



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

A Special Meeting of the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee** of North Ayrshire Council will be held via Microsoft Teams on **Monday, 24 August 2020** at **10:00** to consider the undernoted business.

Arrangements in Terms of COVID-19

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting will be held remotely in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003. A recording of the meeting will be available to view at <https://north-ayrshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

1 Declarations of Interest

Members are requested to give notice of any declarations of interest in respect of items of business on the Agenda.

2 Minutes

The accuracy of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 January 2020 will be confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (copy enclosed).

3 Unaudited Annual Accounts 2019/20

Submit report by the Head of Finance on the unaudited Annual Accounts for the year to 31 March 2020 (copy enclosed).

4 Planning Services Update re Former Seafield School, Eglinton Road, Ardrossan

Submit report by the Executive Director (Place) providing an update to the Committee on the former Seafield School (copy enclosed).

5

Local Government in Scotland 2020 Report

Submit report by the Head of Finance on the findings of the recent national report on Local Government in Scotland. (copy enclosed).

Audit and Scrutiny Committee Sederunt

Marie Burns (Chair)
Margaret George (Vice Chair)
Joy Brahim
Alan Hill
Tom Marshall
Donald Reid
John Sweeney

Chair:

Apologies:

Attending:

IRVINE, 28 January 2020 - At a Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 10.00 a.m.

Present

Marie Burns, Margaret George, Joy Brahim, Alan Hill, Tom Marshall, Donald Reid and John Sweeney.

Also Present

Ronnie McNicol.

In Attendance

C. Hatton, Chief Executive; L. Friel, Executive Director, David Forbes, Senior Manager, P. Doak, Senior Manager (Internal Audit, Risk and Fraud) and C. Morris, Internal Auditor (Finance and Corporate Support); R. McCutcheon, Executive Director, A. Laurenson, Senior Manager, Economic Development and Regeneration; and J. Wraith, Team Manager, Physical Environment (Place); A. Sutton, Executive Director (Interim) (Communities); S. Brown, Executive Director (Health and Social Care Partnership); and D. McCaw, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Also In Attendance

Pat Kenny and Jordan Cook (Deloitte).

Chair

Councillor Burns in the Chair.

1. Chairs Remarks

The Chair advised that the External Auditors were in attendance at the meeting to present their report on the External Audit Plan 2019/20 and, in addition, would observe proceedings as part of their evidence for the Best Value Audit.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 10 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 November 2019 and the Special Meeting held on 27 November 2019 were confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, subject to amended wording to the penultimate paragraph of the Minute of 27 November 2019 to read "The Committee commented on the significant progress by other Council services in achieving their planned savings. Any overspend by the Health and Social Care Partnership creates a financial risk to the Council, as one of the key funding partners".

4. North Ayrshire Integrated Joint Board (IJB) Budget Monitoring Period 8

Submitted report by the Chief Finance and Transformation Officer, and presented by the Executive Director, on the financial position of the North Ayrshire IJB and on progress with plans to reduce the projected overspend for 2019-20. The budget monitoring report and Appendices, which were presented to the IJB on 19 December 2019, were attached as an Appendix to the report.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to the following:-

- the HSCP working towards financial balance in 2019/20 with a focus on ensuring that the final outturn position is no more than £1.5m, to ensure the deficit of the IJB does not increase;
- the 19/20 savings plans being complete for full delivery by 1 April 2020;
- information is included in the Recovery Plan on the review of services to people with learning difficulties, and balancing independence and safety;
- difficulties in making significant inroads to overnight support and ensuring a safe, effective and cost-efficient service delivery model;
- the filling of vacant managerial posts being determined through the HSCP Vacancy Scrutiny Panel;
- the movement in the savings trackers relating to timescales and delay in delivery;
- the continuing work with the Council to reduce the financial risk to the Council; and
- information on care at home numbers, care home placements, self-directed support and other key areas alongside examples of best practice nationally to be included within future reports.

The Committee agreed to note (a) the financial position with regard to the Health and Social Care Partnership; and (b) the actions being taken by the partnership to reduce the projected overspend.

5. Town Centre Regeneration

Submitted report by the Executive Director (Place) providing an update on footfall data in town centres and on planned activity to promote their regeneration. Appendix 1 detailed information on footfall counter locations and footfall data trends while Appendix 2 detailed retail vacancy rates within units.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to the following:-

- the role of Locality Partnerships in supporting the North Ayrshire Regeneration Framework;
- the possible transition from retail use to residential in some town centres and considerations as part of this process;
- consultation with Members, Officers and Community Groups as part of the Stevenston regeneration process;
- tackling of issues in connection with vacant and derelict land sites;

- ongoing parking issues in West Kilbride which will be considered as part of the overall North Ayrshire parking strategy;
- work in connection with decriminalised parking enforcement which is progressing;
- an update on Vacant and Derelict Land Funding (VDLF) in connection with the old gas works site in Dalry;
- that VDLF funding can be carried to the next financial year; and
- support which can be provided to private town centre businesses in Irvine, Saltcoats and Largs.

The Committee agreed to note (i) recent trends in footfall in the main town centres of Irvine, Saltcoats and Largs; (ii) activity to promote investment and regeneration in town centres, including the expenditure of town centre funding in 2019/20; (iii) future plans to increase the impact of investment from other budgets on town centres, including from the Social Housing Investment Programme; and (iv) plans for a new regeneration framework in early 2020 which will provide a strategic approach to the regeneration of North Ayrshire's town centres.

6. Climate Change

Submitted report by the Executive Director (Place) providing an update on progress in tackling climate change and detailing achievements made through the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to:-

- funding of £50,000 awarded through the Scottish Government's Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES);
- procurement of a Consultant to work with Officers on providing a heat strategy across North Ayrshire;
- the installation of solar pv panels on Council houses and the possibility of a joint venture to develop roll-out proposals to private owners;
- the work of the PMI team on the use of solar panels on Council buildings;
- monitoring and usage of the current electric vehicle charging points based at Cunninghame House and possible funding to allow installation of workplace electric vehicle chargers to free these points up to public use;
- zero waste targets, especially in connection with emails and hard copy expectations; and
- the rate of progress with the sustainability and climate change strategy given the climate change emergency.

The Committee agreed to note the actions undertaken across services to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

7. External Audit Plan 2019/20

Submitted report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the External Audit Plan for 2019/20, which summarised Deloitte LLP's assessment of the key risks and challenges facing the Council and the audit work proposed in the

2019/20 financial year. The full Audit Plan report was detailed at Appendix 1 to the report.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to:-

- the recognition of grant income which has been identified as a key risk;
- disclosures in connection with the IFRS16 Standard will be included within in-year reporting as part of the accounting policies;
- an update to be provided to a future meeting on the transformation programme;
- the net pension liability increase as a result of changes in assumptions together with the impact of McCloud and GMP indexation;
- any potential waste management monitoring overlap with SEPA and provision for Audit Scotland to provide further clarification around this if required; and
- the annual publication of 'The State of the State' being included to raise Committee awareness.

The Committee agreed to note the External Audit Plan for 2019/20.

8. Internal Audit Reports Issued

Submitted report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the findings of Internal Audit work completed during October and December 2019. The findings from eight separate audit assignments were detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, together with their respective executive summary and action plans.

Councillor Brahim left the meeting prior to discussion of the Procurement Card audit and rejoined the meeting prior to questions in this regard.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to:-

- assurances in terms of how kelio system controls issues are being addressed, especially in relation to deactivation from the system;
- procedures for recording of visitors entry and exit at Cunninghame House;
- procurement card transaction limits, allocation of cards and authorisation controls for line managers;
- no current access to the Carefirst system for Education staff and on how this will be improved; and
- minimising risk around duplicate payments.

The Committee agreed to note the outcomes from the Internal Audit work completed as set out in the report.

9. Council Plan Progress Update: Q2 2019/20

Submitted a report by the Chief Executive on the progress of performance against the Council Plan 2019-24 as at Quarter 2 2019-20. Appendix 1 to the report detailed the Council Plan 2019-24 Progress Update (Mid-Year 2019-20). Appendices 2 and 3 provided information on performance indicators for the Council Plan Performance Framework and the actions aligned to the Council Plan 2019 - 24 respectively.

The Chair commented on the new format of the report which was more focussed on key priorities and easier to read and follow.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to:-

- ongoing work for projects within the Ayrshire Growth Deal and reporting timelines;
- timescales regarding skills development progress;
- continuing work to integrate and support refugees and a report to be submitted to a future Cabinet meeting making recommendations on the next stages;
- progress with the development of a Community Charter which will be reported to future meetings of the Locality Partnerships; and
- final targets in connection with recycling and the fact that the Council is on-track to meet the 60% target set by the Scottish Government.

The Committee agreed to note the performance of the Council Plan as at 30 September 2019.

10. Exclusion of the Public – Para 1

The Committee resolved in terms of Section 50(A)4 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude from the Meeting the press and the public for the following item of business on the grounds indicated in terms of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

11. Corporate Fraud Reports Issued

Submitted report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the findings of corporate fraud investigations completed between October and December 2019.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 12.00 noon.

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

24 August 2020

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Title:	Unaudited Annual Accounts 2019/20
Purpose:	To submit the unaudited Annual Accounts for the year to 31 March 2020 to the Committee for approval.
Recommendation:	That Committee (i) considers the unaudited Annual Accounts for 2019/20, (ii) notes that these were submitted to the Council's external auditors prior to the deadline on 30 June 2020; and (iii) notes that Deloitte LLP plan to complete their audit of the Accounts by 30 September 2020 and will present their annual audit report to the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The requirements for the production, submission and authorisation of local authority annual accounts are detailed in the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014. The annual accounts for the year to 31 March 2020 would normally be presented to Council by 30 June each year, seeking approval of their submission to the Council's external auditors and publication on the Council's website. Due to the restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 lockdown requirements, the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 has provided some flexibility around these requirements.
- 1.2 In accordance with the Regulations, as adjusted by the Act, the annual accounts for the year to 31 March 2020 were submitted to the Council's external auditors, Deloitte LLP, and published on the Council's website on 30 June 2020. The Council, or a committee with audit or governance functions, is required to meet to consider the unaudited accounts, as submitted to the auditors, within two months of this publication date. Deloitte LLP plan to complete their audit of the Accounts by the end of September 2020 and will present their annual audit report to the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee in due course. A copy of the Council's unaudited accounts for the year to 31 March 2020 was issued directly to Members prior to publication on the Council's website and can be found by following the attached link:

<https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/council/performance-and-spending/budgets-and-finance.aspx>
- 1.3 The 2019/20 Accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (ACOP) and the requirements of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

- 1.4 The Annual Accounts provide an overview of the financial performance of the various funds managed by the Council. The Management Commentary summarises the key messages in relation to the Council's financial and service performance for 2019/20 and outlines the financial plans, challenges and risks which the Council faces.
- 1.5 The detailed financial performance for both Revenue and Capital are reported to Cabinet throughout the financial year and the final Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Financial Performance reports were submitted to Cabinet on 30 June 2020.
- 1.6 At 31 March 2020 the General Fund closed with an in year underspend of £2.594m. This amount has been transferred to the General Fund Unearmarked Balance and will be available to help mitigate the impact of future Covid-19 costs and support recovery and renewal activities, as agreed by Cabinet 17 March 2020. The balance of the General Fund Unearmarked funds is £9.659m, which is equivalent to 2.7% of the annual budgeted expenditure. The balance of earmarked funds of £24.923m is detailed in paragraph 2.9.
- 1.7 At 31 March 2020 the Housing Revenue Account closed with an in year underspend of £0.463m. These funds have been earmarked to support the Council House Building programme, Sheltered Housing Refurbishments and Aids and Adaptations. The HRA earmarked funds are detailed in paragraph 2.18 with an uncommitted balance at 31 March 2020 of £1.500m.
- 1.8 Capital Expenditure for the year was £33.039m for the General Fund and £37.759m for the HRA, representing significant ongoing investment in the Council's assets.
- 1.9 The Common Good Funds closed with a balance of £2.069m and the Trust Funds closed with a balance of £0.364m. The Annual Trustees' Report and Financial statements for the charitable trusts are subject to a separate report to Council.
- 1.10 The Health and Social Care Partnership reported an in year overspend of £1.640m. Following the drawdown of £1.486m, set aside by the Council to support the repayment of the Integrated Joint Board's deficit to the Council, the resultant net overspend of £0.154m has increased the Integrated Joint Board's outstanding deficit to £5.293m.

2. Background

- 2.1 Annual Accounts provide an overview of the financial performance of the various funds managed by the Council, including:
 - North Ayrshire Council General Fund (capital and revenue);
 - Housing Revenue Account (capital and revenue);
 - Six Common Good Funds; and
 - Charitable Trusts Funds.

- 2.2 The accounts also include “group” accounts which recognise the material interest the Council has in other organisations, including:
- North Ayrshire Ventures Trust Ltd;
 - North Ayrshire Leisure Ltd;
 - Strathclyde Partnership for Transport;
 - Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board;
 - North Ayrshire Integration Joint Board; and
 - Ardrossan North Shore LLP.
- 2.3 The financial position of the Council and its Group is presented in the core financial statements, including:
- Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) on page 38;
 - Movement in Reserves Statement (MiRS) on page 39;
 - Balance Sheet on page 40; and
 - Cash Flow Statement on page 41.
- 2.4 The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 require various disclosures of the remuneration and pensions benefits of senior councillors and employees. These are detailed in the Remuneration Report which can be found on page 20 of the Annual Accounts.
- 2.5 The Council is legally required to make its draft accounts available for public inspection for a three-week period during the audit. A notice was published on the Council website and an advert placed in local newspapers during week beginning 8 June 2020 advising that the unaudited accounts would be available for inspection on the Council’s website between 8 July and 28 July 2020.
- 2.6 Under the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 the Council, or a committee of the Council with a remit including audit or governance, must meet to approve the audited annual accounts for signature. Following confirmation of the completion of the audit by Deloitte LLP, a meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee will be arranged to consider the audited annual accounts and approve them for signature.

General Fund Revenue

2.7 The final position for the General Fund Revenue Account at 31 March 20 was a surplus of £2.594m. The following table details the final position on a service by service basis:

	Annual Budget	Actual Outturn to 31 March 2020	Variance for year (Fav)/Adv	Carry Forwards	Variance for Year After Carry Forward (Fav)/Adv
Service Expenditure	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Chief Executive and Democratic Services	3,948	3,747	(201)	65	(136)
Communities	130,949	129,897	(1,052)	1,156	104
Finance & Corporate Support	18,285	17,402	(883)	339	(544)
Place	63,561	62,117	(1,444)	736	(708)
Other Corporate Services	9,025	5,642	(3,383)	2,277	(1,106)
Contribution to Insurance Fund	114	114	-	-	-
Sub Total	225,882	218,919	(6,963)	4,573	(2,390)
Health and Social Care Partnership	97,973	97,973	-	-	-
Balance for Services	323,855	316,892	(6,963)	4,573	(2,390)
Financing Charges	26,388	26,388	-	-	-
Contribution to Loans Fund Reserve	3,179	3,179	-	-	-
Total Planned Expenditure	353,422	346,459	(6,963)	4,573	(2,390)
Planned Income					
Aggregate External Finance	(289,384)	(289,380)	4	-	4
Council Tax	(56,803)	(57,011)	(208)	-	(208)
Contribution to Capital Fund	(181)	(181)	-	-	-
Contribution to/from Earmarked Funds	(7,054)	(7,054)	-	-	-
Total Planned Income	(353,422)	(353,626)	(204)	-	(204)
Net Expenditure/ (Income)	-	(7,167)	(7,167)	4,573	(2,594)

2.8 The Council's contribution to the Health and Social Care Partnership reported a breakeven position for the year reflecting the level of funding which the Council provided to the Partnership. However, the Partnership has reported an in year overspend of £1.640m. Following the drawdown of £1.486m which the Council had set aside to support the repayment of the Integrated Joint Board's deficit, the Integrated Joint Board's outstanding deficit has increased by £0.154m. The Integrated Joint Board's outstanding deficit now stands at £5.293m.

2.9 The table below summarises the movements on each of the Council's General Fund reserves during the year:

	Balance as at 31/3/2019 £000's	Income £000's	(Expenditure) £000's	Balance as at 31/3/2020 £000's	Anticipated Expenditure	Estimated Available Balance £000's
General Fund - Unearmarked	6,933	2,726	-	9,659	-	9,659
Earmarked:						
Education DMR	447	341	(447)	341	(341)	-
Affordable Housing	3,418	1,111	(1,448)	3,081	(3,081)	-
Earmarked funds	12,041	3,643	(6,716)	8,968	(8,968)	-
Change & Service Redesign	2,804	970	(630)	3,144	(3,144)	-
Legacy Fund	10	(10)	-	-	-	-
Loans Fund Reserve	6,210	3,179	-	9,389	(9,389)	-
Total Earmarked	24,930	9,234	(9,241)	24,923	(24,923)	-
Other Reserves:						
Insurance Fund	2,613	634	(33)	3,214	(3,214)	-
Capital Fund	6,638	52	(2,172)	4,518	(4,518)	-
Total General Fund	41,114	12,646	(11,446)	42,314	(32,655)	9,659

2.10 General Fund (Unearmarked) – the General Fund surplus for the year was £7.167m. after recognising the earmarking of funds to be carried forward of £4.573m, a surplus of £2.594m has been reported. These funds have been allocated to the Unearmarked Balance and will be available to help mitigate the impact of future Covid-19 costs and support recovery and renewal activities, as agreed by Cabinet 17 March 2020. The uncommitted balance at 31 March 2020 was £9.659m. This is equivalent to 2.7% of the Council annual budgeted expenditure, compared to the minimum recommended level of 2% or £7.159m.

2.11 Affordable Housing – 40% of Council Tax income on properties which are not a sole or main residence is earmarked for the provision of new build affordable housing.

2.12 Earmarked Funds and Education DMR – these funds relate to specific projects for which monies have been identified prior to 31 March 2020, but for which spending plans exist in 2020/21 and beyond.

2.13 Change & Service Redesign Fund – £0.630m expenditure was incurred during the year in delivery of the transformation programme. Given the scale of the transformation required to address the Council's financial challenges, additional funds of £0.970m have been allocated to meet future costs.

2.14 Loans Fund Reserve – funds arising from the Council's Treasury Management and Investment Strategy have been earmarked to support the Councils' Capital Investment Strategy.

- 2.15 Insurance Fund – these funds represent the amount required to deal with potential uninsured claims and Municipal Mutual Insurance (MMI) underwriting costs. During 2019/20 an additional £0.500m has been allocated to this fund in relation to the potential financial risks associated with national activity in respect of historic child abuse, including contributions to the proposed Statutory Redress Scheme.
- 2.16 Capital Fund – Capital receipts and funds allocated by Council in support of the General Fund Capital Investment Programme 2020 to 2028.

General Fund Capital

- 2.17 General Fund Capital Expenditure amounted to £33.039m or 99.97% of the revised annual budget for 2019/20 of £33.050m.

HRA Revenue

- 2.18 The final position for the Housing Revenue Account at 31 March 2020 was an in-year underspend of £0.463m. These funds have been carried forward to 2020/21 and ringfenced in relation to Aids and Adaptations extension works not completed during 2019/20, £0.058m; additional funding for extensive works at Barnett Court SHU, £0.110m; and support for the Council House Building programme, £0.295m. A full analysis of HRA Revenue financial performance was presented to Cabinet on 30 June 2020. The following table details the movements on the Council's HRA Reserves for the year:

	Balance as at 31/3/2019 £000's	Income £000's	(Expenditure) £000's	Balance as at 31/3/2020 £000's	Anticipated Expenditure £000's	Estimated Available Balance £000's
HRA Reserves						
Council House Building Fund	7,025	295	(947)	6,373	(6,373)	-
Welfare Reform	3,000		(1,500)	1,500	(1,500)	-
Infrastructure Improvements	545	-	(240)	305	(305)	-
Major Refurbishment Works	52	-	-	52	(52)	-
Tarryholme (Trindlemoss)	791	240	(1,031)	-	-	-
Aids and Adaptations	-	58	-	58	(58)	-
Sheltered Housing Works	-	110	-	110	(110)	-
Additional CFCR	-	1,000	-	1,000	(1,000)	-
Uncommitted Balance	1,000	500	-	1,500	-	1,500
Total HRA Reserves	12,413	2,203	(3,718)	10,898	(9,398)	1,500

HRA Capital

- 2.19 HRA Capital Expenditure amounted to £37.759m or 99.96% of the revised annual budget for 2019/20 of £37.773m.
- 2.20 A full analysis of financial performance for the 2019/20 revenue and capital budgets was presented to Cabinet on 30 June 2020.

Common Good Funds

- 2.21 A summary of the revenue and capital balances on the Common Good Funds is provided below with further details provided on page 44 of the unaudited annual accounts:

Common Good Fund	Balance at 1 April 2019 £000s	Movement in Year Increase / (Decrease) £000s	Balance at 31 March 2020 £000s
Ardrossan	217	25	242
Irvine	1,068	56	1,124
Largs	469	(9)	460
Millport	67	-	67
Saltcoats	17	-	17
Stevenston	156	3	159
Total	1,994	75	2,069

Trusts

- 2.22 A summary of the revenue and capital balances on the charitable trusts administered by the Council is provided below with further details provided on page 45 of the unaudited annual accounts. Charitable trusts, where the Council is the sole trustee, are required to prepare their own Accounts and Trustees' annual report. These are subject to a separate external audit and a separate report to Council.

Trusts	Balance at 1 April 2019 £000s	Movement in Year Increase / (Decrease) £000s	Balance at 31 March 2020 £000s
North Ayrshire Charitable Trust	84	2	86
Town Trusts	61	(11)	50
Douglas Sellers Trust	1	-	1
Anderson Trust	1	-	1
Margaret Archibald Trust	182	2	184
Other Bequests	43	(1)	42
Total	372	(8)	364

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that Committee (i) considers the unaudited Annual Accounts for 2019/20, (ii) notes that these were submitted to the Council's external auditors prior to the deadline on 30 June 2020; and (iii) notes that Deloitte LLP plan to complete their audit of the Accounts by 30 September 2020 and will present their annual audit report to the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 The financial implications are as outlined in the report.

Human Resources

4.2 None.

Legal

4.3 Under the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, as amended by the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, the Council is required to meet to consider the Unaudited Annual Accounts within two months of their publication.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 None

Environmental and Sustainability

4.5 None.

Key Priorities

4.6 This report and the annual accounts directly support the draft Council Plan 2019 to 2024 by maximising resources and providing value for money to support financially sustainable delivery models.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 None.

5. Consultation

5.1 Discussions have taken place between Senior Officers and the Finance Service throughout the year on services' financial performance.

Mark Boyd
Head of Finance

For further information please contact **David Forbes, Senior Manager (Strategic Business Partner)**, on **01294 324551**.

Background Papers

Revenue Budget 2019/20 : Financial Performance to 31 March 2020 - Cabinet 30 June 2020;

Capital Programme Performance to 31 March 2020 – Cabinet 30 June 2020

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**24th August 2020****Audit and Scrutiny Committee**

Title: **Planning Services Update re: Former Seafield School, Eglinton Road, Ardrossan**

Purpose: Update the Committee as requested

Recommendation: That the Committee note Planning Services' update and progress with direct action

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Committee considered a petition in relation to Seafield House, Ardrossan at its meeting of 26th March 2019. The Committee agreed actions including that they be updated at their meeting of 10th September 2019. Following that meeting, the Committee again asked to be updated in 6 months' time.
- 1.2 The Planning Committee granted authority for the issue of a Notice under Section 179 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
- 1.3 The Notice was to require: (i) the removal of all litter and refuse from the site; (ii) movement all demolition rubble to the north of the Seafield Stables building, the rubble to be stored so that it is not above the height of the boundary wall with Witches Lynn; and (iii) the boarding of all window and door openings with exterior grade plywood or similar in Seafield House and Seafield Stables, with the exception of those opening on the first floor of the eastern wing of the House (the fire damaged area.)
- 1.4 The Notice was issued 24th September 2019. The Notice took effect on the 24th October 2019 as no appeal against the Notice was made. The compliance period for the Notice expired on the 5th December 2019.
- 1.5 The requirements of the Notice have not been met. Litter and refuse remain on site, the rubble has not been moved and openings are not boarded. The landowner has not carried out the required work despite Planning Services continuing to contact them and seek compliance with the Notice.
- 1.6 The Planning Committee, at its meeting of 24th June 2020 agreed that the Council take direct action and seek its costs from the landowner following any action. Steps to take direct action are under way.

2. Background

- 2.1 The property was last used as a residential school. It has been vacant since at least June 2015. The property was subject of a fire in October 2017 which damaged the eastern wing of the property. The property and the former stable block have been the subject of vandalism. Windows on both properties have been smashed. Some windows have been boarded over and some have required to be re-boarded, after the boarding was smashed/removed.
- 2.2 A Planning Authority cannot compel a landowner to develop a site. The powers available to a Council, as Planning Authority, were set out in the report to the Committee of 26th March 2019. It was in this context that the Committee agreed the actions including that Planning Services seek authority from the Planning Committee for the issue of notices available under the powers available to the Planning Authority, as considered necessary and including Section 179 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act.
- 2.3 The Planning Committee authorised the issue of such a Notice at its meeting of 4th September 2019. The Notice was issued 24th September 2019. The Notice took effect on the 24th October 2019 as no appeal against the Notice was made. The compliance period for the Notice expired on the 5th December 2019.
- 2.4 The Notice requires: (i) the removal of all litter and refuse from the site; (ii) movement of all demolition rubble to the north of the Seafield Stables building, the rubble to be stored so that it is not above the height of the boundary wall with Witches Lynn; and (iii) the boarding of all window and door openings with exterior grade plywood or similar in Seafield House and Seafield Stables, with the exception of those opening on the first floor of the eastern wing of the House (the fire damaged area.)
- 2.5 S.35 of the Act allows a Planning Authority to take direction action where any steps required by an Amenity Notice, have not been met within the time specified. The Council, as Planning Authority, may enter the land, take those steps and recover from the person, who is the then owner, any expenses reasonably incurred.
- 2.6 The requirements of the Notice have not been met. The landowner has been contacted but has not complied with the Notice. Planning Services is therefore seeking to appoint appropriate contractors to carry out the work. It is envisaged that the boarding works will be carried out first, with refuse removal and re-siting of the rubble to follow. The smashed windows are considered to have the most immediate impact on the amenity of the area and boarding them will have the additional benefit of providing some protection to the building from water ingress. The Planning Committee agreed this approach at its meeting of 24th June 2020.
- 2.7 The Council's Building Services advise that a contractor is ready to carry out the first phase of the works, namely boarding the windows and doors. It is envisaged that this first phase of works will cost circa. £2000.
- 2.8 The property was inspected again following the Planning Committee's decision. It is noted that the landowner has padlocked the vehicular gates shut. It is still possible to enter the site on foot from the north or through the broken railings of the gates. Following advice from Legal Services, the owner has been written to and requested to provide access through the vehicular gates. They have been given until 12th August 2020 to provide access. Should this not be done, the Council will have to break the lock to gain access and re-secure the gates when the first phase of works is complete. Any costs incurred can be sought from the owner.

- 2.9 Once access to the grounds has been regained, Planning Services will also seek quotes to carry out the remaining phases of work. The potential cost and timescale of the further phases will be dependent upon the condition of the land, which can only be fully reassessed once access has been regained. However, subject to no significant changes from March 2020, securing a suitable quote and continued easing of lockdown, it is envisaged that the further phases will commence sometime in the next quarter.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 That the Committee note Planning Services actions to date in respect of the property.
- 3.2 That the Committee note the Council's progression with direct action seeking compliance with the Notice.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 The Planning Committee has considered the potential cost to the Council and the scope for the Council to seek to recover its costs.

Human Resources

- 4.2 Ongoing staffing implications for Planning Services.

Legal

- 4.3 The proposed action would be in accordance with the relevant Acts.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 None

Environmental and Sustainability

- 4.5 None

Key Priorities

- 4.6 Protecting and enhancing the environment for future generations.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 Potential for direct action to be carried out by local companies.

5. Consultation

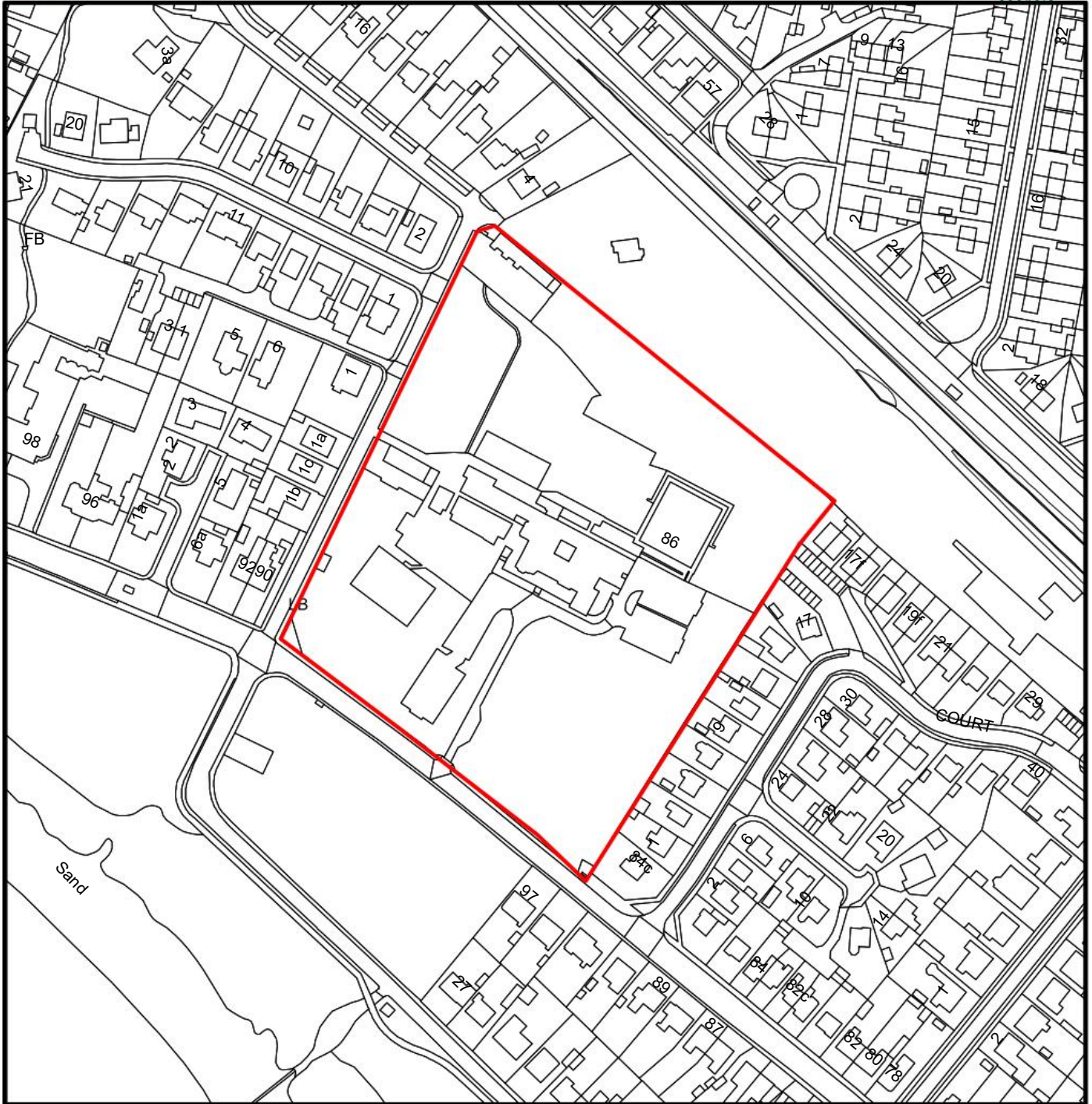
- 5.1 None

RUSSELL McCUTCHEON
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **Iain Davies, Senior Development Management Officer**, on **01294 324 320**.

Background Papers

0



1:2,500

0 30 60 120 Metres

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Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Title:	Local Government in Scotland: Overview 2020
Purpose:	To inform the Committee of the findings of the recent national report.
Recommendation:	That the Audit and Scrutiny Committee notes the findings and the position in North Ayrshire in relation to its recommendations as well as the improvement actions being addressed.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Audit Scotland recently published its national report 'Local Government in Scotland: Overview 2020'. The supplement containing the key messages, recommendations and questions for councillors is attached at Appendix 1 and the full report can be viewed at:
[Local Government in Scotland 2020](#)
- 1.2 The review complements the Audit Scotland report 'Local Government in Scotland: Financial Overview 2018/19' which was reported to Council on 12 February 2020.
- 1.3 This covering report highlights the key messages and issues from the Audit Scotland report and provides an update on North Ayrshire Council's position in relation to the key recommendations made by Audit Scotland.

2. Background

- 2.1 The evidence used in the Audit Scotland report was compiled before the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic and sets out their view before the pandemic began to unfold. It provides an independent overview of the other challenges facing Councils in Scotland, how Councils are responding to tightening budgets and how this affects the services provided to the communities they serve. Although the report does not address the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic will have on local government and its communities, the issues and the messages remain relevant.
- 2.2 The report highlights the context Councils were operating in prior to the pandemic, with increasing need for services for communities but also with financial pressures and uncertainties. It looks at some of the main tools that contribute to change and how effectively Councils are using these to respond to increasing demand and strained budgets. The final section of the report sets out a case study on Planning Services as an example of how these challenges are affecting an individual Council Service, how that Service is responding and the impact on its performance.
[The Challenges facing Councils](#)

- 2.3 It is recognised that there are significant challenges for local government. The first section of the Audit Scotland report illustrates these challenges and the complex landscape which contributes to the pressure on local authorities.
- 2.4 Firstly, the political and economic landscape continues to hold uncertainties. There are always uncertainties about change at a national level and the potential impact on communities and local government, but the current landscape involves some particularly significant unknowns. This makes forecasting issues and planning for the impact of these on the medium and longer term more difficult.
- 2.5 These issues include:
- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, public finances and public bodies
 - The impact of withdrawal from the EU
 - The national political landscape, including forthcoming Scottish Parliament elections in 2021 and debate on a second independence referendum
 - The outcome of the local governance review
 - The impact of Scotland's economic performance on public finances.
- 2.6 Secondly, changes in population continue to affect the need for and demands on services provided by local government:
- The proportion of the population over 75 years is increasing, affecting the demand for some services
 - Most Council areas are seeing a notable decrease in the proportion of children in their communities
 - Poverty and child poverty levels are increasing.
- 2.7 Thirdly, in relation to policy, local government is an important contributor to national outcome priorities. These bring additional challenges and pressures and include:
- Health and Social Care Integration
 - Tackling climate change
 - Welfare reform
 - Early learning and childcare expansion
 - Additional support for learning
 - Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
- 2.8 Finally, local government continues to face a range of financial challenges:
- The level of future Scottish Government funding is uncertain
 - The flexibility of how Councils can use this funding is reducing
 - There are increasing cost pressures including staff costs and increasing need from communities
 - Councils have been using reserves to manage funding gaps - this is not sustainable.

- 2.9 The second section of the report looks at the need for Councils to do things differently as a result of the challenges outlined above, to meet the needs of communities into the future. It is noted that Councils need to plan and implement changes that will allow them to meet the needs and improve the outcomes for their communities, in an increasingly challenging context. There are core aspects that need to be considered by political and management leaders to make good progress with this; the report identifies these key aspects as leadership, change and improvement, workforce planning, partnership working and community empowerment and engagement.

Leadership

- 2.10 The report notes that good leadership is fundamental to good governance and in setting and delivering priorities for communities. In times of increasing pressure on services and finances, this becomes even more critical.
- 2.11 Good working relationships between councillors and officers, and across political divides, is a significant contributing factor to effective strategic leadership, clear direction and to supporting effective change and improvement.
- 2.12 It is noted that changes in officer leadership need to be managed effectively and the report highlights a recent high turnover in Chief Executive and IJB Chief Officer posts. Effective leadership development is essential to ensure that change is well managed at scale and pace.
- 2.13 Elected Members also need to ensure that they have the correct skills and knowledge to provide a high standard of decision-making and scrutiny.

Change and Improvement

- 2.14 Audit Scotland emphasised in its 'Local Government in Scotland: challenges and performance 2019' report, the increasing urgency for Councils to be open to fundamental changes in how they deliver services. There is limited evidence that Councils are changing the way they deliver services to the extent that is needed to respond to the forecast financial challenges, increasing pressure on services and to improve outcomes for communities.
- 2.15 The report emphasises the importance of digital approaches. Increasingly the public expect Councils to keep pace with technological change and to be able to access services at a time and place that suits them.
- 2.16 The importance of performance management information and self-improvement tools is highlighted in supporting improvement.

Workforce Planning

- 2.17 Audit Scotland notes that there is some progress in improving workforce planning, but more still needs to be done to link workforce requirements to change plans, to ensure that Councils have the staff, skills and leaders they need to deliver change.
- 2.18 The need for Councils to deliver services differently and more efficiently should be reflected in workforce decisions. Effective workforce planning is essential to ensuring that Councils have flexibility, agility and efficiency in how they use the workforce and can deliver the level of change that is required.

- 2.19 Councils have adopted a variety of initiatives to manage skills shortages. Approaches such as apprenticeships, traineeships, grow-your-own schemes, and succession planning have been utilised. Some Councils offer existing staff the opportunity to move into expanding areas such as teaching or early learning and childcare.

Partnership Working

- 2.20 The report notes that the full potential of collaborative working is not being realised. There are examples of smaller-scale joint working, but it is not widespread.
- 2.21 It is highlighted that Community Planning Partnerships need to take a more active role in leading partnership working and strategic change in some areas. The report also notes that progress with health and social integration has been too slow.

Community Empowerment and Engagement

- 2.22 The report notes that many Councils recognise the value of involving their communities in the decision-making that affects their lives and in tackling inequalities to ensure that everyone can participate in that decision-making. However, there has been slow progress in putting the requirements of the Community Empowerment Act into practice and few Councils provide opportunities for communities to influence or take control of decision-making processes.
- 2.23 Participatory budgeting activity in Councils has been limited. The Scottish Government and COSLA have agreed that at least one per cent of Council budgets should be determined through participatory budgeting by 2021.
- 2.24 It is highlighted that the local governance review remains ongoing; the aim of the review is to ensure that communities have greater control over decisions that affect them.
- 2.25 Finally, the report notes that not all Councils are reporting their performance in a sufficiently comprehensive or transparent way.

Planning Services

- 2.26 The final section of the report sets out a case study on Planning Services as an example of how these challenges are affecting an individual Council Service, how that Service is responding and the impact on its performance.
- 2.27 In particular, the report looks at the challenges of population change and budget reductions together with the new responsibilities introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 which requires Planning Services to have a more strategic focus.
- 2.28 Audit Scotland highlights the approach taken by North Ayrshire to address recruitment challenges in the planning team – re-designating planning officer posts to planning assistants and recruiting new graduates, with a focus on staff development.

North Ayrshire Position

2.29 The Audit Scotland report makes a number of recommendations to help Councils respond to the challenges facing local government, deliver local outcomes and improve outcomes for their communities. These fall into three main areas:

- Governance
- Collaboration
- Capacity and Skills

Governance

2.30 The recent Best Value audit of North Ayrshire found that the Council has a clear vision for the area – the strategic direction is reinforced by a record of collaboration between Elected Members and officers; in engaging with staff in improvement; and in the empowering approach taken by the council in its relationship with its communities.

2.31 The BV audit also found that the Council's has a good approach to financial planning and financial management arrangements are strong. The Council has long-term (to 2027/28) and medium-term (to 2022/23) financial plans in place.

2.32 Performance reporting systems are clearly focused on priority areas and targets are realistic and kept under review. Performance information is readily available in a variety of formats. Reports have become more user-friendly and focused in recent years.

2.33 The new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 referred to at 2.27 above requires Councils to identify a statutory Chief Planning Officer. The Council has appointed the Senior Manager (Planning Services) to this role and is currently considering how the role can feed into the strategic decision-making process. The Chief Social Work Officer has already been included within the strategic governance arrangements.

Collaboration

2.34 The BV audit identified that there is a strong culture of collaborative working at North Ayrshire Council. Elected Members and officers work well together, and the Council works effectively with a wide range of partners including the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), the Integration Joint Board (IJB) and private business.

2.35 The Council is committed to community empowerment and is viewed as being sector-leading in its work with local communities. Six locality partnerships are established across North Ayrshire.

Capacity and Skills

2.36 The Council has a co-ordinated approach to workforce planning at Service level. The Executive Leadership Team receives regular reports on workforce planning and the challenges and opportunities across Services. The BV audit found that some further work is required to align these plans to transformation projects.

2.37 The Council has an extensive development programme for Elected Members and a leadership programme for staff at all levels of the organisation. Examples of this include the recent 'Blue Wave of Change' programme for senior managers and the Professional Learning Academy approach for teaching staff.

2.38 Appendix 1 includes a self-assessment questionnaire for Elected Members. The Council has previously completed a self-evaluation exercise for the Audit and Scrutiny Committee

and will consider extending this across the wider political base, taking cognisance of the questions outlined in the Appendix.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Committee (1) notes the findings of the Audit Scotland report and the current position in North Ayrshire in relation to its recommendations, (2) notes the improvement actions being addressed in relation to workforce planning and the inclusion of the Chief Planning Officer within the strategic governance framework and (3) notes that consideration will be given to extending the self-evaluation process across a wider political base using the questions in Appendix 1.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 None.

Human Resources

- 4.2 None.

Legal

- 4.3 None.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 None.

Environmental and Sustainability

- 4.5 None.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 None.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 None.

5. Consultation

5.1 No consultation has been required in the preparation of this report.

Mark Boyd
Head of Finance

For further information please contact **Mark Boyd, Head of Finance**, on **01294-324560**.

Background Papers

None.

Local government in Scotland: Overview 2020

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 



Key messages

The COVID-19 pandemic brings unprecedented challenges across communities and public services. The effect on the health and wellbeing of our communities, as well as the financial difficulties and increased levels of poverty, will be significant. The impact on the economy, on national finances and on local public services will also be considerable. This report was compiled before the escalation of the pandemic and is an overview of local government in 2019. But its messages remain relevant. The pandemic multiplies the challenges for local government further and so the need to do things differently to meet the needs of communities more efficiently and effectively are even more important.

- 1** Councils are working hard to deliver services to their communities. But the context they are working in is increasingly uncertain and complex. Demographic and social change is creating demand for services, while the strain on budgets continue to intensify. National policy commitments are increasing and the stresses on other public and third sector partners add to the difficulties in delivering services. The cumulative effect of these pressures on councils is beginning to show across service performance and use of financial reserves.
- 2** Scottish Government revenue funding to councils has reduced in real terms over the period 2013/14 to 2020/21 by 3.3 per cent. Since 2017/18 however, it has increased by 3.9 per cent in real terms, to £10.7 billion in 2020/21. This does not include additional funding in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The strain on budgets is evident as councils continue to dip into their reserves to make ends meet. Medium-term funding levels are uncertain, making continued use of reserves to manage the funding gap unsustainable. Long-term financial planning is not well enough developed in many councils and in integration joint boards. Medium- and long-term financial planning are important tools for making well-informed decisions and to effectively manage continuing financial challenges.
- 3** Alongside the uncertainty of funding levels, the scale and complexity of the challenges for councils and integration joint boards will continue to grow in the coming years. Change is needed in how they serve their communities, so that they are able to respond to the needs and improve outcomes for people into the future, in the most efficient and effective ways. More radical thinking is needed for longer-term solutions. It requires investment of time and capacity by political and management leaders, to analyse the range of challenges for the area, develop the thinking and planning for the medium and longer term. This is difficult, in already demanding roles, but this investment is important.

- 4** Councils alone cannot improve outcomes for communities and achieve local priorities. The full potential of collaborative working with partner organisations and communities is not yet being realised. More progress is needed. Councils need to demonstrate strong leadership and collaborate with partners, including integration joint boards, NHS boards, the voluntary and private sectors, and their local communities. This is essential if they are to make best use of local resources, including the workforce, and demonstrate Best Value.
 - 5** Workforce planning is fundamental to ensure that councils have the staff, skills and leaders they need to deliver change. Some progress has been made to improve workforce planning, but much more needs to be done. As the workforce ages, councils need to be more flexible and agile in how they deploy staff, work with partners and attract younger people to work in local government and respond to specific skills gaps. This also requires comprehensive workforce data and planning.
-

Recommendations

To respond to the challenges facing local government and deliver local priorities and improve outcomes for their communities:

Governance – councils and integration joint boards need to:

- invest leadership capacity in analysing the challenges and planning for the future, including:
 - plans for how services will be delivered that reflect the scale of the challenges ahead and will deliver demonstrable improvement in outcomes for communities
 - putting in place and continuing to develop medium and long-term financial planning that will inform ongoing review and implementation of plans for change.
- monitor and report on delivery of local priorities and outcomes while improving public performance reporting.

Collaboration – councils and integration joint boards need to:

- maximise the potential of collaborative working by:
 - working alongside partners to improve community planning partnerships, so that they have a clearer strategic direction and take a more active role in leading local partnership working
 - engaging with other councils, partners and communities in developing plans to improve and change the way services are delivered.
- increase the opportunity for communities to influence or take control of local decision-making and, demonstrate how communities are supported to help design or deliver local services and improve outcomes.

Capacity and skills – councils and integration joint boards need to:

- develop leadership capacity and workforce planning arrangements including:
 - effective succession planning and capacity development for leadership positions
 - approaches to increase the uptake of learning and development opportunities by councillors; to ensure that they are equipped to respond to the challenging context and their role in planning for the future
 - improving the quality and range of workforce data to give a comprehensive profile of the current organisation wide workforce
 - using this comprehensive workforce data to:
 - o identify and address skills gaps, including those related to lack of capacity or the age profile of staff
 - o plan for the skills required to deliver services, both now and in the future, including using skills from the third and private sectors, with a greater focus on collaborative and flexible working
 - prioritising the development of staff across their organisations, to build more resilient teams, focused on improving the lives of local people
 - building a learning culture to learn from experience both within and outside the organisation.

Services – councils and integration joint boards need to:

- consider how the recommendations above relate to each service.
 - for planning services this specifically includes:
 - ensuring the role of chief planning officer is positioned to contribute at a strategic level to corporate level discussion and planning
 - developing detailed workforce planning and strategies that will respond to the changing skills needs of the service and consider at a national level how collectively the limited availability of planning professionals can be addressed
 - providing effective leadership to staff for the cultural changes needed to respond to the shift in focus for this service
 - implementing changes to how the service works to improve the level of partnership working and community engagement.
-

Questions for councillors

This tool captures a number of questions for councillors to consider and relates to our report [Local government in Scotland: Overview 2020](#). It is designed to prompt thinking on a range of issues to better understand your council's position and to consider areas you may want to seek further information on or scrutinise.

Questions for councillors to consider	How well informed am I? What do I know?	Do I need to ask any further questions?
Leadership		
1 Am I aware what succession planning and leadership development arrangements are in place for the corporate management team? Am I satisfied that these are appropriate?		
2 Do I know what issues I need to develop my knowledge or understanding of? How do I plan to get the appropriate training?		
3 Do I have access to training and learning materials that meet my needs? Do I have a personal development plan in place for training, learning and development that will assist me to be as effective as possible in my role?		
4 How effectively do the council's medium- and long-term financial plans reflect the population projections for my area and the resulting need for services and infrastructure?		
Cont.		

How well informed am I?		
Questions for councillors to consider	What do I know?	Do I need to ask any further questions?
Change and improvement		
5	How clear are my council's plans for the changes needed so that outcomes for communities are improved alongside managing the financial and demand pressures?	
6	How do I know my council is delivering on the outcomes it has committed to achieve for local communities?	
7	Do I receive clear, timely and sufficiently detailed performance information to effectively scrutinise service and corporate performance?	
8	Is my council systematically using self-evaluation approaches corporately and in services to inform improvement? How involved or informed am I of the results and monitoring of improvement plans?	
Workforce planning		
9	Do we have detailed corporate and service level workforce planning? How clearly do they set out the current and future staff capacity and skills required and how this will be managed? How am I involved in scrutinising the effectiveness of workforce planning? Do I know how the council is addressing any specific issues with the workforce age profile or skills gaps in services?	
Cont.		

How well informed am I?		
Questions for councillors to consider	What do I know?	Do I need to ask any further questions?
Partnership working		
10	How well do I understand all the partnership arrangements of my council?	
	How effectively is my council working with partners to deliver services better and/or save money?	
	What steps is the council taking to ensure partnership arrangements meet their full potential?	
11	What obstacles are facing our area's IJB?	
	Am I aware of the steps taken to identify and address these obstacles and to improve the pace of integration?	
Community empowerment and engagement		
12	What do I know about the purpose and aims of participatory budgeting?	
	What do I know about my council's approach to participatory budgeting, and how effectively is it using this to empower communities?	
13	How well is my council providing clear, balanced and accessible information to the public about how well it is performing, what needs to improve and how it is addressing this?	
Planning services		
14	How well informed am I about the requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and what this means for the council?	
15	What do I know about the demographic makeup and the projected changes within the council area?	
	How effectively is the council using this information to plan how we deliver services, including planning services?	

How well informed am I?		
Questions for councillors to consider	What do I know?	Do I need to ask any further questions?
16	Do I know how well prepared my council is to deliver the requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019?	
	How do I know if the planning service has the skills, capacity and resources to implement the new responsibilities the Act brings?	
17	What am I and the council doing to improve or restore community trust, confidence and respect in planning services?	
18	How confident am I and what assurance do I have that the council is well prepared to make the shift in planning services from the regulatory role to include more proactive engagement with communities and other partners?	
19	Do I know how the council is addressing any specific issues with the workforce age profile or skills gaps in services, such as planning services?	



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