

**THE FIFE COUNCIL - POLICY AND CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE – REMOTE MEETING**

20th January, 2022.

10.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillors David Alexander (Convener), David Barratt, John Beare, Tim Brett, Altany Craik, Dave Dempsey, Linda Erskine, David Graham, Judy Hamilton, Andy Heer, Linda Holt, Carol Lindsay, Donald Lothian, Mino Manekshaw, Karen Marjoram, Tony Miklinski, David Ross, Fay Sinclair, Ross Vettraino and Craig Walker.

**ATTENDING:** Steve Grimmond, Chief Executive; Eileen Rowand, Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services), Elaine Muir, Head of Finance, Charlie Anderson, Head of Business Technology Solutions, Carol McColl, Business Change Manager, BTS, Helena Couperwhite, Committee Manager and Michelle McDermott, Committee Officer, Legal and Democratic Services, Finance and Corporate Services; Keith Winter, Executive Director (Enterprise and Environment), Ken Gourlay, Head of Assets, Transportation and Environment and John Mitchell, Senior Manager, Assets, Transportation and Environment; Fiona McKay, Head of Strategic Planning, Performance and Commissioning, Health and Social Care; John Mills, Head of Housing Services; and Kathy Henwood, Head of Education and Children's Services.

**APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE:** Councillor Helen Law.

**337. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were submitted in terms of Standing Order No. 7.1.

*Councillor Judy Hamilton joined the meeting during consideration of the above item.*

**338. MINUTE**

The Committee considered the minute of the Policy and Co-ordination Committee meeting of 9th December, 2021.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to approve the minute.

**COVID AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY UPDATE**

The Chief Executive provided an update on the significant pressures which Services had been and continued to be under in relation to Covid. It was noted that Fife continued to have high levels of Covid Omicron infections but, as was the case across Scotland and the UK, Fife appeared to be beyond the peak and were seeing a reduction in cases. Following on from this, the First Minister had announced on Tuesday that some restrictions were being lifted from Monday, 24th January.

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The Council's Incident Management Team (CIMT) continued to meet to consider current risks and business continuity in light of high covid levels and the high levels of staff absence which the Council were experiencing. It was noted that staff were continuing to work from home where possible but hopefully, following the First Minister's announcement, this would move to more flexible/hybrid arrangements from February but, frontline staff would continue to provide and maintain services across Fife. Staff absence levels continued to be a significant challenge but all Services were actively managing service delivery and prioritising workloads to maintain frontline service delivery.

In addition to Covid, other sickness absence also compounded the challenges the Council were facing particularly within Health and Social Care and schools being significantly challenged in relation to staff absences. In terms of Council service delivery, the Council were largely maintaining business as usual including housing, waste management, building services and protective services, however, it was noted that the Contact Centre were under considerable pressure due to a significant increase in self isolation grant applications but the rate of applications was now reducing. It was highlighted, however, that priority continued to ensure that crisis grant applications were being actioned timeously.

The Chief Executive advised that Health and Social Care continued to be under significant pressure with hospitals being particularly acute alongside the pressure of continuing to meet the demand of social care within the community. It was noted that the number of patients being discharged from hospital with appropriate care arrangements had increased but not at a level to resolve the continuing pressures. With regard to social care, the Chief Executive advised that an urgent request had been issued to the Council's workforce to temporarily assist with care services.

The Chief Executive concluded that the situation with service delivery remained precarious but that he would continue to oversee this through the CIMT meetings.

### **Decision**

It was agreed that the Chief Executive would provide:-

- (1) a further briefing, in due course, to staff and elected members detailing the new provisions to be put into effect particularly in relation to hybrid working; and
- (2) elected members with updated arrangements in relation to future Committee meetings being held remotely/blended.

### **339. REVENUE MONITORING 2021-22**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services) providing members with a strategic overview of Fife Council's finances and provided an update to the previous report. Funding solutions were also outlined to deal with the continued financial implications of Covid-19 as well as reform and recovery from the pandemic in the current financial year 2021-22. The report also provided the forecast outturn position for 2021-22.

### **Decision/**

**Decision**

The Committee:-

- (1) noted the high level financial position as detailed in the report;
- (2) noted the financial plan for 2021-22 had been updated in response to the financial pressures as detailed in section 2 of the report;
- (3) instructed all Services to continue to mitigate additional costs, continue to deliver approved savings and contain expenditure within the approved budget provision wherever possible; and
- (4) noted that detailed provisional outturn reports would be submitted to the relevant Sub-Committees when it was practical to do so.

*Councillor Craig Walker left the meeting during consideration of the above item.*

**340. CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN UPDATE - PROJECTED OUTTURN 2021-22**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services) providing members with a strategic financial overview of the Capital Investment Plan and advised on the projected outturn for the 2021-22 financial year.

**Decision**

The Committee noted:-

- (1) the projected outturn position, that the level of financial risk appeared to be increasing and noted the mitigating actions for the major projects within the Capital Investment Plan;
- (2) the projected outturn position for the 2021-22 Capital Investment Plan;
- (3) that more detailed capital outturn reports for 2021-22 would be submitted to relevant Sub-Committees of the Council in accordance with agreed financial reporting arrangements; and
- (4) that budget variances would be managed by the appropriate Directorate in conjunction with the Investment Strategy Group.

*Councillor Donald Lothian left the meeting following conclusion of the above item.*

**341. LEVEN RAILWAY BRIDGE WORKS - CAPITAL FUNDING**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Assets, Transportation and Environment seeking approval for the Leven Rail Bridge Replacement business case to allow the works to replace the Leven Rail Bridge to be undertaken within Network Rail's programme to deliver the reinstatement of the Leven Rail Link.

During the meeting, it was highlighted that, since the report was drafted, Assets, Transportation and Environment had continued to work with Finance colleagues who had confirmed that the bridge work budget could be increased by up to £5.711m/

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£5.711m by using the capital contingencies budget that was held within the capital plan. This would fund the cost associated with the change in scope of the project. Capital contingencies were held for one off events such as this that happened outwith the capital planning process.

### **Decision**

The Committee :-

- (1) agreed the need to deliver the Leven Rail Bridge replacement works as part of the delivery mechanism to implement the Leven Rail Link which was programmed for delivery by the end of December, 2023;
- (2) approved the business case and the selection of option 2(b) to deliver the bridge replacement works at an overall cost of £8.157m; and
- (3) agreed to delegate to the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services) and the Executive Director (Enterprise and Environment) to agree Heads of Terms with Transport Scotland as well as agreement to the Team Scotland Execution Plan.

### **342. CUPAR CARE HOME REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Health and Social Care providing an update on the Cupar Care Home Replacement Project advising that, following more detailed cost analysis, the current estimates went beyond the 5% project tolerance and a funding solution required to be determined to bridge the identified gap.

### **Decision**

The Committee noted the status of the Cupar Care Home Replacement Project and agreed additional capital funding of £1.279m to be funded from the commitment in general fund balances set aside for costs and pressures following the Covid-19 pandemic. As the funding was revenue in nature, it would be treated as Capital from Current Revenue (CFCR) funding.

*The meeting adjourned at 11.30 a.m. and reconvened at 11.45 a.m.*

### **343. ARMED FORCES COVENANT - TRAINING AND MOBILISATION POLICY**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Human Resources seeking approval for the implementation of a training and mobilisation policy for reservists and revisions to the special leave policy for the wider Armed Forces community in our workforce, in accordance with the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed:-

- (1) the implementation of the training and mobilisation policy included within the Appendix to the report; and
- (2) the revisions to the special leave policy as detailed in the report.

*Councillor Craig Walker/*

*Councillor Craig Walker rejoined the meeting during consideration of the above item.*

**344. ASSISTING UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AS PART OF THE ASYLUM SEEKER DISPERSAL SCHEME**

The Committee considered a joint report by the Head of Education and Children's Services and the Head of Housing Services following on from reports submitted to this Committee in July 2020 and April 2021 confirming that the Home Office had now mandated all UK local authorities to participate in the UK Government's Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme. The report outlined the change of approach by the Home Office and highlighted the implications for Fife by this change.

**Decision**

The Committee noted:-

- (1) the change in Home Office policy; and
- (2) that the multi-agency response to support young people coming to Fife through the Mandatory Scheme would continue to be co-ordinated through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Core Group.

**345. ASSET MANAGEMENT LEGACY SYSTEMS REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME (PRIVATE REPORT)**

The Committee resolved, under Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director (Enterprise and Environment) advising members of the progress to date of the Asset Management Legacy Systems Replacement Programme and the proposed next steps.

**Decision**

The Committee:-

- (1) noted the progress of the programme to date; and
  - (2) approved delegated authority to the Executive Director (Enterprise and Environment) and Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Service) to award contracts to the preferred suppliers as detailed in the report following the outcome of the agile procurement exercise.
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