

FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 17 March 2021

Chair:

Councillor Gladys Miller

Councillors Present:

Councillor Alex Allison, Councillor John Anderson, Councillor Walter Brogan, Councillor Graeme Campbell, Councillor Peter Craig, Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Isobel Dorman, Councillor Joe Fagan, Councillor Grant Ferguson, Councillor Geri Gray, Councillor Ian Harrow, Councillor Eric Holford, Councillor Graeme Horne (Depute), Councillor Eileen Logan, Councillor Hugh Macdonald, Councillor Monique McAdams, Councillor Catherine McClymont, Councillor Mark McGeever, Councillor Jim McGuigan, Councillor Mo Razzaq, Councillor Collette Stevenson (Depute), Councillor Jim Wardhaugh, Councillor Jared Wark

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Joe Lowe, Councillor John Ross (ex officio)

Attending:

Finance and Corporate Resources

P Manning, Executive Director; C Fergusson, Head of Finance (Transactions); T Little, Head of Communications and Strategy; C Lyon, Administration Officer; G McCann, Head of Administration and Legal Services; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services; J Taylor, Head of Finance (Strategy); B Teaz, Head of Information Technology

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 20 January 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

3 Minutes of Appeals Panel

The minutes of the meeting of the Appeals Panel held on 11 February 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

4 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/2021 – Finance and Corporate Resources

A report dated 10 February 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure for the period 1 April to 29 January 2021 against budgeted expenditure for 2020/2021 for Finance and Corporate Resources.

As at 29 January 2021, there was an overspend of £4.640 million against the phased budget which included the net costs of COVID-19 totalling £4.610 million.

Costs associated with COVID-19 were detailed in Appendix I to the report and related to COVID-19 Business Support Grants from the Scottish Government.

Following the Council's probable outturn exercise, Finance and Corporate Resources was forecasting an overspend of £6.336 million before transfers to reserves. After the approved transfers to reserves of £0.103 million, the position was an overspend of £6.439 million.

Appendices to the report provided details on proposed budget virements across the Resource to realign budgets.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the forecast to 31 March 2021 of an overspend of £6.336 million, before approved transfers to reserves, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) that the forecast to 31 March 2021 of an overspend of £6.439 million, after transfers to reserves, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted; and
- (3) that the overspend of £4.640 million as at 29 January 2021 be noted;
- (4) that the budget virements, as detailed in the appendices to the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 20 January 2021 (Paragraph 4)]

5 Capital Budget Monitoring 2020/2021 – Finance and Corporate Resources

A report dated 24 February 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted advising of progress on Finance and Corporate Resources' capital programme for 2020/2021 and summarising the expenditure position at 29 January 2021.

As noted in the report to this Committee on 20 January 2021, the budget for 2020/2021, including carry forward, was £3.644 million. At its meeting on 10 February 2021, the Executive Committee agreed adjustments which decreased the budget by £0.362 million, as detailed in Appendix A to the report. The revised budget for 2020/2021 was £3.282 million and spend to 29 January 2021 totalled £1.563 million.

Work had been ongoing to monitor the predicated spend for this financial year and current estimates from Finance and Corporate Resources suggested an outturn of £2.9 million which was an underspend of £0.382 million.

The progression of a number of projects had been impacted by the ongoing lockdowns due to COVID-19, including some IT Infrastructure refresh projects, where the budget was now required in 2021/2022 rather than 2020/2021. Funding would carry forward into the next financial year.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Finance and Corporate Resources' capital programme of £3.282 million, and expenditure to date of £1.563 million, be noted; and
- (2) that the projected outturn of £2.9 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 20 January 2021 (Paragraph 5) and Minutes of the Executive Committee of 10 February 2021 (Paragraph 3)]

Councillor Craig joined the meeting during this item of business

6 Finance and Corporate Resources – Workforce Monitoring – November and December 2020

A report dated 9 February 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the following employee information for Finance and Corporate Resources for the period November and December 2020:-

- ◆ 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 12 December 2020

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 20 January 2021 (Paragraph 6)]

Councillor Harrow joined the meeting during this item of business

7 Council-wide Workforce Monitoring – November and December 2020

A report dated 9 February 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the following Council-wide employee information for the period November and December 2020:-

- ◆ 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 12 December 2020

The Head of Personnel Services responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 20 January 2021 (Paragraph 7)]

8 Treasury Management Activity – Third Quarter Review

A report dated 24 February 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the third quarter review of Treasury Management activity for 2020/2021.

Details were given on:-

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

The Head of Finance (Strategy) responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 21 January 2021 (Paragraph 8)]

9 Revenue Collection and Approval for Write-offs

A report dated 18 February 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ collection performance for the financial year 2020/2021 to 31 January 2021 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, Hamilton, Carlisle and Lanark Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID) levies, sundry debt and Housing Rent and associated charges

Collection across all income streams had been significantly impacted upon by the temporary cessation of recovery action for the first 4 months of 2020/2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. No statutory recovery and sheriff officer activity had taken place between April and July 2020 in respect of Council Tax for both the current year and arrears. The health crisis had also seen financial support provided, via Council Tax Reduction, increase by over 10% for this financial year.

Statutory recovery in the form of reminders and recovery action for all income streams had recommenced at the end of July 2020.

In light of the impact of the health crisis, collection targets for 2020/2021 had been reviewed. Those targets were consistent with those in the Resource Plan for 2020/2021 and were detailed in the report.

Given the impact of COVID-19, the provisional annual buoyancy target for the Council in 2020/2021 had still to be confirmed by the Scottish Government (the final target in 2019/2020 was 1.0%). The Scottish Government had intimated that the 2020/2021 target would require to be adjusted significantly, with the possibility that BRIS might have to be suspended this financial year. A final decision on this would be communicated to local authorities when available.

Performance against the BRIS target was closely monitored and reported to this Committee on a quarterly basis. Buoyancy for the third quarter, to the end of December 2020 had seen a reduction of 0.15%.

Should the buoyancy target remain the same as in 2019/2020, the tax base must achieve growth of 1.15% during the remaining quarter of the financial year to secure additional income under the scheme.

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

- ◆ irrecoverable Council Tax accounts from 1993/1994 to 2020/2021 to the value of £121,376.11, relating primarily to prescribed debt, sequestrations and estates of the deceased
- ◆ non-domestic rates from 2018/2019 to 2020/2021 totalling £273,362.26 relating to debtors who were in liquidation, had ceased trading or had been sequestrated
- ◆ Business Improvement District (BID) levies totalling £3,764.30
- ◆ sundry debts to a value of £84,310.59
- ◆ former tenant rent arrears totalling £316,026.54 and Housing Benefit overpayments totalling £48,247.79

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Council's performance in the collection of revenues be noted;
- (2) that the Council's performance against the Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme target be noted, and
- (3) that the write-off of the following irrecoverable debts be approved:-
 - ◆ Council Tax debt from 1993/1994 to 2020/2021 to the value of £121,376.11
 - ◆ non-domestic rates from 2018/2019 to 2020/2021 totalling £273,362.26
 - ◆ Hamilton, Carluke and Lanark Business Improvement District levies totalling £3,764.30
 - ◆ sundry debts to a value of £84,310.59
 - ◆ house rent and associated charges totalling £364,274.33

[Reference: Minutes of 20 January 2021 (Paragraph 9)]

10 Youth Guarantee and Kickstart Employability Programmes – Workforce Implications

A report dated 19 February 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted advising on the action taken, in terms of Standing Order No 36(c), by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources), in consultation with the Chair and an ex officio member, because of the timescales involved, to implement the 2020/2021 Youth Guarantee grant offer made to the Council.

Both the UK and Scottish Governments had pledged to introduce employability interventions to counteract the impact of the global pandemic on young people aged 16 to 24 years. Detailed information was provided on the Scottish Government's Youth Guarantee Funding and the UK Government's Kickstart programme.

On 16 November 2020, the Council had received a 2020/2021 Youth Guarantee grant offer of £1,654,675 with the funds to be spent this financial year, or committed beyond March 2021, for defined supports such as staff costs.

The Council had been successful in obtaining 2 Kickstart bids, an intermediary Gateway host bid for 234 opportunities in SMEs and a Council Employer bid for 50 new and additional supernumerary Council posts.

The Youth Guarantee funding allowed for the temporary appointment of Key Workers for a period of 12 months, to facilitate employability support to affected young people. Those posts would operate in 2 teams as follows:-

Education Resources

- ◆ 4 posts of Key Worker at Grade 2, Level 4, SCP 57 (£30,147)
- ◆ 1 post of Team Leader at Grade 3, Level 2, SCP 65 (£33,943)

Finance and Corporate Resources

- ◆ 4 posts of Key Worker at Grade 2, Level 4, SCP 57 (£30,147)
- ◆ 1 post of Team Leader at Grade 3, Level 2, SCP 65 (£33,943)
- ◆ 1 post of Key Worker (Single Point of Contact) at Grade 2, Level 4, SCP 57 (£30,147)

In relation to the Kickstart programme, the Council would provide up to 50 additional temporary training opportunities to unemployed young people aged 16 to 24. Those young people would be identified and referred to the Council by the Department for Works and Pensions locally. Details of the grant conditions for the Kickstart vacancies were provided in the report.

The Committee decided:

that the action taken, in terms of Standing Order No 36(c) by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources), in consultation with the Chair and an ex officio member, to:-

- ◆ increase the establishments of Finance and Corporate and Education Resources by 6 FTE posts and 5 FTE posts respectively, for a temporary 12 month period as detailed in Section 5 of the report, and approve 50 supernumerary Kickstart training placements, be noted.

11 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.