

MINUTES of MEETING of POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held ON A HYBRID BASIS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD AND BY MICROSOFT TEAMS on THURSDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2024

Present: Councillor Audrey Forrest (Chair)

Councillor John Armour	Councillor Reeni Kennedy-Boyle
Councillor Gordon Blair	Councillor Dougie McFadzean
Councillor Math Campbell-Sturgess	Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Councillor Kieron Green	Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor Mark Irvine	Councillor Gary Mulvaney

Also Present: Councillor Maurice Corry Councillor Tommy MacPherson

Attending: Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director
Douglas Hendry, Executive Director
Carolyn Earl, Interim Head of Financial Services
Jane Fowler, Head of Customer and Support Services
Jim Smith, Head of Roads and Infrastructure Services
Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth
Shona Barton, Governance Manager
Suzanne Mason, Engagement and Communities Lead

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Amanda Hampsey, Jim Lynch, Liz McCabe and Dougie Philand.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 10 October 2024 were approved as a correct record.

*** 4. FINANCIAL REPORTS MONITORING PACK - 31 OCTOBER 2024**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing a summary of the financial monitoring reports as at the end of October 2024.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed to –

1. note the revenue budget monitoring report as at 31 October 2024;
2. note the financial risks for 2024-25;

3. note the capital plan monitoring report as at 31 October 2024 and approve the proposed changes to the capital plan outlined in Appendix 4 of that report;
4. note the reserves and balances report as at 31 October 2024; and
5. recommend to Council that the revenue virements over £0.200m during September and October 2024 are approved.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 12 November 2024, submitted)

5. BUDGET OUTLOOK 2025-26 TO 2029-30

The Committee considered a report providing an update to the budget outlook covering the period 2025-26 to 2029-30.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee noted –

1. the current estimated budget outlook position for the period 2025-26 to 2029-30; and
2. that the budget outlook now included new management/operational and policy options presented by officers for consideration as part of the budget in February 2025; and further noted that detailed templates would be provided to Council.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 12 November 2024, submitted)

6. SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES FUND - REVIEW AND OUTLINE PROPOSALS

The Committee considered a report setting out recommendations from an internal review of the Council's annual Supporting Communities Fund (SCF) to support improvements for communities applying in 2025/26.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the findings from the internal review and that further feedback was being gathered from community groups on their experiences to help improvements;
2. agreed the proposed next steps and timeframe for the 2025/26 round of Supporting Communities Fund (SCF);
3. agreed that a detailed paper would come to February 2025 Policy and Resources Committee to consider and agree an improved approach to SCF for 2025/26; and
4. approved that, within 2025/26, officers explore the scope of grants available to community groups in Argyll and Bute through the Council, CPP partners and other funding bodies and consider possibilities for collaboration and realignment. Further to this, to consider the potential format of local decision making for grants available through the council and/ or collaborations.

(Reference: Report by Chief Executive dated 4 November 2024, submitted)

7. ENGAGING COMMUNITIES FRAMEWORK - DRAFT

The Committee considered a report presenting the Draft Engaging Communities Framework for approval.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. approved the content of the Engagement Framework; and
2. noted that the Framework would be produced in a user-friendly format, reviewed annually to support learning and development of best practice, and promotion of the Framework and training on its content for staff and elected members is in development.

(Reference: Report by Chief Executive dated 5 November 2024, submitted)

*** 8. VOLUNTEER POLICY AND VOLUNTEER PROCEDURE**

The Committee gave consideration to a report introducing a new Council wide Volunteer Policy and Procedure.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed –

1. the Volunteer Policy;
2. that PVG costs for volunteers would be covered by existing service budgets; and
3. to forward the Policy to Council for final approval.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Customer Support Services dated 30 October 2024, submitted)

9. OCTOBER 2023 WEATHER EVENT - NOVEMBER 2024 UPDATE

The Committee considered a report following up on the report presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 15 August 2024 in respect of the October 2023 weather event.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the update on the current position of the projects; and
2. agreed that further updates on the October 2023 Weather Event would be made to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee rather than to the Policy and Resources Committee.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure Services dated 26 November 2024, submitted)

10. RURAL GROWTH DEAL - PROJECT DEVELOPMENT COSTS

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the Rural Growth Deal (RGD) and specifically costs associated with the Business Case and Project Development.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted that the total estimated essential development costs to inform Treasury Five compliant Full Business Cases for all projects amounted to £3.183m and these costs required to be incurred in advance of Central Government endorsement at risk to the Council and lead delivery partners;
2. agreed that the Council sets aside a fund from the Priorities Investment Fund to the value of £0.700m that can pay for the development costs for Council projects on the basis that all will be paid back by the end of Year 10;
3. agreed that any cash flow funding requests for projects led by external partners would be brought to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval as and when a request for funding was made and considered on a case by case basis; and
4. delegated to the Internal Programme Board (Chief Executive and Executive Directors) to approve pre-development funding requests relating to Council led projects up to a threshold of £250k per project from the new Fund.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 20 November 2024, submitted)

11. CROWN ESTATE FUNDING

The Committee gave consideration to a report requesting agreement on additional funding being allocated to Campbeltown War Memorial and permission for Argyll Countryside Trust (ACT) to sell their Eco-Hub which had been part funded through Crown Estates Funding.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed to –

1. allocate additional funding of up to £11,000 to complete the upgrade works at Campbeltown War Memorial from Crown Estate contingency funding; and
2. grant permission to ACT to sell their Eco-Hub, which was part funded through Crown Estates funding in 2021; and agree in principal that the returned proceeds in addition to the remaining 5% retention (anticipated to be £28.5k) are reinvested in the new Kilmory site.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 26 November 2024, submitted)

12. CLIMATE CHANGE BOARD UPDATE & DECARBONISATION TRACKER

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an overview of key highlights from the Decarbonisation Plan Tracker, offering a strategic snapshot of recent progress.

Decision

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

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services dated 7 November 2024, submitted)

The Chair ruled and the Committee agreed to take item 14 of the agenda (Policy and Resources Committee Workplan) at this point, before the exclusion of the press and public for item 13 of the agenda (Oban Airport Business Park), to facilitate smooth running of the agenda.

13. 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 5 December 2024.

(Reference: Policy and Resources Committee Workplan dated 5 December 2024, 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 Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

*** 14. OBAN AIRPORT BUSINESS PARK**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update on progress of the Oban Airport Business Park project and how it fitted within the wider Lorn Arc Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) Programme.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed the recommendations as 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 28 November 2024, submitted)