

# STIRLING COUNCIL

**MINUTES of MEETING of the FINANCE & ECONOMY COMMITTEE held as a Virtual Meeting by MICROSOFT TEAMS on THURSDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2021 at 10.00 a.m.**

## **Present**

Councillor Margaret BRISLEY (in the Chair)

Councillor Neil BENNY  
Councillor Scott FARMER  
Councillor Alison LAURIE

Councillor Jeremy MCDONALD  
Councillor Jim THOMSON

## **In Attendance**

Adam Boey, Business Planning & Performance Management (Communities & Performance)  
Jim Boyle, Chief Officer – Finance  
Charlotte Brown, Graduate Planning Officer (Infrastructure)  
Stephen Clark, Chief Officer - Housing  
Christina Cox, Planning & Buildings Standards Service Manager (Infrastructure)  
Graham Gibson, Senior Media Officer (Communities & Performance)  
Charlie Haggerty, Legal Manager (Governance)  
David Hopper, Public Transport & Sustainable Development Manager (Infrastructure)  
Nick Hyde, Head of Procurement (Communities & Performance)  
Drew Leslie, Senior Manager – Infrastructure  
Steven MacDonald, Economic Growth, Culture Tourism & Events Service Manager (Economic Development & Communities)  
Julia McAfee, Chief Officer – Governance  
Isabel McKnight, Chief Operating Officer – Communities & Performance  
Norman McLeod, Health & Safety Team Leader (HR & OD)  
Bryony Monaghan, Interim Head of Education  
George Murphy, Accounting Operations Manager (Finance)  
Gordon O'Connor, Audit Service Manager (Governance)  
Stuart Oliver, Senior Manager – Economic Development & Communities  
Bruce Reekie, Senior Manager – Environment & Place  
Brian Roberts, Chief Operating Officer – Infrastructure & Environment  
Keir Stevenson, Place Development Manager (Economic Development & Communities)  
Karen Swan, Committee Officer (Governance)  
Marie Valente, Senior Manager – Children & Families (CSWO)  
David McDougall, Governance Officer (Governance) (Clerk)

## **Also in Attendance**

Adam Haahr, Audit Scotland  
Barry McDonald, Codebase

Prior to the start of the meeting, Councillor Brisley as Convener of the Finance & Economy Committee welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the meeting via MS Teams. She updated the meeting on the procedures related to MS Teams and the protocols that both Members and Officers should adhere to throughout the meeting.

The Convener asked the Clerk to carry out a roll call of all Members participating in the meeting.

#### **FE260 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no apologies and substitutions.

#### **FE261 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **FE262 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & Economy Committee that was held on 23 September 2021 were submitted for approval.

##### **Decision**

The Minutes of the Meeting of Finance & Economy Committee held on 23 September 2021 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

#### **FE263 ROLLING ACTION LOG**

The Finance & Economy Committee Rolling Action Log was submitted for review and approval.

The Committee noted that FE245 Placed Based Investment Programme – Update (Master Plan - Albert Halls) Members Briefing had been delayed and would be re-scheduled.

##### **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to note the Rolling Action Log.

#### **Agenda**

The Convener intimated her intention to alter the order of the Agenda. The items were taken in the order minuted below.

## **FE264 STIRLING CITY CENTRE ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

The Senior Manager – Economic Development, Culture & Tourism submitted a report that presented Finance and Economy Committee with an update on actions agreed within the City Centre Economic Action Plan, approved in February 2018, and outlined progress against the development of a new City Centre Strategy and Action Plan for Stirling.

Stirling city centre was a hub of economic activity within the area and its continued success and growth was critical to the health of the local economy.

In response to Members questions, the Place Development Manager confirmed that an Engagement Session would be arranged between City Centre Action Group and Elected Members, to allow Members to hear from the Action Group directly.

The Committee noted that Friar Street, along with King Street, had established itself as a good café culture which was positive to see and an encouraging future with Stirling as Good Food City.

### **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to:

1. note the progress against actions included within the existing City Centre Economic Action Plan (2018); and
2. note the progress update which noted that a new City Centre Strategy and Action Plan was being developed with key partners and would be presented to the meeting of the Finance and Economy Committee on 17 February 2022 for approval.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager – Economic Development & Communities, dated 15 November 2021, submitted)

## **FE265 CODEBASE STIRLING**

A report was submitted by the Senior Manager - Economic Development & Communities that provided an update on the performance and achievements of Codebase Stirling from September 2017 until present and requested a 12 month extension to the existing contract.

The appointment of Codebase was in recognition of their ambitions to make Stirling one of the most important centres for Digital Technology in Scotland and to act as a key driver behind the development of Stirling's Digital District.

The partnership between Stirling Council and Codebase was agreed for a 5 year period commencing March 2017 and running until 31 March 2022 and Codebase's services were contracted on that basis.

In response to two significant ongoing pieces of work, a 12 month extension to the current contract was proposed.

Barry McDonald, Codebase Stirling Manager who was in attendance, noted that Codebase had various projects ongoing in particular the school to start up approach that helped school children with future start-ups. He also noted that Codebase

throughout the pandemic had been operating online and recently was using a hybrid model of work. In respect to Digital for Girls, he advised that this would start again on a face to face basis in January 2022.

The Convener thanked Barry McDonald for attending and the Committee noted the good work that Codebase had accomplished.

### **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to:

1. note the contents of the report;
2. note the progress made by Codebase Stirling since opening;
3. note the performance against the annual Key Performance Indicators for the contract; and
4. approve a 12 month extension to the existing contract.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager – Economic Development & Communities, dated 16 November 2021, submitted)

## **FE266 GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET PROJECTED OUTTURN 2021/22**

The Chief Officer – Finance submitted a report that provided the projected outturn position on the overall General Fund Revenue Budget position for the current year.

The report set out the overall financial outlook for the General Fund in the 2021/22 financial year and it identified some key areas of significant budget pressure that arose mainly from Covid-19 impact on services.

Services were reporting a net overspend position of £4.868m, of which £5.176m represented additional Covid-19 related costs, offset partly by an underspend of £308k from Business As usual activities.

In addition to the Service outturn position noted above, budget within the operational responsibilities of the Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) was currently reporting a projected overspend of £2.345m. However, this reflected the position prior to any partners' cost sharing agreement which had still to be confirmed, and any financial impact on Stirling Council would not be as high as this figure.

Corporate areas of the budget currently showed loan charges savings of £750k, additional non-recurring Scottish Government Covid-19 grant funding of £4.521m, and as previously approved earmarked reserves to support Covid-19 pressures. These favourable balances were being partially off set by the Services capital programme as agreed by Council in March 2021, additional transformation costs of £150k, and the transfer of a further £1m to the transformation Fund in line with the June 2021 Finance & Economy Committee decision.

Following a Members question, the Chief Officer – Finance confirmed that earmarked reserves were due to be considered at a Meeting of Stirling Council on 9 December 2021 which would allow for Members a further review in preparation for setting the budget. The Committee noted that the Convener requested offline discussions in connection to the uncommitted earmarked reserves be arranged, with a view to arranging a Members Briefing or Special Meeting of Committee as felt necessary.

The Senior Manager – Economic Development & Communities responded to a Members question stating that clarity would be sought on whether the in-year vacancy savings of £44k was a required position and advise Members of the Finance & Economy Committee accordingly.

### **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to:

1. note the projected outturn positions for Service and Corporate areas of the budget;
2. note the outturn position for Stirling Council's element of the Health & Social Care Partnership budget; and
3. note the overall projected uncommitted General Fund reserves of £7.266m at 31 March 2022 (3.2% of General Fund budget).

(Reference: Report by Chief Officer - Finance, dated 16 November 2021, submitted)

## **FE267 GENERAL SERVICES CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 PROGRESS REPORT**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Finance that provided Committee with an update on the delivery of the General Services capital programme for 2021/22. The report also aimed to increase the governance, scrutiny and visibility of the programme to elected members and to improve the implementation of the programme.

The General Services capital programme delivered significant investment in Stirling's infrastructure that enabled key projects that were required to support economic growth, support and develop our communities, improve public infrastructure and assets and improve the services the Council services.

Following a Members question, the Senior Manager – Environment & Place confirmed that the Council's flood programme had been phased and further information would be provided within a Flood Alleviation Scheme Briefing Note that would be circulated to affected Ward Elected Members.

The Chief Officer - Finance noted that due to time pressures in the capital programme and the ability to proceed with projects, that the officers report recommendation could be amended from a "recommendation made to Council for inclusion of projects detailed in Appendix 2 to the submitted report", to "virement that the Finance & Economy Committee could authorise officers to progress". In accordance with Scheme of Delegation, Councillor Brisley proposed the amendment which was seconded by Councillor Farmer.

In a request for clarity on virement and where authority lies, the Chief Officer – Governance, Chief Officer – Finance and Legal Manager left the meeting to clarify.

In returning to the meeting, the Legal Manager advised that the Financial Regulations stipulated that delegated authority exercised by Officers was for virement not exceeding £250,000. Virement in excess of £250,000 must be approved by Council.

In light of the information advised, the Legal Manager suggested that the recommendation change to the following to allow for, all but one of the projects, to be accepted under delegated authority:-

- to note that officers would exercise delegated powers under paragraph 5.11.1 of the Financial Regulations to approve virement of the budgets as detailed in Appendix 2 to the submitted report, with the exception of the Roads Resurfacing Budget, which Finance & Economy Committee remits to a Meeting of Stirling Council recommending approval in terms of paragraph 5.12 of the Financial Regulations.

The Finance and Economy Committee Members all accepted the amended recommendation.

### **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to:

1. note the progress being made on the delivery of the 2021/22 programme;
2. note the core funded programme was currently projected to be £5.114M underspent;
3. note the overall capital programme was currently projected to be £11.739M underspent;
4. note the supply chain issues set out in paragraphs 1.6 to 1.13 of the submitted report;
5. note the revised allocations of the Place Based Investment Programme Projects, as detailed in paragraphs 2.40 to 2.44 of the submitted report; and
6. note that officers would exercise delegated powers under paragraph 5.11.1 of the Financial Regulations to approve virement of the budgets as detailed in Appendix 2 to the submitted report, with the exception of the Roads Resurfacing Budget, which Finance & Economy Committee remits to a Meeting of Stirling Council recommending approval in terms of paragraph 5.12 of the Financial Regulations.

(Reference: Report by Chief Officer – Finance, dated 15 November 2021, submitted)

## **FE268 PERFORMANCE & STRATEGIC PRIORITIES PROGRESS REPORT**

The Chief Operating Officer – Communities & Performance submitted a report that presented the recommended performance indicators to be used to measure and report on progress on Council priorities to the Finance & Economy Committee.

In response to a Members question, the Chief Operating Officer – Communities & Performance assured Members that “% of Trainees and Apprentices” was monitored and was included within the council’s workforce plan.

### **Decision**

The Finance and Economy Committee agreed to note the performance of indicators within the Committee Scorecard (Appendix 1 & 2 to the submitted report).

(Reference: Report by Chief Operating Officer – Communities & Performance, dated 15 November 2021, submitted)

## **FE269 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE 2021/22**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Finance that provided a mid-year update on the Treasury Management Strategy and activities for 2021/22 as required by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management in the Public Services Code (2017).

The Prudential Indicators for 2021/22 had been approved in the General Fund Revenue Budget and Determination of Council Tax 2021/22 report presented to Stirling Council on 11 March 2021. The Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22 was also approved the same meeting.

The Accounting Operations Manager responded to a Members question that Link Asset Services, who were Stirling Council's External Treasury Advisors, would be contacted to arrange for a Treasury Management Briefing session with All Elected Members prior to the budget meeting.

### **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to:

1. note the Treasury Management Strategy and activities for 2021/22 as outlined in the submitted report; and
2. note the deposits of surplus funds with Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) and the Debt Management Office Account Deposit Facility (DMADF), in excess of the normal limits, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Chief Officer – Finance, dated 15 November 2021, submitted)

## **FE270 STIRLING TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS LTD ANNUAL REPORT**

The Chief Officer – Finance submitted a report that provided an annual update on Stirling Technology Projects Ltd, highlighting performance during the financial year 2020/21.

Stirling Technology Projects (STP) was formed in 1999 for the sole purpose of providing an extension to the original BioReliance building located within the University Innovation Park, and thereafter leasing the whole building (original and extension) to BioReliance (Bio).

Bio, whose parent company was Merek, provided biological testing and research services to the world's pharmaceutical health care, biotechnology and chemical companies.

In response to a Members question, the Economic Growth, Culture Tourism & Events Service Manager advised that Stirling Council were looking at all options for a pharmaceutical cluster action plan at the Innovation Park.

### **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

(Reference: Report by Chief Officer – Finance, dated 15 November 2021, submitted)

## **FE271 HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY REVIEW**

A report was submitted by the Senior Manager – Environment & Place that reviewed the existing Health & Safety Policy.

The Policy was a legal requirement under the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The revised Health & Safety Policy would continue to be the formal document that was regarded as a legally binding document and therefore its purpose, definitions and the responsibilities outlined within its contents, must be upheld in order that it may be used to support an individual or the Council during legal action. The revised Policy would continue to provide a consistent logical framework for Council action across all services and their functions to meet the requirements of the Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974.

### **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to approve the revised Health and Safety Policy and its rollout by services across Council. (Paragraphs 2.1-2.1.4 within the submitted report).

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager – Environment & Place, dated 15 November 2021, submitted)

## **FE272 BUDGET CONVERSATION 2022/23**

A report submitted by the Chief Operating Officer – Communities & Performance noted that in March 2022, Stirling Council would consider its financial plans for the 2022-23 budget.

The Member-led Budget Advisory Group agreed to hold a formal public engagement process to inform the budget-setting process and development of final options presented to Council for consideration in 2022.

The report summarised the findings of the Budget Conversation survey held from September to November 2021, which was conducted mainly as an online survey through the Council's Engage Stirling platform.

Every year the Council's challenge was to set a budget that ensured that services were funded and delivered. As the Council's budgets have become tighter every year, with demands for services increased. Stirling Council needed to know what was important to our services users. Stirling Council had asked the public to join the conversation to advise officers what they cared about, where the Council could make savings and where changes would be made.

Following a Members concern that the Conversation would form the basis for the budget, the Convener and the Chief Officer - Communities & Performance confirmed that the conversation material would only assist with the next phase in which officers would review the feedback.



## **Motion**

The Finance & Economy Committee is asked to:

1. note the findings of the Budget Conversation 2022-23; and
2. support the use of the Budget Conversation finds in the 2022-23 Budget setting process.

Proposed by Councillor Margaret Brisley, seconded by Councillor Scott Farmer

## **Amendment**

The Finance & Economy Committee is asked to note the findings of the Budget Conversation 2022-23.

Proposed by Councillor Neil Benny, seconded by Jeremy McDonald

On the roll being called, Members presented votes as follows:-

### For the Amendment (2)

Councillor Neil Benny  
Councillor Jeremy McDonald

### Against the Amendment (4)

Councillor Margaret Brisley  
Councillor Scott Farmer  
Councillor Alison Laurie  
Councillor Jim Thomson

The Amendment fell by 4 votes to 2 votes.

On the roll being called for the Motion, Members presented votes as follows:-

### For the Motion (4)

Councillor Margaret Brisley  
Councillor Scott Farmer  
Councillor Alison Laurie  
Councillor Jim Thomson

### Against the Motion (2)

Councillor Neil Benny  
Councillor Jeremy McDonald

The Motion was carried by 4 votes to 2 votes

## **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to:

1. note the findings of the Budget Conversation 2022-23; and
2. support the use of the Budget Conversation findings in the 2022-23 Budget setting process.

(Reference: Report by Chief Operating Officer – Communities & Performance, dated 15 November 2021, submitted)

## **FE273 STIRLING COUNCIL PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2021-25 AND ANNUAL PROCUREMENT REPORT 2020-2021**

The Chief Operating Officer – Communities & Performance submitted a report on the Procurement Strategy 2021-25 that set out the basis for strategic direction of the Council Procurement function over the next four years that sought to build on the success of the previous strategy and directly and explicitly link to and contribute towards the Council's overall aims and objectives set out in the Five Year Plan and the Ten Year Strategy.

The Annual Procurement Report 2020-21 also set out progress made against the previous strategy, legislation, aims and objectives over the last year in the awarding and management of contracts for goods, services and works on behalf of Stirling Council.

The report sought Committee's approval for the two documents to enable publication of both in-line with Scottish Government legislation.

### **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to:

1. approve revised and updated Procurement Strategy 2021-25;
2. note the changes in strategic direction for Procurement over the next four years:
  - 2.1 Carbon Net Zero – Linking explicitly with the Stirling Council Climate and Nature Emergency Plan 2021-2045;
  - 2.2 Community Wealth Building - A new objective which drew together good work in several areas into one joined up strategic direction;
  - 2.3 Financial Stability – A new objective around focusing on driving efficiencies and savings in everything we do as a team;
  - 2.4 Commercialisation – Again a new objective which, over the term of the strategy, would enable the Council to work towards efficiencies and improvements in service delivery by our suppliers during the term of contract rather than primarily during the tender process;
  - 2.5 Contract Management - This objective remains but was now supported by more specific performance measures and actions;
  - 2.6 Staff Development - This objective remains but was now supported by more specific performance measures and actions;
3. approve Annual Procurement Report 2021;
4. note the achievements of the Procurement Team over the last twelve months in delivering against its aims and objectives; and
5. note the significant progress made in Sustainable Outcomes and Community Benefits contained in Appendix 5 to the submitted report as requested by members previously.

(Reference: Report by Chief Operating Officer – Communities & Performance, dated 15 November 2021, submitted)

The Convener adjourned the meeting at 12.30pm  
in accordance with Standing Orders 74 to  
allow for a comfort break.

The Meeting reconvened at 12.35pm, noting  
All Elected Members, previously noted, present.

## **FE274 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

A report by the Chief Officer – Governance was submitted that detailed the Council's current Whistleblowing Policy was approved by Finance and Economy Committee on 15 February 2018. The report sought Committee's approval of an updated Whistleblowing Policy which had been amended to reflect current governance arrangements and provided greater clarity as to the persons protected by law.

Every 3 years, a review would be undertaken with this update in a form of a refresh rather than a more fundamental update. The legislation underpinned whistleblowing had not been amended since the Police was drafted.

In response to a Members question, the Audit Service Manager advised that in accordance with confidentiality, feedback to complainants on either the outcome or ongoing status would always be advised.

### **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to:

1. approve the revised Whistleblowing Policy; and
2. note and take assurance from the fact that the new Policy would be publicised to raise awareness amongst staff.

(Reference: Report by Chief Officer – Governance, dated 15 November 2021, submitted)

## **FE275 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS: POSITION 2021/2022**

The Senior Manager – Infrastructure submitted a report that set out the current position with the opening and closing balances of developer contributions at the end of the financial year 2020/2021. A summary of contributions spent during the last 3 financial years (2018/19-20/21) and an outline of the process for identifying future spend was also provided.

Planning authorities could secure developer contributions to mitigate the impact of the developments. Stirling Council had been collecting such contributions under various planning policies since the late 1990s.

Local Development Plan policy defined the types of infrastructure for which developer contributions could be sought, and associated Supplementary Guidance (SG)

provided detail on the methodologies used to calculate contributions, the circumstances under which they would be required, and the amounts that developers were required to pay.

Following Members enquiry on whether Developers Contribution could be reported to Committee through the Performance & Strategic Priorities report, Committee noted that further discussion offline would be needed between relevant political groups and officers on whether a quarterly report with a broader remit could be reported back.

### **Decision**

The Finance & Economy Committee agreed to:

1. note the financial position regarding developer contributions for the period 2020/21;
2. note the spend attributed to developer contributions in the last 3 financial years (2018/19 to 2020/21);
3. note the process for spend of developer contributions in the period 2022/23; and
4. agree that a report of similar format would be provided annually to this Committee.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager – Infrastructure, dated 15 November 2021, submitted)

### **Notice**

The Convener noted that this Meeting of the Finance and Economy Committee would be Jim Boyle's, Chief Officer – Finance, last one as he was leaving Stirling Council for pastures new at the end of the year.

She wished him all the best and congratulations on his new ventures and thanked him for all the work over the years to keep the Council's finances on track. Personal thanks was given by the Convener, which was echoed by all Members of the Finance & Economy Committee in wishing him all the best.

The Convener closed the Meeting at 1pm.