

FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 9 February 2022

Chair:

Councillor Gladys Miller

Councillors Present:

Councillor Alex Allison, Councillor John Anderson, Councillor Walter Brogan, Councillor Graeme Campbell, Councillor Peter Craig (Depute), 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 Katy Loudon, Councillor Hugh Macdonald, Councillor Monique McAdams, Councillor Catherine McClymont, Councillor Mark McGeever, Councillor Jim McGuigan, Councillor Margaret B Walker (*substitute for Councillor Maureen Devlin*), Councillor Jim Wardhaugh

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Joe Lowe, Councillor Mo Razzaq, Councillor John Ross (ex officio), Councillor Jared Wark

Attending:

Finance and Corporate Resources

P Manning, Executive Director; G Cochran, Administration Assistant; C Fergusson, Head of Finance (Transactions); R Leith, Community, Participation and Development Manager; 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 10 November 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

Councillor McAdams joined the meeting during this item of business

3 Minutes of Recruitment Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Recruitment Committee held on 23 November 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

4 Minutes of Appeals Panel

The minutes of the meeting of the Appeals Panel held on 8 December 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 2021/2022 – Finance and Corporate Resources

A report dated 12 January 2022 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 December 2021 against budgeted expenditure for 2021/2022 for Finance and Corporate Resources, along with a forecast for the year to 31 March 2022.

Following the probable outturn exercise, the forecast was an overspend of £9.918 million, including COVID-19 costs but before transfers to reserves.

On 2 February 2022, the Executive Committee approved transfers to reserves of £0.113 million, bringing the overspend to £10.031 million, as detailed in Appendix A to the report.

The forecast cost of COVID-19 was £10.031 million, as detailed in Appendix I to the report. This was made up of expenditure of £9.935 million and loss of income totalling £0.096 million within Administration, Legal and Licensing.

As at 31 December 2021, there was an overspend of £8.074 million after approved transfers to reserves. This included the net costs of COVID-19 totalling £8.077 million.

The budget included in Appendix I for COVID-19 related to Scottish Government funding in relation to COVID-19 Business Support Grants.

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

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the forecast overspend of £9.918 million to 31 March 2022, including COVID-19 costs but before approved transfer to reserves, and an overspend of £10.031 million, after approved transfer to reserves, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) that the overspend of £8.074 million as at 30 December 2021, including COVID-19 costs and after approved transfers to reserves, be noted; and
- (3) that the proposed budget virements, as detailed in the appendices to the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 10 November 2021 (Paragraph 3) and Minutes of the Executive Committee of 2 February 2022 (Paragraph 3)]

6 Capital Budget Monitoring 2021/2022 – Finance and Corporate Resources

A report dated 19 January 2022 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted advising of progress on Finance and Corporate Resources' capital programme for 2021/2022 and summarising the expenditure position at 31 December 2021.

At its meeting on 10 November 2021, the Committee noted that the budget for 2021/2022, including carry forward, was £3.176 million and spend to 31 December 2021 totalled £0.695 million. This represented a position of £0.281 million behind profile and mainly reflected the timing of spend on the IT Infrastructure Refresh Project.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic had led to materials shortages, longer lead times and steep price increases and this would continue to impact the supply chain for the foreseeable future. The impact of this would be monitored and any significant increases in contract values would be brought to members' attention.

Following a full discussion regarding the AV project for the Committee Suite and the timescale for holding hybrid meetings again, the Head of Administration and Legal Services advised that the contract for the project had been awarded and discussions were ongoing regarding timescales for installation.

The Committee decided: that the Finance and Corporate Resources' capital programme of £3.176 million and expenditure to date of £0.695 million be noted.

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

7 Finance and Corporate Resources – Workforce Monitoring – September to November 2021

A report dated 23 December 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the following employee information for Finance and Corporate Resources for the period September to November 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 11 September 2021

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

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

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

Councillor Harrow joined the meeting during this item of business

8 Council-wide Workforce Monitoring – September to November 2021

A report dated 11 January 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the following Council-wide employee information for the period September to November 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 11 September 2021

There followed discussion on:-

- ◆ employees working from home
- ◆ communication with the Trades Unions in this regard
- ◆ availability of agreements with regard to those issues

The Head of Personnel Services advised that:-

- ◆ although there was no single formal policy on this, there were regular discussions with the Trades Unions around the revisions to the safe systems of work and the Service Re-introduction Toolkit was available for employees, Services and Resources to establish arrangements for a variety of work settings
- ◆ national guidance on hybrid working had been issued recently by the Scottish Government and this would be used to develop further guidance locally

Councillor McClymont requested that councillors also be afforded similar considerations to employees in terms of supports for working from home.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 10 November 2021 (Paragraph 6)]

9 Treasury Management Activity – Third Quarter Review

A report dated 1 January 2022 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the third quarter review of Treasury Management activity for 2021/2022.

Details were given on:-

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

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 10 November 2021 (Paragraph 7)]

10 Revenue Collection and Approval for Write-Offs

A report dated 19 January 2022 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ collection performance for the financial year 2021/2022 to 31 December 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, non-domestic rates, Hamilton, Carluke and Lanark Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID) levies, sundry debt, Housing Rent and associated charges and rent for homeless accommodation

Details were provided on collection targets and, at this stage, the Council was ahead of target and of comparable information from 2020/2021.

Performance against the BRIS target was closely monitored. As previously advised to Committee, the scheme had been suspended for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 due to the impact of COVID-19.

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

- ◆ irrecoverable Council Tax accounts from 1993/1994 to 2021/2022 to the value of £327,022.59, relating primarily to prescribed debt, sequestrations and estates of the deceased
- ◆ irrecoverable non-domestic rates from 2019/2020 to 2021/2022 to the value of £650,244.64, relating primarily to debtors in liquidation, had ceased trading or had been sequestrated
- ◆ write-off of Business Improvement District (BID) levies of £3,551.94, administered by the Council on behalf of the Hamilton, Carlisle, and Lanark BID companies
- ◆ sundry debts to a value of £166,174.83
- ◆ former tenant rent arrears totalling £124,340.48, factoring arrears of £336.63 and Housing Benefit overpayments totalling £78,340.69
- ◆ arrears for former occupants of homeless temporary accommodation totalling £2,741,202.31

Members expressed concern regarding the high figure for write off in relation to arrears for former occupants of homeless temporary accommodation and the lack of information on what that figure related to. The Head of Finance (Transactions) provided additional information on the number of accounts included in the proposed write-off and the overall value of outstanding debt. He also advised the Committee that the proposed write-off was fully provided for by Housing and Technical Resources and that further write-off proposals would be presented to this Committee as Housing and Technical Resources continued to review historical accounts.

Following detailed discussion, the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) advised that, in future, this information would be presented as a separate joint report with the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) to provide members with more detailed information on proposals for write-off of arrears for former occupants of homeless temporary accommodation. The information would firstly be reported to Housing and Technical Resources Committee for noting and then to this Committee for approval.

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;
- (3) that the write-off of the following irrecoverable debts be approved:-
 - ◆ Council Tax debt from 1993/1994 to 2021/2022 to the value of £327,022.59
 - ◆ non-domestic rates from 2019/2020 to 2021/2022 to the value of £650,244.64
 - ◆ write-off of Business Improvement District (BID) Levies to the value of £3,551.94
 - ◆ sundry debts to a value of £166,174.83
 - ◆ house rent and associated charges totalling £203,017.80
 - ◆ rent for homeless accommodation totalling £2,741,202.31

- (4) that, in future, the write off in relation to arrears for former occupants of homeless temporary accommodation be the subject of a separate joint report, and that the report be presented to Housing and Technical Resources Committee for noting and then to Finance and Corporate Resources Committee for approval.

[Reference: Minutes of 10 November 2021 (Paragraph 9)]

In terms of Standing Order No 13, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 3.03pm and reconvened at 3.10pm. Councillor McClymont was not present when the meeting reconvened. Councillor Campbell left and re-joined the meeting during this item of business. Councillors Anderson and McGuigan left the meeting during this item of business

11 Procurement Service - Establishment

A report dated 12 January 2022 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted:-

- ◆ providing an update on the reasons for the increased workload within the Procurement Service
- ◆ requesting approval for additional posts to address the increased workload and identified workforce planning issues

The Council operated a largely centralised Procurement function and delivered the following core functions:-

- ◆ assisting Resources with scoping procurement requirements
- ◆ identification of the routes to market
- ◆ managing the delivery of tenders covering initial publication, responding to clarifications from potential bidders, assessing bids and contract award
- ◆ compliance with procurement regulations and Standing Orders on Contracts
- ◆ reporting to the relevant committees on contracts awarded
- ◆ delivery of the Council's procurement strategy and reporting requirements

The current workload of the Procurement team was considerable. For the period April to September 2021, a total of 88 awards over £50,000 were made, in comparison to 61 for the same period in both 2019 and 2022. This represented an increase of 44% stemming from:-

- ◆ significant delays to procurement delivery in 2020/2021 due to COVID-19 which resulted in a marked increase in the volume of activity in 2021/2022
- ◆ an increase in the procurement requirements from Resources resulting from wider strategic projects such as City Deal, regeneration projects and Education Resources

The Service had also seen significant staff turnover during 2021 which resulted in a loss of experienced staff.

Recruitment had focused heavily on bringing in new graduates to build greater levels of long-term resilience in the team. This resulted in a significant training and development programme being put in place to develop the appropriate skills and experience across the team.

Additional resources had been brought in during 2021/2022 to deliver the procurement workload, which comprised a secondment from Scotland Excel for an initial 12 month period and a small number of projects were being delivered directly by them.

Despite this activity, there remained a need to identify additional resources to support Education Resources with its significant procurement requirements and to support City Deal projects and community benefits.

It was proposed that 2 additional full time equivalent (FTE) Procurement Officer posts on Grade 3, Level 2-4 (£33,651.16 to £39,162.35) be added to the establishment of the Procurement Service to support those projects.

The cost of the posts would be met from existing budgets within Education Resources and City Deal.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the need to increase the resources available to support the procurement activity for Education Resources and City Deal be noted; and
- (2) that the proposal to increase the Procurement establishment within Finance and Corporate Resources by 2 FTE Procurement Officer posts, as detailed in Section 5 of the report, be approved.

12 Creation of Development Officer (Trauma Informed Practice)

A report dated 16 December 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the establishment of a fixed term Development Officer post to take forward the Transforming Psychological Trauma agenda.

The occurrence of psychological trauma was prevalent in Scotland and its effects were wide ranging, substantial, long lasting and costly to individuals and communities. However, services underpinned by trauma informed practice could mitigate those and support the resilience and recovery of people affected by trauma.

The Scottish Government's ambition was that all employers, including local authorities, ensured that all aspects of service provision were trauma informed and responsive to both its employees and customers/service users.

To support employers to achieve this, a framework entitled "Transforming Psychological Trauma: A Knowledge and Skills Framework for the Scottish Workforce" had been developed.

The Scottish Government had made additional funding available to support the work. For the financial year 2021/2022, each local authority had received £50,000. Subject to approval of the Scottish Parliament budget, the Council would receive a further £50,000 in 2022/2023.

The Council had 'signed' the Leadership Pledge of Support and was committed to embedding trauma informed principles and practice. Two Trauma Champions had been identified and links made with the national Trauma Champions Network and the Pan Lanarkshire Trauma Steering Group.

Trauma informed practice was on the agenda for each Resource Learning and Workforce Development Board. A South Lanarkshire Trauma Steering Group had also been established to oversee and coordinate development and implementation.

Due to the scale of the task, the Steering Group had concluded that the most effective use of the funding from the Scottish Government was the creation of a 2 year fixed term full time equivalent (FTE) Development Officer post.

It was proposed that 1 FTE post of Development Officer (Trauma Informed Practice) on Grade 3, Level 2-4 (£32,994.19 to £38,779.13) be added to the Learning and Development establishment within Finance and Corporate Resources for a fixed term period of 23 months.

The Committee decided: that 1 FTE post of Development Officer (Trauma Informed Practice) on Grade 3, Level 2-4 (£32,994.19 to £38,779.13) be added to the Learning and Development establishment within Finance and Corporate Resources for a fixed term period of 23 months.

13 Finance and Corporate Resource Plan – Quarter 2 Progress Report 2021/2022

A report dated 14 December 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the Finance and Corporate Resource Plan for 2021/2022.

Details were provided on:-

- ♦ progress made in implementing the priority projects identified in the Resource Plan 2021/2022, 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 Section 5.3 of the report
- ♦ those measures which had a 'report later' status as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the Quarter 2 Progress Report for 2021/2022, as summarised in paragraph 5.2 and detailed in Appendix 1 to the 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 the additional scrutiny of reporting the updated status of those measures identified as 'report later' at Quarter 4 2020/2021, as summarised in paragraph 5.5 of the report and detailed in Appendix 3 to the report, be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 2 June 2021 (Paragraph 12) and Minutes of the Executive Committee of 28 April 2021 (Paragraph 6)]

14 Procurement Strategy Action Plan - Mid Year Update 2021/2022

A report dated 13 January 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on progress in the Procurement Strategy Action Plan for the period 1 April to September 2021.

The Council's Procurement Strategy 2020 to 2023 was approved by the Executive Committee on 13 May 2020 and, at its meeting held on 2 June 2021, this Committee noted the reviewed Strategy objectives for 2021/2022.

The Procurement Strategy update in June 2021 included 7 key strategic objectives, which linked to key outcomes for the Procurement Service. An update on each of those objectives and evidence of progress in working towards those outcomes was included in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Procurement Strategy Action Plan included specific projects for 2021/2022 in support of those strategic objectives which included 21 actions. Progress made to the end of September 2021 was detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

Performance was reflective of a significant increase in the number of procurement requests and reduced capacity due to staff turnover. Additional support had been brought in from Scotland Excel (SXL) in the form of a secondment and a small number of projects being delivered directly by SXL, including the replacement of the Social Work case management system.

Additional funding had also been identified to support the delivery of community benefits and for delivering procurement for Education Resources where increased spend levels had a significant impact on the procurement workload.

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 April to 30 September 2021

A report dated 21 December 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on contracts awarded by Finance and Corporate Resources during the period 1 April to 30 September 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 2 June 2021 (Paragraph 15)]

16 Safety at Sports Grounds – Issue of Special Safety Certificate for Fireworks Event - Foy's Stadium

A report dated 24 December 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted 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 issue a Special Safety Certificate for the North and West Stands, Hamilton Academical Football Club (HAFC) Stadium Limited, Foy's Stadium, Cadzow Avenue, Hamilton for the purpose of holding a fireworks event on 5 November 2021.

An application for a Special Safety Certificate had been received from HAFC Stadium Limited to hold a fireworks event on 5 November 2021. As the certificate was required to be issued prior to the event, the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources), in consultation with the Chair and an ex officio member, approved the issue of the Special Safety Certificate, subject to the completion of a satisfactory site inspection.

A site inspection, attended by representatives of the South Lanarkshire Sports Grounds Safety Advisory Group, had subsequently taken place on 5 November 2021. Representatives were satisfied with the event arrangements and the Special Safety Certificate had been issued prior to the admission of spectators

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 issue a Special Safety Certificate for the North and West Stands, Hamilton Academical Football Club (HAFC) Stadium Limited, Foy's Stadium, Cadzow Avenue, Hamilton for the purpose of holding a fireworks event on 5 November 2021, be noted.

17 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

Chair's Closing Remarks

As this was the last meeting of the Committee prior to the Local Government Elections in May 2022, the Chair thanked the members and officers for their hard work over the course of this Administration.