

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, 20 FEBRUARY 2025

Present: Councillor Jim Lynch (Chair)

Councillor John Armour	Councillor Reeni Kennedy-Boyle
Councillor Gordon Blair	Councillor Luna Martin
Councillor Math Campbell-Sturgess	Councillor Dougie McFadzean
Councillor Audrey Forrest	Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Councillor Kieron Green	Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor Amanda Hampsey	Councillor Gary Mulvaney

Also present: Councillor Jan Brown Councillor Tommy Macpherson
Councillor Fiona Howard Councillor Peter Wallace

Attending: Pippa Milne, Chief Executive
Douglas Hendry, Executive Director
Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director
Carolyn Earl, Interim Head of Financial Services
Jane Fowler, Head of Customer and Support Services
Ross McLaughlin, Head of Commercial Services
Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth
Suzanne Mason, Engagement and Communities Lead
Shona Barton, Governance Manager
Jonathan Welch, Transformational Projects and Regeneration Manager
Fergus Walker, Revenues and Benefits Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mark Irvine and Liz McCabe.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

There were no declarations of interest intimated.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 5 December 2024 were approved as a correct record.

4. FINANCIAL REPORTS MONITORING PACK - 31 DECEMBER 2024

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing a summary of the financial monitoring reports as at 31 December 2024.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed to –

1. note the revenue budget monitoring report as at 31 December 2024;

2. note the financial risks for 2024-25;
3. note the capital plan monitoring report as at 31 December 2024 and approve the proposed changes to the capital plan outlined in Appendix 4 of that report; and
4. note the reserves and balances report as at 31 December 2024.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 17 January 2025, submitted)

Councillor Luna Martin left the meeting during consideration of the next item of business.

* **5. BUDGETING PACK 2025-26**

The Committee gave consideration to the full package of papers included in the budgeting pack in relation to the revenue and capital budgets for 2025-26.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed to refer consideration of the Budgeting Pack 2025-26 to the Council meeting on 27 February 2025, without recommendation.

(Reference: Budgeting Pack 2025-26 dated 13 February 2025, submitted)

* **6. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2025-26**

The Committee gave consideration to a report presenting the draft Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2025-26, and the Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2025-26 to 2027-28.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2025-26, and the Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2025-26 to 2027-28; and
2. agreed to refer the report to full Council for approval.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 10 February 2025, submitted)

7. ARGYLL AND BUTE UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND INVESTMENT PLAN, TRANSITION YEAR 2025/26

The Committee gave consideration to a report presenting the Argyll and Bute UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Transitional Year Investment Plan for 2025/26.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the content of the report;
2. approved the Argyll and Bute UKSPF Transitional Year Investment Plan for 2025/26; and
3. agreed that a progress report on the investment plan for 2025/26 would be presented at the Policy and Resources Committee in October 2025.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 6 February 2025, submitted)

8. FUTURE OF THE ARGYLL AND BUTE FLEXIBLE FOOD AND FUEL FUND

The Committee gave consideration to a report presenting a contingency plan for funding the Argyll and Bute Flexible Food and Fuel Fund for 2025/26, leveraging a combination of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and earmarked reserves for Revenues and Benefits administration works.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. acknowledged the work done to date to directly support people to cope with food and fuel poverty and other cost of living pressures, with over £4.3m in financial benefits delivered and almost 2,000 households and 800 children receiving the help that they need;
2. recognised the importance of extending the fund so that people in Argyll and Bute who need help can continue to get support;
3. welcomed and agreed the plan to extend the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund to 31 March 2026, supported by the following funding sources:
 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund (60% of £204,000): £122,400
 - Earmarked reserves: £189,600
 - Total cost for 2025/26: £312,000
4. noted the recent correspondence to the Committee from Argyll and Bute Citizen's Advice Bureau and agreed that officers would continue to explore potential for any future additional partnership working that may be possible.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Finance dated 13 January 2025, submitted)

9. SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES FUND 2025-26

The Committee gave consideration to a report detailing proposals for an improved process for the Supporting Communities Fund in 2025/26, adding to the outlined proposals approved by Policy & Resources Committee in December 2024.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee agreed –

1. a focus on digital first with promotion of an online application;
2. non-digital application available if needed to ensure fairness and equality;
3. a shorter application – one of the key asks from the community survey;
4. maximum funding which can be applied reduced from £2,500 to £1,500 - allowing more community groups to be awarded funding;
5. groups eligible to apply continue to be all third sector organisations in Argyll and Bute, with additional criteria of: ‘who have a turnover of £150,000 or less’; and
6. funding is to remain available for projects that come under one or more of the following criteria: Fairer, Resilient, Greener and Creative.

(Report by Chief Executive dated 29 January 2025, submitted)

* **10. SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2025/2028 - DRAFT DOCUMENT AND CONSULTATION**

The Committee gave consideration to a report seeking approval for the draft revised Sustainable Procurement Strategy 2025/2028.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. noted the key changes to the Sustainable Procurement Strategy 2025/2028, and the changes made to the strategy following the consultation period; and
2. recommended to the Council agreement of the revised final Sustainable Procurement Strategy 2025/2028, and the publication on the council’s website in April 2025

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support dated 17 December 2024, submitted)

11. EQUALITY OUTCOMES 2025-2029

The Committee gave consideration to a report detailing work which has been undertaken to develop a new set of Equality Outcomes which will cover the period May 2025 to April 2029 as required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee approved the following set of Equality Outcomes for the period 2025-2029 –

1. We make access to information and services easier for people with protected characteristics.

2. Our communities are safe for, and welcoming to, people with protected characteristics.
3. We raise awareness of issues and challenges faced by people with protected characteristics along with ways to accommodate and support them.
4. Argyll and Bute welcomes New Scots and supports them.
5. We ensure people with protected characteristics are enabled to progress.
6. Our work relating to equalities and people with protected characteristics is coordinated across the organisation and its partners and is strategically aligned.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Customer Support Services dated 14 January 2025, submitted)

12. CONSERVATION AREA REGENERATION SCHEME (CARS) PROJECT 15-19 ARGYLL STREET, LOCHGILPHEAD

The Committee gave consideration to a report seeking approval to award an additional Private Sector Housing Grant of £21,220, to help bridge the budget shortfall for external building works at 15-19 Argyll Street, Lochgilphead.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee approved utilisation of the £21,220 balance of Private Sector Housing Grant allocated to the Lochgilphead CARS projects by Full Council on 21st February 2019 to bridge the funding shortfall at the 15-19 Argyll Street Lochgilphead CARS project.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 6 January 2025, submitted)

13. COMMUNITY REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP FUNDING

The Committee gave consideration to a report detailing 5 priority projects to put forward for potential funding from the Community Regeneration Partnership.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. approved the updated list of priority projects included at Appendix 1 of the report, which will form the basis of further negotiations with the UK and Scottish Governments; and
2. noted that all funding requires to be committed by financial year 26/27 and would be subject to business case approvals by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Ministers.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated January 2025, submitted)

14. CROWN ESTATES FUNDING ALLOCATION 2025/26

The Committee gave consideration to a report setting out proposals for the allocation of the remaining Crown Estates budget allocated in the 2024/25 financial year.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. considered and approved the time sensitive proposals set out in Table 1 of the report for the remaining Crown Estates budget allocated in the 2024/25 financial year; and
2. noted that a further report would be brought back to the Policy and Resources Committee identifying priority projects for the 2025/26 Crown Estates funding allocation.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 16 January 2025, submitted)

*** 15. STRATEGIC EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND - ROUND 7 2025-26**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing an update on Round 7 (2025/26) of the Council's Strategic Events and Festivals Fund (SEF) and details of the applications submitted and the applications recommended to receive funding. The report also sought agreement to allocate a minimum of £90,000 funding to allow for a SEF Round 8 in 2026/27.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee–

1. agreed to the award of eligible SEF Round 7 grants amounting to £106,036 as detailed in Table 1 of the report;
2. agreed that any SEF Round 7 grant offer be formally issued upon confirmation from the event organisation that the event is confirmed as going ahead, match funding is in place and the event still meets the SEF Round 7 criteria;
3. agreed to continue delegation of powers to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth to allow any subsequent amendment to existing grant requests due to changes to the event/event budget. Any amendment to a current grant request/offer would only be considered if the amendment related to either the same level or a reduction in the request and constitute up to 75% of legitimate and eligible expenditure. Similarly, if there was a reduction in the final event costs that would result in delivery of a profit more than £10,000 (all of which must be reinvested to future events) to the organisation and that this was sustained over a 3-year period, the final retention (10%) would not be paid out on the third year of the grant;
4. agreed to recommend to Council that as part of the budget in February 2025, that they agree a minimum of £90,000 base funding for Strategic Events and Festivals in order that the application process can commence for Round 8 (2026/27); and

5. agreed and recommended to Council that any underspend from SEF Round 6 (2024/25) was earmarked and used to augment a future SEF round.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 6 December 2024, submitted)

16. ROYAL NATIONAL MOD 2028

The Committee gave consideration to a report seeking approval in principle on An Comunn's offer for Argyll and Bute to host the Royal National Mòd (RNM) in 2028.

Decision

The Policy and Resources Committee –

1. agreed in principle to hosting the RNM in Dunoon or Oban in 2028 and for the requirement to enter into an agreement with An Comunn to provide a maximum of £200K financial support over a four year period with the final payment in financial year 2028-2029;
2. agreed to the Council working with Live Argyll to secure the use of the venues for the duration of the RNM at no cost to the RNM; and
3. noted that the An Comunn Board meet in March 2025 and had requested that the Council provide an in principle decision by this date.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 5 February 2025, submitted)

17. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

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 20 February 2025.

(Reference: Policy and Resources Committee Workplan dated 20 February 2025, submitted)