

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held via Confero and in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 16 August 2023

Chair:

Councillor Gerry Convery (Depute)

Councillors Present:

Councillor Alex Allison, Councillor John Anderson, Councillor Robert Brown, Councillor Andy Carmichael, Councillor Maureen Chalmers, Councillor Ross Clark, Councillor Margaret Cooper, Councillor Andrea Cowan, Councillor Margaret Cowie (*substitute for Councillor Lesley McDonald*), Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Gladys Ferguson-Miller, Councillor Lynsey Hamilton, Councillor Mark Horsham, Councillor Susan Kerr (*substitute for Councillor Joe Fagan*), Councillor Ross Lambie (*substitute for Councillor Kenny McCreary*), Councillor Eileen Logan, Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Hugh Macdonald, Councillor Ian McAllan, Councillor Catherine McClymont, Councillor Mark McGeever, Councillor Davie McLachlan, Councillor Richard Nelson, Councillor Mo Razzaq, Councillor Kirsten Robb, Councillor John Ross, Councillor David Shearer, Councillor Margaret B Walker

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Joe Fagan (Chair, ex officio), Councillor Kenny McCreary, Councillor Lesley McDonald

Attending:

Chief Executive's Service

C Sneddon, Chief Executive

Community and Enterprise Resources

D Booth, Executive Director

Education Resources

C McKenzie, Executive Director

Finance and Corporate Resources

P Manning, Executive Director; C Fergusson, Head of Finance (Transactions); T Little, Head of Communications and Strategy; G McCann, Head of Administration and Legal Services; P MacRae, Administration Adviser; K McLeod, Administration Assistant; M Milne, Head of Personnel Services

Housing and Technical Resources

S Gibson, Executive Director

Health and Social Care/Social Work Resources

S Sengupta, Director, Health and Social Care

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 21 June 2023 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

Councillor Allison requested an update on the position regarding actions in respect of the South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture (SLLC) commissioned external legal review. The Chair responded, advising of actions proposed to progress this matter.

3 Revenue Budget Monitoring for Period 1 April 2023 to 14 July 2023

A report dated 26 July 2023 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the overall financial position of the Council's General Fund Revenue Account and Housing Revenue Account for the period 1 April to 14 July 2023.

At 14 July 2023, the position on the General Fund Revenue Account was breakeven. Details were given on:-

- ◆ budget pressures within Children and Families Services
- ◆ the position following the outcome of the Job Evaluation exercise for Home Carers

The Housing Revenue Account showed a breakeven position at 14 July 2023.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the breakeven position on the General Fund Revenue Account at 14 July 2023, as detailed in section 4 and Appendix 1 of the report, be noted; and
- (2) that the breakeven position on the Housing Revenue Account at 14 July 2023, as detailed in section 5 and Appendix 2 of the report, be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 21 June 2023 (Paragraph 4)]

4 Capital Budget 2023/2024 and Monitoring for Period 4 - 1 April 2023 to 14 July 2023

A report dated 26 July 2023 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on progress of the General Fund Capital Programme and the Housing Capital Programme for the period 1 April to 14 July 2023.

At its meeting on 21 June 2023, the Committee had approved a General Fund Capital Programme for 2023/2024 totalling £81.990 million. A revised programme of £83.322 million was now anticipated which included proposed adjustments to the programme totalling a net increase of £1.332 million. The proposed adjustments were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. The increase reflected additional funding from external bodies which required to be spent on specific programmes of work.

At 14 July 2023, £9.865 million had been spent on the General Fund Capital Programme, a slight underspend of £0.142 million, and actual funding received to 14 July 2023 totalled £41.715 million. The programme spend and funding for the General Fund for the period was detailed in appendices 2 and 3 to the report.

The Housing Capital Programme 2023/2024, approved by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 21 June 2023, totalled £63.916 million. Details of the position of the programme at 14 July 2023 were provided in Appendix 4 to the report. Adjustments to the Housing Programme, as detailed in the report, had resulted in a proposed revised programme of £69.596 million. Programmed funding for the year also amounted to £69.596 million.

At 14 July 2023, the budget for the Housing Capital Programme amounted to £13.250 million. Expenditure for the period totalled £12.469 million and actual funding received to 14 July 2023 also amounted to £12.469 million.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the period 4 position, at 14 July 2023, of the General Fund Capital Programme, detailed in appendices 2 and 3 of the report, and the Housing Capital Programme, detailed at Appendix 4 of the report, be noted;
- (2) that the adjustments to the General Fund programme, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, and the Housing programme, as detailed in Sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the report, be approved; and
- (3) that the revised programmes be monitored by the Financial Resources Scrutiny Forum.

[Reference: Minutes of 21 June 2023 (Paragraph 6)]

5 Additional Funding from Scottish Government and Other External Sources

A report dated 27 July 2023 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on additional funding, totalling £1.478 million, which had been made available to the Council by the Scottish Government and other external sources.

The funding had been allocated as follows:-

Revenue Funding

Resource	2023/2024 (£m)
Education	0.458
Total	0.458

Capital Funding

Resource	2023/2024 (£m)
Community and Enterprise	1.020
Total	1.020

Overall Total	1.478
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The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 21 June 2023 (Paragraph 7)]

6 Cost of Living – Support

A report dated 4 July 2023 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the support provided to households in South Lanarkshire which had been significantly impacted by the cost of living crisis.

An update was provided on the cost of living supports approved by the Executive Committee at its meeting held on 21 September 2022 including:-

- ♦ the Financial Wellbeing Support Fund which had, from the launch of the fund to the end of the financial year, supported 5,137 households, distributing £1.2 million in funding to households

- ◆ energy support through the delivery of an energy voucher scheme for households on prepaid meters and the Capped Meter Fund which supported social rented tenants who were struggling to pay their utility costs and had had their pre-payment meter capped
- ◆ the Digital Inclusion Fund which had been established to help residents, particularly in high Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation areas, access services digitally

Given the success of the Financial Wellbeing Support Fund in distributing cash to households, coupled with advice and support, it was proposed to redirect funding earmarked for the provision of energy vouchers in 2023/2024 for a further round of wellbeing payments.

The energy voucher scheme had resulted in 8,000 vouchers being issued to households by the end of May 2023. The activity would continue to the end of August 2023, following which it was proposed that any underspend be ringfenced for further support activity through the Financial Wellbeing Support Fund.

Details were also given on existing Council support for households including:-

- ◆ support from the Money Matters Advice Service
- ◆ provision of grants through the Scottish Welfare Fund
- ◆ support for tenants with rent arrears
- ◆ provision of benefits
- ◆ write-off of school meal debt

At its meeting on 30 November 2022, the Executive Committee approved additional supports for those affected by the cost of living crisis including:-

- ◆ further payment to South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture (SLLC). Providing extra funds had enabled SLLC to keep all facilities, which were operating at that time, open throughout the winter and available for the community to access. People across the communities in South Lanarkshire were also able to access warm space within SLLC run facilities throughout winter 2022/2023 as part of the Warm Welcome Initiative. SLLC's response to the Warm Welcome Initiative included:-
 - ◆ provision of space within libraries
 - ◆ Stay and Play sessions for families
 - ◆ Bookbug Sessions
 - ◆ free lets to community groups
 - ◆ free swims for under 16 residents
- ◆ support for foodbanks
- ◆ extension of school meal payouts to weekends
- ◆ support for looked after children

The significant pressure on household finances as a result of the cost of living crisis was expected to continue throughout 2023/2024. The Council would continue to provide support from the range of services and budgets available, however, the financial challenges faced by councils was a limiting factor in the level of support that could be provided to households in South Lanarkshire.

There followed a full discussion during which officers responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the range of support being provided by the Council to households in response to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis be noted;

- (2) that the redirection of 2023/2024 funding for energy support to the Financial Wellbeing Support Fund, as detailed in section 4.1 of the report, be approved; and
- (3) that the redirection of any underspend from the provision of energy support to the Financial Wellbeing Support Fund, as detailed in section 4.2 of the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 21 September 2022 (Paragraph 12) and 30 November 2022 (Paragraph 11)]

7 Job Evaluation – Back Pay

A report dated 26 June 2023 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on a proposed funding package to meet the cost of paying the backdated element of the recently agreed Home Carers' Job Evaluation.

The cost of backdating the Job Evaluation outcome for Home Carers to October 2020 had been estimated at £18 million. Those costs required to be included in the financial position for 2022/2023. As the costs were in relation to Home Care, which was a delegated service, the costs would fall under the Integration Joint Board (IJB) and would require to form part of its financial accounts.

It was proposed that the costs be met as follows, details of which were provided in Table 1 of the report:-

- ◆ £5.6 million – IJB underspend
- ◆ £7.2 million – IJB reserves
- ◆ £0.3 million - additional IJB underspend
- ◆ £2.7 million - Council reserves set aside for use in future budget strategies
- ◆ £2.2 million - uncommitted service concession funds

Total £18 million

The £7.2 million IJB reserves were intended to be used to balance the IJB budget in 2023/2024 and, without those reserves, the IJB would be unable to balance its budget in the current financial year. As a result, it was proposed that the Council provide a one-off contribution to the IJB of £7.2 million.

It was proposed that this contribution be made up as follows, details of which were provided in Table 2 of the report:-

- ◆ £4.7 million - use of reserves with no current date for spend
- ◆ £0.8 million – uncommitted underspend from 2022/2023
- ◆ £1.2 million – uncommitted service concessions
- ◆ £0.5 million – unallocated COVID funds

Total £7.2 million

The funding solution detailed in the report left the solutions previously identified to support the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 budget strategy intact.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the estimated costs of back pay for Home Carers of £18 million, which would be accounted for in 2022/2023, be noted;
- (2) that the funding solution detailed in Table 1 of the report be noted;

- (3) that the one-off payment in 2022/2023 to the IJB from uncommitted service concessions towards the funding solution (£2.2 million), as detailed in Table 1 (line 5) of the report, be approved; and
- (4) that the one-off payment, totalling £7.2 million, to the IJB to reimburse IJB reserves in 2023/2024, as detailed at section 5 and Table 2 of the report, including reserves, unallocated underspends, uncommitted service concession funds and COVID funds, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 21 June 2023 (Paragraph 3)]

8 Land and Property Transfers and Disposals

A report dated 20 July 2023 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on proposed actions in respect of land and property transactions.

The recommendations had been made in terms of agreed procedures for dealing with surplus land and property.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the land and property, as detailed in Appendix A of the report, be transferred between Resources; and
- (2) that the land detailed in Appendix B of the report be declared surplus to Council requirements.

9 South Lanarkshire Council Response to Pre-budget Scrutiny Call for Evidence on Sustainability of Scotland's Finances

A report dated 1 August 2023 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the Council's proposed response to the call for evidence on the sustainability of Scotland's finances, issued by the Finance and Public Administration Committee of the Scottish Parliament, as part of the pre-budget scrutiny process.

The focus of the Finance and Public Administration Committee's enquiry was the sustainability of Scotland's finances in both the short and longer term and details of the challenges faced within both time frames were provided in the report. Details were also given of the questions on which the Committee had asked for views.

The Council's response to the call for views was attached as Appendix 1 to the report and emphasised the unprecedented financial pressures faced by local government. It made the point that any further reductions in budgets would have severe implications for councils' ability to deliver services which would, in turn, hinder the ability of councils to support Scottish Government priorities and the achievement of national outcomes.

The proposed response included the following key points:-

- ◆ local authorities had a pivotal role in delivering national outcomes and medium and long term strategies for funding the public sector should recognise this key role
- ◆ reductions in budget and significant increases in costs over a sustained period had significantly reduced the capacity of councils to offer a range of core services and respond to national issues such as the cost of living crisis and carbon reduction

- ◆ current funding arrangements limited the ability of councils to plan and invest in dealing with long term systemic challenges and single year budgets for local government restricted longer term planning, fostering short term interventions
- ◆ government required to take current unprecedented pressures into account when making spending decisions, especially where they affected frontline council services

The Parliamentary Committee had issued its call for views as part of the normal pre-budget scrutiny process. The Committee would hear oral evidence in September/October 2023 and consider the draft report in early November, with a view to publication shortly thereafter. If approved, the response detailed in Appendix 1 would be submitted to the Scottish Parliament by the deadline of 16 August 2023.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Council's response to the call for evidence, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved; and
- (2) that the response be submitted to the Scottish Parliament by the deadline of 16 August 2023.

10 Glasgow City Region City Deal – A72 Lanark Road M74 Junction 7 Signalisation – Revised Full Business Case

A report dated 27 July 2023 by the Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources) was submitted on action taken, in terms of Standing Order No 37(c), because of the timescales involved, by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair and an ex officio member, to approve the revised Full Business Case (FBC) for the A72 Lanark Road/M74 Junction 7 Signalisation element of the Larkhall Community Growth Area City Deal Project.

Following the withdrawal of the successful contractor for the A72 Lanark Road/M74 Junction 7 Signalisation element of the Larkhall Community Growth Area City Deal Project, a revised FBC had been produced covering the next most favourable submission tendered for the project.

The Executive Summary of the revised FBC was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Committee decided:

that the following action taken, in terms of Standing Order No 37(c), by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair and an ex officio member, be noted:-

- ◆ approval of the revised A72 Lanark Road/M74 Junction 7 Signalisation Full Business Case
- ◆ approval to seek grant funding in accordance with the City Deal Grant Distribution Process outlined in the Assurance Framework in relation to the delivery of the project, with the precise arrangements to be agreed by the City Deal Chief Executive's Group (CEG) and City Deal Cabinet

[Reference: Minutes of 17 May 2023 (Paragraph 4)]

11 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.