

FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held via Confero and in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 6 March 2024

Chair:

Councillor Walter Brogan (Depute)

Councillors Present:

Councillor Alex Allison, Councillor Mathew Buchanan, Councillor Andy Carmichael, Councillor Maureen Chalmers, Councillor Andrea Cowan, Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Mary Donnelly, Councillor Grant Ferguson, Councillor Gladys Ferguson-Miller, Councillor Graeme Horne, Councillor Martin Hose, Councillor Ross Gowland (*substitute for Councillor Lesley McDonald*), Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Hugh Macdonald, Councillor Catherine McClymont, Councillor Elaine McDougall, Councillor Mark McGeever, Councillor Richard Nelson, Councillor Mo Razzaq, Councillor John Ross, Councillor Graham Scott, Councillor Kirsty Williams

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Margaret Cooper, Councillor Joe Fagan (ex officio), Councillor Celine Handibode (Depute), Councillor Lesley McDonald (Chair)

Chief Executive's Service

P Manning, Chief Executive

Finance and Corporate Resources

C Fergusson, Head of Finance (Transactions); M Husband, Head of IT Services; S Jessup, Administration Assistant; T Little, Head of Communications and Strategy; C Lyon, Administration Officer; E McPake, Human Resources Business Manager; J Taylor, Head of Finance (Strategy)

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Corporate Resources Committee held on 6 December 2023 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Committee decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3 Minutes of the Appeals Panel

The minutes of the meetings of the Appeals Panel held on 30 November and 20 December 2023, 17, 22, 23, 30 January and 8 February 2024 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

Officers responded to a member's question in relation to the number of recent meetings of the Appeals Panel.

The Committee decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

4 Minutes of Recruitment Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Recruitment Committee held on 29 November 2023 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Committee decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

5 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/2024 – Finance and Corporate Resources

A report dated 15 January 2024 by the Head of Finance (Strategy) was submitted comparing the actual expenditure for the period 1 April to 28 December 2023 for Finance and Corporate Resources.

As at 28 December 2023, there was an overspend of £0.179 million against the phased budget, as detailed in Appendix A to the report. Following the probable outturn exercise, the forecast to 31 March 2024 was an overspend of £0.216 million. There were no proposed transfers to reserves.

Virements were proposed to realign budgets and those movements were detailed in the appendices to the report

Following a question from a member, officers gave an undertaking to provide members with a breakdown of the employability programmes contributing to the overspend in relation to Personnel Services, payments to contractors.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the overspend of £0.179 million, as detailed in Appendix A of the report, be noted;
- (2) that the forecast to 31 March 2024 of an overspend of £0.216 million be noted; and
- (3) that the proposed budget virements, as detailed in the appendices to the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 6 December 2023 (Paragraph 5)]

6 Capital Budget Monitoring 2023/2024 - Finance and Corporate Resources

A report dated 14 February 2024 by the Head of Finance (Strategy) was submitted advising of progress on Finance and Corporate Resources' capital programme for 2023/2024 and summarising the expenditure position at 28 December 2023.

The Finance and Corporate Resources' capital programme for 2023/2024 was £5.333 million. Anticipated spend to date was £2.319 million and spend to 28 December 2023 totalled £2.269 million. This represented an underspend of £0.050 million, mainly due to timing.

The projected outturn for 2023/2024 was £5.000 million, an underspend of £0.333 million. This was mainly due to the anticipated timing of spend on IT infrastructure projects which required spend in 2024/2025 rather than 2023/2024. Funding for those projects would carry forward into next financial year.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Finance and Corporate Resources' capital programme of £5.333 million, and expenditure to date of £2.269 million, be noted; and
- (2) that the projected outturn of £5.000 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 6 December 2023 (Paragraph 6)]

7 Finance and Corporate Resources – Workforce Monitoring – October to December 2023

A report dated 1 February 2024 by the Chief Executive was submitted on the following employee information for Finance and Corporate Resources for the period October to December 2023:-

- ◆ attendance statistics
- ◆ occupational health statistics
- ◆ accident/incident statistics
- ◆ disciplinary hearings, grievances and Dignity at Work cases
- ◆ analysis of leavers and exit interviews
- ◆ staffing watch as at 9 December 2023

Following a question from a member, officers undertook to provide an analysis of exit interviews, with respect to reasons for leaving.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted

[Reference: Minutes of 6 December 2023 (Paragraph 7)]

8 Council-wide Workforce Monitoring – October to December 2023

A report dated 1 February 2024 by the Chief Executive was submitted on the following Council-wide employee information for the period October to December 2023:-

- ◆ attendance statistics
- ◆ occupational health statistics
- ◆ accident/incident statistics
- ◆ disciplinary hearings, grievances and Dignity at Work cases
- ◆ analysis of leavers and exit interviews
- ◆ recruitment monitoring
- ◆ staffing watch as at 9 December 2023

Officers:-

- ◆ responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report
- ◆ undertook to provide, if possible, an analysis of the disabled applicants whose disability was autism
- ◆ undertook to provide timescales on when the report on the Veterans Strategy would be available
- ◆ undertook to look into members' concerns regarding the disparities around figures in relation to appointments to posts for disabled, BAME groups and veterans in comparison to the general population

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 6 December 2023 (Paragraph 8)]

9 Treasury Management Activity – Quarter 3

A report dated 9 February 2024 by the Head of Finance (Strategy) was submitted on the third quarter review of Treasury Management activity for 2023/2024.

Details were given on:-

- ◆ market performance
- ◆ debt management and borrowing strategy
- ◆ investment activity
- ◆ management of risk
- ◆ next quarter investment plans
- ◆ treasury management indicators

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 6 December 2023 (Paragraph 9)]

10 Revenue Collection and Approval of Write-Offs

A report dated 16 February 2024 by the Chief Executive was submitted on:-

- ◆ collection performance for the financial year 2023/2024 to 31 January 2023 on revenue income which comprised Council Tax, non-domestic rates, sundry debts and arrears
- ◆ performance in the Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme (BRIS)
- ◆ the write-off of irrecoverable Council Tax, non-domestic rates, Business Improvement District (BID) levy, sundry debt and Housing Rent and associated charges

Details were provided on current collection targets. The Council was ahead of target but behind comparable performance from 2022/2023 in respect of Council Tax and non-domestic rates. In respect of Sundry Debt, the Council was ahead of target and ahead of comparable performance from 2022/2023.

In terms of arrears collection targets, the Council was ahead of target but behind comparable performance from 2022/2023 in respect of Council Tax and non-domestic rates. In respect of sundry debt, the Council was behind target in both collection and comparable performance from 2022/2023.

As previously advised to Committee, the BRIS scheme had been suspended due to the impact of Covid-19 from 2020/2021 to 2022/2023. The Scottish Government had advised of the reinstatement of the scheme and provided provisional targets for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 of 1.20% and 1.10% respectively. Year to date performance was 1%, with the position being closely monitored to the end of the financial year.

It was proposed that the following debts be written off:-

- ◆ irrecoverable Council Tax accounts from 1993/1994 to 2023/2024 to the value of £367,627.63 relating primarily to prescribed debt, sequestrations and estates of the deceased
- ◆ irrecoverable non-domestic rates from 2021/2022 to 2023/2024 to the value of £308,194.95 relating primarily to debtors in liquidation, those who had ceased trading or had been sequestrated
- ◆ BID levies totalling £3,649.55 administered by the Council on behalf of Hamilton, Carluke and Lanark BID companies
- ◆ sundry debts to a value of £476,867.06
- ◆ former tenant rent arrears totalling £2,230,448.51 (including bulk write-off for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020) and factoring arrears of £340.26

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Council's performance in the collection of revenues be noted;

(2) that the current position in respect of the Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme be noted; and

(3) that the write-off of the following irrecoverable debts be approved:-

- ◆ Council Tax debt from 1993/1994 to 2023/2024 to the value of £367,627.63
- ◆ Non Domestic Rates from 2021/2022 to 2023/2024 totalling £308,194.95
- ◆ BID levies totalling £3,649.55
- ◆ sundry debts to a value of £476,867.06
- ◆ house rent and associated charges totalling £2,230,788.77

[Reference: Minutes of 6 December 2023 (Paragraph 11)]

11 Communications and Strategy Services

A report dated 14 February 2024 by the Chief Executive was submitted proposing a change of management lines for Communications and Strategy Services.

Communications and Strategy Services was currently part of Finance and Corporate Resources, alongside Administration and Legal, Finance (Strategy), Finance (Transactions), IT and Personnel services.

As with all Finance and Corporate Resources' services, Communications and Strategy provided a range of key corporate services in support of all Resources and had 51 Full Time Equivalent employees.

It was proposed that Communications and Strategy Services should become part of the Office of the Chief Executive, with management lines changing accordingly in that the Head of Communications and Strategy would report directly to the Chief Executive. All conditions and working arrangements would remain unchanged.

The model of an Office of the Chief Executive, which included direct management of a small number of core corporate services across communications and strategy-type services, was used successfully at other large Scottish local authorities. Feedback from colleagues in those councils suggested that the arrangements could assist quick decision-making and also lend additional authority to the output from such services.

It was, therefore, proposed that the entire Communications and Strategy Services move from Finance and Corporate Resources to the Office of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive would manage the service directly, but current reporting arrangements relating to finance and personnel matters would remain as via the Finance and Corporate Resources Committee.

The Committee decided: that the changes to the management lines for Communications and Strategy Services, as outlined in paragraph 4.4, of the report be approved.

12 Finance and Corporate Resource Plan Quarter 2 Progress Report 2023/2024

A report dated 6 February 2024 by the Chief Executive was submitted on the Finance and Corporate Resource Plan Quarter 2 Progress Report 2023/2024, for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023.

The Resource Plan measures were rated using a traffic light system of red, amber or green as well as blue (BRAG) which indicated that an action had been completed.

Details were provided on:-

- ♦ progress made against all Resource Plan measures, as detailed in the Quarter 2 progress report, attached as Appendix 2 to the report
- ♦ key achievements made by the Resource to date, as detailed in paragraph 5.3 of the report

The report noted that there were no measures classified as red and, therefore, no areas for improvement and associated management actions for the Resource.

There were no measures identified as 'report later' or 'contextual', so no further action or analysis was required.

Officers responded to a member's question on an aspect of the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Finance and Corporate Resource Plan Quarter 2 progress report 2023/2024, as summarised in paragraph 5.2 and attached as Appendix 2 of this report, be noted;
- (2) that the key achievements made by the Resource to date, as detailed in paragraph 5.3 of the report, be noted; and
- (3) that it be noted that there were no areas identified for improvement, as detailed in paragraph 5.4 of the report.

[Reference: Minutes of 3 May 2023 (Paragraph 12)]

13 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.