining the network is available at item 14 at <a href="https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2487">https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2487</a>