

FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 2 June 2021

Chair:

Councillor Gladys Miller

Councillors Present:

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 Eric Holford, Councillor Graeme Horne (Depute), Councillor Eileen Logan, Councillor Hugh Macdonald, Councillor Monique McAdams, Councillor Catherine McClymont, Councillor Jim McGuigan, Councillor Mo Razzaq, Councillor Jared Wark

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Alex Allison, Councillor Geri Gray, Councillor Ian Harrow, Councillor Joe Lowe, Councillor Mark McGeever, Councillor John Ross, Councillor Collette Stevenson (Depute), Councillor Jim Wardhaugh

Attending:

Finance and Corporate Resources

P Manning, Executive Director; Y Douglas, Audit and Compliance Manager; 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 McLeod, Administration Assistant; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services; J Taylor, Head of Finance (Strategy); B Teaz, Head of Information Technology

1 Declaration of Interests

The following interest was declared:-

Councillor(s)	Item(s)	Nature of Interest(s)
McClymont	Common Good - Update	Trustee on Tolbooth, Lanark

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Corporate Resources Committee held on 17 March 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 27 April 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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 Panel held on 21 May 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

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

A report dated 28 April 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure for the period 1 April 2020 to 26 February 2021 against budgeted expenditure for 2020/2021 for Finance and Corporate Resources.

As at 26 February 2021, there was an overspend of £6.393 million against the phased budget after approved transfers to reserves. This included the net costs of COVID-19 totalling £6.411 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 £7.090 million before transfers to reserves. After the approved transfers to reserves of £0.103 million, the position was an overspend of £7.193 million.

The late notification of funding for employability programmes meant that full spend could not be achieved in 2020/2021 and permission would be requested to carry forward £3.157 million of this funding through reserves for use in 2021/2022. In addition, as reported to the Executive Committee on 28 April 2021, a request to carry forward £0.060 million of Community Grants budget would also be made by the Resource. The Resource would also request that an underspend on the Scottish Welfare Fund budget of £0.129 million be transferred to Reserves to be used in 2021/2022.

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 £7.090 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 £7.193 million, after transfers to reserves, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (3) that the overspend of £6.393 million as at 26 February 2021 be noted; and
- (4) that the budget virements, as detailed in the appendices to the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 17 March 2021 (Paragraph 4) and Minutes of the Executive Committee of 28 April 2021 (Paragraph 4)]

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

A report dated 12 May 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 26 February 2021.

The revised budget for 2020/2021 was £3.282 million and spend to 26 February 2021 totalled £1.603 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 £2.605 million which was an underspend of £0.667 million.

As previously reported to this Committee, 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 year end position was currently being finalised and would be reported to the Executive Committee on 23 June 2021. The ongoing impact of COVID-19 continued to impact on the level of capital spend achieved this financial year and it was likely that there would be a further underspend than predicted at Period 12. This was a timing issue only.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Finance and Corporate Resources' capital programme of £3.282 million, and expenditure to date of £1.603 million, be noted; and
- (2) that the projected outturn of £2.605 million be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 17 March 2021 (Paragraph 5)]

7 Finance and Corporate Resources – Workforce Monitoring – January to March 2021

A report dated 26 April 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the following employee information for Finance and Corporate Resources for the period January to March 2021:-

- ◆ 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 13 March 2021

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 17 March 2021 (Paragraph 6)]

8 Council-wide Workforce Monitoring – January to March 2021

A report dated 26 April 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the following Council-wide employee information for the period January to March 2021:-

- ◆ 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 13 March 2021

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 17 March 2021 (Paragraph 7)]

9 Revenue Collection and Approval for Write-offs

A report dated 12 May 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ collection performance for the financial year 2020/2021 to 31 March 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, sundry debt, Housing Rent and associated charges and rent for homeless accommodation

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 11% 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%). Further guidance and information was awaited from the Scottish Government.

Performance against the BRIS target was closely monitored and reported to this Committee on a quarterly basis. Buoyancy for 2020/2021 had seen a reduction of 0.34%, which represented a reduction of 2.10% compared to 2019/2020.

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

- ◆ irrecoverable Council Tax accounts from 1993/1994 to 2020/2021 to the value of £248,067.75, relating primarily to prescribed debt, sequestrations and estates of the deceased
- ◆ sundry debts to a value of £178,791.07
- ◆ former tenant rent arrears totalling £123,805.28 and Housing Benefit overpayments totalling £64,598.30
- ◆ arrears for former occupants of homeless temporary accommodation totalling £750,913.64

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 £248,067.75
- ◆ sundry debts to a value of £178,791.07
- ◆ house rent and associated charges totalling £188,403.58
- ◆ rent for homeless accommodation totalling £750,913.64

[Reference: Minutes of 17 March 2021 (Paragraph 9)]

10 Common Good Update

A report dated 4 May 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ a request for funding from the Biggar Common Good Fund for the installation of 4 lighting units
- ◆ the cyclical spend committed against the Common Good repairs and maintenance budget for Lanark
- ◆ an update on the Lanark Loch project

The Common Good funds held within South Lanarkshire Council were Lanark, Biggar, Hamilton and Rutherglen. The unaudited accounts for 2019/2020 were presented to this Committee on 19 August 2020 and had since been approved by Audit Scotland.

The Common Good accounts in Lanark and Hamilton held a number of properties and a proactive approach to maintenance supported the viability of those assets and reduced the Council's risk to greater liability in the future. On 2 October 2013, this Committee had approved an annual cyclical maintenance plan of £15,000 for both Lanark and Hamilton Common Good properties.

A request for funding from the Biggar Common Good Fund for additional lighting units had been made by a member of the public in respect of poor lighting on the path between Campsie's Garage on Coulter Road and the Boghall Estate. Finance and Corporate Resources had consulted with local Members and Biggar Community Council on this proposal which would be at a cost of £8,000.

Following a public consultation within Biggar, 84% of those consulted were in support of the use of the funds.

As at 31 March 2021, Biggar Common Good Fund had a value of £0.033 million and no assets to maintain, therefore, it was proposed that funds of £8,000 be used to install 4 lighting units on the footpath between Campsie's Garage on Coulter Road and the Boghall Estate.

Housing and Technical Resources had arranged for a contractor to assess an issue of dampness within the Tolbooth building in Lanark. A number of remedial works had been identified at an estimated cost of £10,180 which would be funded from the £15,000 Lanark Common Good allocation for Repairs and Maintenance for 2021/2022. This was the only commitment to date from the 2021/2022 budget, leaving a balance of £4,820.

The works at Lanark Loch had now been completed. Details of changes to the original scope of works which had been required were outlined in the report. Costs associated with those changes were currently being assessed, however, the costs would still remain within the budget allocated. An update on the final costs of the project would be provided to this Committee at its meeting on 1 September 2021.

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

The Committee decided:

- (1) that £8,000 of Biggar Common Good Funding, for the installation of 4 lighting units along the path between Campsie's Garage on Coulter Road and the Boghall Estate be approved;
- (2) that it be noted that £10,180 of the £15,000 Lanark repairs and maintenance budget would be spent on the Tolbooth; and
- (3) that the update on the Lanark Loch project be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 20 January 2021 (Paragraph 12)]

Councillor McClymont, having declared an interest in the above item, withdrew from the meeting during its consideration

11 2021/2022 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Asset Management Plan

A report dated 12 May 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the 2021/2022 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Asset Management Plan.

The ICT Asset Management Plan outlined the priorities and strategies required to develop and support the ICT asset estate which was in place to support the business objectives of the Council whilst ensuring business continuity. The plan highlighted the key actions planned for the year ahead, ensuring that the Council's ICT assets were fit for purpose.

Details of the key support work were provided in the report and a copy of the proposed 2021/2022 ICT Asset Management Plan was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the content of the report be noted; and
- (2) that the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Asset Management Plan for 2021/2022 be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 19 August 2020 (Paragraph 14)]

12 Finance and Corporate Resource Plan 2021/2022

A report dated 13 May 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the Finance and Corporate Resource Plan 2021/2022.

Details were provided on the Resource Plan for 2021/2022, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, which outlined the:-

- ◆ key areas for the year ahead
- ◆ Resource outcomes
- ◆ measures and actions

- ◆ resourcing of the Plan
- ◆ organisational structure of the Resource

The Resource Plans for all Resources had been approved by the Executive Committee on 28 April 2021. Quarter 2 and Quarter 4 progress reports would be submitted to future meetings of this Committee.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Finance and Corporate Resource Plan for 2021/2022, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- (2) that the Finance and Corporate Resource Plan for 2021/2022 be uploaded onto the Council's website; and
- (3) that Quarter 2 and Quarter 4 progress reports on the Finance and Corporate Resource Plan 2021/2022 be submitted to future meetings of this Committee;

[Reference: Minutes of the Executive Committee of 28 April 2021 (Paragraph 6)]

13 Early Retirement, Voluntary Severance and Switch 2

A report dated 20 April 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on early retirements, voluntary severances, re-employment of early retirees and the Switch 2 programme for the period 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 21 January 2021 (Paragraph 11)]

14 Procurement Strategy Action Plan Update 2020/2021 and Procurement Strategy Review 2021/2022

A report dated 13 May 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ progress on the Procurement Strategy Action Plan to March 2021
- ◆ the annual review of the Procurement Strategy for 2021/2022
- ◆ the Procurement Strategy Action Plan for 2021/2022

On 13 May 2020, the Executive Committee approved the Procurement Strategy 2020 to 2023 which included 7 strategic objectives that linked to key outcomes for the Procurement Service. An update on each of those objectives and evidence of progress in working towards those outcomes were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Procurement Strategy Action Plan included specific projects for 2020/2021 in support of those strategic objectives which included 14 actions. Progress made to the end of March 2021 was detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

Responding to COVID-19 priorities had impacted on the allocation of resources to the Procurement Service's strategic objectives due to the impact of contract management, supplier relief and sourcing for unplanned requirements and, latterly, supporting services to re-mobilise, including re-tendering for projects abandoned during the pandemic. In addition, resources had been allocated to manage the procurement implications of the exit from the EU.

The Council was required to review the Procurement Strategy annually and this was the first review of the 2020 to 2023 Strategy. A key amendment to the Strategy was the addition of the new strategic objective, Community Wealth Building. The updated Procurement Strategy was attached at Appendix 3 to the report.

The proposed Procurement Strategy Plan for 2021/2022 was detailed in Appendix 4 to the report.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 20 January 2021 (Paragraph 13) and Note of Delegated Decisions taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Leaders, on items of business relating to the Executive Committee Agenda of 13 May 2020 (Paragraph 6)]

15 Notification of Contracts Awarded 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021

A report dated 12 May 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on contracts awarded by Finance and Corporate Resources during the period 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021.

In terms of Standing Order Nos 21.8 and 22.5 of the Standing Orders on Contracts, Resources were required to notify the relevant Committee of contracts awarded. Details of the contracts awarded by Finance and Corporate Resources were provided in the appendix to the report.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 28 October 2020 (Paragraph 11)]

16 Update on Delivery of the European Social Fund Programme 2014 to 2020

A report dated 14 May 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on progress with the delivery of the European Social Fund (ESF) programme 2014 to 2020.

For management and monitoring purposes, Phase 1 covered the period from the original approval to December 2019 and Phase 2 covered the period 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2023, the extended period. Although the UK had now left the EU, the UK Government had provided a guarantee to fund approvals which were agreed within the current 2014 to 2020 EU funding cycle.

On 21 January 2020, the Council was awarded £6.3 million by the Scottish Government to deliver a South Lanarkshire Works 4U (SLW4U) Strategic Intervention Programme covering a range of projects across Phase 2, details of which were provided in the report.

In November 2019, the ESF programme had been formally suspended at a Scotland level by the EC. This followed a pre-suspension period initially started in February 2019. The suspension applied to all Public Bodies in Scotland in receipt of EU, ESF and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding.

Routine audit work undertaken by the EC had identified issues with elements of the ESF Programme which had led to the EC suspending further payments pending a resolution. In December 2020, the Council had been advised that the ERDF suspension had been lifted, The ESF suspension, however, remained in place and the Scottish Government continued to work with the EC to reach a resolution. Claims could continue to be submitted and, following verification, would be reimbursed by the Scottish Government.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the content of the report be noted; and
- (2) to note that the ESF element of the Programme remained under suspension, however, grant claims could be submitted and would be reimbursed by the Scottish Government.

[Reference: Minutes of 28 October 2020 (Paragraph 12)]

17 Safety at Sports Grounds – Re-issue of General Safety Certificate

A report dated 11 May 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted advising on action taken in terms of Standing Order No 36(c), in view of the timescales involved, by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources), in consultation with the Chair and an ex officio member, to re-issue the reviewed General Safety Certificate for Hamilton Park, Bothwell Road, Hamilton.

The revised format of the General Safety Certificates for those premises had been approved by this Committee at its meeting on 3 February 2016 and the Certificate was required to be reviewed and re-issued annually.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020, the start of last year's racing season had been delayed until 24 June 2020, following which, all racing had been conducted behind closed doors.

The General Safety Certificate had not been re-issued, however, ground management and the safety team had produced an Operation Plan for Racing Behind Closed Doors, a stewarding plan and risk assessments which had been distributed to representatives of the South Lanarkshire Sports Grounds Safety Advisory Group.

Information was provided on:-

- ◆ feedback received from the South Lanarkshire Sports Ground Safety Advisory Group
- ◆ a site visit to ensure that appropriate measures were in place in terms of COVID-19 restrictions
- ◆ the annual safety inspection
- ◆ the changes made to the General Safety Certificate approved for Hamilton Park to allow it to be re-issued prior to the start of the new racing season which commenced on Sunday 2 May 2021

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 re-issue the General Safety Certificate for Hamilton Park, Bothwell Road, Hamilton be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 7 August 2019 (Paragraph 20)]

18 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.