

FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 10 November 2021

Chair:

Councillor Gladys Miller

Councillors Present:

Councillor Alex Allison, Councillor John Anderson, Councillor Walter Brogan, Councillor Graeme Campbell, Councillor Peter Craig (Depute), 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 Joe Lowe, Councillor Monique McAdams, Councillor Catherine McClymont, Councillor Mark McGeever, Councillor Jim McGuigan, Councillor Mo Razzaq, Councillor Jim Wardhaugh, Councillor Jared Wark

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Hugh Macdonald, Councillor John Ross

Attending:

Finance and Corporate Resources

P Manning, Executive Director; C Fergusson, Head of Finance (Transactions); R Leith, Community, Participation and Development Manager; T Little, Head of Communications and Strategy; G McCann, Head of Administration and Legal Services; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services; A Norris, Administration Assistant; S Somerville, Administration Manager; 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	Adviser to Lanark Community Development Trust

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Corporate Resources Committee held on 1 September 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

3 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2021/2022 – Finance and Corporate Resources

A report dated 23 September 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted comparing actual expenditure for the period 1 April 2021 to 10 September 2021 against budgeted expenditure for 2021/2022 for Finance and Corporate Resources.

As at 10 September 2021, there was an overspend of £6.332 million against the phased budget. This included the net costs of COVID-19 totalling £6.281 million.

Costs associated with COVID-19 were detailed in Appendix I to the report and related to lost income of £0.020 million within Administration, Legal and Licensing, and COVID-19 Support Business Grants from the Scottish Government. Removing the impact and lost income due to COVID-19, left an overspend of £0.031 million.

The forecast to 31 March 2022, excluding COVID-19 costs and loss of income, was a breakeven position.

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

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the overspend of £6.332 million, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) that the forecast to 31 March 2022 of a breakeven position, excluding COVID-19 costs and loss of income, be noted; and
- (3) that the budget virements, as detailed in the appendices to the report, be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 1 September 2021 (Paragraph 4)]

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

A report dated 20 October 2021 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 10 September 2021.

As noted in the report to this Committee on 1 September 2021, the budget for 2021/2022, including carry forward, was £2.776 million. At its meeting on 3 November 2021, the Executive Committee agreed changes to the Finance and Corporate Resources' capital programme totalling £0.400 million, as detailed in Appendix A to the report. The revised budget for 2021/2022 was £3.176 million and spend to 10 September 2021 totalled £0.378 million.

The Committee decided: that the Finance and Corporate Resources' capital programme of £3.176 million and expenditure to date of £0.378 million be noted.

[Reference: (Minutes of 1 September 2021 (Paragraph 6) and Minutes of the Executive Committee of 3 November 2021 (Paragraph 4)]

5 Finance and Corporate Resources – Workforce Monitoring – July and August 2021

A report dated 11 October 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the following employee information for Finance and Corporate Resources for the period July and August 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 12 June 2021

The Head of Personnel Services responded to a members' question in relation to those staff who wished to work from the office rather than from home.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 1 September 2021 (Paragraph 8)]

6 Council-wide Workforce Monitoring – July and August 2021

A report dated 11 October 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the following Council-wide employee information for the period July and August 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 12 June 2021

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 1 September 2021 (Paragraph 9)]

Councillor Harrow joined the meeting during this item of business

7 Treasury Management Activity – Second Quarter Review

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

Details were given on:-

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| ◆ 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 1 September 2021 (Paragraph 10)]

8 Common Good Update

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

- ◆ the audited Common Good Fund Account for the year ended March 2021

- ◆ a request from Lanark Community Development Trust for a contribution of £3,000 from the Lanark Common Good Fund

The Common Good funds held within South Lanarkshire Council were Lanark, Biggar, Hamilton and Rutherglen. The Common Good accounts for 2020/2021 were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report and showed that, at the year end, the Common Good balance invested in the Council's Loan Fund was £0.841 million. The unaudited accounts for 2020/2021 were presented to this Committee on 1 September 2021 and had since been approved by Audit Scotland.

As previously reported, the Lanark Community Development Trust (LCDT) had requested a contribution of up to £10,000 from Lanark Common Good Fund for a commemorative sculpture of a Clydesdale horse to be sited beside Lanark Auction Market. LCDT had now raised £52,000 from various sources and had submitted a request for the remaining £3,000 to be met by a contribution from the Lanark Common Good Fund. The Royal Burgh of Lanark Community Council (RBLCC) had been consulted regarding the project.

In response to a question from Councillor Allison, the Head of Finance (Strategy) undertook to clarify with Housing and Technical Resources, the timescale for resolution of Biggar Common Good Fund issues.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the audited accounts for the Common Good for the year ended 31 March 2021 be noted; and
- (2) that the request from Lanark Community Development Trust for a contribution of £3,000 from the Lanark Common Good Fund be approved.

[Reference: Minutes of 1 September 2021 (Paragraph 14)]

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

9 Revenue Collection and Approval for Write-Offs

A report dated 21 October 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on:-

- ◆ collection performance for the financial year 2021/2022 to 30 September 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, sundry debt, Housing Rent and associated charges

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. On 3 September 2021, the Scottish Government advised that the Council was to retain £0.225 million of BRIS income in relation to 2019/2020 as the buoyancy achieved was 0.38% above target. As a result of the impact of COVID-19, the Scottish Government also confirmed that the scheme had been suspended for both 2020/2021 and 2021/2022.

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

- ◆ irrecoverable Council Tax accounts from 1993/1994 to 2021/2022 to the value of £168,766.22, 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 £10,970.77, relating primarily to debtors in liquidation, had ceased trading or had been sequestrated
- ◆ sundry debts to a value of £154,087.49
- ◆ former tenant rent arrears totalling £112,625.59, factoring arrears of £283.32 and Housing Benefit overpayments totalling £20,968.13

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 2021/2022 to the value of £168,766.22
 - ◆ Non-Domestic Rates from 2019/2020 to 2021/2022 to the value of £10,970.77
 - ◆ sundry debts to a value of £154,087.49
 - ◆ housing rent and associated charges to the value of £133,877.04

[Reference: Minutes of 1 September 2021 (Paragraph 12)]

10 Community Asset Transfer

A report dated 20 October 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted providing an update on the Community Asset Transfer process and requesting approval for the creation of a fixed term Development Officer (Community Asset Transfer) post.

The 2021/2022 General Revenue budget included £250,000 for the purpose of supporting the delivery of Sustainable Community Asset Transfer proposals. Following a review of the existing Community Asset Transfer process and how this fund would be best put to use to enhance it for applicants, the funding was anticipated to be spent across the next 3 financial years as follows:

- ◆ Year 1 - £40,000
- ◆ Year 2 - £100,000
- ◆ Year 3 - £110,000

In order to more effectively support community asset transfer, it was proposed that a temporary post be created within the Community Engagement Team. The postholder would develop guidance, assist organisations to develop their capacity and access support to create business cases as well as act as a liaison between the community and Council Resources.

There would be 2 aspects to the development of organisational capacity as follows:

- ◆ self help resources and access to advice aimed at organisations beginning the process of community asset transfer
- ◆ a community asset transfer support grant to enable organisations to access independent professional advice for preparation of formal applications

Further use of the fund would be made available for investment within properties which were involved in an asset transfer process. It was considered that repairs and minor redesign could facilitate an organisation to take early entry to a property.

The Executive Director responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report and undertook to clarify with the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources), the strategic position in respect of a Community Asset Transfer policy and what further work was planned on policy development, as well as associated responsibilities, and report back to committee members via the Chair.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the 1 FTE post of Development Officer be added to the establishment list within the Community Engagement Team for a fixed period of 23 months;
- (2) that the criteria for community asset transfer support grant, as set out in the report, be noted; and
- (3) that the criteria for property investment, as detailed in the report, be noted.

Councillor Lowe left the meeting during this item of business

11 Consolidation of Service Delivery

A report dated 2 November 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted providing an update on the consolidation of service delivery in the print centre team within Communications and Strategy.

In terms of efficiencies, the emphasis was on a digital strategy to provide a more responsive service which aligned with other digital processes in delivering communications and campaigns. This had led to a change in the core set of skills required within the print centre team and the requirement for an additional Production Assistant post which would be funded through the merging of 1.5 FTE Production Operative posts and the removal of a 0.5 vacant post.

The Committee decided: that the changes to the establishment in the print centre team within Communications and Strategy, as detailed in Section 5, be approved.

12 Live Streamed Meetings - Subtitles

A report dated 14 October 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted providing an update on the current arrangements for live streamed meetings and future arrangements.

The current practice of professionally subtitling meetings was causing delays in the process of uploading the subtitled version of meetings and was also expensive. Based on costs to date, a full year cost would be between £80,000 to £100,000. This did not include employee time taken to check the work before uploading. It was highlighted that there was no legal obligation to subtitle live streamed meetings and no other council had done this.

The automatic subtitles available via the YouTube platform worked well for other authorities and, together with the formal minutes of meeting, provided a good sense of the meeting content. This also improved on the speed of information being available. Additional support, in the form of signers, was provided as appropriate.

The Council was in the process of procuring an upgrade to the Audio-Visual system in the Council Chamber and installing the system in Committee Room 1, with the aim of improving the overall live streaming viewer experience. Meanwhile, links to the committee papers would be added to the YouTube front screen of the recordings to improve accessibility and address any issues with the captioning. It was noted that YouTube subtitling was available at no cost. In addition, to ensure equal access to information, all future members' awareness seminars would also include a BSL signer as part of the recording.

Councillor Ferguson stated that, as he often had other commitments, he was grateful that the members' awareness sessions would include a BSL signer. He also welcomed the addition of links to Council committee documents from the YouTube front screen. He anticipated that progress in technology would mean that subtitles would soon be available on live stream recordings.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the contents of the report be noted; and
- (2) that the updated arrangements for providing accessible meetings be noted.

13 Update of the Finance and Corporate Resources' Risk Register and Risk Control Plan

A report dated 6 October 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the Risk Register and Risk Control actions for Finance and Corporate Resources.

The Resource had followed Council guidance in developing, monitoring, and updating its Risk Control Register on an ongoing basis. The Register had been developed to ensure that the Resource was fully aware of the main risks that it had, was able to prioritise those risks and had controls in place to eliminate or minimise the impact of risk.

The risks were scored in accordance with the Council's revised 5x5 scoring matrix, which had been changed from a 3x3 matrix, following a review of the Council's Risk Management Strategy. The risk register and risk control plan review has been completed in August 2021.

The revised scoring matrix and definitions for likelihood and impact were outlined in Appendix 1 to the report. This had resulted in risks being scored between 1 to 25 (low to very high). Risks were scored on their inherent risk (risk if nothing was done) and their residual risk (risk after applying controls).

The Risk Register had been developed and was monitored on an ongoing basis to add any new risks and to review the scores of existing risks. The main changes to the Finance and Corporate Resources' register were:-

- ◆ the residual risk score for 'COVID-19 pandemic' had reduced from 20 to 16
- ◆ the residual risk score for 'EU Exit' had reduced from 20 to 12
- ◆ the risk card for 'Potential liability arising from claims of historical abuse' had been rewritten to reflect upon recent developments and changes to legislation
- ◆ the risk description 'Death or injury to employees, service users or members of the public affected by Council operations' had been amended to capture wider health, safety and wellbeing issues
- ◆ risk descriptions, controls and actions had been updated as required on individual risks, following discussions with risk owners

Risks scored 15 to 25 were considered very high and risks scored 8 to 12 were considered high risks. The top risks identified for the Resource were detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

There was 1 risk control action due for delivery between April and August 2021 which was completed on time.

8 actions were due for completion during 2020/2021 and had been completed.

There were currently 11 risk actions due for completion during the remainder of 2021/2022, with a further 5 actions due to be completed in future years. Details of those actions were noted at Appendix 4 to the report. Outstanding actions to mitigate the risks would be progressed by relevant officers.

Within Finance and Corporate Resources, 4 partnerships had been identified, of which the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) had been assessed as high risk and the remaining 3 partnerships had been assessed as low risk.

Appropriate risk management arrangements were in place for the CPP, with regular reports on its risk register and action plan presented to the CPP Board.

The Committee decided:

- (1) that the contents of the Finance and Corporate Resources' Risk Register be noted; and
- (2) that it be noted that the outstanding risk control actions would be progressed by relevant officers.

[Reference: Minutes of 20 January 2021 (Paragraph 14)]

14 Early Retirement, Voluntary Severance and Switch 2

A report dated 19 October 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on early retirements, voluntary severances and the Switch 2 programme for the period 1 April to 30 September 2021.

The Committee decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 2 June 2021 (Paragraph 13)]

15 Safety at Sports Grounds – Re-issue of General Safety Certificate for the Foys Stadium

A report dated 19 October 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 re-issue the reviewed General Safety Certificate for the North and West Stands, Hamilton Academical Football Club (HAFC), Foys Stadium, Cadzow Avenue, Hamilton.

The revised format of the General Safety Certificates for those premises had been approved by the Committee at its meeting on 11 December 2013 and the certificate was required to be reviewed and re-issued annually.

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 reviewed General Safety Certificate for the North and West Stands, Hamilton Academical Football Club (HAFC). Foys Stadium, Cadzow Avenue, Hamilton be noted.

16 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.