

Minute of Meeting Economy & Jobs Policy Board

Date	Time	Venue
Wednesday, 03 February 2016	13:00	Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

PRESENT

Councillors Caldwell, Cameron, Glen, Provost Hall and Councillors Harte, Holmes, Hood, Lawson, K MacLaren, McCartin, Mullin and J Sharkey.

CHAIR

Councillor Glen, Convener, presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

M Crearie, Director of Development & Housing Services; S Roberts, Communications Manager (Chief Executive's); A Morrison, Head of Regeneration, R Cooper, Economic Development Manager and V Howie, Finance Business Partner (all Development & Housing Services); and D Forbes, Finance Manager and R Devine, Senior Committee Services Officer (both Finance & Resources).

APOLOGY

Councillor Nicolson.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

1 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

There was submitted a joint revenue budget monitoring report by the Directors of Finance & Resources and Development & Housing Services for the period 1 April to 13 November 2015.

DECIDED: That the report be noted

2 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

There was submitted a capital budget monitoring report by the Director of Finance & Resources for the period 1 April to 13 November 2015.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

3 LEADER PROGRAMME 2014/20 AWARD

There was submitted an update report by the Director of Development & Housing Services relative to progress in securing a new LEADER Funding programme for the wider Renfrewshire rural area in 2014/20.

The report intimated that formal approval of the Renfrewshire LEADER Programme was received in December 2015 with a subsequent offer of grant of £2,324,196 by the Scottish Government. Renfrewshire Council had accepted the role of accountable body and returned the Service Level Agreement (SLA) to the Scottish Government. The SLA was signed off by the Minister on 30 December 2015.

The report highlighted that Renfrewshire Council was leading the delivery of the LEADER 2014/20 for the rural areas within Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde, acting on behalf of the Local Action Group (LAG). The Greater Renfrewshire and Inverclyde LEADER Programme was now live and that the LEADER staff team would support the LAG in launching the programme across the three local authority areas during February/March 2016. Although guidelines for the LEADER Programme were still awaited from Scottish Government it was anticipated that the Programme would be open for applications in April 2016.

DECIDED:

(a) That the formal approval and Scottish Government offer of grant for Greater Renfrewshire and Inverclyde LAG be noted; and

(b) That it be agreed that further reports, providing updates on progress, be submitted to future meetings of this Board.

4 **PIAZZA MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Development & Housing Services relative to the proposed refurbishment of the Piazza shopping centre multi-storey car park.

The report intimated that at the meeting of the Planning & Economic Development Policy Board held on 28 February 2012 it was agreed to contribute approximately £166,000 from the Paisley Town Centre Project Fund to towards the proposed refurbishment of the Piazza shopping centre multi-storey car park. The total cost of the proposed refurbishment was approximately £2.5 million.

The report intimated that the refurbishment of the car park had never been carried out and the owners, New River Retail Limited, had approached the Council again in 2015 with a new proposal for refurbishment of the car park at a cost of approximately £1.2 million. It was proposed that, due to the lower expenditure by the owners on the project, the Council revise its contribution to £80,000 and that no funds be released by the Council until the refurbishment works were complete.

DECIDED: That the revised offer of contribution to New River Retail Limited of £80,000 to assist with the cost of the car park refurbishment at the Piazza Shopping Centre be agreed.

5 **MODERN APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME - UPDATE**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Development & Housing Services relative to the Modern Apprenticeship Programme.

The report provided an update on the performance to date for 2015/16 and information regarding the tender submission to Skills Development Scotland to continue the programme during 2016/17. During 2015/16 Skills Development Scotland had awarded the Council a contract to start up to 26 new Modern Apprentices, all of whom had been placed by October 2015, significantly ahead of schedule. Renfrewshire Council had subsequently requested and were awarded an additional 15 new start places. Currently 38 apprentices were agreed or in place and arrangements had been made to utilise the remaining three places prior to March 2016. Accordingly it was anticipated that the Council would claim the full contract award of £153,000 by March 2016.

The report also advised that the Council's tender submission for 2016/17 was for 37 new Modern Apprenticeship starts and that Skills Development Scotland had indicated that the outcome of the tender process would be advised during March 2016.

DECIDED:

(a) That the current performance levels be noted; and

(b) That it be agreed that further update reports on progress for this area of service provision be submitted on a regular basis to future meetings of the Board.

6 EMPLOYABILITY FUND - UPDATE

There was submitted a report by the Director of Development & Housing Services relative to delivery of training places through the Skills Development Scotland Employability Fund.

The report advised that the Council had been awarded a contract by Skills Development Scotland which facilitated up to 60 starts across the various stages of the employability pipeline. The places were for a range of skills levels for each of the three age groups under Employability Funds. To date 45 starts were in place, with a commitment for a further 15 places beginning prior to March 2016. The report stated that the Council had implemented pre-recruitment programmes to enable participants to enhance their knowledge and skill and then move seamlessly into traineeships and also utilised roles which enhanced the work of community initiatives, resulting in 79% of participants moving into employment with the Council. The outcome of the Council's 2016/17 tender submission to Skills Development Scotland for a further 60 new starts would be advised during March 2016.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the current performance levels be noted; and
- (b) That it be agreed that further update reports on progress for this area of service provision be submitted to future meetings of this Board on a regular basis.

7 SCOTLAND'S EMPLOYMENT RECRUITMENT INCENTIVE - SERI

There was submitted a report by the Director of Development & Housing Services relative to the suspension of the Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI) Programme.

The report advised that the Scottish Government had recently announced that the SERI programme was suspended with immediate effect and that no additional starts would be approved after 4 December 2015. The Chief Executive, on behalf of the Council, had previously accepted an allocation of SERI support of 83 places and a financial contribution of up to £370,429 for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2016.

Reference was made to the decision taken at the meeting of this Board held on 2 September 2015 to integrate the SERI offer into the wider Invest in Renfrewshire Programme and to match the SERI grant into the Youth Employment Initiative to offer a total of 249 additional places and a fund of up to £1,111,287 over a three year period. The integrated programme would be known as Renfrewshire Recruitment Incentive (RRI) programme. A summary of the current position in terms of the SERI programme and the impact of the suspension on the current programme and RRI was provided. The report proposed that RRI continue in its current format to 31 March 2016 and a new Incentive Programme be launched to local businesses in April 2016. This action would provide continuity to those companies currently involved in the programme and time to identify and promote a new lower cost scheme.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the suspension of the SERI Programme be noted;
- (b) That the actions of the Chief Executive in continuing with the Invest in Renfrewshire Recruitment Incentive until March 2016 be homologated; and
- (c) That it be agreed that further update reports on the project be submitted to future meetings of this Board.

SEDERUNT

Councillor Mullin entered the meeting during consideration of the following item.

8 FULL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

There was submitted a report by the Director of Development & Housing Services relative to Youth Employment.

The report advised that since the launch of Invest in Renfrewshire in 2012, youth employment levels in Renfrewshire had increased by over 50% and youth unemployment had fallen by over 80%. Due to this success, it was proposed that the Council aim to further reduce youth unemployment and strive to eliminate structural unemployment for young people in Renfrewshire.

The report proposed that the Council, via the Employability Services, focused on supporting unemployed young people into work within the first six months of being unemployed. An allocation of £2.1 million of Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) funding had previously been reported to the Board to support youth employment programmes across Renfrewshire to 2018. An outline proposal to increase the YEI funding in Renfrewshire to £5,030,253.40 over three years had been received on 6 January 2016, and would enable existing Council budgets for youth employment through Invest in Renfrewshire and mainstream Economic Development funding to be matched. The funding request had been approved and an acceptance of grant signed by the Chief Executive. This funding would be used to assist in supporting the Council's ambitions to further reduce youth unemployment until June 2018.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the current youth employment levels and the significant increase in youth employment in Renfrewshire over the last three years be noted;
- (b) That it be agreed that the Council introduce an initiative to further reduce youth unemployment and strive to eliminate structural unemployment for young people in Renfrewshire;
- (c) That it be noted that Renfrewshire Council had been successful in securing additional YEI (ESF) resources to support youth employment until June 2018;
- (d) That the Chief Executive be authorised to accept a new offer of EU grant to Renfrewshire Council of £5.03 million for the delivery of the YEI in Renfrewshire; and

(e) That it be agreed that further update reports on progress for this area of service provision be submitted on a regular basis to future meetings of the Board.

9 **LABOUR MARKET UPDATE**

There was submitted an update report by the Director of Development & Housing Services relative to labour market statistics for Renfrewshire as at December 2015 and providing comparisons, where data was available, with Scottish and UK markets.

The percentage of Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) claimants in Renfrewshire for December 2015 was 1.9% having fallen from 2.7% in December 2014. Youth unemployment had fallen from 3.8% in December 2014 to 1.6% in December 2015. It was highlighted that for the third month running Renfrewshire had a youth JSA rate below both the Scottish and UK average. Adult JSA claimants aged 25-49 had remained static at 2.2 % with 1,250 people claiming JSA. This rate had fallen from 3.0% in December 2014 while the JSA rates for those aged 50+ had remained static.

DECIDED: That the report and the improvements in unemployment figures across Renfrewshire be noted.