

## **SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE PANEL.**

Minutes of meeting held remotely  
on 9 March 2021 at 10 a.m.

- Present: Councillors Alec Clark (Chair), Andy Campbell, Iain Campbell, Chris Cullen, Hugh Hunter, Derek McCabe and Bob Pollock.
- Apology: Councillor Laura Brennan-Whitefield.
- Attending: E. Howat – Chief Executive; D. Gillies, Director – Place, M Newall, Assistant Director – People; L. Reid, Assistant Director – Place; K. Carr, Assistant Director – Place; C. Caves, Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services; W. Carlaw, Service Lead – Democratic Governance J. Nicol, Service Lead – Planning and Building Standards; M. Houston, Service Lead – Trading Standards and Environmental Health; K. Anderson, Service Lead – Policy, Performance and Community Planning; Z. Fance, Service Lead – Procurement; N. Gemmell, Service Lead – Revenues and Benefits, C. Monaghan, Service Lead – Community Services and Facilities ; N. Williams – Auditor, and C. Buchanan, Committee Services Officer.

### **Opening Remarks.**

The Chair took the sederunt and confirmed that today's meeting was not open to the press and public, which was permissible under the COVID-19 legislation. He also confirmed to Members the procedures to conduct this meeting. The Chair announced to Members that the meeting was being recorded for minuting purposes only.

### **1. Declarations of Interest.**

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

### **2. Minutes of previous meeting.**

The minutes of 10 February 2021 ([issued](#)) were submitted and approved.

### **3. Action Log and Work Programme.**

There was submitted an update of the Action Log and Work Programme ([issued](#)) for this Panel.

The Panel

**Decided:** to note the current status of the Action Log and Work Programme.

#### **4. Progress on Implementation of 2020 Management Structure.**

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 2 March 2021 by the Chief Executive providing an update regarding the impact on services affected by revised structural changes.

The Chief Executive stated that there had been an exceptional response by all staff throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; and that the three outstanding recommendations in the report had been delayed slightly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following a question from a Member of the Panel regarding paragraph 4.3.9 of the report relating to the increase in workload for customer contact centre staff and if staff were managing this increase and being given support, the Chief Executive outlined that she was aware of the extra pressures and additional duties which staff had been facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and noted that staff were prioritising and managing their additional workload very well.

Another Member of the Panel enquired if staff had been redeployed to support services which were under greater pressure and the Chief Executive stated that a survey had been issued to staff to highlight any concerns related to increased work levels and to ascertain that staff felt adequately supported. The Assistant Director – People highlighted that there were a number of employees who had been unable to carry out their traditional roles during COVID-19 and had offered their assistance in other ways such as helping in the local community and vaccination centres. The Service Lead – Trading Standards and Environmental Health added that there had been a lot of support received from Human Resources and ICT throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic which had helped to support staffing levels as well as assisting in planning for the COVID-19 recovery phase. The Service Lead – Revenues and Benefits agreed with earlier comments related to work levels throughout the pandemic and added that Revenues and Benefits had to prioritise and utilise staff overtime as a result.

A Member of the Panel enquired, in relation to paragraph 4.5.4 of the report, if the number of interventions with businesses by Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers had increased as a result of the pandemic and the Service Lead – Trading Standards and Environmental Health outlined that the figures had dramatically increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and reflected the current volume of work by the service. It was further noted that questionnaires relating to business standards had been created which allowed monitoring to continue throughout lockdown periods and that rolling inspections were also taking place.

A Member of the Panel enquired, as a result of Brexit, if exports were running smoothly and the Service Lead – Trading Standards and Environmental Health stated that though there were still certain delays caused by paperwork exports had improved within the last few months.

A Member of the Panel referenced the information around the ‘Attend Anywhere’ virtual appointment system in paragraph 4.3.10 of the report and enquired if further improvements would be made to certain services as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Chief Executive advised that the COVID-19 pandemic had forced a number of quick service changes, particularly in the use of online forms and outlined that she intended to examine all processes in relation to digital technology improvements going forward.

Following a question from a Member of the Panel regarding whether or not a formal evaluation would take place following the COVID-19 pandemic related to this Council’s performance and the effects on businesses, resources and constituents, the Chief Executive advised that Audit Scotland had been monitoring all Council’s responses to

COVID-19 which she advised would likely be reported on during the COVID-19 recovery phase.

The Panel commended the excellent work which had been undertaken by Council employees despite increasing pressures and additional workload throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, with particular mention to services within Trading Standards and Environmental Health; Revenues and Benefits; Customer Contact Centres; and ICT.

Having scrutinised the contents of the report, the Panel

**Decided:** to note the contents of the report.

## 6. **Council Plan 2018-22 (2020 Mid-Term Refresh) – October to December 2020.**

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 26 February 2020 by The Assistant Director - People, allowing Members the opportunity to review progress made towards achieving the strategic objectives contained within the Council Plan 2018-22 (2020 Mid-Term Refresh)

The Assistant Director - People gave an introduction to the report and highlighted that all of the project dates were in line with the Council Plan and that he felt confident that many projects would be completed prior to the due dates specified.

A Member of the Panel asked in relation to the Capital Programme, if there had been an impact on progress due to lockdown and social distancing measures. Another Member asked if there had been any impact on voids. The Assistant Director – People outlined that due to COVID-19, various measures had to be put in place to abide by social distancing measures and safe working. The Assistant Director advised that there had been a legacy impact, as last year all works were suspended, however work had since resumed employing safe measures. There were some areas, for example housing, where it had not been possible to undertake modernisation works, however voids were unaffected.

A Panel Member enquired about enforcement on individuals who left their vehicles idling. The Service Lead – Trading Standards and Environmental Health advised that current enforcement was weak as Police Scotland were required to warn the offender in the first instance. The Service Lead stated that a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued to the offender.

A Panel Member asked for clarification on members of the Champion's Board being invited to participate as an evaluator on appropriate Children's Services contracts and the Service Lead – Procurement confirmed that the Champions Board had been asked to participate in the evaluation of certain contracts over the last few months. The Service Lead explained the position that The Champions Board had been looking at one particular contract and the Lead Officer for The Champions Board had arranged evening Zoom calls with young people who were recipients of the service that the contract provided and, through a process of engagement with the young people, she had asked them to score the contract on a number of performance indicators. The Service Lead stated that the feedback was then collated anonymously and given to the provider as well as comments from internal colleagues, this was well received by the provider and the approach was commended. The Service Lead explained that the intention was to roll out the approach further with additional contracts. A Panel Member asked why the progress of the working was only shown at 10 percent despite the wealth of innovative work that had already been carried out and the Service Lead – Procurement explained that the percentage was

based on the number of contracts and outlined that this figure of 10 percent was based on one contract.

A Member of the Panel enquired in relation to page 23 of the Appendix, relating to action COPL 06.1e entitled 'To deliver contracts which support sustainability in an improved environment in South Ayrshire' if this was a matter of using different weighted criteria, to allow more environmental issues to be considered. The Service Lead – Procurement advised that the current working standard was weighting contracts and quality for sustainability of five percent with each contract individually assessed on individual merit before tender and the five percent was reviewed. The Service Lead highlighted that new legislation was due to come on board to support the zero net carbon and the plan update should reflect this in future work to be scheduled in light of the legislation. The Panel Member asked for confirmation that the information would be in the policy for the contract as a weighted criteria relating to quality and price and the Service Lead – Procurement agreed that this would be the case as the standard was five percent weighted.

Having scrutinised the contents of the report, the Panel

**Decided:** to note the contents of the report.

## **6. Planning Performance Framework Feedback 2019-20.**

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 10 February 2021 by the Assistant Director – Place setting out the Council's performance against the Planning and Performance Framework for 2019/20 and the Scottish Government's feedback to this.

The Service Lead – Planning and Building Standards gave an introduction to the report outlining that it provided background to the Planning Performance Framework which was introduced in 2012 and was developed by the Heads of Planning in conjunction with the Scottish Government. The Service Lead stated that the framework involved a number of quantitative measures to help measure the overall quality of the Planning Service whilst helping to drive continuous improvement. It was also noted that the report did not cover the diverse range of work undertaken by the Planning Service but rather specific areas.

A Member of the Panel enquired about page six of the report relating to effective land supply and if this was satisfactory. The Service Lead - Planning and Building Standards stated that the Service was satisfied that their approach around the scrutiny of land supply was consistent with that adopted nationally. Another Member of the Panel enquired about ineffective land supply and asked if there was a timescale to adhere to and a process for managing these sites. The Service Lead further advised that developers could hold on to sites indefinitely, however the service could "unallocate" sites if they wish following review.

Following a question from a Panel Member related to page eight of the report detailing advice to Local Review Body (LRB) concerns and requesting any information around comparing LRB services with other local Councils, the Service Lead - Planning and Building Standards outlined that she was aware of the LRB concerns and advised that there was intention for collaborative working going forward, to ensure a proper understanding amongst agents and the development industry of the processes for future work projects. The Panel Member then enquired if the next Local Development Plan (LDP) would be ready on time and the Service Lead stated that the LDP was in examination currently but this would look to be adopted as early as possible following the examination, to ensure an up to date plan was in place.

A Panel Member enquired if there was any progress with green energy and electric charging points and if there was a possibility of obtaining new charging points with developer contributions and the Service Lead - Planning and Building Standards advised that green energy and charging points were being examined by the Service through the planning policy.

A Member of the Panel enquired in relation to page nine of the report, entitled 'Part 3: Service Improvements 2019-20' which detailed Service Improvements and delays as a result of the vacant Service Lead Post and the Service Lead - Planning and Building Standards noted that the next Planning Performance Framework report would be submitted to The Scottish Government on 31 July 2021 and would cover the period for 2021. The Service Lead also advised that the Supplementary Guidance report to be submitted to the Leadership Panel was experiencing some delays due to staffing issues, and that it was hoped to report this in 2021/22.

Another Panel Member asked if the Service Lead had any concerns around the staffing profile figures which stated that over fifty percent of staff were aged over fifty and the Service Lead - Planning and Building Standards advised that the service would look to recruit a Planning Assistant and Chartered Planner and that she anticipated that a number of officers aged over fifty may leave due to the restructure of the Service and that in terms of succession planning, this was being examined.

A Panel Member sought clarity on page seventeen of the report relating to enforcement activity where it reported that 252 potential breaches of planning control were being investigated, It was noted, with concern, that no direct action, no reports to the Procurator Fiscal and no prosecutions had taken place. The Service Lead - Planning and Building Standards stated that during the period of 2019/20 there were 252 complaints lodged and investigated and 213 of these complaints had been resolved by retrospective planning permission and that ten enforcement notices had been served. The Service Lead outlined that she did not hold any information related to the specific details around each case.

Following a question from a Panel Member related to Appendix 2 of the report in relation to Scottish Government responses, as to whether there were some responses with which the Service Lead - Planning and Building Standards did not agree; the Service Lead conceded that that was the case. The Service Lead stated that the Service would take learning from this and that future responses would make more information available.

Having considered the contents of the report, the Panel

**Decided:** to note the contents of the report.

The meeting ended at 11:25 a.m.