

**MINUTES of MEETING of POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held ON A HYBRID BASIS IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND BY MICROSOFT TEAMS
on THURSDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2023**

Present: Councillor Robin Currie (Chair)

Councillor Gordon Blair	Councillor Reeni Kennedy-Boyle
Councillor Audrey Forrest	Councillor Jim Lynch
Councillor Kieron Green	Councillor Liz McCabe
Councillor Amanda Hampsey	Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Councillor Fiona Howard	Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor Willie Hume	Councillor Alastair Redman
Councillor Andrew Kain	

Also Present: Councillor Peter Wallace

Attending: Pippa Milne, Chief Executive
Douglas Hendry, Executive Director
Anne Blue, Head of Financial Services
Jane Fowler, Head of Customer Support Services
Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth
Ross McLaughlin, Head of Commercial Services
Fergus Walker, Revenue and Benefits Manager
Stuart Green, Corporate Support Manager
John Gordon, Programme Manager
Stuart McLean, Committee Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gary Mulvaney and Dougie Philand.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jim Lynch advised in relation to item 9 of the agenda (Place Based Investment Programme Fund 2021 – 2024 Allocations and Project Updates) that he had been appointed to the Oban BID Board by the Council. Having taken note of the updated Standards Commission Guidance in relation to declarations (issued on 7 December 2021) with specific reference to section 5.4(c) he did not consider that he had a relevant connection and as such would remain in the meeting.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 10 August 2023 were approved as a correct record.

*** 4. FINANCIAL REPORTS MONITORING PACK - 31 AUGUST 2023**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing a summary of the financial monitoring reports as at the end of August 2023. There were five detailed reports setting

out the position as at 31 August 2023 which included the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report; Monitoring of Financial Risks; Capital Plan Monitoring Report; Treasury Monitoring Report and Reserves and Balances.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the revenue budget monitoring report as at 31 August 2023;
2. noted the financial risks for 2023-24;
3. noted the capital plan monitoring report as at 31 August 2023 and approved the proposed changes to the capital plan as outlined in Appendix 4 of that report;
4. noted the treasury monitoring report as at 31 August 2023;
5. noted the reserves and balances report as at 31 August 2023; and
6. agreed to recommend to Council that the revenue virements over £0.200m during July and August 2023 are approved.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 8 September 2023, submitted)

* **5. BUDGET OUTLOOK 2024-25 TO 2028-29**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update to the budget outlook covering the period 2024-25 to 2028-29, previously reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on 10 August 2023.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the current estimated budget outlook position for the period 2024-25 to 2028-29; and
2. agreed to recommend to Council that the budget for winter maintenance was right sized by utilising £0.326m of the £1.4m contingency that was set aside for inflationary increases as part of the 2023-24 budget setting process.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 18 September 2023, submitted)

6. BUDGET SIMULATOR EXERCISE - FINDINGS

The Committee gave consideration to a report outlining feedback from local communities on their priorities for bridging the £10M+ budget gap via the budget simulator exercise.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed to take into account the budget simulator results when considering and preparing the budget for 2024/25.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Customer and Support Services dated 12 October 2023, submitted)

7. UPDATE ON EMPTY PROPERTY RELIEF IN NON-DOMESTIC RATES

The Committee gave consideration to a report summarising key findings from the consultation on the potential use of empty business properties in Argyll and Bute. The consultation engaged with a diverse group of stakeholders including members of the public, property owners, community organisations and Elected Members. The report focused on the location and profile of respondents, barriers and challenges to occupying empty properties, potential new roles for vacant buildings, incentives and support measures, and the community impact of addressing vacant properties.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the results of the Empty Property Relief Consultation and that a revised Policy would be brought to Council on 23 November 2023; and
2. noted that a member's seminar would be held at the start of November to discuss the position and the options for a new policy.

(Reference: Report by Head of Financial Services dated 18 September 2023, submitted)

8. DEVELOPMENT OF AREA PLANS TO REFLECT INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Committee gave consideration to a report setting out an approach to delivering area based plans for all communities, reflecting investment opportunities and local service prioritisation as part of the delivery of the approved Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed –

1. that the number of locality plans covering Argyll and Bute was 8 plans (option A), as set out in paragraphs 4.31 to 4.33 of the submitted report;
2. the principles on which the initiative would be designed and implemented as set out in paragraph 4.35 of the submitted report;
3. the approach to the aforementioned initiative as set out in paragraphs 4.36 to 4.40 of the submitted report;
4. the resourcing and timescales as set out in paragraphs 4.41 to 4.45 of the submitted report;
5. to reflect any relevant outcomes from the Community Planning Partnership Community Wealth Building Review in the approach to producing area plans, noting that the report would be completed before the work started on the plans; and

6. to an allocation of £200,000 from the Council's Priorities Investment Fund to fund two temporary posts and associated costs to allow commencement of this initiative.

(Reference: Report by Chief Executive dated 20 September 2023, submitted)

9. PLACE BASED INVESTMENT PROGRAMME FUND 2021 – 2024 ALLOCATIONS AND PROJECT UPDATES

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update on the Place Based Investment Programme allocation for the years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 as well as the allocations agreed to individual projects and any subsequent change that had to be made as well as an update on progress of each project.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee -

1. noted the allocation of Place Based Investment funding provided from the period 2021-2024;
2. noted the agreed allocation of the Place Based Investment funding during the period 2021-2024 to the projects in Table 1 of the submitted report;
3. approved any amendments to the funding allocation as detailed in paragraph 4.9 of the submitted report;
4. noted the update on each of the individual projects as detailed in Table 1 of the submitted report; and
5. agreed a delegation of powers to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth to allow any subsequent amendment to approved Place Based Investment Programme grant allocations to ensure that any risk relating to payback of any grant is minimised; noting that it may involve swapping Place Based Investment Programme allocations with Crown Estate allocation of grants against individual projects but would not affect the projects but simply the grant source.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated September 2023, submitted)

10. CROWN ESTATES FUNDING

(a) Crown Estate 2019-2023 Allocations and Project Updates

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update on the Crown Estate allocations for the years 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 totalling £5,785,106.55 and the respective individual project allocations. The report also provided an update on any subsequent changes made to the allocations as well as providing an update on the progress of each of the projects.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the allocation of Crown Estate funding provided from the period 2019-2023;
2. noted the agreed allocation of the Crown Estate funding during the period 2019-2023 to the projects in Table 1 and paragraph 4.4 of the submitted report;
3. approved the amendments to the funding allocation as detailed in paragraph 4.6 of the submitted report;
4. noted the update on each of the individual projects as detailed in Table 1 of the submitted report;
5. agreed to the continuation of delegated powers, as agreed in February 2023, to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth to allow any subsequent amendment to approved Crown Estate grant allocations to ensure that any risk relating to having to payback any grant is minimised; noting that this may involve swapping Crown Estate allocations with Place Based Investment Programme allocations of grants against individual projects but would not affect the projects but simply the grant source.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 14 September 2023, submitted)

(b) **Crown Estate 2023/24 Allocation and Possible Projects**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing detail on the proposed allocation of the Crown Estate funding for 2023/24 following consultation with all Elected Members as agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee on 10 August 2023.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted that the formal allocation of Crown Estate funding for 2023/24 is still awaited;
2. noted the proposal to allocate a £1.0million prudent estimate of anticipated Crown Estate 2023/24 funding against individual projects pending receipt of the formal allocation;
3. noted that officers sought suggestions from Elected Members and are undertaking due diligence in reviewing those projects against the criteria set by the Scottish Government;
4. agreed to a delegation of powers to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with the Leader, Depute Leader and Leader of the largest Opposition Group to approve the final list of projects to be supported by the £1.0million prudent allocation of Crown Estate 2023/24 funding;

5. noted that officers would inform Elected Members of the decision taken by the delegation; and
6. noted that a further report would be brought back to members of the Policy and Resources Committee should the formal allocation for 2023/24 represent a higher figure than £1.0million.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 14 September 2023, submitted)

11. RURAL GROWTH DEAL – UPDATE PAPER

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update on the Rural Growth Deal Programme and in particular progress towards signing of the full deal agreement, which represented the next key milestone in the Rural Growth Deal process.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. approved a further drawdown of funding from the Inward Investment Fund (up to £150k); noting that similar to previous arrangements, funds would only be drawn down subject to the Chief Executive and two Executive Directors of the Council being satisfied that the monies were for the purpose of delivering the Rural Growth Deal; and that any further funding required in excess of the approved value would require further approval from the Policy and Resources Committee.
2. noted the process and anticipated timescales for signing the Full Deal Agreement with the Scottish and UK Governments.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated September 2023, submitted)

Councillor Ross Moreland advised in relation to items 12 and 13 of the agenda, that he had been appointed to the Argyll Countryside Trust by the Council. Having taken note of the updated Standards Commission Guidance in relation to declarations (issued on 7 December 2021) with specific reference to section 5.4(c) he did not consider that he had a relevant connection and as such would remain in the meeting.

12. NATURE RESTORATION FUND - SPEND OPTIONS

The Committee gave consideration to a report recommending the Council take forward a number of time sensitive and deliverable projects utilising the Nature Restoration Fund allocated by the Scottish Government.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the allocation of Nature Restoration Funding received;

2. agreed to the recommended projects as set out in Appendix 1 of the submitted report; and
3. agreed that officers bring forward a further list of projects for Members' consideration to the Policy and Resources Committee in December 2023.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth and Roads and Infrastructure Services and Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services dated 12 October 2023, submitted)

13. CLIMATE CHANGE BOARD UPDATE AND DE-CARBONISATION TRACKER

The Committee gave consideration to a report summarising and highlighting some of the recent activities of the Climate Change Board over the previous quarter.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee noted the updates contained at Section 5 and the full Decarbonisation Tracker update attached at Appendix A to the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services dated 12 September 2023, submitted)

14. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Policy and Resources Committee Workplan was before the Committee for noting.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee noted the content of the Workplan as at October 2023.

(Reference: Policy and Resources Committee Workplan dated October 2023, submitted)

The Committee resolved in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the press and public for the following item of business on the grounds that it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 8 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

15. ROTHESAY PAVILION UPDATE

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update on the construction position and the efforts of the Lobbying Group in relation to the refurbishment of Rothesay Pavilion.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed the recommendations contained within the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services and Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 21 September 2023, submitted)