

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 28 April 2021

Chair:

Councillor John Ross

Councillors Present:

Councillor Alex Allison, Councillor John Anderson, Councillor John Bradley, Councillor Robert Brown, Councillor Stephanie Callaghan, Councillor Maureen Chalmers (Depute), Councillor Gerry Convery, Councillor Poppy Corbett, Councillor Peter Craig, Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Isobel Dorman, Councillor Joe Fagan, Councillor Allan Falconer, Councillor George Greenshields (*substitute for Councillor Margaret Cooper*), Councillor Lynsey Hamilton, Councillor Ian Harrow (*substitute for Councillor Richard Nelson*), Councillor Mark Horsham (*substitute for Councillor Jim McGuigan*), Councillor Eileen Logan, Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Monique McAdams, Councillor Kenny McCreary, Councillor Gladys Miller, Councillor Lynne Nailon, Councillor David Shearer, Councillor Jim Wardhaugh, Councillor Josh Wilson

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Margaret Cooper, Councillor Joe Lowe, Councillor Jim McGuigan, Councillor Richard Nelson

Attending:

Chief Executive's Service

C Sneddon, Chief Executive

Community and Enterprise Resources

M McGlynn, Executive Director

Education Resources

T McDaid, Executive Director

Finance and Corporate Resources

P Manning, Executive Director; T Little, Head of Communications and Strategy; P MacRae, Administration Adviser; G McCann, Head of Administration and Legal Services; K McLeod, Administration Assistant; N Reid, Improvement and Community Planning Manager

Housing and Technical Resources

D Lowe, Executive Director

Social Work Resources/Health and Social Care

V de Souza, Director

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 10 March 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Committee decided:

that the minutes be approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the following wording at the conclusion of paragraph 4 of item 10:-

"A presentation on the Stewartfield Way/East Kilbride Sustainable Transport Capacity Enhancement project would be arranged for members' information."

3 Capital Programme 2020/2021 – Monitoring for Period 12 – 1 April 2020 to 26 February 2021

A report dated 1 April 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the progress at 26 February 2021 of the various capital programmes.

At its meeting on 10 March 2021, the Committee had approved a General Fund Capital Programme totalling £80.648 million and noted the Housing Capital Programme of £48.172 million. No new adjustments were proposed for either the General Fund or the Housing Capital Programmes 2020/2021. Proposed adjustments to the 2021/2022 General Fund Capital Programme were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. If approved, the adjustments would increase the 2021/2022 Capital Programme by £0.122 million.

In terms of the Resource position, removing the budget and costs associated with COVID-19, current estimates suggested an outturn of £63.1 million. This outturn represented an underspend across Resources of £9.7 million. The majority of the outturn variance was due to the timing of spend, resulting in the budget being required in 2021/2022 instead of 2020/2021. Current estimates suggested an outturn of £48.172 million in respect of the Housing Capital Programme.

The capital programme currently included an element of budget for capital costs associated with COVID-19, estimated at £7.891 million. The Council would receive additional funding from the Scottish Government associated with COVID-19 and a separate report to the Committee on the Revenue Budget Monitoring proposed that those funds be used to support the budgeted £7.891 million for COVID-19 costs within the Capital Programme.

It was proposed that the £7.891 million released from the COVID-19 budget could be spent on the following capital projects:-

- ◆ Larkhall Leisure Centre
- ◆ digital transformation

A further report, which would include details of both projects and carry forward from the 2020/2021 capital budget, would be submitted to the meeting of the Executive Committee to be held on 23 June 2021.

At 26 February 2021, £49.278 million had been spent on the General Fund Capital Programme and £36.015 million had been spent on the Housing Capital Programme.

The programme spend and funding for the General Fund for the period to 26 February 2021 was detailed in Appendices 1 to 4 to the report. Details of the position for the Housing Capital Programme at 26 February 2021 were provided in Appendix 5 to the report.

Officers responded to a member's question on funding for and maintenance of bridges.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Period 12 position of the General Fund Capital Programme, detailed at Appendices 1 to 4, and the Housing Capital Programme, detailed at Appendix 5, be noted;
- (2) that the adjustment to the 2021/2022 General Fund programme, detailed at Appendix 1, be approved;
- (3) that the projected outturn of £63.1 million for the General Fund Capital Programme, detailed at section 4.6 of the report, be noted;

- (4) that the projected outturn of £48.172 million for the Housing Capital Programme, detailed at section 5.2 of the report, be noted;
- (5) that the £7.891 million of capital funding no longer required for COVID-19 be allocated, as proposed in section 6.7 of the report, and included in the 2021/2022 update report which would be submitted to the Committee at its meeting on 23 June 2021; and
- (6) that the revised programmes be monitored by the Financial Resources Scrutiny Forum.

[Reference: Minutes of 10 March 2021 (Paragraph 4)]

4 Revenue Budget Monitoring for Period 12 - 1 April 2020 to 26 February 2021 and Probable Outturn

A report dated 23 March 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted providing an update on the 2020/2021 Revenue Budget for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account for the period 1 April 2020 to 26 February 2021, taking account of the financial implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a projection for the year to 31 March 2021.

The Council had received additional COVID funding of £27.861 million, taking the total COVID funding to £63.172 million. The Council's Capital Programme currently included an element of budget for capital costs associated with COVID-19, estimated at £7.891 million. As additional flexible funding had been received by the Council, it was proposed that revenue funding, instead of capital, be used to cover those additional capital costs. If those monies were used to pay for the additional costs currently anticipated to be met by the capital programme, this would free up the capital budget of £7.891 million set aside for COVID costs.

Using the additional funding of £27.861 million to cover the previously reported COVID shortfall of £1.902 million and the £7.891 million of capital costs would leave a balance of £18.068 million which could be carried into 2021/2022. Of that sum, an estimated £9 million was tied to funding specific anticipated spend.

The revised COVID position for the year, which reflected the use of additional funding to manage the COVID shortfall of £1.902 million, together with the General Fund position, gave a revised outturn underspend of £2.163 million for 2020/2021.

At 26 February 2021, the figures showed the position on the General Fund Revenue Account, including COVID-19 spend and funding and after approved transfers to reserves, as an underspend of £1.394 million. At 26 February 2021, the Housing Revenue Account showed a breakeven position and the forecast to 31 March 2021 on the Housing Revenue Account was also a breakeven position.

It was proposed that unspent balances in respect of grants distributed by Area Committees be carried forward at the end of the year and formal approval for this would be sought in the year end report which would be submitted to the meeting of the Executive Committee to be held on 23 June 2021.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the additional COVID funding of £27.861 million, outlined at section 6.3 of the report, be noted;
- (2) that the use of £7.891 million of additional COVID funding to manage capital costs, outlined in section 6.4 of the report, be approved;

- (3) that it be noted that any underspend element of additional funding, currently £18.068 million, would be carried forward in reserves to manage COVID pressures in 2021/2022;
- (4) that an underspend of £1.394 million on the General Fund Revenue Account, after transfers, as at 26 February 2021 be noted;
- (5) that including Resources, Corporate Items, Council Tax and the updated COVID breakeven position, the Council's revised outturn underspend of £2.163 million be noted; and
- (6) that the breakeven position on the Housing Revenue Account as at 26 February 2021 and the forecast to 31 March 2021 of breakeven be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 10 March 2021 (Paragraph 5)]

5 Additional Funding from Scottish Government and Other External Sources

A report dated 23 March 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on additional revenue funding, totalling £56.101 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	2020/2021 (£m)
Community and Enterprise	11.370
Finance and Corporate	21.297
Education	7.579
Total	40.246

Resource	2021/2022 (£m)
Education	0.526
Finance and Corporate	15.329
Total	15.855

Overall Total	56.101
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The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

6 Resource Plans and Connect Reporting 2021/2022

A report dated 25 March 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the 2021/2022 Resource Plans.

The Resource Plans for 2020/2021 had been reviewed and developed according to a new shorter format and revised Resource Planning Guidance. This resulted in a suite of Plans which were shorter and focused more on priorities than previous Resource Plans. The draft Resource Plans for 2021/2022 had been developed in line with the revised format and to a timetable which brought them forward earlier in the year than had previously been the case.

This allowed a closer alignment of planning, reporting and budget setting cycles and also provided an overview of how the Council Plan, Connect, would be reported during the current financial year.

In preparing the 2021/2022 Plans, Resources had undertaken a horizon scanning and situational awareness exercise covering Social Change, Legislation and Policies, areas for improvement, including the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF), customer views and external inspection results together with other triggers for action such as top risks. From this exercise, a maximum of 10 areas were selected for inclusion and development in each Resource Plan and those were detailed in the report. The draft Resource Plans 2021/2022 were attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

A total of 316 measures had been identified in the 2021/2022 draft Resource Plans. This compared with 230 measures in 2020/2021, an increase of 86 (37%), however, the Education Resource Plan was still under development and measures would reduce prior to presentation to the Resource Committee. Of those, 101 (32%) had been identified for reporting progress of Connect. This compared with 89 (39%) measures reported against Connect in 2020/2021.

Once approved by the Committee, the 2021/2022 draft Resource Plans would be presented to each individual Resource Committee for noting and subsequent monitoring.

Officers responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the draft Resource Plans, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
- (2) that the key issues and areas of interest identified within the Resource Plans, detailed at Table 1 in the report, be noted;
- (3) that the number and spread of measures to be reported against Resource Plans and the Council Plan Connect in 2021/2022, detailed at Table 2 in the report, be noted; and
- (4) that the Resource Plans be referred to the individual Resource Committees for noting and performance monitoring at Quarter 2 and 4.

[Reference: Minutes of 24 June 2020 (Paragraph 17)]

7 Live Streaming of Committee and Council Meetings

A report dated 31 March 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the live streaming pilot exercise carried out at the Finance and Corporate Resources Committee on 17 March 2021 and providing an update on the proposal to live stream future Standing Committee and Council meetings.

South Lanarkshire Council's Committee and Council meetings had been impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of public health concerns, some elected members and a large number of officers were currently undertaking their duties from home and members of the public were not permitted to enter public buildings.

During June 2020, a pilot exercise was undertaken to hold certain Committee meetings via Microsoft Teams. Following the summer recess, the full programme of meetings resumed, and a blended approach was adopted, whereby members could choose to participate in person within the Committee rooms, while observing physical distancing measures, or by virtual means. However, subsequently, due to public health restrictions, all Committee meetings had been held through Microsoft Teams only.

Since January 2021, Council and Committee meetings had been recorded for uploading, once subtitled, to the Council website. An outside contractor had been engaged to provide a subtitling service as an interim arrangement, which was being kept under review. As there was a time lapse between the date of the meeting and publication of the subtitled recording, the original recordings were being published to the website and replaced with the subtitled version as soon as this was available.

At the South Lanarkshire Council meeting on 16 December 2020, it was agreed that the Council work toward the live broadcasting of all Committee and Council meetings for the non-restricted element of business as soon as possible.

Suitable software had been identified and initial training undertaken to allow live streaming tests of Microsoft Teams to take place prior to the formal pilot at the Finance and Corporate Resources Committee held on 17 March 2021.

Due to additional workloads involved in the live streaming process for Committee Services, IT Services and Communications and Strategy Services, work was ongoing to address how this would be accommodated within current working practices. As a result, it was proposed that, up to the commencement of the summer recess, the meetings of the Council and the Standing Committees, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be live streamed during this initial period to allow time for solutions to be put in place and expertise to be developed. It was proposed that Forum meetings be live streamed from 17 August 2021.

Currently, the Council did not have the technology or equipment in place which would afford the public a good viewing experience of a live streamed blended committee meeting. Officers were currently investigating options available to live stream blended meetings and those options would be brought to a future meeting of the Executive Committee.

There followed a full discussion and exchange of views during which a number of issues were raised including:-

- ◆ the importance of inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing people in accessing Council and Committee meetings
- ◆ the importance of transparency in respect of access to Council and Committee meetings
- ◆ the suitability of current subtitling arrangements for Council and Committee meetings and potential for in-house provision
- ◆ future format of Council and Committee meetings and requirements to facilitate blended meetings which offered a good viewing experience

Following discussion, it was proposed that consideration of the matter be continued to allow officers to investigate the issues raised and identify potential solutions together with costs and possible staffing requirements. A further report would be submitted to the Committee, possibly via the Equal Opportunities Forum, however, in the interim, while recordings of further meetings would not be published until they had been subtitled, the Council would continue to record and live stream meetings.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the matter be continued to allow officers to investigate the issues raised and identify potential solutions together with costs and possible staffing requirements; and
- (2) that a further report on the matter be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

8 Revenue Budget and Level of Local Taxation 2021/2022 – Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2021

A report dated 25 March 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted:-

- ◆ confirming receipt of the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2021
- ◆ providing an update on the 2021/2022 budget based on the Order

At its meeting on 24 February 2021, the Council agreed the recommendations in relation to the Revenue Budget and Level of Local Taxation 2021/2022. Subsequently, the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2021 was approved by Parliament on 18 March 2021 and councils were issued with their approved grant figures in Finance Circular 5/221 – Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2021.

The Order provided an updated settlement position for 2021/2022 and the Council's grant figure was £641.140 million, an increase of £15.329 million on the figure approved in the budget by the Council on 24 February 2021. The increase of £15.329 million reflected the Council's allocation of the £259 million COVID-19 flexible funding which was not distributed earlier in the settlement. This was ring-fenced for COVID-19 related expenditure and was non-recurring funding for 2021/2022 only.

As part of the Finance Order Parliamentary debate, the Cabinet Secretary announced a further £40 million to be added to Local Government's settlement allocation to assist with budget pressures. This was not included in the Order, however, it was likely that this would be received in March 2022. The allocation for the Council was £2.367 million.

The 2021/2022 Budget report to Council on 24 February 2021 approved an additional pay award allocation of £3 million required to meet the additional costs anticipated if the Council employed a similar pay policy to that of the Scottish Government. Since then, the Cabinet Secretary had announced a revised pay offer, details of which were provided in the report. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) Leaders had agreed a negotiating mandate to commence discussions with a base offer of the Scottish Government Public Sector Pay Policy. However, negotiations were still ongoing and it was proposed that the full amount of additional funding be set aside to manage the potential additional costs of the pay award which could not be confirmed yet.

The original budget approved on 24 February 2021, including the amendments, was £720.363 million. The additional allocations detailed in the report of £15.329 million and £2.367 million took the revised budget to £738.059 million.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the receipt of the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2021 be noted;
- (2) that the revised 2021/2022 Revenue Budget of £738.059 million be noted; and
- (3) that the additional funding allocations and associated commitments be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of South Lanarkshire Council of 24 February 2021 (Paragraph 2)]

9 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.