

Notice of Meeting and Agenda Council

Date	Time	Venue
Thursday, 29 September 2016	09:30	Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

KENNETH GRAHAM
Head of Corporate Governance

Membership

Councillor Derek Bibby: Councillor Bill Brown: Councillor Maria Brown: Councillor Lorraine Cameron: Councillor Stuart Clark: Councillor Eddie Devine: Councillor Margaret Devine: Councillor Andy Doig: Councillor Audrey Doig: Councillor Christopher Gilmour: Councillor Roy Glen: Councillor Jim Harte: Councillor Jacqueline Henry: Councillor Michael Holmes: Councillor John Hood: Councillor Terry Kelly: Councillor Brian Lawson: Councillor Paul Mack: Councillor James MacLaren: Councillor Kenny MacLaren: Councillor Mags MacLaren: Councillor Mark Macmillan: Councillor Eileen McCartin: Councillor Cathy McEwan: Councillor Stephen McGee: Councillor Marie McGurk: Councillor Iain McMillan: Councillor James McQuade: Councillor Sam Mullin: Councillor Alexander Murrin: Councillor Will Mylet: Councillor Iain Nicolson: Councillor Allan Noon: Councillor Jim Paterson: Councillor Bill Perrie: Councillor Jim Sharkey: Councillor Maureen Sharkey: Councillor Tommy Williams:

Provost Anne Hall (Convener): Councillor John Caldwell (Depute Convener):

Members of the Press and Public

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Further Information

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Items of business

Apologies

Apologies from members.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare an interest in any item(s) on the agenda and to provide a brief explanation of the nature of the interest.

1 Minutes of Meetings of Council, Boards and Panels

Minutes of Meetings of Council, Boards and Panels (attached separately).

Council, 22 June 2016, pages 1-26

Placing Requests and Exclusions Appeals Panel, 27 June 2016, pages 27-30

Council 4 July 2016, pages 31-34

Regulatory Functions Board, 7 July 2016, pages 35-38

Paisley North Local Area Committee, 19 July 2016, pages 39-40

Johnstone and the Villages Local Area Committee, 28 July 2016, pages 41-42

Renfrew and Gallowhill Local Area Committee, 16 August 2016, pages 43-46

Regulatory Functions Board, 17 August 2016, pages 47-54

Education and Children Policy Board, 18 August 2016, pages 55-62

Paisley North Local Area Committee, 18 August 2016, pages 63-66

Placing Requests and Exclusions Appeals Panel, 23 August 2016, pages 67-68

Housing and Community Safety Policy Board, 23 August 2016, pages 69-76

Planning and Property Policy Board, 23 August 2016, pages 77-88

Paisley South Local Area Committee, 23 August 2016, pages 89-92

Environment Policy Board, 24 August 2016, pages 93-98

Finance and Resources Policy Board, 24 August 2016, pages 99-126

Johnstone and the Villages Local Area Committee, 25 August 2016, pages 127-130

Economy and Jobs Policy Board, 31 August 2016, pages 131-136

Houston, Crosslee, Linwood, Riverside and Erskine Local Area Committee, 31 August 2016, pages 137-138

Regulatory Functions Board, 1 September 2016, pages 139-148

Appointment Board, 13 September 2016, pages 149-150

Leadership Board, 14 September 2016, pages 151-160

Appointment Board, 15 September 2016, pages 161-162

Renfrew and Gallowhill Local Area Committee, 19 September 2016, pages 163-164

Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board 19 September 2016, pages 165-173

Regulatory Functions Board, 22 September 2016 (to follow)

2	Report on Audit of Accounts 2015/16	15 - 16
	Report by Director of Finance and Resources (the Appendices to the report are attached separately)	
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	Report by Director of Finance and Resources	
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8	Review of the Upkeep of Common Areas within Council Housing Stock including Garden Areas (Lead Officer Dorothy Briggs)	121 - 132
	Report by Lead Officer	
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| 11 | Business Gateway – Appointment of Member Representative to National Management Group | 193 - 196 |
| | Report by Director of Development and Housing Services | |
| 12 | Paisley Townscape Heritage/Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (TH/CARS2): Grant Awards | 197 - 200 |
| | Report by Director of Development and Housing Services | |
| 13 | Planning Applications | |
| | Members must deal with planning applications in an objective manner to ensure that they cannot be challenged with accusations of bias or predetermination. Votes on planning applications must be seen to be impartial and not influenced by party political issues. | |
| 13(a) | Planning Application - 16/0139/PP - Miller Developments Limited - Erection of residential development with associated remediation/enabling works and formation of vehicular access, Land at 144 Hawkhead Road, Paisley. | 201 - 214 |
| | Report by Director of Development and Housing Services | |
| 13(b) | Planning Application - 16/0291/PP - Gladman Developments Limited: Erection of residential development including formation of vehicular access, open space and landscaping, provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) and associated engineering works, Land to the North East of Strathgryffe Crescent, Gryffe Castle, Bridge of Weir | 215 - 234 |
| | Report by Director of Development and Housing Services | |
| 14 | Notice of Motion 1 | |
| | Notice of Motion by Councillors Lawson and K MacLaren in the following terms: | |
| | "Council agrees to organise a suitable event to commemorate the bicentenary of the Scottish Insurrection of 1820 and to incorporate it, where possible, into the City of Culture bid." | |

15 Notice of Motion 2

Notice of Motion by Councillors McCartin and J MacLaren in the following terms:

"Named Person review"

Council recognizes that the Education Secretary is not now going to roll out his "Named Person" policy due to legal judgements, with both legislation and guidance requiring to be revised.

Council calls on the Cabinet Secretary to take this opportunity to commission a wide-ranging and independent review of this policy, given the repeated and growing concerns expressed by public and professionals alike.

The review would be independent and would consider threshold for intervention, the power and duty of the named person, resources, training and data sharing arrangements. The Cabinet Secretary must take this opportunity to commission a review, without which the Government will lose support of councils and the thousands of families this would affect."

16 Notice of Motion 3

Notice of Motion by Councillors McCartin and Mack in the following terms:

"Council recognizes that the Scottish Government is planning to change the council tax bands from next year, with a planned extra income of £100 million per annum.

Council recognizes that any extra money raised from council taxes should be managed by local councils, in order to maintain accountability of councillors to their communities.

Council is, therefore, appalled with the suggestion that the Scottish Government is going to top slice this £100 million increase and use it for their own policy choices.

Renfrewshire Council will write to the Scottish Finance minister and the First minister demanding that any finances raised through council tax should be administered by the councils in accordance with their policy commitments to their constituents.

Extra funding to be given directly to schools is vital, but should be raised centrally through an extra 1p of general taxes (as agreed by this council on 25th February 2016) and given in the form of a Pupil Premium or similar award.

In this way the Scottish government could meet its own commitments on Education support while acknowledging the "parity of esteem" which they supposedly wish to convey on councils."

17 Notice of Motion 4

Notice of Motion by Councillors J MacLaren and McCartin in the following terms:

"Renfrewshire Council condemns racism, xenophobia and hate crimes unequivocally. We are lucky to live in a diverse and tolerant society. Racism, xenophobia and hate crimes have no place in our country. We will not allow hate to become acceptable. We will work to ensure all local bodies and programmes have support and resources needed to fight and prevent racism and xenophobia.

We reassure all people living in Renfrewshire that they are valued members of our community."

18 Notice of Motion 5

Notice of Motion by Councillors J MacLaren and Mack in the following terms:

"Council notes and welcomes the "U" turn on the part closure of the local amenity sites. This debacle has highlighted the lack of any Brown Bin Service for residents living in the outlying properties across the rural communities in Renfrewshire. Some of these residents take their garden waste to the amenity site while many others place their waste into the general waste bin (grey bin), which incurs a landfill charge to the Council.

As these residents receive both the general waste uplift (grey bin) and the recycling uplift (blue bin), there is no reason for not providing a garden waste collection. Given the amount of garden waste generated by these rural communities, with many of the gardens being larger than average, council requests that the Director carry out a consultation to establish the need for a garden waste collection service in the rural communities and bring a report before the Environment Policy Board indicating the net cost."

19 Notice of Motion 6

Notice of Motion by Councillors Andy Doig and Cameron in the following terms:

"After School Care in Johnstone

Renfrewshire Council welcomes the substantial contribution of the SNP Government to funding educational programmes to close the attainment gap in Renfrewshire's schools, and in increased funding for childcare places to help Renfrewshire parents and families.

Council notes with concern the current difficulty experienced by Johnstone parents and families with relation to After School Care, and agrees to continue to provide an interim service, within local school premises, to be funded from council reserves, until a local private provider can fill the gap in provision."

20 Notice of Motion 7

Notice of Motion by Councillors Nicolson and McEwan in the following terms:

"Renfrewshire Council aims to ensure that play parks and play facilities, whether provided by Renfrewshire Council, community groups or developers should, as far as reasonably practicable, be equally accessible to children of all abilities and those who care for them. This should apply equally to facilities in either the private or public realm and to indoor or outdoor facilities.

Accordingly, Renfrewshire Council agrees to undertake an audit of its play parks and play facilities and assess their suitability for all children of all abilities. Where there is a shortfall in provision, it will seek to rectify that when the opportunity to replace or supplement play equipment arises. The same requirement will apply if play parks or play areas are refurbished or replaced. The Council further resolves that, where a new play park or play facility is to be constructed as part of a new housing development or as a standalone provision, the planning consent will include a condition requiring that an appropriate number of inclusive pieces of play equipment be provided."

21 Notice of Motion 8

Notice of Motion by Councillors M MacLaren and K MacLaren in the following terms:

"Council supports the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival (10th-31st October) which aims to support the arts and challenge preconceived ideas about mental health.

Council notes that one in four people in Scotland will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives and that nearly nine out of 10 people with mental health problems have been affected by stigma and discrimination, with two thirds saying they have stopped doing things because of the stigma they face.

Council also congratulates the work of Recovery Across Mental Health (RAMH) who promote recovery from mental ill health, and empower people to build independent, fulfilled lives and the work of the Neighbourhood Challenge Renfrewshire in their recent Breaking Barriers event which aims to help end stigma and discrimination surrounding mental illness."

22 Notice of Motion 9

Notice of Motion by Councillors Mylet and Cameron in the following terms:

"Bus Stops

Council recognises that in attempting to attract more visitors to Paisley it is important that such visitors are not put off by the lack of clean public spaces, including all bus stops in Paisley Town Centre. Council notes that since their installation, the ground around these bus stops have not been adequately cleaned and that this, along with the poor general level of cleanliness within Paisley, may make visitors think again about coming back to Paisley.

Council calls for immediate action to clean up the town centre bus stops."

23 Notice of Motion 10

Notice of Motion by Councillors Nicolson and Lawson in the following terms:

"Building Repairs Task Group

Council agrees that a comprehensive report be brought to the next meeting of the Planning and Property board regarding the activities and actions of the Building Repairs Task Group since its inception. The report should focus on the effectiveness of the group, and its use of legal powers. This report may form the basis of widening the task group activities to other parts of Renfrewshire."

24 Notice of Motion 11

Notice of Motion by Councillors K MacLaren and M MacLaren in the following terms:

"Detention Centre

Council welcomes the proposed closure of the Dungaval detention centre.

Council expresses its concern about the treatment of detainees within Dungavel and notes the complaints regarding the treatment of detainees from various organisations including the STUC and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

Council notes the plan to build a new rapid removal detention centre in Renfrewshire and expresses its concern that moving detainees to Renfrewshire doesn't address the concerns of many campaigners about the treatment that detainees have received at Dungavel.

Council highlights its concerns that in introducing a rapid removal facility in Renfrewshire there is a real risk that people who have been living in Scotland will either have their opportunities to challenge their deportation restricted or be taken to immigration removal centres far away from their families, friends and legal representation."

25 Notice of Motion 12

Notice of Motion by Councillors Nicolson and Perrie in the following terms:

"Renfrewshire Council agrees that allotments contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities in a number of ways, not least in maintaining a community link to food production. Council therefore agrees to bring forward a comprehensive policy document which will clearly identify demand, geographical deficits and identify land which may be suitable for allotment development and be reserved for such purposes in all relevant council policies.

Council also agrees that an appropriate policy be formed where developer contributions should be sought from relevant developments to a fund which would develop a comprehensive network of allotments across Renfrewshire and in particular areas where there is a potential loss of green space."

26 Notice of Motion 13

Notice of Motion by Councillors Andy Doig and Audrey Doig in the following terms:

"TIE

Renfrewshire Council resolves to work closely with the Time for Inclusive Education campaign, and with equalities organisations and the SNP Government, to ensure that homophobic bullying in Renfrewshire's schools is effectively tackled and that Renfrewshire's classrooms actively promote equality and inclusivity for young people of LGBTI identities."

27 Notice of Motion 14

Notice of Motion by Councillors Nicolson and Paterson in the following terms:

"Renfrewshire Council notes with concern the well advanced proposals to locate a replacement detention facility for Dungavel in Renfrewshire. Council requires the leader of the council to make a statement on what discussions have taken place with the Westminster Government and or its agencies regarding this matter and what representations he has made on behalf of the people of Renfrewshire."

28 Notice of Motion 15

Notice of Motion by Councillors M MacLaren and Audrey Doig in the following terms:

"Women Against State Pension Inequality

Council calls upon the UK Government to make fair transitional state pension arrangements for all women born on or after 6 April 1951 who have unfairly borne the burden of the increase to the State Pension Age with lack of appropriate notification.

Hundreds of thousands of women had significant pension changes imposed upon them by the Pensions Act of 1995 and 2011 with little or no personal notification of the changes. Some women had only 2 years of notice of a 6 year increase to their state pension age.

Many women born in the 1950s are living in hardship. Retirement plans have been shattered with devastating consequences. Many of these women are already out of the labour market - caring for elderly relatives, providing childcare for grandchildren or struggling to find employment after having suffered discrimination in the workplace.

Women born in this decade are suffering financially. These women have worked hard, raised families and paid their tax and national insurance with the expectation they would be financially secure when reaching 60. It is not the pension age itself that is in dispute, it is widely accepted that women and men should retire at the same age.

The issue is that the rise in the women's state pension age has been too rapid and has happened without sufficient notice being given to those affected. This has left women with no time to make alternative arrangements.

Council also supports the recently formed WASPI Renfrewshire group who are campaigning for the rights of Renfrewshire residents affected by these pension changes."

29 Notice of Motion 16

Notice of Motion by Councillors Andy Doig and K MacLaren in the following terms:

"Violation of Sepulchre

This Council shall have regard to the need to respect the rights of sepulchre, the violation of which is a criminal offense under Scots law."

30 Notice of Motion 17

Notice of Motion by Councillors M Macmillan and Holmes in the following terms:

"Council notes the intention of the UK Government to open an Immigration Detention Facility in Renfrewshire. Council further notes there was no consultation with this authority prior to the announcement. Council will take cognisance of human rights and other relevant issues and will seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders before consideration of any planning application related to this facility."

31 Notice of Motion 18

Notice of Motion by Councillors Mack and McCartin in the following terms:

"Renfrewshire Council condemns the Labour run administration for displaying a singular inability to address the poverty in Ferguslie Park despite having almost fifty years of uninterrupted rule of local governance of that area."

32 Notice of Motion 19

Notice of Motion by Councillors Harte and J Sharkey in the following terms:

"This Council adopts the Construction Charter outlined in Appendix A"

"APPENDIX A

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL'S CONSTRUCTION CHARTER

As a Local Authority we either directly procure, or are the planning authority, for a multitude of construction projects. It is our intention to promote and support positive workforce practices involving **"Direct Employment"** on all construction projects where we procure on behalf of the residents under this authority. We expect all construction companies who secure contracts on these projects within our boundaries to fully comply with this charter.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of all workers is paramount. Construction is a dangerous industry. We expect all contractors to ensure that:

- Health and safety regulations and standards are rigorously implemented and adhered to,
- Welfare facilities for construction workers are appropriate for the 21st Century, including reasonable standards for toilets, amenities and drying facilities in accordance with the Construction, Design and Management Regulations 2015.

The Scottish Future Trust's Non Profit Distributing (NPD) programme alternatively known as HUBCO's was developed to deliver infrastructure projects for the Scottish Government. As such, they must include proper local community benefits, in particular local jobs and apprenticeships and help local SME's develop the capacity to take on those infrastructural projects. The Scottish Government should work with Renfrewshire Council to produce strong and clear guidelines on Community Benefit Clauses for externally awarded contracts through HUBCOs and that those contracts uphold the working practices contained herein.

Employment and skills

We require the highest standards of project delivery in order to ensure that Renfrewshire people's aspirations are met and the projects serve our communities well in the years to come. We are also mindful of the projected skills shortage across the sector and wish to work with the industry to train the next generation of skilled workers for the future. We therefore encourage, and will require where appropriate, all contractors to:

- Be able to demonstrate the skill level of their employees on the project by ensuring appropriate checks are carried out by contractors,
- Comply with the employment and skills requirements set out in our tender documents, promoting and encouraging full apprenticeships,
- Prioritise hard to reach and underrepresented groups in employment, training and skills initiatives,
- Work with us to support initiatives aimed at promoting and improving opportunities in education and training of employers and employees engaged on all construction projects within our authority.

Pay and benefits

This Council is also a Living Wage employer and will encourage that all construction companies working on their contracts will adhere to that policy where workers are not directly connected to industry collective agreements then the living wage is a minimum standard and we will promote and encourage that those companies are registered with the Scottish Living Wage Accreditation Initiative.

We also expect that all employees, and encourage that all workers, should have access to:

- Paid holiday,
- A sickness benefit scheme,
- A pension scheme,
- Accident compensation,
- Death in service benefits.

Employment rights

This Council expects direct employment by contractors and sub contractors on a PAYE Class 1 National Insurance basis. We believe that Trade Unions play an important role in creating a safe and productive worksite and developing good industrial relations. We therefore expect our contractors, within the context of the contract let, to:

- Employ workers under recognised industry collective agreements as set out in SJIB, SNIJIB, BESA, CIJC, NAECI and TICA or other EU equivalent,
- Promote the benefits of belonging to a recognised Trade Union,
- Recognise on-site Shop Stewards as having an important role to play in achieving and promoting good industrial relations,
- Ensure that the Trade Union has input into the development of Health and Safety policy (to ensure members' priorities are reflected),
- Actively promote the election of Health and Safety Representatives and support their role in helping to ensure a safe site,
- Provide equality and opportunity for all,
- Be able to certify that they have not engaged in the practice of blacklisting workers for any reason.

This Council also supports the Get Britain Building campaign which is aimed at supporting and sustaining the construction the construction industry in Great Britain. Consequently, we seek to maximise the building materials used on council construction projects that are covered by BES6001 Responsible Sourcing of Construction Products Certificate or equivalent.

Renfrewshire Council looks forward to working with contractors to help them support the aims set out in this Charter.



To: Council

On: 29 September 2016

Report by: Director of Finance & Resources

Heading: AUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2015/16

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The 2015-16 Annual Accounts were submitted to Council for approval on 22 June 2016 and then submitted for audit to Audit Scotland.
- 1.2 The audit process is now complete and the Assistant Director of Audit (Local Government) has provided an audit opinion which is free from qualification.
- 1.3 Under the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, the Council must meet to consider the Annual Accounts and aim to approve those accounts for signature no later than 30th September. In order to comply with these requirements the 2015-16 Annual Accounts are now attached for approval.
- 1.4 The Assistant Director of Audit (Local Government) has also provided an annual audit report to Members and the Controller of Audit which was considered by the Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board 19 September 2016. This report is attached for Members information.
- 1.5 The accounts for the charities controlled by the Council have also been audited by Audit Scotland and they have provided separate audit opinions on the accounts of these charities (including the three Common Good Funds and the four charitable trust funds) in accordance with the charities regulations and best practice promoted by the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR). These accounts are also attached for Council approval.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is asked to:-

- 2.1 Approve the Annual Accounts for 2015-16 for signature in accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014;
 - 2.2 Approve the 2015-16 accounts of the Renfrew, Paisley and Johnstone Common Good Funds and Renfrewshire Council Trust Funds, and thereafter delegate authority to the Director of Finance & Resources to submit these accounts to OSCR in accordance with the relevant regulations;
 - 2.3 Note the annual audit report to Members.
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Implications of this Report

Financial – The 2015/16 Annual Accounts have been certified as providing a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2016.

HR & Organisational Development - none

Community Planning – none

Legal – An audit opinion free from qualification demonstrates the Council's compliance with the statutory accounting requirements set out in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Property/Assets – none

Information Technology - none

Equality & Human Rights - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

Health & Safety - none

Procurement – none

Risk - none

Privacy Impact - none

Author: Alastair MacArthur, Ext 7363



To: Council

On: 29th September 2016

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: Financial Outlook 2017/18 – 2019/20

1. Overview and Key Messages

- 1.1.1 The report to Council on 13 February 2014 'Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2014/15' established the Council's anticipated medium term financial position through to 2017/18, confirming a likely budget saving requirement of between £20 and £30 million, after accounting for saving anticipated from the Council's medium term debt smoothing strategy.
- 1.1.2 Since that time, the Council has set three budgets covering 2014/15 - 2016/17. Each of these successive budgets has progressively addressed this medium term financial challenge by incorporating a range of efficiency and saving measures. The period since the current medium term financial strategy was framed in February 2014 has remained fluid from a range of perspectives. As a consequence the strategy has been kept under active review, with appropriate adjustments made linked to a range of factors which have been subject to material change over the course of this period.
- 1.1.3 The report to Council on 3rd March 2016 'Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2016/17' outlined the most recent update of the forecast through to 2017/18. Similar to previous updates, the Council's financial outlook continued to remain uncertain, over not just the medium term but also over the short term period leading into 2017/18. At that time it was anticipated that a residual budget gap of up to £6 million potentially remained for the period through to 2017/18, albeit it was acknowledged that the Council's financial projections moving into 2017/18 included a range of key assumptions which were subject to uncertainty and potential movement.
- 1.1.4 The purpose of this report is therefore to provide elected members with an update on the Council's current financial position, projected position moving into 2017/18 and the medium term financial outlook beyond 2017/18. The report will cover the following key areas of the financial strategy for elected members:

- The Council's current financial position;
- The updated projection for 2017/18 taking account of key changes that have occurred since March
- An updated outlook for the Council beyond 2017/18, particularly in light of changed and uncertain economic environment following the June referendum vote across the UK to leave the European Union.
- An outline of the key strategies and financial planning recommendations to support the Council to address the medium term challenges in a financially sustainable manner.
- Overview of the long term financial landscape for the Council, the key long term financial risk that this presents and the short to medium term strategies that require to be adopted to plan for this longer term landscape.

1.2 Key Messages

- 1.2.1 The Council's current financial position remains in line with the financial planning assumptions made when the Council set its budget for 2016/17. In addition, Audit Scotland has recently completed their audit of the 2015/16 accounts and the audited financial position remains in line with that reported to Council in June 2016. Notwithstanding the significant financial challenges to be faced in the forthcoming years overall the Council's immediate financial position remains stable and consistent with existing financial and service plans.
- 1.2.2 Uncertainty in relation to the forecast position for 2017/18 has shifted considerably following the outcome of the referendum vote in June for the UK to Leave to European Union. It is expected that moving into 2017/18 a saving requirement of between £20 million - £30 million will be required to achieve a balanced budget. After taking into account savings of approximately £20 million already planned for 2017/18, linked predominantly to the Debt Smoothing Strategy and also the Better Council Change Programme, a residual saving requirement of up to £10 million remains a possibility. Increased certainty for 2017/18 is not expected to be secured until towards the end of 2016 and possibly moving into 2017.
- 1.2.3 Given the scale of uncertainty and potential for variability, it is important that the Council plans for a range of potential outcomes over this short time horizon with a central planning assumption of a £6 million residual saving requirement. In addition, it is anticipated that moving forward beyond 2017/18 and through to 2020 an annual saving requirement of significant scale is likely to continue over the medium term. Given this outlook, it is important that the Council continues to adopt a sustainable medium term perspective in developing the budget planning for 2017/18, ensuring sufficient flexibility to manage in a sustainable manner the final position that emerges over the coming months. In this context, the Corporate Management team remain available to advise and work with political groups and elected members to assist in the development of budget strategies for 2017/18 which remain flexible, sustainable and focused on the delivery of key priorities detailed in the Council Plan.
- 1.2.4 In sharp contrast to the position outlined to the Council in March of increasing medium term certainty expected to emerge over the course of 2016, the outlook is now considerably more uncertain and exposed to increased downside risk following

the significant events that have subsequently occurred. It is still anticipated that the Council will continue to be presented with a requirement to deliver significant year on year savings to address the financial challenge of reducing resources set against increasing cost and demand pressures. The scale of the annual saving requirement is now increasingly uncertain and could potentially sit within a range of £16 million - £27 million per annum in the period up to 2020. Subject to greater certainty emerging over coming months and years it would be advised that the Council adopts a central medium term planning assumption of being required to deliver savings of £20 million per annum in the two years 2018 - 2020. There will be a requirement to maintain an ongoing assessment of key factors impacting upon this projection to ensure the Council is alert to the potential for any significant changes, in particular if indications suggest an increasing risk of a shift to the upper end of this projection.

1.2.5 Looking to the longer term beyond 2020, the financial outlook identifies many issues consistent with that outlined for 2017 – 2020, with financial challenges anticipated to remain beyond 2020. This longer term outlook re-enforces the need for the Council to continue to plan services and its finances over the medium to longer term on the basis of:-

- reducing resources with uncertainty over when and at what level sustained growth may return,
- rising cost and demand pressures expected to be a long term feature of the Council's financial outlook,
- an increasing and ongoing need for the Council to prioritise spend to focus on the delivery of strategic priority outcomes, and
- that a focus on delivering change, transformation and savings will continue to be a necessary feature of the Council's planning arrangements

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- Notes the update on the Council's current financial position.
- Notes the update on the anticipated outcome for 2010/7/18 and the range of uncertainty that still exists in relation to a wide range of issues.
- Notes the update on the medium term outlook for the Council in the context of current forecasts and the expectation of further significant budget reductions for the Council through to 2020.
- Notes the anticipated position on capital grant and the recommendation to continue to restrict the timeframe on new investment funded by capital grant to the period confirmed by the Scottish Government.
- Approve the Council's ongoing commitment to the financial planning principles outlined at paragraph 5.5 and 6.2 below.

3. Financial Outlook – Revenue Budget

3.1 Current Financial Position

- 3.1.1 The Council's current financial position remains in line with financial planning assumptions made in the setting of the 2016/17 budget. Audit Scotland has recently completed their audit of the 2015/16 accounts which has confirmed that the audited financial position remained in line with that reported to Council in June. Unallocated reserves are currently just over £7 million and there is currently no dependence on these reserves as part of the 2016/17 budget strategy approved in March 2016. As reported to Council at the March budget meeting, it would not be recommended that unallocated reserves fall below £7 million. Budget monitoring for 2016/17 to date confirms all services remain in line with budget. Notwithstanding the significant financial challenges to be faced in the forthcoming years, overall the Council's immediate financial position remains stable and in line with existing financial plans.

3.2 Update on Budget Strategy 2017/18

- 3.2.1 The report to Council on 13 February 2014 'Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2014/15' established the Council's anticipated medium term financial position through to 2017/18, confirming a likely budget saving requirement of between £20 and £30 million, after accounting for savings anticipated to flow from the Council's medium term debt smoothing strategy.
- 3.2.2 Since that time, the Council has set three budgets covering 2014/15 - 2016/17. Each of these successive budgets have progressively addressed this medium term financial challenge by incorporating a range of measures including savings secured through the Better Council Change Programme, cost avoidance achieved through demand and cost mitigation strategies and securing growth in the council tax yield and investment income. The period since this medium term financial strategy was framed in 2014 has remained fluid from a financial, economic and political perspective. As a consequence the strategy has been kept under active review, with appropriate adjustments and updates made linked to a range of factors which have been subject to material change over the course of this period.
- 3.2.3 The report to Council on 3rd March 2016 'Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2016/17' outlined the most recent update of the forecast through to 2017/18. Similar to previous updates, the Council's financial outlook at that time continued to be uncertain, and it was anticipated it would remain subject to a series of potential downside risks.
- 3.2.4 In March it was anticipated that after taking account of around £20 million of planned savings already incorporated into the budget strategy for 2017/18, relating primarily to debt smoothing, a residual budget gap of up to £6 million potentially remained. It was recognised that this projection included, by necessity, a range of key assumptions which were subject to uncertainty and potential movement, both positive and negative. Most notably the areas of key uncertainty were focused upon:
- *Future grant settlement* – the UK Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in November 2015 and March budget statement in 2016 outlined that the level of Scottish block grant that was expected to be available to the Scottish Government would be subject to relatively limited growth over the

medium term. In response to the November CSR announcement the Scottish Government published a detailed budget for 2016/17 but did not provide any material details of spending plans beyond this single year budget. It was anticipated that this would be subject to review by Scottish Government following the May 2016 Scottish Parliamentary elections, with a three year budget announcement expected around September or October 2016. At that time it was anticipated that given the relatively flat forecast in Scottish Government resources over the medium term, should areas of the Scottish budget that were protected in 2016/17 – Health, Police, Education - continue to receive similar levels of protection, there would be little to suggest that the medium term prospects for the local government budget was likely to materially improve from the reduction experienced in 2016/17.

- *Future Pay Settlements* – no national agreement was secured beyond 2016/17 and this remains the case at present.
- *Demand led Pressures* – demographic and socio-economic demand led cost pressures, in particular on both Children's Services and Adult Social Care, which are recognised to be a key determinant on the Council's financial position and can be subject to material movement over relatively short periods.

Government Grant Prospects

3.2.5 Since the updated outlook for 2017/18 was reported to members in March and following the Scottish Parliamentary election in May, the Scottish Government has reaffirmed key policy commitments for this new parliamentary period. This includes a commitment over the course of this parliament to increase health spending by £500 million above real terms growth, protect the policing budget in real terms, invest additional resources in health and social care and double the provision of free childcare hours. Given the limited growth prospects for the Scottish Government budget that was expected over this period, this level of commitment to major areas of spend by the Scottish Government sets an inevitable expectation of a negative consequential impact for local government and anticipation of sustained reductions in Scottish Government grant over the course of the current Scottish parliamentary period.

3.2.6 In addition, the Scottish Government will move into a new fiscal environment with enhanced powers being devolved under the Scotland Act 2016 – with approximately 50% of the resources the Scottish Government will spend being funded through devolved tax raising powers. This has added a new dimension of risk and uncertainty to the Scottish budget. Moving forward over the medium term, this devolution process will be governed by the new Fiscal Framework. The mechanics of the framework are complex but in essence will mean that the performance of the Scottish economy relative to that of the UK as a whole will be key in determining whether the Scottish budget will fare better under the new devolved arrangements than it would have had under the current arrangements. This process of fiscal devolution is a major change and even in normal circumstances would present a major new dimension of risk. In the current context of Brexit and all the uncertainty that is associated with it, the risks appear to be even greater. Indeed, the Fraser of Allander Institute this month published a report, "Scotland's Budget 2016", which amongst other key conclusions stated that *"Even before the EU referendum outcome, the Scottish budget was facing real terms cuts over the next few years driven largely by the plans set out by the previous Chancellor George Osborne. Our new findings suggest that the Scottish budget*

could be cut by between 3% – 4% percent in real terms by 2020-21 and up to 6% – around £1.6 billion – under a worst case scenario.”

- 3.2.7 Undoubtedly the most significant change over recent months was the unexpected outcome of the UK referendum vote in June to leave the European Union. The potentially far reaching impact of the referendum outcome was outlined in some detail in a report to the Leadership Board on the 18th September. However, the scale of uncertainty associated with both the exit process itself and the medium to longer term impact of the UK leaving the EU is significant.
- 3.2.8 From an economic and financial perspective, there has been as predicted an immediate reaction to the Brexit vote which moving forward over at least the short to medium term is likely to have negative implications for the Council's financial outlook over and above that which was anticipated prior to the referendum vote itself.
- 3.2.9 As outlined in the report to the Leadership Board, there is a general consensus of deterioration in the economic growth prospects at both a UK and Scottish level following the Brexit vote. In an immediate response, the UK Government has already confirmed that the key fiscal target to move the UK public finances into surplus by 2019/20 had been abandoned and will be pushed back by an as yet unconfirmed period of time.
- 3.2.10 It is now expected that the UK Government will take some time to assess developments before announcing consequential changes to the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) as part of the Autumn Statement which has now been confirmed as being the 23rd November. The poorer post Brexit referendum prospects for economic growth in the UK will undoubtedly impact on the UK Government's forecast tax revenues placing additional pressure on public finances.
- 3.2.11 The net impact on public sector spending plans across the UK and subsequently in Scotland will not become clearer until the new CSR announcement. Changes arising from the new CSR may result in the UK Government's programme for reduction in public sector expenditure across the UK being deeper and or extending for a longer period than was previously planned. This would have material risks for both the Scottish Government's budget and ultimately the Council's financial outlook moving into 2017/18 and beyond.
- 3.2.12 What is clear at this stage is that the overall risks to the Council's financial outlook, in both the short and medium term, have increased since the last update to members in March and there is every prospect that as future spending plans of both the UK and Scottish Governments are revised and confirmed the Council will face increased cuts to government grant than those previously projected prior to the exit vote.
- 3.2.13 As a consequence of these developing circumstances, the short term 2017/18 budget strategy has become increasingly uncertain:-
- Similar to 2016/17, the Scottish Government are expected to wait until after the UK Government's Autumn Statement before announcing their draft budget and local government settlement, raising the possibility of a late funding announcement in December or potentially into the New Year.
 - Given the uncertainty the Scottish Government have indicated that they will

be committing only to a single year budget and therefore uncertainty over future years will remain.

- There is an increased risk that the grant cut for local Government could potentially be higher than that experienced in 2016/17. This will be a particularly acute risk if the Scottish Government overall budget falls from what was expected and they remain committed to their spending pledges to Health and Police. In such circumstances the local government budget is at high risk of disproportionately shouldering the majority of any reduction in overall Scottish Government spending plans.
- At this stage, it is not clear what conditions may or may not accompany the grant settlement offer to local government and what impact this may have on the Council's budget. In this respect the Scottish Government have to date announced an intention to remove conditions associated with a Council Tax freeze and introduce a cap arrangement providing scope for a maximum increase in Council Tax levels of 3% moving into 2017/18.

3.2.14 The current budget strategy is framed on a grant cut of up to 3.5%, a broadly similar level to the reduction experienced in 2016/17. Given the scale of uncertainty, it would be prudent for the Council to plan for a potential range of grant cut, including the possibility of a cut beyond 3.5 %. Planning on this basis will assist in developing flexibility in the Council's financial planning for 2017/18 and allow the Council to respond to the risk of both a late and potentially poorer financial settlement than 2016/17. Variability from the 3.5% assumption can have a significant impact and each +/-1% variation in the level of cut would represent approximately a £3 million change in the estimated residual saving requirement for 2017/18 of £6 million.

Projected Cost Pressures in 2017/18

3.2.15 As referred to earlier in the report, the current projection for 2017/18 includes by necessity a wide range of assumptions in respect to key cost pressures, which total over £15 million, almost a 4% growth in the Council's net cost base. It is expected that over the coming months a number of these areas will become more certain in scale allowing a firmer position for 2017/18 to be established.

3.2.16 In addition to securing a firmer assessment of emerging cost pressures, as always detailed work is progressing with all Directors to identify opportunities to manage new pressures through the re-allocation of existing resources to mitigate net cost growth in the overall budget. Detailed below are the major areas of uncertainty in relation to cost pressures and which are expected will be subject to ongoing movement over the coming months as matters progress and which will impact on the settled position moving into 2017/18.

- Pay award – negotiations in respect to pay are ongoing and it would not be anticipated that they will be resolved for a number of months and potentially into 2017. These negotiations will be undertaken in the context of a backdrop where pay levels in the private sector have been increasing, moving forward projections anticipate upward pressure on inflation from historically low levels, set against the contrasting expectation of a further medium term period of contraction in local government resources in Scotland. Each 1% increase in pay level provides an additional £2.1 million of cost pressure in 2017/18 and therefore similar to grant, movement in the finalised position can have a material impact on the overall financial position. In addition, the Council has remained committed to the payment of the living wage and has extended this commitment in 2016/17 to all adult social care staff employed by external

providers. The living wage announced for 2016 was higher than anticipated increasing by almost double the percentage increase that was expected, with the Living Wage Foundation citing a degree of “catch up” being included in this increase. The new living wage is expected to be announced in November and with an expectation of increasing inflation on the horizon there remains a risk that this may increase beyond expectations, resulting in additional cost pressure moving into 2017/18.

- **Demographic Pressures** – the strategy includes a provision to address the impact of additional service pressures arising from demographic and socio-economic changes. The Council has over a number of years been successful in implementing a range of strategies across both Children’s and Adult Services aimed at redesigning service provision to achieve better outcomes whilst at the same time lowering the cost of service provision. The full impact of a range of these strategies are delivered over a number of years and as such continue to build each year in their significance, supported by the impact of new measures that continue to be designed and implemented by Directors. Work in this respect is continuing with both the Director of Children’s Services and Chief Officer of the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). Over the coming months greater certainty will be secured in respect to the net financial impact that is achievable moving into 2017/18 taking into account changes in actual demands levels that are being experienced during 2016/17. In addition, as part of the 2016/17 budget and in line with the associated government grant conditions, the Council passed over as part of the delegation of resources to the HSCP, the full £8.779 million of new resources directed to support investment in Adult Social Care. These resources were directed to support a range of issues, most significantly to support the payment of the living wage to all adult social care workers and to meet the financial impact of demand led pressures. Based on the scale of demand pressure experienced in 2016/17 the scope for these resources to continue to assist in meeting anticipated further growth in demand in 2017/18 will assessed and become clearer over the coming months. It is expected therefore that the net impact of demographic and socio-economic pressures will be firmed up over the second half of 2016 and the strategy updated accordingly.
- **National pension changes and apprenticeship levy** – the Council will continue over the course of 2016 and 2017 to implement changes arising from the UK Government’s national reform of the state and employee pension arrangements, including the phased introduction of auto-enrolment and in addition the implementation of the new apprenticeship levy from 1st April 2017. Over the course of both 2016 and 2017, changes in relation to pension arrangements and the apprenticeship levy are estimated to add over £10 million of additional costs to the Council’s net cost base. In particular, the final impact of the introduction of auto-enrolment is subject to some uncertainty and is dependent upon the degree to which employees chose to stay in the Council’s pension arrangements once auto-enrolled. The expected final scale of this cost pressure will not become clearer until the end of 2016 and ultimately will only be confirmed during the course of 2017.
- **Non Domestic Rates** – Notwithstanding any increase applied to the rate poundage by the Scottish Government in setting their 2017/18 budget, the Scottish Government is currently undertaking a revaluation exercise as part of the non domestic rates system in Scotland. At present, indications would suggest that similar to the last revaluation exercise in 2010, major Council properties, such as schools, may see a material increase in valuation. This however is yet to be confirmed and a number of decisions will also require to

be taken by the Scottish Government as part of implementing the outcome of the revaluation exercise, in particular the operation of any transitional arrangements. Such arrangements are normally self financing within the system and phase in over a number of years the impact of valuation changes, both increases and decreases. Transitional arrangements operated in 2005 but did not operate in 2010, where in general terms Council assets absorbed in a single year the full impact of the uplift in non domestic rates costs following revaluation. It is expected that the impact and operation of the revaluation process will become clearer over the course of 2016 and any change in the rate poundage confirmed as part of the Scottish Government budget announcement. Only at this point will the degree of cost uplift in cost for Council properties become clear.

- Utilities – the Council procures energy provision through national contract arrangements delivered by the Scottish Procurement Directorate (SPD). As a commodity, energy can be subject to significant short term volatility driven by a wide range of factors that can shift and emerge very quickly. In recognition of this the SPD employ a sophisticated forward purchasing strategy that seeks to hedge against the risk of having to procure at the point of consumption and being fully exposed to the prevailing price. Given the nature energy markets and the potential for volatility, it is always difficult to be certain of future energy costs over even a short term time period of a single year. Based on their purchasing and hedging strategy, SPD normally provide a financial planning guide on the forthcoming financial year prices around November or December. Only at this point is there a firm view of the potential change required in energy budgets and the strategy will be updated accordingly at this time.

Changes to the Council Tax System

- 3.2.17 Full details have yet to emerge from the Scottish Government over proposed changes to the Council Tax arrangements from 2017/18. Changes in the banding arrangements for those property bands E – H along with some enhancements to the existing Council Tax reduction scheme are expected to raise a net £100 million across Scotland. The detailed implementation arrangements continue to be subject to ongoing discussions as do the distribution arrangements linked to the proposed application of the additional net funding raised from the changes. The Scottish Government have indicated that it remains their intention that this funding will be provided directly to head teachers. Given there is no detail as yet on how this will be achieved it is not anticipated at this stage that this will have any positive impact on the Council's forecast budget deficit

Projected Funding Gap

- 3.2.18 Given the scale of uncertainty that still exists in relation to a range of significant areas, it is anticipated that the projected overall cost pressure of £15 million will be subject to some movement over the coming months. Additionally, as outlined above, there is now increasing uncertainty in relation to the Council's grant prospects in 2017/18 and an increasing risk that it could potentially be in excess of that experienced in 2016/17.
- 3.2.19 As noted earlier, after taking account of around £20 million of savings already accounted for in the 2017/18 strategy, the previous forecast of a residual saving requirement of up to £6 million i.e. a top end projection would now be presented as a central planning assumption i.e. a total saving requirement in 2017/18 of £26 million.

- 3.2.20 The recent changes in the Council's financial environment present a much more uncertain set of circumstances, with an increased risk of variability from this central forecast. For example, a residual saving of up to £10 million (total saving of £30 million in 2017/18) would arise should the Council's grant be cut by 4.5% and cost pressures overall settle marginally above current provisions. Equally, should the Council's grant be cut by 2.5%, a range of the cost uncertainties settle below current provisions and work with Directors in relation to the base budget is successful in releasing existing resources to meet new pressures, there may be limited or no residual saving requirement beyond the £20 million already accounted for in 2017/18.
- 3.2.21 The final scale of saving for 2017/18 is likely to sit somewhere within a range of £20 million to £30 million in total. Certainty in this regard is however unlikely to begin to emerge until the end of 2016.
- 3.2.22 Given the scale of uncertainty and potential for variability, it is important that the Council plans for a range of potential outcomes over this short time horizon. This will assist in mitigating the risk of having to respond within a limited time period to set a balanced budget for 2017/18 following what is anticipated will once again be a later than normal confirmation of the financial settlement for local government.
- 3.2.23 Further and as outlined in section 4 below, it is anticipated that moving forward beyond 2017/18 an annual saving requirement of scale is likely to continue over the medium term. Given this outlook, it is important that the Council continues to adopt a sustainable medium term perspective in developing the budget planning for 2017/18, ensuring sufficient flexibility to manage in a sustainable manner the final position that emerges over the coming months. In this context, the Corporate Management team remain available to advise and work with political groups and elected members to assist in the development of budget strategies for 2017/18 which remain flexible, sustainable and focused on the delivery of key priorities detailed in the Council Plan.

4. Medium Term Financial Outlook to 2020 – Revenue Budget

Medium Term Grant Prospects

- 4.1 The current Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period for the UK Government which was announced in November 2015, extended through to 2019/20. At that time the UK Government set out their plans to move the UK fiscal position into a planned surplus position by 2019/20. As referred to above, this will now be subject to revision by the UK Government with an updated CSR announcement planned for November 2016. This is expected to outline revised spending plans over this period taking into account the UK Government's assessment following the post Brexit vote impact. Outwith the UK Government's existing announcement of postponing the objective of moving the public sector budget into surplus by 2020, it is difficult to predict with any certainty what decisions the UK Government may make in revising the CSR and how they intend, if at all, to adjust previous spending plans in response to the changed environment for the UK.
- 4.2 Equally, it is difficult to predict at this stage how the Scottish Government's budget will be affected over the medium term based on UK Government's revision of the CSR and how the forecast level of devolved tax revenues over the medium term may change from those previously forecast by the Scottish Government. Currently, recognising the scale of uncertainty and period over which this may continue to persist, it is difficult to envisage a set of circumstances where the medium term outlook for the Scottish Government budget is likely to improve from the high level position outlined in their budget announcement in December 2015. It is more probable that any material movement would result in potentially less resources

being available for planned spending in Scotland over the CSR period. Coupled with the policy priorities already set out by the Scottish Government and the inevitable implications this has for the existing local government budget, there is now an increased risk that over the medium term the level of annual grant reduction applied by the Scottish Government to the local government budget in 2016/17, may continue not just into 2017/18 but over the medium term through to at least the end of the current decade. The recent report by the Fraser of Allander Institute, "Scotland's Budget 2016", concurs with this outlook citing

"Local government will likely be a focal point for debate. As an area of 'unprotected spend', our analysis suggests that the grant to local government could be reduced by around £1 billion on a like-for-like basis by 2020-21 – with increases in business rate and council tax income only partially offsetting these cuts."

Based on a potential range of average annual reduction in grant levels of between 2% - 4% the loss in grant to the Council would be approximately £6 million - £12 million per annum. At this pace of reduction, by 2019/20 grant levels would be between £18 million - £36 million less in cash terms than 2016/17 presenting significant ongoing challenges for the Council.

Council Tax Income

- 4.3 As referred to earlier, the Scottish Government have indicated an intention to remove the application of a grant condition linked to a continuation of the Council Tax freeze and introduce arrangements to support a cap on increases set at 3%. Details have yet to be confirmed on how this arrangement will operate and if it is the Scottish Government's intention to operate such a mechanism beyond 2017/18. If implemented, it does however open up the opportunity for the Council to consider as part of setting annual budgets an annual increase in Council Tax levels following the long term period it has remained frozen since the first year of the freeze in 2008/09. It should however be noted that for context, each 1% increase in Council Tax will yield just under £0.7 million of additional income.
- 4.4 In addition to any potential changes in future Council Tax levels, it is anticipated that the Council Tax base will continue to grow over the medium term at relatively limited but nevertheless steady pace of around 0.5% per annum. This anticipated growth reflects the level of development activity currently occurring and expected to commence over the coming years across Renfrewshire. However, on a note of caution, the house building sector was disproportionately impacted by the immediate fall-out from the Brexit vote and it remains to be seen whether there is any lasting impact which has a consequential slowing in the future pace of development activity across the UK and ultimately within Renfrewshire.

Future Spending Pressures and Commitments

- 4.5 It is anticipated that moving forward beyond 2017/18 the Council will continue to experience year on year spending pressures, increasing demand for services and the impact of existing commitments made by the Council. As outlined earlier in the report, it remains challenging to predict with certainty the scale of cost pressures the Council will face on a year to year basis given the extent of uncertainty and variability of pressures the Council is exposed to as a large and complex public sector organisation. Taking account of a range of scenario outcomes, the potential scale of annual cost pressures could range from £10 million to £15 million. Detailed below are a range of the most significant areas that will influence this position over this period and which remain consistent with the 2017/18 position outlined earlier in the report:-

- Pay and Living Wage - despite the backdrop of an anticipated reduction in resources, it is expected that pay pressures and increases in living wage costs will be a recurring feature of the Council future financial landscape. Assuming annual pay awards of between 1% - 2% and living wage increases in the ranges experienced over recent years, an annual cost pressure of approximately £3 million - £6 million per annum would be anticipated.
- Demographic and Demand - similarly, increasing demand and demographic led pressures are anticipated to remain an ongoing challenge each year for Council. Notwithstanding the success the Council has achieved in mitigating the associated cost growth, net annual cost pressures of this nature have ranged from £1 million to £3 million over recent years and typically remain subject to a degree of uncertainty moving from one year to the next with short term acceleration in growth remaining an underlying risk. In addition, after a period of reducing numbers, primary school rolls forecasts suggest that moving forward these are expected to begin increasing over the medium term. This may drive additional demand for teaching resource, in particular if maintaining a pupil teacher ratio is a specific condition of future local government settlements.
- National Policy Changes - changes in national policy have remained a significant driver of new cost burdens for the Council. As outlined earlier reform of public sector and UK state pension arrangements coupled with the Apprenticeship Levy is expected to add over £10 million of additional cost to the delivery of existing services. Although difficult to be definitive, there remains the risk that national policy changes at both a UK and Scottish Government level will continue to create new cost pressures for the Council through introducing new or increased costs associated with being a large employer, introducing new statutory responsibilities on the Council or through indirectly creating new or increased demand for existing Council Services. An area of uncertainty in this respect relates to the ongoing implementation of Welfare Reform changes at both a UK level and as a result of powers being devolved to the Scottish Government. In respect to each of these areas, the shape, scale and timing of change is subject to uncertainty as are the full implications for the Council in terms of costs to deliver existing services and wider demands that may arise for Council services as a result of the changes. Additionally, the Scottish Government's commitment to double the number of hours of free childcare has potentially significant risks, both from a financial perspective but also in terms of service delivery and long term sustainability.
- City Deal - in addition to external pressures the Council has agreed to future commitments as part of delivering City Deal. City Deal represents a significant regional economic programme that will drive economic growth and create jobs across the region. It involves amongst other things over £1.1 billion of new infrastructure investment across the City Region, with £275 million being delivered within Renfrewshire. The infrastructure investment is funded predominantly by government grant provided by both the UK and Scottish Governments. The Council's contribution to delivery of the projects within Renfrewshire amounts to just under £18 million which will be delivered through prudential borrowing, the impact of which will not feature in the Council's financial strategy until post 2020. In addition and in order to accommodate the payment of government grant support over a 20 year period set against the delivery of investment over a shorter period, there will be a requirement for the Council to temporarily support a proportion of the costs associated with the delivery of the investment programme. The financial impact of this commitment is already emerging and will incrementally build up over the coming years in line with the infrastructure delivery, forecasting to peak in terms of associated annual

interest costs in 2021/22. Thereafter, this commitment will gradually reduce as the grant payments are made over the full 20 year period of the funding agreement.

Future Funding Gaps

- 4.6 In sharp contrast to the position outlined to Council in March of increasing medium term certainty expected to emerge over the course of 2016, the Council's financial outlook is now significantly more uncertain and exposed to increased downside risk than it was only a few months ago following on from the significant events that subsequently occurred. However it is still anticipated that the Council will continue to be presented with a requirement to deliver significant year on year savings to address the financial challenge of reducing resources set against increasing cost and demand pressures. The scale of the annual saving requirement is now increasingly uncertain and as outlined above could potentially sit within a range of £16 million - £27 million per annum. Subject to greater certainty emerging over coming months and years it would be advised that the Council adopts a central planning assumption of being required to deliver savings of £20 million per annum in the two years 2018 - 2020. There will be a requirement to maintain an ongoing assessment of key factors impacting upon this projection to ensure the Council is alert to the potential for any significant changes, in particular if indications suggest an increasing risk of a shift to the upper end of this projection.

Other Medium Term Considerations

- 4.7 This medium term saving requirement will in itself present the Council with major financial and organisational challenges. However, it should also be noted that sitting alongside this is a range of additional considerations that will also require to be taken into account as part of the medium term planning which is progressed by the Council over this period, including:
- Over the course of the current financial strategy through to the end of 2017/18, the Council has utilised temporary investment capacity to invest in a range of priority areas including the Tackling Poverty programme, Invest in Renfrewshire employability programmes and Early Year's initiatives. Moving beyond 2017/18 these temporary funding arrangements will begin to come to an end and there will be a requirement for the Council to consider the sustainability or otherwise of these services, set against the resources that will be available and the strategic priorities of the Council. In addition, an added complication in this respect relates to future uncertainty around EU funding post 2018 and which in addition to Council funding is a key element of funding existing employability programmes. As reported to the Leadership Board, at present certainty has yet to be secured around the continuation of funding for such programmes covering initially from 2018-20 and indeed in the longer term once a UK exit from the EU is negotiated. This similarly will need to be carefully monitored and as certainty emerges over future funding arrangements appropriate transitional planning put in place.
 - The potential saving requirements detailed above do not provide for any capacity for new investment. Over the course of the existing financial strategy running through to 2017/18, the Council has achieved investment in key priorities through the redirection of existing resources and through directing temporary revenue surpluses to support targeted time limited investment programmes. The nature of the Council's medium term financial outlook, both in scale and potential for movement, means that the Council will need to continue to adopt a strategic and sustainable plan linked to the delivery of priorities approved in the Council Plan and agreed with partners in the Community Plan. The existing Council Plan runs until 2017 and will be subsequently updated identifying refreshed strategic

priorities moving forward. These strategic priorities will continue to provide a clear focus in future budget decisions, where the delivery of core services must be balanced with the increasingly limited resources that will be available to the Council in the future. In this context it is important that the Council's underlying financial strategy maintains a sustainable medium term perspective whilst at the same time recognising the ambitions of the Council to direct investment to support the delivery of key outcomes. Directing investment to such areas of priority in a climate of reducing resources will inevitably require the Council to make difficult choices to support the re-direction of existing resources and which will have natural consequences for the level of services provided in other areas of provision.

- In its current form the benefits the Council's financial position has accrued from the debt smoothing strategy was anticipated to drop off to a much reduced scale moving beyond 2017/18. Given it is anticipated that the Council will be moving into a further period of sustained and significant cost reductions beyond 2017/18, a review has been undertaken to reassess the approach associated with the implementation of the final stages of the current strategy. It is now intended that resources previously earmarked to deliver accelerated debt repayment will now be utilised to directly support the revenue budget over the medium term through providing relief from annual debt charges. This change in approach will allow a further phase of debt smoothing savings moving beyond 2017/18 to be established for a defined medium term period after which the benefit would drop away. This will provide additional opportunity through this period of further more immediate financial challenge and assist in protecting core front line services and mitigate against unnecessary reductions in service provision in anticipation of a return to growth in resources over the medium to longer term. In addition, the change in approach will also provide access to a flexible resource to support the Council to deliver the inevitable scale and pace of change that will be required to meet the overall financial challenge, including costs associated with continuing to resize and reshape the workforce.

5. Long Term Outlook Beyond 2020

- 5.1 Looking beyond 2020 and into the longer term, it becomes inevitably more difficult to forecast. This would be the case in normal circumstances, however the difficulty in this regard has been magnified by the wider uncertainty associated with the UK's planned negotiation to exit the EU and what the longer term impact of this will be on the UK, Scotland and ultimately Renfrewshire as an area.
- 5.2 Notwithstanding such difficulties, it is important that the Council continues to adopt a long term outlook, not just in planning the delivery of strategic outcomes and services, but also from a financial perspective to ensure that major medium to long term risks to the Council's financial sustainability are identified early, even though there may be uncertainty over their specific timing, scale and ultimate effect. Maintaining a longer term perspective ensures that early consideration of appropriate strategies is undertaken to plan for the expected emergence of the respective risks ensuring the Council remains pro-active in responding to anticipated changes in its long term environment.
- 5.3 Attached at Appendix 1 to this report is a Long Term Financial Strategy which sets out the current perspective of the Council's long term financial outlook. Many of the issues identified remain consistent with that outlined for 2017 – 2020, with challenges anticipated to remain beyond 2020 for the Council. The long term strategy provides a more detailed overview of some of the key workstreams in place

and under development to manage increasing demand, avoid future costs and create greater capacity and opportunity for promoting prevention and early intervention. Such approaches will assist in protecting core services and vulnerable users and ensure services remain targeted, focused on the delivery of improved outcomes and importantly financially sustainable. This long term financial strategy will continue to be developed and aligned to the policy priorities of the Council as set out in the current and future Council Plan.

5.4 The long term outlook outlined in the strategy re-enforces the need for the Council to continue to plan services and its finances over the medium to longer term on the basis of :-

- reducing resources with significant uncertainty over when sustained growth may return and at what level over the long term,
- rising cost and demand pressures expected to be a long term feature of the Council's financial outlook
- an increasing and ongoing need for the Council to prioritise spend to focus on the delivery of strategic outcomes, and
- a focus on delivering change, transformation and savings continuing to be a necessary feature of the Council's long term planning arrangements.

5.5 In the delivery of the existing medium term financial strategy through to 2017/18, the Council agreed to a set of financial planning principles to underpin the delivery of the strategy and to support long term financial sustainability of the Council. Given the context outlined for both the short, medium and potentially long term, these principles remain equally valid for the Council moving forward. It would therefore be proposed that the following principles continue to underpin the delivery of the medium term strategy through to 2020:

- (i) The Council has an ongoing commitment to efficiency, modernisation of service delivery and prioritisation of resources on the delivery of key strategic outcomes.
- (ii) The Council strives to maximise income, grow its tax base and attract external funding.
- (iii) Investment in service transformation and early intervention/ prevention, including lifecycle maintenance to protect existing investments in our assets is given appropriate priority.
- (iv) Any new borrowing decisions taken by the Council are capable of repayment on a sustainable basis and overall debt levels are contained within affordable long term parameters.
- (v) The Council's core budget is not underwritten by the use of general reserves or speculative capital receipts.
- (vi) Council reserves are maintained at a level which provides appropriate financial resilience to the Council and the core services it provides and should be subject to ongoing annual review in the context of the risk profile faced by the Council.

6. Financial Outlook - Non-Housing Capital Investment

- 6.1 Similar to the revenue budget, the Council has no visibility of capital grant levels beyond 2016/17 and this is unlikely to emerge until December or January as part of the Scottish Government budget announcement and the specific detail of the local government settlement. Similar to the revenue grant, this will be heavily influenced by the UK Government CSR announcement in November, as well as decisions the Scottish Government may take in relation to the prioritisation of available resources.
- 6.2 In considering its strategy for investment, the Council has sought to ensure capital spending remains affordable, financially sustainable and deliverable within the resources that are available over the medium to longer term. In addition, as part of prudently managing its investment commitments, the Council has restricted making investment commitments supported by capital grant until firm figures are confirmed by the Scottish Government, and has sought to protect its existing asset base moving forward through planned and responsible maintenance programmes. In this context, the Council has previously agreed that the medium term investment strategy will progress on the basis of continuing to adopt the following financial planning principles:
- Any new capital borrowing undertaken by the Council will be underpinned by specific investment cases which are capable of delivering efficiencies to support the annual costs of the associated borrowing and or those costs being supported by savings delivered through the Council's wider budget planning process.
 - Future years capital grant funding will continue to be prioritised in the first instance to support ongoing lifecycle maintenance and renewal programmes across the Council's asset base to protect the assets the Council currently holds and its ability to deliver services to citizens.
 - Investment commitments will only be taken forward on the basis of capital receipts that have been secured and received by the Council with no reliance being placed on the predicted future generation of receipts from planned disposal programmes.
 - The Council will continue to actively pursue other sources of funding to maximise support for investment opportunities including external grant funding sources, partner contributions and where appropriate bid funds which may become available through the Scottish Government and other sources.
- 6.3 It is proposed that moving forward over the medium term the Council continues to commit to these financial planning principles and given at present there is no visibility of capital grant funding beyond 2016/17, it is proposed that the updating of the capital programme, focuses only on known and estimated resources that are expected to be confirmed in December or January. Officers will be available to work with political groups and elected members as required, to develop proposals for capital investment, in line with the financial planning principles agreed by Council.

Implications of this report

- 1 **Financial Implications** – The report details an estimated budget position over the period 2017-18, and highlights the likelihood of the need for further budget savings over the medium term period through to 2020. The forecast position through to 2020 has been updated from the position presented to members in March 2016 following on from the Scottish Parliamentary elections and referendum vote for the UK to Leave the European Union.
- 2 **HR and Organisational Development Implications** – integration with the Council's workforce planning arrangements will continue to be a key measure required to help address the forecast medium term reduction in Council resources.
- 3 **Community Plan/Council Plan Implications** - The Council remains committed to Community Planning priorities and the priorities outlined within the Council Plan will be key to providing strategic context to support prioritising future budget decisions.
- 4 **Legal Implications** – N/A
- 5 **Property Implications** - N/A
- 6 **Information Technology Implications** - N/A
- 7 **Equal Opportunity Implications** – Equality Impact Assessment will continue to be a key consideration in the development budget proposals.
8. **Health and Safety Implications** – N/A
9. **Procurement Implications** – N/A
10. **Risk Implications** – the report sets out the range of financial risks that are likely to be faced by the Council in the short, medium and longer terms and the requirement for the Council to actively manage these to maintain long term financial sustainability whilst increasingly focusing the reducing resources that will be on the delivery of key strategic priorities in line with the Council Plan.

List of Background Papers

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Appendix 1

Renfrewshire Council

Medium to Longer Term Financial Strategy

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Executive Summary

1.1 This medium to longer term financial strategy outlines the financial challenges and opportunities the Council could face over the medium to long term, and provides a financial framework which will support the Council to remain financially sustainable and delivers on its key strategic objectives and priorities.

1.2 This strategy document is structured to support and complement the Council's shorter term budget planning structures and processes which generally have a 3 year planning horizon. The strategy will also complement the Council Plan, highlighting how the Council's financial capacity and agreed financial planning principles will support the delivery of Council priorities; but also outline what the associated challenges are to this from the economic, political and regulatory environment.

1.3 Audit Scotland has highlighted that councils with well developed financial plans and strategies are better equipped to manage the challenges facing local government in the future. This strategy is one element of the Council's overall framework of robust financial planning and budgetary control.

Strategic Economic and National Policy Context

1.4 The previous medium term financial strategy outlined both a fragile and challenging economic environment, characterised by austerity budgets and uncertainty for many Eurozone and world

economies. The seminal vote for the UK to leave the EU has added a further layer of uncertainty as outlined in a report to the Leadership Board in September 2016.

1.5 This new and significant post Brexit uncertainty has had, and is likely to continue to have, a material impact on UK public finances. The economic recovery from the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession has undoubtedly been dealt a significant blow by the fall-out from the Brexit vote. It is now highly likely that previous forecasts of a sustainable economic recovery across the UK will be subject to fundamental re-assessment. However, at this stage it is too early to tell just how deep and long lasting the impact the Brexit vote and the subsequent exit process will ultimately have across the UK. In the Autumn statement, expected to be made on the 23rd November, the new UK Chancellor of the Exchequer has indicated he intends to "re-set UK fiscal policy".

1.6 It is difficult at this stage to anticipate what the outcome may be for the Scottish Block settlement provided to the Scottish Government. It would be wrong to assume that this means an end to fiscal consolidation. With a weaker economic outlook and rising inflation putting pressure on the welfare budget, further medium term departmental spending cuts over and above what was already planned seems more likely. Equally however, both the UK and Scottish Government have reaffirmed their commitment to infrastructure spending as a route to provide economic stimulus to mitigate some of the adverse effects of the

Brexit vote. This will therefore be a critical announcement and is expected to provide a refreshed post Brexit outlook for public finances across the UK and naturally will be a major influence on Scotland's budget.

1.7 In addition to the impact of the wider UK economy, moving into 2017/18 Scotland begins to assume greater fiscal autonomy under the 2016 Scotland Act. A process will commence in 2017/18 to devolve greater tax raising powers to the Scottish Parliament which will move Scotland towards a position where 50% of public sector spending is funded through devolved taxation powers. This process of fiscal devolution is a major change and even in normal circumstances would present a major new dimension of risk. In the current context of Brexit and all the uncertainty associated with it (the terms of the exit process and the post exit economic environment), the risks appear to be even greater.

1.8 In addition to the anticipated real terms squeeze on the Scottish Government's budget over the medium term, the Scottish Government has set out and reaffirmed clear policy priorities that will have significant implications for the local government budget in Scotland over this period and potentially beyond. It is therefore anticipated that over the medium term and potentially extending beyond the end of this decade, local government will move into a further period of sustained cash terms reduction in resources. Although this direction of travel appears to be relatively firm, the scale, pace and longevity is uncertain and this is unlikely to

change over coming months with the Scottish Government indicating a further single year budget in 2017/18.

1.9 Moving forward, the key strategic priorities which are set out in the Council Plan will become increasingly important in the context of the Council's longer term financial planning. With a shrinking resource base and the delivery of sustained efficiencies becoming increasingly challenging, it is inevitable that the Council will increasingly be required to focus resources on those services which support the key strategic outcomes targeted by the Council.

It appears likely therefore that the Council will be required to continue to plan over the medium to longer term from a basis of ongoing uncertainty where flexibility and maintaining a medium term perspective will become an increasingly important feature of the Council's financial planning landscape. Despite this, at this stage it does appear certain that the delivery of sustained savings and cost reductions coupled with the increased prioritisation of a reducing resource base will by necessity remain a significant feature of the Council's long term planning.

Financial outlook and Cost pressures

1.10 The Council's financial outlook over the longer term time horizon is challenging, and can be broadly divided into cost pressures and income pressures. With regards cost pressures there are a wide range of both short term and more fundamental pressures. This

report focuses on those which have the potential to have a significant and fundamental impact on the Council's financial position over this horizon:

- Demographic pressures

- o Pressure on adult and older people services driven by increasing demand is expected to significantly increase in the medium to longer term. This will require an ongoing commitment from the Council to continue to work innovatively to re-shape service delivery to deliver better outcomes whilst maintaining financially sustainable services. However such is the anticipated demand pressure, it is inevitable that there will remain significant risk of year on year requirement for net growth in the level of resource requirement required for these service areas.

- o Primary rolls have been increasing for 3 years - this is likely to continue and extend into secondary. Further, analysing the roll projections at individual school level suggests that several schools will begin to have capacity issues linked to housebuilding plans in particular areas. This shift in local demographics will require ongoing monitoring and may drive a requirement for additional teaching resources and a need to reshape the current education estate.

- Service pressures

- o New burdens from the enactment of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act
- o Waste collection, recycling and disposal
- o Volatility in utility costs
- o The introduction of self directed support for adults requiring care and support
- o ICT service evolution and the move to "cloud" computing
- o Contractual and other inflationary cost pressures

- Pay pressures

- o General pay inflation and incremental drift
- o Continuation of changes in national pension arrangements
- o Living wage related pay cost pressures

- Policy related pressures

- o Welfare reform
- o Costs related to the Carers (Scotland) Act
- o Health and social care integration
- o Proposed Education Bill

The Council will need to remain pro-active in monitoring and evaluating the changing public sector landscape, remaining alert to key changes and for new and emerging cost pressures; ensuring that changes and pressures are understood, scoped and incorporated into the Council's financial plans and where appropriate longer term plans put in place to mitigate the impact of key longer term financial risks.

longer term. The uncertainty in this respect is potentially unprecedented and much may depend on what the longer term settled impact is for the UK and Scottish economy in a post exit environment outside the EU. In addition, it is recognised that specific risks reside around economic regeneration and skills development activities that are currently delivered by the Council and which lever in substantial amounts of EU funding. In the very short term, there appears to be appropriate guarantees being secured in relation to this funding but moving into the medium and longer term, the position becomes less certain. At this stage there is no indication what longer term funding arrangements may exist once the terms of the UK exit from the EU are concluded.

On the back of a weakening economic outlook for the UK and Scottish economies and taking account of the Scottish Government's articulated policy priorities for future spending over the course of this Parliament, local government in Scotland is expected to move into a further medium term period of sustained reduction in its major source of funding from the Scottish Government. The scale of the reduction is uncertain as is the period of time over which it will extend. The ongoing contraction in government grant may continue into the next decade and possibly beyond and the Council needs to prepare itself for this possibility. Certainty in respect to the scale and timing is not expected to emerge in the short term and the Council will therefore be required to progress its strategic and financial planning arrangements with ongoing uncertainty in this regard.

Income pressures

- 1.11 The principal source of funding for the Council continues to be the Government Grant, which provides over 80% of the funding required to meet the net cost of providing services. As outlined earlier, it is anticipated that based on the weakening economic outlook, coupled with the policy priorities set out by the Scottish Government, that local government is anticipated to face a further period of sustained reduction in the level of government grant. This may continue into the next decade and possibly the

Significant areas of economic and skills development services are funded by European Regional Development Funding and European Social Funding; and currently there is no guarantee from either the UK or Scottish Governments with regards to the replacement of these funding sources in the longer term. It is not anticipated that certainty in this regard will emerge potentially for a number of years as the exit negotiations are progressed and the Council will require to monitor this position very closely, engage where appropriate in national discussions as they develop and plan appropriately for the current guaranteed funding to come to a natural end with potentially no certainty over access to new funding sources emerging over the medium term.

could provide a marginal but sustained increase in the council tax base over the medium to longer term which will support a growth in net income.

It is expected that over the coming months greater clarity will emerge in relation to the future changes proposed for council tax and the potential introduction of a cap arrangement to replace the freeze that has operated for a number of years and the Council's financial planning arrangements should be adjusted as appropriate. For the purposes of longer term forecasting it is anticipated that the Council's net council tax base will grow at a marginal but sustained rate based on anticipated new house completions.

Mitigation Strategies

1.12 For several years now, the total package of grant support to the Council has been contingent on a council tax freeze. Following the findings of the Commission on Local Tax Reform the Scottish Government have proposed removing the freeze and introducing an annual cap of 3% on council tax rises, accompanied by changes to the ratios of the upper bands E-H (albeit it has yet to be clarified how the additional funding from the changes in council tax banding will be ring fenced for education spending). Moving forward it would appear that the opportunity to review council tax levels as part of the annual budget setting and longer term financial planning process will once again be a potential consideration for the Council. Whilst any increase in council tax yield over the medium to longer term is expected to be minimal given the already high level of collection, new house building

1.13 The Council already has in place a number of medium and longer term strategies which are focussed on mitigating cost growth or delivering efficiency savings. These strategies and the actions which flow from them are necessary in order for the Council to manage over the medium term its financial outlook and long term financial sustainability; and reduce the risk of being required to make unnecessary savings or cuts to services quickly in order to maintain a balanced budget.

In order to support the objective of both financial and service stability, it is important that the Council where possible looks to achieve savings and deliver change in a planned fashion. Given the uncertainty that exists over the medium term financial outlook, it is important that the

Council maintains a rolling medium term outlook when looking at the pipeline of delivery of change and savings, ensuring that flexibility exists in its shorter term budget strategies to respond in a managed fashion to unexpected movements in the Council's financial position.

It is critical that the Council continues to be innovative, focused on driving efficiency and delivering better outcomes in smarter, more sustainable ways. Left unchecked, the Council will otherwise face financially unsustainable demand led pressures. In this context, it is important that longer term financial planning takes appropriate account of the need to develop and deliver such change in order to promote long term service sustainability. It is important that sufficient financial flexibility is in place to support and deliver such longer term beneficial change that promotes sustainability and better outcomes.

1.14 Without action to address and plan for cost and service pressures the financial position of the Council would quickly come under significant pressure and longer term sustainability risks. A key response of the Council over a significant period of time has been to mitigate future cost growth through investment in preventative and early intervention services. It is important that moving forward that the Council continues to progress such strategies to support both better outcomes but also the longer term sustainability of services. In this context, active review of the Council's ongoing Debt Smoothing Strategy has been undertaken with adaptations implemented to support additional savings over the medium term period in order to protect resources supporting front line service delivery over this period.

1.15 The next phase of the Better Council Change Programme will focus over the medium term on digital service delivery, early intervention, asset optimisation and commercialisation with the aim of delivering further savings and service modernisation. In many cases the service transformation will require up-front investment in for example ICT or other assets.

1.16 Moving forward, the Council will increasingly be required to take strategic decisions, balancing the needs of communities with the resources available; and creating a sustainable model of service delivery which focuses a reducing level of resource on the delivery of those outcomes that are most important to the people of Renfrewshire. This will inevitably lead the Council into difficult territory and will require decisions covering potential disinvestment or stopping non-priority services in order to support and sustain investment in key priorities; the examination of alternative service delivery models; and the ongoing consideration of the future shape and size of the workforce that is required to meet the future needs of the Council.

Reserves

1.17 Active use of planned reserves has and will remain a key part of the Council's financial strategy and has remained a key mechanism to support the delivery of key objectives and to support long term financial sustainability objectives. Unallocated

general reserves are a key protection mechanism for the Council, providing financial resilience to manage unexpected demands on services, unanticipated costs or reductions in income. The level of unallocated reserves has historically been around 2% of the Council's net expenditure, with an absolute minimum of £7m being recommended. The level of unallocated reserves should reflect the financial risks currently and anticipated, and should be reviewed regularly to ensure the level remains appropriate to the risk profile of the financial environment.

As a general financial planning principle, no reliance should be placed on the use of unallocated reserves for day to day operations. A balance of around 2% of net expenditure is considered in the current economic environment an appropriate level of unallocated reserves to hold over the medium term and this should be reviewed on a regular basis in the context of changes in the Council's financial risk environment.

The use of existing earmarked reserves and the creation of new reserves will continue to play an important role in the management of the Council's current and future financial position.

Capital Investment

1.18 Given the limited visibility of capital grant from the Scottish Government, the Council has adopted a number of principles in

the management and planning of capital spend which remain valid:

- No new general borrowing will be undertaken without being underpinned by a specific investment case which is capable of delivering revenue savings sufficient to meet associated borrowing costs
- Future years capital grant will be prioritised to lifecycle maintenance and asset renewal
- The capital investment programme will continue to be supported by capital receipts from the sale of surplus assets, however no reliance will be placed on speculative receipts, only receipts which have been received.
- The council will actively and aggressively pursue other sources of funding to maximise investment opportunities.

1.19 In addition to the above principles, the Council has a major obligation to deliver the three City Deal projects which it is leading. This will require considerable planning to ensure the Council's capital funding, cash, borrowing and treasury management positions are all clearly monitored and understood.

Part 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Financial Strategy

This financial strategy provides a strategic medium to long term framework which establishes overall financial direction and parameters to support the Council to move forward and deliver against its strategic policy objectives and priorities. The development of the financial strategy is supported by existing key areas of activity:

- **The basic financial planning and control system** – the Council has well established budget planning and controls systems which have proved critical in supporting ongoing financial stability for the Council, particularly over recent years as financial challenges have increased significantly. This is focused on shorter term challenges for the Council, typically one year detailed budget with 1 – 2 year forward looking forecasts depending upon the current stage in the financial settlement cycle. The emphasis of this work is primarily to ensure fundamental stewardship requirements are met in relation to the Council's finances i.e. legal requirement to set a balanced budget, responding to year on year changes, support the delivery of short term service and Council objectives and controlling annual expenditure within agreed limits.

- **Longer term modelling** – the Council continues to examine longer term modelling arrangements which look to forecast forward over the long term. The work undertaken in this respect has reduced in more recent years from the scale undertaken previously recognising the significant fluidity of the economic, fiscal, and political environment. This has made such financial forecasting extremely challenging with wide degrees of uncertainty. Nevertheless, the principle objective of such processes remain valid and are aimed at supporting the development of a long term perspective of the Council's potential financial landscape and the identification of key underlying financial risks for the Council. Notwithstanding the significant uncertainty that exists looking to the long term, this allows the Council to plan for and build in longer term strategies to mitigate the development of the negative impacts of these key risks.

1.2 The medium term financial strategy seeks to integrate these key activities through;

- enhancing, developing and extending the key outputs from the shorter term financial planning arrangements,
- incorporating the key identified financial risks and the associated mitigation strategies that emerge from the longer term forecasting arrangements

- integrating these in a medium term financial planning context alongside the Council's key policy objectives and priorities, providing a clear financial framework to support the Council to change over the medium term and focus resources on the delivery of key strategic objective.
- 1.3 The strategy itself provides a framework which over the medium term will;
- guide and inform key financial planning principles,
 - support long term financial sustainability of the organisation and avoid short term focused decision making,
 - allow the identification of the critical workstreams to support the both the delivery of the annual budget setting requirement and medium term changes to the Council's financial and service structures;

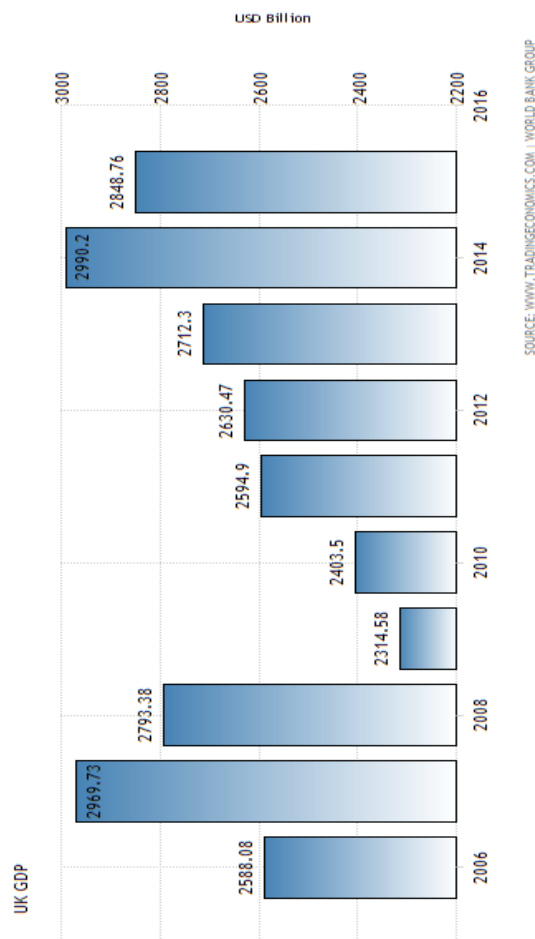
Part 2

National Strategic Context

UK economic outlook

2.1 The previous medium term financial strategy outlined both a fragile and challenging economic environment, characterised by austerity budgets and uncertainty for many Eurozone and world economies. The recent seminal vote for the UK to leave the EU has added a further layer of unprecedented uncertainty as outlined in a report to the Leadership Board in September 2016.

2.2 The Council is heavily dependent on government grant income to fund delivery of its services. The health of the public finances at both a UK and Scottish Government level as well as policy decisions taken by national levels of Government inevitably weigh heavily on the financial outlook and prospects for the Council both in the short and longer term. Since the global financial crisis which took hold in 2008, the UK has experienced poor economic growth – taking until 2014 for UK GDP to recover back to the level achieved in 2007 before a further dip in 2015.



2.3 The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) in November 2015 forecast GDP growth in 2016 of 2.4%, which it revised down to 2.0% in March 2016, prior to the Brexit vote. Since then and following the Brexit vote in June, there is a consensus amongst economic forecasters of limited economic growth over the medium term as the uncertainty caused by Brexit impacts on investment and recruitment decisions denting short to medium term growth prospects. The longer term impact of the Brexit vote on economic growth will take some time to emerge. There is the possibility that the impact is temporary in nature and as and when the exit terms are agreed and uncertainty dissipates, economic growth is re-established to historically normalised levels, albeit the economy will be a step below where it otherwise

may have been. A more significant and damaging risk is that there is a lowering of longer term growth rates as the economy settles into life outside the EU. The inextricable link between economic growth and the health and prospects for public finances means there is an inevitable expectation of additional pressure on the public finances in the UK, but with significant uncertainty over the scale and more importantly whether this will continue over the long term.

2.4 It should also be recognised that whilst Brexit has the most immediate and dominant impact on the state of the nation's financial position and prospects, there are other unresolved issues within the Eurozone itself, which despite the vote to leave may still impact on the UK economy given how interlinked world economies and banking systems are.

2.5 This new and significant post Brexit uncertainty has had, and is likely to continue to have, a material impact on UK public finances. The economic recovery from the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession was, prior to the Brexit vote, already recognised to be fragile and subject to a range of downside risks. Undoubtedly the post Brexit impact has dealt a significant blow to this recovery process. Evidence of this is illustrated from the decision of the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England in July 2016 to cut the bank rate to 0.25%, a historic low, and to introduce further quantitative easing measures to both stabilise financial markets and stimulate the economy in light of poor economic forecasts over the medium term. It is now highly

likely that previous forecasts of a sustainable economic recovery across the UK will be subject to fundamental re-assessment. However, at this stage it is too early to tell just how deep and long lasting the impact the Brexit vote and exit negotiation process will ultimately have.

Fiscal Outlook

2.6 As outlined above, the future prospects for the UK public finances are intrinsically linked to the prosperity in the wider economy. The UK government spending review set in 2015 outlined a plan to eliminate borrowing by 2019-20 through a series of measures to remove £37 billion of spend annually, predominantly through welfare reform. This was based on GDP growth averaging 2.4% over the next 5 years, a forecast which now appears unlikely to be unachieved.

2.7 The 2015 Spending Review outlined funding for the devolved Scottish Parliament as follows:

	Baseline 2015/16 £ billion	2016/17 £ billion	2017/18 £ billion	2018/19 £ billion	2019/20 £ billion
Resource DEL	25.9	26.1	26.3	26.3	26.5
Capital DEL	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.4
Total DEL	28.8	29.3	29.5	29.6	29.8

2.8 The resource funding (revenue funding) for Scotland was to increase in cash terms, but only by a limited amount and which in effect equated to a 1.3% reduction in real terms each year. Capital allocations by contrast were projected to increase in real terms each year.

2.9 The 2015 Spending Review will now be revised by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer in light of the Brexit vote, with the announcement due to be made on 23rd November. At this stage it is difficult to predict with any certainty the decisions that will be taken. The new Chancellor has indicated that he is prepared to 'reset' UK fiscal policy and an early decision was taken to extend the timeframe over which he plans to reduce annual borrowing to zero, albeit the scale of extension has not yet been confirmed. It would be wrong however, to assume that this means an end to fiscal consolidation. With a weaker economic outlook and rising inflation putting pressure on the welfare budget, further medium term departmental spending cuts over and above what was already planned seems now to be a greater risk. Equally however, both the First Minister and the Prime Minister have reaffirmed their commitment to infrastructure spending as a route to provide economic stimulus to mitigate some of the adverse effects of the Brexit vote.

2.10 In addition to the impact of the wider UK economy, moving into 2017/18 Scotland begins to assume greater fiscal autonomy under the 2016 Scotland Act. A process will commence in 2017/18 to devolve greater tax raising powers to the Scottish

Parliament and which will move Scotland towards 50% of public sector spending being funded through devolved taxation powers. Moving forward over the medium term, this devolution process will be governed by the new Fiscal Framework. The mechanics of the framework are complex but in essence will mean that the performance of the Scottish economy relative to that of the UK as a whole will be key in determining whether the Scottish budget will fare better under the new devolved arrangements than it would have had under the current arrangements. This process of fiscal devolution is a major change and in normal circumstances would present a major new dimension of risk. In the current context of Brexit and all the uncertainty that is associated with it, the terms of the exit process and the post exit economic environment, the risks appear to be even greater. Indeed, the Fraser of Allander Institute very recently published a report, "Scotland's Budget 2016", which amongst other key conclusions stated that: -

- *"The Smith Commission's proposals were intended to introduce both greater risk and greater reward to the Scottish budget. However with additional economic uncertainty following the EU referendum, a weakening UK fiscal position, ongoing UK welfare reform, and a fragile Scottish economy, the devolution of these new tax and social security powers could not have come at a more challenging time. There is a real risk that this new framework will only add strain on Scotland's public finances at least in the near term."*

- *“Under the complex arrangement for determining the Scottish Government’s budget under the new fiscal framework, what will be crucial is how the growth in Scottish tax receipts per head compares to the growth in equivalent tax revenues per head in the rest of the UK.”*
- *“The balance of evidence suggests that Scotland will do well to match UK economic performance at least in the short-term.”*
- *“Even before the EU referendum outcome, the Scottish budget was facing real terms cuts over the next few years driven largely by the plans set out by the previous Chancellor George Osborne. Our new findings suggest that the Scottish budget could be cut by between 3% – 4% percent in real terms by 2020-21 and up to 6% – around £1.6 billion – under a worst case scenario.”*

National Government Strategic Policy Drivers

- 2.11 As referred to earlier, over 80% of the Council’s funding is provided in the form of Scottish Government grant and therefore the Council’s financial position, prospects and outlook is heavily influenced by the level of funding made available by the Scottish Government. The local government settlement from the Scottish Government has over the past years been extremely challenging, with the 3.5% grant cut experienced in 2016/17 being the biggest

ever single year cut imposed on the local government revenue budget. Additionally, it is once again expected that the Scottish Government will announce only a 1 year budget for 2017/18, perpetuating the cycle of short term financial settlements which restricts the ability of the Council to effectively plan over the medium to longer term both from a financial and service delivery perspective. Notwithstanding the Scottish Government’s reluctance at present to commit to budget planning beyond a single year, the Government has outlined very clear policy and spending priorities that they intend to deliver over the course of the current Parliament. This includes growing by £500 million above inflation, spending on the NHS, protecting in real terms spending on the Police Scotland and seeking to double the provision of free childcare. Given the scale of these commitments and the proportion of the Government’s budget touched by these spending priorities, there will be inevitable consequences for the areas of the Scottish Government budget that remain unprotected, the significant element of which is local government. It appears inevitable that the local government budget will over the medium term be squeezed considerably, as a consequence of further downward pressure on public finances arising from the weakening economic outlook, coupled with the spending priorities set out by the Scottish Government.

2.12 In addition, the Scottish Government has also in recent years introduced a range of conditions which have formed part of the annual financial settlement offered to local government which were required to be satisfied to access the full amount of revenue

grant. Such measures have varied over the years but have included the council tax freeze and maintaining teacher numbers and/or the pupil teacher ratio. Although the Government have announced an intention to remove the Council Tax freeze moving into 2017/18, it remains to be seen if other conditions continue to be a feature of future year financial settlements and to what extent they restrict local flexibility for the Council in setting its annual budget.

- 2.13 Extending devolution to local communities is a key aim of the Community Empowerment Act, which places obligations on local authorities in terms of community consultation and participation in decision making (including resource allocation decisions), and also with regards the control of local authority assets. Community bodies have a right to request to purchase, manage or use land or building assets belonging to a local authority. Further proposals to delegate governance and finances directly to schools have also been outlined by the Scottish Government in their Programme for Scotland 2016-17. Individually, each of these measures has the potential to change how the Council progresses financial planning and budget setting in years to come. In this context, it will be important that the Council remains alert to such changes and new obligations to assess the financial, planning and service implications.

- 2.14 The UK Government agreement to devolve welfare powers to the Scottish Parliament may have significant implications for local government in Scotland. While the state pension will remain a

reserved matter, powers in respect of employment programmes and supporting long term unemployed people into work, job seeker support, discretionary welfare payments and DHP, and benefits for people who are disabled and their carers will be devolved. The Scottish Government plans to establish a new Social Security Agency to manage and administer these services. The exact implications of the new service on current local government support services is unknown at this stage, however these again could be significant depending on the delivery approach decided eg in partnership with local government or delivery in full by the new agency. The impact on advice and employability services currently delivered by councils and their local partners also remains unknown. The Council will require to fully engage in discussion around the proposed new service delivery model to fully understand the potential service and financial impact.

Part 3

Local Strategic Context

Strategic Drivers in Renfrewshire

Local Demographics and Socio-Economic circumstances

3.1 Renfrewshire is home to approximately 175,000 people, with the age profile of these residents broadly in line with the Scottish average. The total Renfrewshire population has remained stagnant over the past 20 years at a time when the Scottish population was gradually increasing. Projecting forward to 2037, according to the National Records of Scotland, the Renfrewshire population is forecast to increase very marginally in Renfrewshire by 0.6%, whilst in contrast the Scottish population is expected to grow steadily by 8.8% over the same period (it is recognised that these projections would have been influenced by net inward migration assumptions which may in time be revised following the outcome of any change in free movement within the existing European Union area follow negotiation and agreement on the terms of the UK exit from the EU). Life expectancy for both males and females is below the Scottish average; while levels of morbidity are higher. The 75+ age group is forecast to increase 15% over the next 6 years, a recurring demographic trend that is increasing in its significance and which will over the longer term exponentially increase demand led pressures on services for the elderly.

3.2 The Renfrewshire area covers both affluent and significantly deprived localities, with widely varying prospects and life expectancy evident. This position was the subject, amongst other

things, of a report by the Commission on Tackling Poverty set up by the Council in 2014. Since then the Council has been actively addressing the challenges of tackling poverty through dedicated funding and an action plan involving a range of community planning partners. SIMD data released in August 2016 again names the Ferguslie area of Paisley as the most deprived area in Scotland, outlining just how deep rooted the problems facing the Council are. Tackling poverty and inequality is a key priority for the Council and fundamentally addressing and reversing the associated long standing challenges which arise from poverty and deprivations means it is likely to remain a strategic focus for the Council over the medium to longer term.

Council priorities

3.3 The Council Plan as refreshed in 2015 outlines 10 priorities for the period to 2017, and the financial strategy of the Council is appropriately aligned to support addressing these priorities. Significantly, the Council has committed to the physical and economic regeneration of the area through a range of initiatives such as building on the area's culture and heritage, participation in the Glasgow City Region City Deal and the improvement of Renfrewshire's town centres.

3.4 An outlook of contracting resources available to the Council over the medium and potentially longer term, reinforces the need for the Council to continue to plan services and finances over the medium to longer term on the basis of:-

- reducing resources with uncertainty over when sustained growth may return,
- rising cost and demand pressures expected to be a long term feature of the Council's financial outlook,
- an increasing and ongoing need for the Council to prioritise spend to focus on the delivery of priority strategic outcomes defined in long term Council Plans, and
- a focus on delivering change, transformation and savings will continue to be a necessary and inevitable feature of the Council's planning arrangements

Long Term Commitments - City Deal

- 3.5 Whilst a key part of the Council's strategic priority to deliver regeneration, the financial issues related to the Council's involvement in the Glasgow City Region City Deal are of particular note, and will extend over the long term. City Deal represents a significant regional economic programme that will drive economic growth and create jobs across the region. It involves amongst other things over £1.1 billion of new infrastructure investment across the City Region, with £275 million being delivered within Renfrewshire. The Council is leading the delivery of three significant infrastructure projects:

- Glasgow Airport Investment Area (GAIA)
- Clyde Waterfront and Renfrew Riverside (CWRR)
- Glasgow Airport Access Project (AAP)

3.6

The infrastructure investment is funded predominantly by government grant provided by both the UK and Scottish Governments. The Council's contribution to delivery of the projects within Renfrewshire amounts to just under £18 million which will be delivered through prudential borrowing, the impact of which will not feature in the Council's financial strategy until post 2020. In addition and in order to accommodate the payment of government grant support over a 20 year period set against the delivery of investment over a shorter period, there will be a requirement for the Council to temporarily support a proportion of the costs associated with the delivery of the investment programme. The financial impact of this commitment is already emerging and will incrementally build up over the coming years in line with the infrastructure delivery, forecasting to peak in terms of associated annual interest costs in 2021/22. Thereafter, this commitment will gradually reduce as the grant payments are made over the full 20 year period of the funding. It is also recognised that access to the Grant Funding commitments made by both the UK and Scottish Governments is not automatically guaranteed and will be subject to delivery of specified outcomes by the City Deal partners over the long term associated with physical delivery of the infrastructure plans and delivery of economic growth targets. It will be important therefore that the Council's long term plans ensure that this long term commitment

is appropriately planned for and is undertaken in a manner consistent the delivery of long term financial sustainability of the Council.

Part 4

Financial Outlook

Financial outlook

4.1 This section will outline the key financial issues the Council is likely to have to deal with over the medium to longer term ie 3-10 years, and these can be broadly grouped into cost pressures and income pressures.

Cost pressures

4.2 A perennial feature of the Council's financial landscape is additional cost pressures emerging each and every year. Every Council in Scotland will face a range of cost pressures over the coming years; with many experienced being similar in nature and scale whilst others will be distinctly associated with particular areas of the country. The section below outlines some of the key drivers for increased costs for the Council over the medium to longer term. When considering the long term forecasting period involved, it is clear uncertainty plays a greater role and definitive confidence around the accuracy of the future cost pressure becomes less significant. What is important for the Council is that the key long term financial risks are identified and appropriate planning and mitigation strategies are developed and employed to plan for the long term changes and challenges that the Council will face.

Demographic pressures

4.3 As mentioned earlier, the gross population of Renfrewshire is projected to increase marginally in the coming years. Information

on population projections from the National Records of Scotland (2012 based population projections) can be summarised as follows:

Renfrewshire	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
All ages	174,563	174,709	174,870	175,039	175,202	175,366	175,527	175,691	175,830	175,945	176,038
0-5 years old	11,349	11,276	11,269	11,340	11,405	11,459	11,501	11,532	11,555	11,562	11,555
6-18 years old	24,162	24,148	24,112	24,034	23,971	24,084	24,206	24,295	24,317	24,362	24,430
19-65 years old	108,183	107,812	107,579	107,220	106,778	106,221	105,588	104,958	104,231	103,446	102,659
66 years old +	30,869	31,473	31,910	32,445	33,048	33,602	34,232	34,906	35,727	36,575	37,394

4.4 As illustrated in the table above, while the overall population remains relatively static, this forecast does not include the increase in population which may accompany current and planned housebuilding. Current projections forecast an additional 4,000 houses could be built in Renfrewshire over the period to 2022, with potential for a further 6,000 being built in the years following this. Naturally, there are risks with these projections as sentiment ebbs and flows with economic news. For example it should be noted that housebuilders' share prices have suffered significantly in the weeks since the Brexit vote as confidence in the UK housing market has reduced and it remains to be seen whether this will have a lasting impact on the scale of development activity and long term delivery of new house completions over the medium to long term. Equally, as new house completions feed through, there remains the potential for

Renfrewshire to experience a greater degree of churn or displacement within an overall broadly static population as people move around the area but with limited net inward migration. Nonetheless, a potential increase in both the number of households and the overall population should be anticipated for planning purposes; with potential consequent demand for school places and community services such as waste collection, recycling and disposal also increasing; and these pressures are explored in more detail below.

4.5 More pressingly however, is the projected increase in the population of over 65s of over 20% over the next 10 years. Projecting further out this percentage of over 65s making up the total population of Renfrewshire is expected to move from 17% in 2016 to 26% in 2036. This age group has potentially significant needs in terms of support to live independently in their own homes, care at home, and residential and nursing home places. Whilst individuals are expected to live longer, this does not necessarily mean that they will live longer *in good health*, therefore the support they require may be for an increasingly extended period. Tellingly, the population of over 90s is projected to triple over the next 20 years.

4.6 Pressure on adult and older peoples services driven by increasing demand is therefore expected to significantly increase in the medium to longer term, and these services will require significant increases in resource. The Council and the Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership are actively planning for this increase

in demand, and some of the mitigation and service redesign measures proposed are outlined in section 5 below.

4.7 Owing predominantly to the increased number of houses anticipated to be built over the next 10 years, school roll projections suggest an increase in pupil numbers in excess of 10%. In the past increasing primary numbers have been largely offset by falling secondary, however both are projected to increase moving forward.

Year	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
2016	13,405	9,903	362	23,669
2017	13,468	9,967	377	23,811
2018	13,626	10,091	377	24,094
2019	13,519	10,387	377	24,283
2020	13,560	10,724	377	24,661
2021	13,648	10,926	377	24,951
2022	13,841	11,144	377	25,362
2023	13,948	11,363	377	25,688
2024	14,188	11,424	377	25,989
2025	14,252	11,587	377	26,216
2026	14,445	11,592	377	26,414

4.8 This increasing school roll projection has long term consequences for teaching resources across the Council that will bring not just financial implications but longer term workforce planning implications. Further, analysing the roll projections at individual

school level suggests that several schools may begin to experience capacity challenges linked to housebuilding plans in particular areas. In addition, as part of the Local Government Settlement for 2016/17, all local authorities agreed to maintain the national pupil / teacher (p/t) ratio at the 2015 level. Renfrewshire's p/t ratio was 14.6. If such an agreement remains a medium to long term feature of future financial settlements, this could drive a formulaic change in the level of annual cost increase that may be experienced in teaching resources with limited opportunity to develop local solutions to best meet Renfrewshire's needs. It is clear therefore that over the medium to long term, the Council is likely to be moving into a long term period where there will be growing demand pressures emerging in the delivery of Education services with an increasing pressure on the existing estate, escalating the potential need to reshape it to meet long term demands as well as maintain its physical condition. This projected shift in local demographics will necessitate careful ongoing monitoring and may potentially drive longer term workforce planning and school estate challenges that will require to be planned for and ultimately addressed.

Service Specific pressures

4.9 The Council has traditionally experienced a relatively high demand for support services for children and young people. While this pressure still remains, the mitigation measures put in place over the past number of years such as the development of Functional Family Therapy and the Permanence and Care

Excellence Programme have reduced the number of children who are looked after by the authority. However, there are a number of pressures as a consequence of changes to the responsibilities of local authorities to support looked after children introduced under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The three most significant pressures are the right of looked after and accommodated children to remain in placement to the age of 21, the extension of a right to throughcare support to the age of 25 and an extension of allowances to kinship carers. This legislation is recent and there is potential pressure for growth in looked after children numbers arising from the extension in support. In addition, the Scottish Government has set out a commitment to double the provision of free childcare of 3-5 year olds to 1140 hours over the course of the current parliament. As a new statutory requirement, it would be expected that this will be fully funded by the Scottish Government. Nevertheless this will create a wide range of significant challenges for the Council in terms of costs to deliver the new level of provision, and the capacity of the public sector and partnership market to deliver the service, both in term of physical infrastructure and the size of workforce required.

4.10

Compounded by the projected increase in housebuilding, existing cost pressures in relation to waste collection, recycling and disposal are projected to increase. Landfill tax rate rises have been limited to inflationary rises in recent years as opposed to the escalator which operated from 2007 to 2014; however given the devolution of this tax to the Scottish Parliament and

collection by Revenues Scotland, there is potential additional risk should Scottish waste policy diverge markedly from the rest of the UK. Increases in costs, particularly with regards to recycling are difficult to estimate given the significant volatility in the markets for recyclates; however the trend in the past 3 years has very much been towards cost increases as opposed to a position where the Council was able to generate income from recyclable materials. Separate collection streams for recycling and residual waste disposal add additional burdens; as does a need to separately dispose of food waste. Zero Waste Scotland targets of 70% of waste being recycled and maximum 5% sent to landfill, both by 2025, are challenging targets the Council will need to address over the medium term. The Council has recently committed to a long term residual waste contract in conjunction with 4 other West of Scotland councils which provides cost certainty for an extended period from 2019/20, therefore the financial risks associated with this particular service have been mitigated to a significant extent. However, the risks associated with environmental and waste management remain significant as both policy and legislation in this area develops and potentially changes in light of the UK exit from the EU.

4.11 The continuing volatility in utility costs is an ever present challenge for the Council. Cost projection in this area is extremely difficult given the impact of global factors such as oil and gas prices and supply, the evolution of different more environmentally friendly energy generation sources such as wind and solar power, and the continuing use of nuclear power as part

of a diversified strategy for the country's energy needs. The Council along with other public bodies purchases utilities through a national contract managed by the Scottish Procurement Directorate of the Scottish Government. The forward purchasing of a proportion of estimated demand provides some protection from exaggerated volatility however the general trend in prices is upwards. The council spent £5m on gas and electricity in 2015/16 and increases to this cost will remain a significant risk in the future. In terms of consumption, the Council has invested in a range of energy efficiency measures such as LED street and building lighting, solar installations on public building which generate electricity which can be consumed by the Council or sold back to the National Grid; and investment in more efficient boiler plant and controls. These combined efforts to reduce the Council's consumption are providing and will provide a degree of protection from energy cost risks.

4.12

Adult social care services have been radically changed by the introduction of the Social Care (Self Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013, which gives service users a much greater degree of choice and control of the support services they receive. Professional staff work in partnership with the person needing support and their family to agree their needs, what difference they want services to make to their lives and what sort of services and support would achieve this. An appropriate budget for support is determined, over which the individual can have as much control as they wish. This presents challenges for the Council's service planning, advice services and infrastructure to

support options which users take up. The Council requires to ensure that the systems and processes necessary to successfully operate SDS remain fit for purpose as the numbers of service users increases. The service is also required to continually plan and assess service demand, both for Council support and for support commissioned from external agencies in order to ensure the best use of resources. This continuous reshaping of service provision, increased demand for advice services and ongoing staff training results in financial risks for the Council which are difficult to forecast as they can be heavily influenced by changes and development in the preferences of users.

- 4.13 The environment and methodology for the delivery of information and communications technology (ICT) services is constantly evolving with new technology bringing both opportunities and costs. Information security and information sharing are challenges the Council has faced over recent years and as the public sector landscape continues to reshape eg closer integration of health and social services, then the requirement to share information potentially will grow; requiring always to protect that information from being shared unnecessarily or in an unmanaged way. The Council has met a Cabinet Office requirement for public bodies to be Public Service Network (PSN) accredited which allows information to be passed to and from other public bodies and the Council; and is a mark of the security of the Council's own networks and gateways. The costs of maintaining this level of security, and also of addressing the Council's evolving ICT requirements in an environment where

“software as a service” and a move away from the traditional approach where the Council would maintain a significant in-house server estate puts additional and growing pressure on revenue budgets. The market delivery of ICT services, both software and hardware, is evolving fast and delivery of both as a purchased service is becoming an increasing feature. The Council, in planning for ICT resilience, risk management, access to high quality services and reducing cost in an ever faster moving environment, is shifting the delivery of a range of ICT services to this model where it is appropriate. Looking to the future and given the current direction of travel in the market place, a shift to the provision of services as opposed to assets – either infrastructure, hardware, software or end user devices – is likely to become the increasing norm. There will therefore be a need for the Council to plan for this fundamental shift, recognising that in the longer term, meeting the Council's ICT requirements will require less capital resources and an increasing emphasis on revenue resources to acquire services.

- 4.14 In addition to the specific pressures mentioned above, the Council faces a range of contractual and other inflationary cost pressures linked to annual cost increases such as maintenance contracts and the unitary charge for PPP schools. Other general inflationary pressures have traditionally been managed on a bottom line basis by Directors and are not as a matter of course funded; however in an environment of potentially increasing inflation this pressure will require continual monitoring and assessment.

Pay pressures

4.15 Since the recession which took hold in 2008 the pay landscape in the public sector has been characterised by significant pay restraint. Pay inflation has varied between 0% and 1.5% at a time when inflation in the general economy was higher, effectively resulting in a real terms decline in public sector pay levels. However, the fact that pay growth has failed to match the pace of inflation in the economy generally, allied with an expectation of increasing inflation linked to the Brexit vote, suggests that pressure on pay awards could increase in the coming years. The UK Government has a public sector pay cap of 1% for 4 years from 2015/16, however it is not certain whether this will be translated into the Scottish context and indeed local government in Scotland. Given the outlook for public finances outlined above, it is difficult to envisage that a degree of pay restraint will not continue as part of the overall solution to the financial challenge being faced. That said, it will be important for the Council to recognise the potential challenges this presents, both in financial terms as well as from a longer term workforce planning and organisational development perspective. Pay represents only part of the overall package offered to employees and it will be important that the Council continues to modernise the overall pay structure, wider terms and conditions, training and development and job roles within the Council. This is important to ensure the delivery of high quality services; to maintain attractiveness as an employer who values and invests in our employees; where future career opportunities can be seen,

where work flexibility is valued by both employer and employee; and where people are clear on how their role makes a difference to the people of Renfrewshire. Generally the Council does not budget for “incremental drift” where employees move up pay bands within their grade as their service with the Council extends. This cost has traditionally been managed through the natural turnover in staffing as they move from post to post; however as the overall headcount of the Council reduces and the age profile of Council staff increases, this pressure will become more difficult to manage in this fashion and the ability to manage this pressure moving into the future will require to be carefully monitored.

4.16

The Council also has costs associated with pension reform to contend with, most notably from auto-enrolment of staff into the Council pension scheme. The Council has agreed a “staging date” of 2017 in terms of the full application of auto enrolment, at which point the Council will require to automatically enrol any member of staff not currently a member of the scheme with the onus on the employee to notify the Council if they wish to opt out. New members of staff have been auto-enrolled since 2015. While the policy objective is laudable, there are significant additional employer contributions associated with the move. For the organisations which have already passed their staging date, experience suggests that around 60% - 80% of those members not previously in the scheme who are enrolled do not opt out. For Renfrewshire this could result in an additional cost of up to £3m.

4.17 The Council is committed both as an employer and as a service purchaser to ensure that employees are paid the Living Wage. There is a UK Government commitment that the Living Wage will increase to £9.00 per hour by 2020 - the current living wage paid by the Council is £8.33. Post achievement of this level it is anticipated annual increases may be more in line with pay inflation generally. Of additional concern is the implication for adult social care services where again a commitment has been given to ensure that, where these services are commissioned from the independent and third sectors, that employees of organisations who are providing these services will also receive the Living Wage. There is no certainty of Scottish Government grant funding to cover these costs in full, nor of an ongoing commitment by private and third sector providers to meet their share of Living Wage costs. Therefore this is an area of potential significant financial pressure for the Council and the Health & Social Care Partnership, both in terms of the current financial year but also moving forward into the future and the longer term sustainability of this commitment and should there be a longer term policy commitment to extend this into other sectors of commissioned services, in particular, the provision of early years services.

4.18 As a consequence of the implementation of the Living Wage, the Council along with other local authorities could be required to fundamentally reform pay and grading structures. Where the living wage has been implemented, many of the lower points on the current pay grades have been eroded, pushing up not just

wages for those on those scales, but also squeezing the gap between these individuals and their team leads. As the level of Living Wage continues to increase at above general pay inflation rates, this pressure becomes even more acute and it will be important that the Council ensures that in this context, its pay and grading structure remains appropriate and avoids unnecessary equality risks.

Policy Influences

4.19 The UK Government has, through the Welfare Reform Act 2012, introduced a raft of changes to welfare provision over the last four years. The underlying policy intent of the Government's measures is to reduce the level of welfare spending; to support people off welfare benefits and into work and; to reduce the complexity and administrative burden of the current system. The impact of these reforms on Renfrewshire residents has been the subject of several reports to members over the past number of years; as well as being a driver for the instigation of the Tackling Poverty Commission. These wider reform issues, particularly the continued roll-out of Universal Credit, combined with the devolution of welfare powers to the Scottish Government as proposed by the Smith Commission, have potentially significant service and financial implications for the Council. The Council's strategic approach to welfare reform has, over the last four years, recognised and planned an effective response to the changes. These included ensuring effective arrangements were put in place to manage the impact of welfare reform; manage the impact on

citizens and the financial risks to the council. These risks require to be kept under review, particularly in relation to:

- anticipated increasing demand for financial assessments due to the complex interaction between benefits, tax credits and council tax reduction
- increasing demand for financial, benefits and debt advice
- increasing demand for Discretionary Housing Payments to support those with immediate and pressing financial support to address housing related costs such as the implications of the bedroom tax, and other welfare reform such as the benefits cap
- increasing demand for Scottish Welfare Fund support, potentially outstripping the allocation made to the Council by the Scottish Government
- service demands to build on existing employability programmes and the wider programme of economic regeneration

4.20 The implications for the Council from the devolution of aspects of welfare provision to the Scottish Government is still uncertain; however the local government role in delivery of social security is a significant concern in terms of service configuration and planning. For example, should the Scottish Government opt to deliver benefits services directly, then there are obvious

workforce issues for the Council, in addition to a potential disconnect between benefits advice and other advice services the Council provides.

4.21 The Scottish Government have confirmed that the Carers (Scotland) Act will be commenced on 1 April 2018, which will introduce new statutory duties in relation to the assessment and provision of support to unpaid and young carers and the people they care for. Although most of the new duties are relatively clear, discussion is ongoing in relation to the charging of looked after people for replacement care i.e. the care provided to replace the input which an absent unpaid carer would normally provide. Although the Scottish Government has advised sufficient resource will be provided to deliver the new duties, the availability of free replacement care is highly likely to increase demand for support, leading to significant demand on social care budgets.

4.22 As mentioned above, the Council has extended obligations under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act to provide support and accommodation for looked after and accommodated (LAC) children up until they reach 21 years of age. Local Authorities supporting looked after young people will also have to provide “advice, guidance and assistance” to care leavers up to the age of 26 where this is something that would be helpful to them. The extension of support to kinship carers also presents a further potential pressure for the Council. The table below shows the growth in non looked after children placed with related carers. At

31st March 2016 the number of children looked after by non LAC related carers is three times the 2012 level and this upward trend is expected to continue.

Year	Non LAC Link Carer
2011/12	45
2012/13	112
2013/14	125
2014/15	138
2015/16	148

4.23 The Scottish Government has a number of school related manifesto pledges, amplified in the government's delivery plan for education "Delivering Excellence & Equity in Scottish Education" published in June 2016. Currently, legal responsibilities for delivering education and raising standards in schools sit largely with education authorities. The Government plans to extend these responsibilities to schools and teachers in a new Education Bill, due for consultation early in 2017. The financial implications for councils at this point are unclear, however the manifesto pledged to "deliver £750m in additional investment through the extended Scottish Attainment Fund including £500m raised from local tax reforms delivered direct to schools." Renfrewshire was not amongst the authorities selected for participation in the first phase of the attainment challenge, however in the second phase five Renfrewshire primaries will

each receive around £80k per year until financial year 2018/19. Renfrewshire has been selected as a "challenge authority" for the third phase of the Attainment Challenge which relates to secondary schools and engagement with the Scottish Government in this regard remains ongoing. The £500m referred to in the manifesto is "the additional £100 million that will be raised each year from local tax reforms" ie from council tax banding changes. From 2017-18 the Government has indicated that they intend to allocate this amount directly to schools. The exact mechanism for this distribution is not yet agreed, however there is a risk that over the medium term, if the direction of policy intent is to allocate resources direct to schools, that the current resource allocation methodologies are impacted; increasing risk to both funding levels and to the financial management of the Council as funding flows become more complex. The recent announcement by the Scottish Government of a Governance Review suggests major change in both the structures and funding of primary and secondary education in and by local authorities is a real possibility. This may therefore present major service and financial change for the Council and it will be important that the Council remains alert to and actively engaged in developments in this policy space.

4.24 Over the medium term and sitting alongside the expected scale of financial challenge to be faced, the Council has a range of key policy related financial considerations to address that have the potential to extend into the medium to longer term. These will

need to be incorporated into the Council's financial plans over this period, including:

- Temporary investment capacity currently directed to a range of priority areas including the Tackling Poverty programme, Invest in Renfrewshire employability programmes and Early Year's initiatives. Moving beyond 2017/18 these temporary funding arrangements will begin to come to an end and there will be a requirement for the Council to consider the sustainability or otherwise of these services, set against the resources that will be available and the strategic priorities of the Council. In addition, an added complication in this respect relates to future uncertainty around EU funding post 2018 and which in addition to Council funding is a key element of funding existing employability programmes. As reported to the Leadership Board, at present certainty has yet to be secured around the continuation of funding for such programmes covering initially from 2018-20 and indeed in the longer term once a UK exit from the EU is negotiated. This similarly will need to be carefully monitored and as certainty emerges over future funding arrangements appropriate transitional planning put in place.
- Over the course of the existing financial strategy the Council has achieved investment in key priorities through the redirection of existing resources and through directing temporary revenue surpluses to support targeted time limited investment programmes. The nature of the Council's

medium term financial outlook, both in scale and potential for movement, means that the Council will need to continue to adopt a strategic and sustainable plan linked to the delivery of priorities approved in the Council Plan and agreed with partners in the Community Plan. The existing Council Plan runs until 2017 and will be subsequently updated identifying refreshed strategic priorities moving forward. These strategic priorities will continue to provide a clear focus in future budget decisions, where the delivery of core services must be balanced with the increasingly limited resources that will be available to the Council in the future. In this context it is important that the Council's underlying financial strategy maintains a sustainable medium term perspective whilst at the same time recognising the ambitions of the Council to direct investment to support the delivery of key outcomes. Directing investment to such areas of priority in a climate of reducing resources will inevitably require the Council to make difficult choices to support the re-direction of existing resources.

Income pressures

- 4.25 2016/17 witnessed the largest ever single year cut to the level of revenue grant funding for local government in Scotland. This single year settlement was in contrast to the detailed 4 year comprehensive spending review figures announced by the UK government in the Autumn of 2015; and which has been outlined in section 2.7 above.

4.26 The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution has indicated a further 1 year settlement is anticipated in 2017/18, limiting the ability of the Council to plan over the medium term with any degree of certainty its financial outlook. As covered in detail in the covering report, the impact of the decision to leave the European Union is likely to remain a significant feature of the fiscal landscape for some time, both in terms of the impact of uncertainty during the exit negotiation process and in terms of the lasting impact on long term economic growth prospects. During this period, major uncertainty will exist for the Council in terms of future prospects for revenue and capital grant funding. What is perhaps better understood is the anticipated general direction of movement in government grant support. As set out in more detail in the covering report, local government in Scotland can reasonably expect further cuts in revenue grant over the medium term as pressures in other areas of the public sector such as the NHS emerge and the Scottish Government prioritises these services over local government. The larger impact however is likely to be driven by the state of the UK economy generally as outlined above.

4.27 In addition to the overall expectation of reducing grant resources available to local government over the medium term, the Council's position on or close to the grant floor may remain unchanged moving forward given forward projections for net population change across Renfrewshire relative to the rest of the country, therefore exacerbating the impact of the loss in grant resources to local government. This will remain under ongoing

review to identify any potential change in direction, for example the scale of future house building in the area may provide a degree of counterbalance to this projected change in relative population. The Council will also need to remain alert to proposed changes in the grant settlement process, such as changes in the measures for rurality and deprivation; and also to the impact of new burden funding within the overall financial settlement changes, ensuring that the underlying change in funding and the impact on the Council is clearly understood. In addition, and as outlined in detail in the covering report, the Scottish Government will assume significantly increased responsibility for raising taxes and administering welfare benefits as agreed in the Scotland Act 2016. As recently highlighted by the Fraser of Allander Institute, these changes present a new scale of risk and at the same time access to potential reward for the Scottish Government. However this is undoubtedly a most significant and challenging period of change in Scotland's fiscal landscape that is likely to be made more challenging and complex when occurring at the same time as the EU exit process is progressed. It will be important that over the medium to longer term the Council remains alert to how this national fiscal position and outlook is developing in this new and untested environment, and anticipates the impact of any material changes that appear to be developing. In addition, it will also be important that the Council remains both alert to and engaged in any future discussions in relation to any proposed developments and changes in respect to the future funding arrangements for local government.

- 4.28 Recent reports to both the Leadership Board and Economy & Jobs Policy Board outlined the risks of current levels of EU funding being at withdrawn following the Brexit vote. Significant areas of economic and skills development services are funded by European Regional Development Funding and European Social Funding; and currently there is no guarantee from either the UK or Scottish Governments with regards to the replacement of these funding sources in the longer term. The Council should continue to explore with partners the possibility of replacement funding, and press government on these issues as developments from the exit process unfold.
- 4.29 For several years now, the total package of grant support to the Council has been contingent on a council tax freeze while the system of council tax was reviewed. The Scottish Government response to the findings of the Commission on Local Tax Reform were to propose an annual cap of 3% on council tax rises, accompanied by changes to the ratios of the upper bands E-H. Moving forward therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that the opportunity to review council tax levels as part of the annual budget setting and longer term financial planning process will once again be a potential consideration for the Council – subject to the cap that may be imposed by the Scottish Government and any associated conditions that may or may not accompany this change in policy. In addition and as mentioned referred to earlier, any increase in income from banding changes are proposed by the Scottish Government to be ring-fenced to support education provision and may not be available to councils to address general
- funding pressures – again this position has yet to be clarified and financial plans will require to be updated accordingly once this becomes clear. Whilst any increase in council tax yield over the medium to longer term is expected to be minimal given the already high level of collection, new house building as mentioned above could provide a marginal but sustained increase in the council tax base over the medium term. The magnitude of this increase will depend to a large extent on the type of housing being built and the council tax band into which it would fall. However, it would appear reasonable to assume for the purposes of longer term forecasting that an annual increase in the council tax collected, linked to an increase in the council tax base, in the order of £0.5m may be potentially sustainable.
- 4.30 The operation of the non-domestic rates system is being reviewed by the Scottish Government with a report going to Ministers from the Barclay Review Group in July 2017. The review aims to enhance and reform the business rates system to better support business growth and long term investment and reflect changing marketplaces. It is impossible to say at this stage what the impact from the recommendations of the review will be, other than there being a suggestion that the overall level of funding (ie the tax take) is maintained. The review, and also the rating revaluation in 2017, may affect both the income available and costs for the Council. While any changes could be mitigated through the Scottish Government adjusting the poundage rate, there is potentially more upside risk to costs given buildings cost inflation over the years since the last revaluation in 2010.

Part 5

Mitigation Strategies

Mitigation Strategies

5.1 The Council already has in place a number of medium and longer term strategies which are focussed on mitigating cost growth or delivering efficiency savings. These strategies and the actions which flow from them are necessary in order for the Council to manage over the medium term its financial outlook and long term financial sustainability; and reduce the risk of being required to make unnecessary savings or cuts to services quickly in order to maintain a balanced budget. In order to support the objective of both financial and service stability, it is important that the Council where possible looks to achieve savings and deliver change in a planned fashion. Additionally and given the uncertainty that exists over the medium term financial outlook, it is important that the Council should maintain a rolling medium term outlook when looking at the pipeline of delivery of change and savings, ensuring that flexibility exists in its shorter term budget strategies to respond in a managed fashion to unexpected movements in the Council's financial position.

Early intervention

5.2 As outlined above, the Council will continue to face long term and substantial cost pressures from changes in demographics and socio-economic circumstances. In the absence of any pro-active action taken by the Council to address and plan for these service pressures, the Council's financial position would quickly come under significant strain, increasing the risk to longer term

sustainability. A key response from the Council over a significant period of time has been to mitigate future cost growth through investment in preventative and early intervention services, shifting resource from services which deal with the consequences of for example ill health or increased dependency. It is acknowledged that the simultaneous investment in new services may not be possible at the same pace as dis-investment from current services, and periods of "double-running" may be a consequence. Change on this scale also takes time to plan and implement, making for a challenging financial position. However, it is recognised that such measures provide medium to long term benefit and act as a counterbalance to pressures emerging from natural demographic change.

5.3

With the introduction of the Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), the Council has a partner to work with to achieve these aims in terms of adult care and support services. The workplan agreed by the HSCP outlines several key areas of change over the coming years:

- Service review of Homecare
- Service review of Care Homes;
- Service review of Occupational Therapy services and provision of equipment and adaptations;
- Service review of Self Directed Support;
- Review with each provider how services will be delivered from 1 October 2016.

5.4 These prioritised areas reflect the national policy direction to shift the balance of care, promote independent living and ensure person centred care. The service reviews will critically appraise and challenge current models of service delivery to ensure resources are focused on greatest need delivering the best outcomes for service users.

5.5 Within Childrens' Services, preventative projects such as Functional Family Therapy and improved routes to permanence are having positive impacts on the accommodated population. Functional Family Therapy supports a number of young people at home who are at serious risk of becoming accommodated. The Permanence and Care Excellence programme (PaCE), aims to improve permanent placements for children who cannot be safely looked after during their childhood by their birth families. The Council aims to have a decision on a permanent placement within 6 months of a child being accommodated. A permanent placement could be with family/friends, a rehabilitation home, consideration of adoption or to remain in their current placement.

5.6 Investing in prevention has been a key element of the Council's long term financial planning to date and has proved to be a key and positive contributor to the Council's financial stability and sustainability. The impact of such measures continue to contribute to the mitigation of cost growth linked to demand led pressures and given the demographic and socio-economic outlook for the Renfrewshire area, it will be important moving

forward that the Council continues to pro-actively pursue the prevention agenda as part of the long term planning to deliver better outcomes through service delivery that is financially sustainable.

Service transformation

5.7 One of the key aims of the Council Plan is to be a "Better Council", and a programme of change projects aimed at transforming services has been in place for a considerable period of time. The Better Council Change Programme (BCCP) has delivered substantial change in and modernisation of services in a thematic way – examining, developing and implementing change to deliver improved procurement, asset management, customer access and corporate support. Over the period the programme has been in place, significant savings have been delivered, predominantly from increased efficiency, contributing towards the protection of front line services.

5.8 The next phase of the BCCP will focus over the medium term on digital service delivery, early intervention, asset optimisation and commercialisation with the aim of delivering further savings and service modernisation. In many cases the service transformation will require up-front investment in for example ICT or other assets, therefore the availability of, and replenishment of, modernisation funds is critical, and this issue is covered in further detail below.

5.9 Again in conjunction with the HSCP, the Council will look to further develop its ways of working, particularly to build a structured approach to how to involve and engage General Practitioners to ensure they are meaningfully part of service based working. A number of change projects will progress to inform how the HSCP can best design an effective and dynamic approach to 'locality' and 'cluster' based working and to build collaboration and joint working between services. These projects will bring together GP's, Social Work, District Nurse, Rehabilitation Service, Mental Health and other staff to consider how they can improve joint working to better support the needs of local patients and service users. As part of the Change and Improvement Programme, the Partnership will maximise the use of the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) to explore and test innovative new ideas and wider service change, where available adopting evidence based approaches, designed to shift the balance of care rather than to maintain historic arrangements and relationships:

- To roll-out successful rehabilitation, reablement and technology-enabled models of service to all adult care groups;
- To deliver a community capacity building plan, engaging a wide range of stakeholders in its development and delivery, with a view to third sector organisations or partnerships leading on a number of the work areas; and
- To develop locality and cluster based models of working and networking.

Continuous Improvement

5.10 The necessity to deliver Best Value and key outcomes for residents is critical for the Council, and is a key focus for the Council. Moving forward, Audit Scotland have refreshed and reviewed the Best Value evaluation framework and the Council will be audited in the near future. This review may generate further thoughts on areas in which the Council could improve, however the Council will also continue to self evaluate its performance through a variety of service specific benchmarking frameworks, through the ongoing development and application of the Better Working toolkit, and through use of evaluation frameworks such as the EFQM model.

Service Prioritisation and Strategic Commissioning

5.11 As outlined above, the Better Council programme has delivered substantial savings and significant service change – largely in 'back office' areas of the Council. The effective implementation of these changes will continue where ever possible, such as the investment in the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system which will generate further efficiencies in administrative processes and deliver improved information management. However, it is becoming clear that the ability of the Council to generate the savings required from the back office and wider service efficiency is diminishing and is unlikely to sustain the Council through this period of medium term financial challenge.

- 5.12 Moving forward, the Council will increasingly be required to take strategic decisions, balancing the needs of communities with the resources available; and creating a sustainable model of service delivery which focuses a reducing level of resource on the delivery of those outcomes that are most important to the people of Renfrewshire. This will inevitably lead the Council into difficult territory and will require decisions covering potential disinvestment or stopping non-priority services in order to support and sustain investment in key priorities; the examination of alternative service delivery models; and the ongoing consideration of the future shape and size of the workforce that is required to meet the future needs of the Council.

Treasury Management and Debt Smoothing

- 5.13 Over a number of years the Council has implemented a debt smoothing strategy as one of the key methods of achieving long term budget savings and maintaining sustainable debt levels in the context of the Council's shrinking resource base. The strategy involves examining the Councils existing debt profile and structures, and taking the opportunity to manage this profile to minimise future debt repayments. In its current form, the benefit the Council's financial position has accrued from the debt smoothing strategy was anticipated to diminish to a much reduced scale moving beyond 2017/18. Given it is anticipated that the Council will be moving into a further period of sustained and significant cost reductions beyond 2017/18, a review has been undertaken to reassess the approach associated with the

implementation of the final stages of the current strategy. It is now intended that resources previously earmarked to deliver accelerated debt repayment in 2016 - 18 will be utilised to support the revenue budget through providing relief from annual debt charges over the medium term. This change in approach will allow a further phase of debt smoothing savings moving beyond 2017/18 to be established for a defined medium term period after which the benefit will fall away. This however will provide additional opportunity through this forthcoming period of further financial challenge to assist in protecting core front line services and mitigate against unnecessary reductions in service provision. In addition, the change in approach will also provide access to a flexible resource to support the Council to deliver the inevitable scale and pace of change that will be required to meet the overall financial challenge, including costs associated with continuing to resize and reshape the workforce.

Part 6

Reserves Strategy

Reserves Strategy

6.1 The Council maintains a range of long and short term reserves to manage the financial risks outlined in this report, to provide financial stability for the Council and to support the delivery of change and key strategic priorities.

6.2 Unallocated general reserves are a key protection mechanism for the Council, providing financial resilience to manage unexpected demands on services, unanticipated costs or reductions in income. The level of unallocated reserves has historically been 1-2% of council net expenditure, with an absolute de-minimis of £7m being recommended in the previous version of the medium term financial strategy. The level of unallocated reserves should reflect the financial risks currently and anticipated, and should be reviewed regularly to ensure the level remains appropriate to the risk profile of the financial environment. As a general financial planning principle, no reliance should be placed on the use of unallocated reserves for day to day operations. Maintaining a balance in the region 2% of net expenditure is considered in the current economic environment to be an appropriate level of unallocated reserves to hold over the medium term.

6.3 The Council also maintains several earmarked reserves which are held for specific purposes to reflect future commitments the Council has agreed. The flexibility which earmarked reserves provide is an important part of the overall ability of the Council to maintain financial stability, support long term financial planning

associated with the delivery of key strategic outcomes and also mitigate against future financial risks. Over the medium term, the use of existing earmarked reserves, and the creation of new reserves will continue to play an important role in the management of the Council's current and future financial position.

6.4 Key earmarked reserves are held as follows:

Reserve	Purpose
Capital Funds	The Council holds an investment capital fund into which revenue contributions are committed to fund future capital commitments. Over the period of this strategy several large scale investment projects have been committed to eg the Paisley Museum redevelopment and Ferguslie Sports Facilities. In addition the Council will continue to require to invest in schools, public buildings and infrastructure and the maintenance of these funds in addition to a capital receipts reserve assists in enabling these works to be undertaken once agreement has been secured. In addition, use will also be made of Capital Funds to hold resources linked to the delivery of the Council's revised Debt Smoothing Strategy which will be released over the medium term to counter balance debt servicing costs, providing an avenue of support to protect the delivery of front line services.

Service Modernisation and Reform Fund	The Council has maintained this fund for a considerable time in recognition of the need as outlined above of the continual need to modernise Council services through investment in for example new technology, but also to fund service redesign which may involve the need to consider voluntary severance for particular staff groups. Audit Scotland have recently highlighted that Councils have been dependent on incremental service change to generate savings; but this approach is not sustainable – a more strategic, longer term approach which fully considers alternative forms of service delivery is required. The availability and replenishment of modernisation funds to enable change is crucially important if the Council is to remain financial sustainable.
Long reserves	term The Council maintains reserves which are linked to the delivery of major council projects – schools PPP and waste management. The PPP reserve is held to replace future Scottish Government funding for unitary charges which is due to cease in 2030/31 – the PPP contract itself will run for a further 5 years after this date therefore the Council considers it prudent to set aside funds now to meet this commitment. The Council also has obligations in terms of future waste management arrangements, and contributions from existing waste revenue budgets have been set aside to manage the anticipated costs of managing both recycling and residual waste over the medium term.

Short to medium term reserves	A range of other earmarked reserves are held to meet known future commitments and to support council priorities as set out in the Council Plan and Single Outcome Agreement. As the Council continues to evolve to meet the changing needs of local residents, the use of short and medium terms reserves will remain an important tool in managing the financial impact of investment decisions.
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Part 7

Capital Investment

Capital Investment

7.1 The Council has a capital plan which traditionally looks three years ahead. The Scottish Government has in recent years however provided only single year settlement figures, making capital planning difficult as the Council has no visibility of capital grant income in the medium term. Further, the Scottish Government has accelerated or decelerated portions of capital grant from year to year, again further complicating the process of planning for capital investment.

7.2 The practice the Council has therefore adopted in terms of capital planning is to plan capital investment funded from capital grant on the basis of known funding awards and not to build in assumptions in respect to future awards. In recognition of the need to maintain long term service sustainability in the context of a more restricted resource base, the Council has committed to prioritise initially capital grant as it become available to support maintenance and renewal programmes such as infrastructure and roads maintenance, public buildings maintenance and vehicle replacement. This practice has ensured that historic investment in Council buildings and assets is protected; and that the Council's investment plans remain affordable. Both these principles and a number of others outlined below, were agreed by Council in 2013 and remain valid today in a context of current and future funding constraints:

- No new general borrowing will be undertaken without being underpinned by a specific investment case which is capable of delivering revenue savings sufficient to meet associated borrowing costs.
- Future year's capital grant will be prioritised initially to support lifecycle maintenance and asset renewal.
- The capital investment programme will continue to be supported by capital receipts from the sale of surplus assets however no reliance will be placed on speculative receipts, only receipts which have been secured.
- The council will actively pursue other sources of funding to maximise investment opportunities.

7.3

The final principle above is of particular relevance to the Council's aspirations over the medium to longer term with regards substantial investment in and redevelopment of key strategic heritage assets, and other community assets such as parks, leisure and sports facilities. This investment is a key strategic priority in terms of the economic and social regeneration of the area, but is however heavily reliant on external sources of funding. The Council has demonstrable success in securing external funding including for example the City Deal, Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Environment Scotland and Museums & Galleries Scotland; and this success will require to be built on in future.

7.4 In addition to the above principles, the Council has major commitments as part of delivering City Deal. City Deal represents a significant regional economic programme that will drive economic growth and create jobs across the region. It involves amongst other things over £1.1 billion of new infrastructure investment across the City Region, with £275 million being delivered within Renfrewshire. The infrastructure investment is funded predominantly by government grant provided by both the UK and Scottish Governments. The Council's contribution to delivery of the projects within Renfrewshire amounts to just under £18 million which will be delivered through prudential borrowing, the impact of which will not feature in the Council's financial strategy until post 2020. In addition and in order to accommodate the payment of government grant support over a 20 year period set against the delivery of investment over a shorter period, there will be a requirement for the Council to temporarily support a proportion of the costs associated with the delivery of the investment programme. The financial impact of this commitment is already emerging and will incrementally build up over the coming years in line with the infrastructure delivery, forecasting to peak in terms of associated annual interest costs in 2021/22. Thereafter, this commitment will gradually reduce as the grant payments are made over the full 20 year period of the funding agreement. There are financial risks associated with the City Deal programme, with the member councils being responsible for any associated risks linked to cost overruns. In addition, access to the associated grant commitments from both

the Scottish and UK Governments is not guaranteed and will be subject to the city region securing appropriate performance standards at key intervals over the 20 year period, linked to both progress in the physical delivery of the infrastructure projects and thereafter in terms of securing the associated economic growth targets. Given the nature of the long term commitment associated with this programme, this will require considerable monitoring and planning to ensure the Council's capital funding, cash, borrowing and treasury management positions are all clearly planned and implemented and that the Council and the wider City Deal member councils achieve appropriate progress in meeting the key gateway targets. The delivery of the envisaged long term benefits is important to protect the Council from any consequential financial impact associated with the wider programme delivery.



To: Council

On: 29 September 2016

Report by: Chief Executive as Returning Officer

Heading: By Election Proceedings – Ward 2, Renfrew South and Gallowhill

1. Summary

- 1.1 The undernoted candidate was duly elected in respect of the Electoral Ward 2: Renfrew South and Gallowhill at the by election held on 11 August 2016 and will hold office until the next ordinary election of councillors in May 2017.

Ward No	Ward Name	Candidate	Address	Party
2	Renfrew South and Gallowhill	Jim Paterson	5 Beechwood Drive Renfrew PA4 0PN	Scottish National Party

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the report be noted.
-

Implications of this report

1. **Financial Implications** – none
2. **HR and Organisational Development Implications** – none
3. **Community Plan/Council Plan Implications** – none
4. **Legal Implications** – none
5. **Property/Assets Implications** – none

6. Information Technology Implications – none

7. Equality and Human Rights Implications

- (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. Health and Safety Implications – none

9. Procurement Implications – none

10. Risk Implications – none

11. Privacy Impact – none

List of Background Papers – none

Author: Lilian Belshaw, Democratic Services Manager, 0141 618 7112



To: Council

On: 29 September 2016

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland- Fifth Statutory Review of Electoral Arrangements

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise elected members that the recommendations from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland ("the Commission") to the Scottish Government in relation to Renfrewshire following the Statutory Review have now been approved by the Scottish Ministers.
 - 1.2 The new arrangements as set out in this report will apply to future Local Government elections and by-elections taking place on or after 4 May 2017.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council notes:-
 - a) that the Scottish Government has approved the electoral arrangements for the Renfrewshire Council area recommended by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland; and
 - b) the action required to revise the Council's polling arrangements as a result of the changes to ward boundaries.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 The Commission recently concluded its Fifth Review of Electoral Arrangements and submitted its final recommendations to the Scottish Government for approval in May 2016.
- 3.2 The detail of the Commission's final recommendations as they affected Renfrewshire was reported to the Council on 22 June 2016. A link to the relevant page on the Commission's website containing its final recommendations for Renfrewshire is provided
- http://www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk/reviews/5th_electoral/renfrewshire/
- 3.3 The Renfrewshire (Electoral Arrangements) Order 2016 was laid before the Scottish Parliament on 14 September 2016 and the Order comes into force on 30 September 2016. The new electoral arrangements will apply to any election held on or after 4 May 2017.
- 3.4 Members will recall that the main changes to be implemented are:
- a) An increase in the number of councillors on Renfrewshire Council from 40 to 43
 - b) An increase in the number of electoral wards in the Renfrewshire Council area from 11 to 12; and
 - c) The additional ward being created in the south east of Paisley from areas that are currently within Wards 3 and 5.
- 3.5 Appendix 1 lists the new wards and the number of elected members to be returned in each of the wards.
- 3.6 The Council's arrangements for undertaking electoral events are set out in a Polling Scheme which was approved by Council on 27 February 2014. The Polling Scheme divides the Council area into polling districts and identifies polling places for each polling district. Taking into account the significant changes made by the Commission a review of the current Polling Scheme will be required to identify where polling districts may require to be redrawn and to identify the extent to which the changes will lead to voters being allocated to different polling places.
- 3.7 The review of the Polling Scheme will begin immediately and a report on the outcome of the review will be submitted to the next meeting of the Council on 15 December 2016.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial-** There are no direct financial consequences arising from this report. However, the decision by the Scottish Government to approve the creation of three additional elected members for Renfrewshire will result in additional cost to the Council due to the additional elected members being entitled to a level of remuneration prescribed in legislation.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** None –
3. **Community Planning –**
Children and Young People – None

Community Care, Health & Well-being - None

Empowering our Communities – The new electoral arrangements referred to in this report are intended to improve the democratic representation of communities within Renfrewshire

Greener - None

Jobs and the Economy – None

Safer and Stronger - None
4. **Legal-** The report reflects the outcome of a statutory review of electoral arrangements undertaken to comply with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973
5. **Property/Assets -**None -
6. **Information Technology -**None
7. **Equality & Human Rights**

- (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because the report is only for noting. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

- 8. **Health & Safety** None –
- 9. **Procurement** None –
- 10. **Risk** -None –
- 11. **Privacy Impact** - None

List of Background Papers

- (a) Background Paper 1 – Report by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland dated 26 May 2016 following the Fifth Review of Local Government Electoral Arrangements in Scotland.
- (b) Background Paper 2 – Report to Council on 22 June 2016 titled Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland – Fifth Statutory Review of Electoral Arrangements.

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Legal and Democratic Services for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Ken Graham, Head of Corporate Governance (ext 7360)

Author: Ken Graham, Head of Corporate Governance ext 7360

Renfrewshire Council Area

ward no	ward name	councillors	electorate sept 13	actual variation from parity	forecast electorate	forecast variation from parity
1	Renfrew North and Braehead	4	11,192	-8%	11,646	-4%
2	Renfrew South and Gallowhill	3	9,329	3%	9,054	-1%
3	Paisley Northeast and Ralston	3	8,954	-2%	8,676	-5%
4	Paisley Northwest	4	12,406	2%	12,466	2%
5	Paisley East and Central	3	8,930	-2%	9,726	6%
6	Paisley Southeast	3	9,276	2%	9,102	0%
7	Paisley Southwest	4	11,932	-2%	11,641	-4%
8	Johnstone South and Elderslie	4	12,174	0%	12,453	2%
9	Johnstone North, Kilbarchan, Howwood and Lochwinnoch	4	11,785	-3%	11,549	-5%
10	Houston, Crosslee and Linwood	4	12,021	-1%	12,123	0%
11	Bishopton, Bridge of Weir and Langbank	3	9,095	0%	9,580	5%
12	Erskine and Inchinnan	4	13,349	10%	12,951	6%
	Total	43	130,443	3%	130,967	4%



Report to: **Council**
 On: **29 September 2016**
 By: **Director of Children's Services**
 Heading: **Annual Report of the Chief Social Work Officer 2015/16**

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Chief Social Work Officer provides an annual update report to Council in Autumn each year. The requirement for every local authority in Scotland to appoint a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) is set out within Section 3 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. The particular qualifications are set down in regulations and this is one of a number of statutory requirements which local authorities must comply with. In Renfrewshire Council the role of the Chief Social Work Officer is held by the Director of Children's Services.
 - 1.2. The annual reports of all CSWOs are submitted to the Office of the Chief Social Work Officer at the Scottish Government in order that a national overview report can be produced.
 - 1.3. The report provides a summary of activity relating to the role of the Chief Social Work Officer during 2015/16. It also seeks to provide an overview of progress for elected members on the changes to governance in light of the integration of adult health and social care and the creation of the Children's Services Directorate and changes in the national guidance on the role of the CSWO.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that elected members:
 - Note the key activities outlined in this report;
 - Note that the report will be submitted to the Office of the Chief Social Work Officer at the Scottish Government; and
 - Agree that the next update to Council will be presented in Autumn 2017
-

3. The Chief Social Work Officer

- 3.1 The principal role and purpose of the Social Work service is contained within the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, which gave local authorities the responsibility of “promoting social welfare”. The Social Work Service has a statutory duty to provide care and protection to the most vulnerable people across Renfrewshire, often meaning that many of our service users do not engage with us on a voluntary basis.
- 3.2 The role of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) is critical in terms of achieving this purpose. New guidance on the role was issued by the Scottish Government in July 2016 and a paper on this was presented to the Education and Children Policy Board on 18 August 2016.
- 3.3 The CSWO is a ‘proper officer’ in relation to the social work function: an officer given particular responsibility on behalf of a local authority, where the law requires the function to be discharged by a specified post holder.
- 3.4 The qualifications of the CSWO are set down in regulations and stipulate that the postholder must be a qualified social worker registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. The CSWO must be able to demonstrate extensive experience of operational and strategic management at a senior level within social work or social care services.
- 3.5 The overall objective of the CSWO is to provide professional advice on the provision of social work services to elected members and officers; advice which assists authorities in understanding many of the complexities which are inherent across social work services. The CSWO should also assist authorities in understanding the key role that social work plays in contributing to the achievement of national and local outcomes, to improving local performance and in terms of the management of corporate risk. The key aspect of this locally has been the provision of an annual report to Council, and these, along with CSWO reports from other local authorities, are now being used nationally to create an overview report.
- 3.6 The scope of the CSWO role covers all social work and social care services, whether provided directly by the local authority, or in partnership with others. Where these services are purchased or commissioned from external providers, the CSWO has responsibility to advise on the specification, quality and standards of services commissioned. The revised guidance notes the role of the CSWO in providing professional advice and guidance to the Integration Joint Board on social work matters which have been delegated to that IJB, and reflects the changed environment in which social work services are now delivered.
- 3.7 The CSWO has a range of other responsibilities relating to the promotion of values and standards and leadership.

- 3.8 Social work services have a statutory duty to provide care and protection to the most vulnerable people across their local authority area. This means that many of service users do not engage with the service on a voluntary basis. Access to the majority of services is assessed on the basis of need, and social work staff work in partnership with individuals, carers, families and communities to meet this need within the resources available to the service and partner agencies.
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4. Local Governance Arrangements

- 4.1 In 2015/16, new structures for social work services in Renfrewshire were implemented as a result of the integration of adult health and social care. Social work services for adults transferred to the newly established Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership under the management of a Chief Officer. Criminal Justice Social Work and social work services for children and families formed a new directorate – Children’s Services – which also includes all education services provided by Renfrewshire Council.
- 4.2 Within Renfrewshire Council the Director of Children’s Services acts as Chief Social Work Officer. As well as the responsibilities associated with the directorship, as CSWO he retains professional leadership for adult social care services delivered by the HSCP. The post has a number of general and specific duties, including:
- (i) Providing regular reports to elected members on the key activities and role of the Chief Social Work Officer.
 - (ii) Leading for Social Work on the Renfrewshire HSCP Executive Governance Group and the Integration Joint Board
 - (iii) Reporting directly to the Education and Children Policy Board and Renfrewshire Council.
 - (iv) Being a member of the Council’s Corporate Management Team and the Chief Officer’s Group and reporting directly to the Chief Executive and senior elected members.
 - (v) Representing services and the council more widely, at a local, regional and national level.
 - (vi) Chairing the Senior Leadership Team of Children’s Services and the twice-yearly meeting of all social work managers from both Children’s Services and the HSCP.
 - (vii) Leads for Social Work on the Chief Officers’ Group

(viii) **Specific Duties**

In relation to specific duties associated with the position, the CSWO within Renfrewshire Council acts as:

- Final point of appeal in relation to Adoption and Fostering decisions
- Recipient of all Mental Health and Adults with Incapacity Orders
- Decision maker in relation to Secure Care applications for Children

(ix) **Management of Risk**

The Chief Social Work Officer is accountable to the Chief Executive, the Corporate Management Team and the Council as part of the Chief Officers' Group which manages public protection risks on a partnership basis. Heads of Service have responsibility for the management of risk within their respective service areas.

5. Activities of the Chief Social Work Officer 2015/16

- 5.1 The report attached as Appendix 1 summarises the key activities of the Director of Children's Services in his capacity as Chief Social Work Officer in Renfrewshire. It does not provide an exhaustive description of the full range of duties and responsibilities undertaken by the Director, but seeks to provide a broad overview of the CSWO role. This report and its appendices will be submitted to the Office of the Chief Social Work Officer to inform a national overview report.
- 5.2 The next report on the activities of the Chief Social Work Officer will be submitted to the Council in Autumn 2017.
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6. Overview of activities within social work services

- 6.1 Services continue to experience high demand in a number of areas, which is being managed in a financially prudent manner and during a period of significant structural change for social care and the wider Council. The management of significant levels of risk to vulnerable children and adults continues to be significant for the service and for partner agencies. Many of those pressures are related to high levels of alcohol and drug misuse in Renfrewshire. The service works as part of a multi-agency partnership to co-ordinate the provision of services which aim to protect vulnerable people locally and continues to deliver high-quality services to vulnerable people in Renfrewshire and to innovate and improve through a programme of continuous development and improvement.
- 6.2 The CSWO has a range of statutory duties which are detailed in Appendix 1 to this report; that appendix also includes more detail of demand and provision in those areas.

- 6.3 Statutory functions in respect of children encompass looked after and accommodated children, child protection, work with the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and work with young people who offend and are subject to secure orders. In recent years, the service, in partnership with others, has developed a strong focus on early intervention and prevention, on the use of evidence-based programmes to support families, on the use of intensive support in complex cases, and on focusing on permanence including looked after and accommodated children who are not able to return to the care of their parent(s). The impact of this approach is considered in more detail in Appendix 1.
- 6.4 Services were part of a multi-agency inspection of integrated children's services during 2014/15, and findings were reported during 2015/16. These findings were very positive and partners are making good process in addressing the recommendations.
- 6.5 Day to day management of adult social work services is delegated to Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership. The CSWO retains a professional advisory role in relation to these services and continues to have statutory duties within adult social work. The Renfrewshire Adult Protection Committee is responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring the strategic approach to the management of the protection of vulnerable adults in Renfrewshire in terms of the Adult Support & Protection (Scotland) Act 2007. There continues to be increasing demand for work related to the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000. More detail is included in Appendix 1.
- 6.6 The Criminal Justice Service supervises a range of community-based requirements on offenders, provides reports to Courts and the Parole Board, manages the inter-authority Pathways Partnership Project which works with sexual offenders and operates a range of statutory and voluntary services to support female offenders. A number of services which previously operated on a shared basis with neighbouring authorities have now been brought in-house. Multi-agency arrangements are in place to manage high-risk offenders, violent and sexual offenders and to tackle domestic abuse. The service is currently engaged in transition work as part of the new national arrangements for community justice.

Structural Change

- 6.7 As noted in 4.1, there has been significant structural change in relation to the management and governance arrangements for social work services in Renfrewshire. Formal delegation of responsibility for adult social care passed to the Integration Joint Board (IJB) by 1 April 2016. The CSWO sits on the IJB as a non-voting member and on the HSCP Executive Governance Group. He also chairs the twice yearly meetings of senior social work managers from both Children's Services and the HSCP. Heads of Service for social work services also meet regularly to discuss areas of common interest.
- 6.9 More details of the CSWO's governance role are included in Appendix 2 to this report.

Key Challenges in 2016/17

6.10 Based on an assessment of internal and external factors the CSWO has identified key priorities for the year ahead:

- Supporting the wider Council to deliver on the priorities set out in the Council Plan
- Effectively discharging our public protection role and working with partners to ensure that vulnerable children and adults live as safely as possible within local communities
- Continuing to ensure strong and positive links between Children's Services and Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership.
- Continuing to deliver high quality services in a period of financial constraint
- Improving outcomes for children living in Renfrewshire through evidence-based early intervention and preventative programmes and other initiatives which will aim to transform services for children
- Wider partnership working
- Tackling inequality in Renfrewshire

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community Planning** – The report details the progress made by the service to protect vulnerable children and adults, reduce offending behaviour, increase community safety, and promote early intervention, independent living and wider health improvement. It highlights partnership working, details the measures which ensure the workforce is skilled and effective and highlights achievements in relation to support to communities, customer service and consultation.
4. **Legal** - None
5. **Property/Assets** – None
6. **Information Technology** – None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** –

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** – None
 9. **Procurement** –None
 10. **Risk** - Risks related to the management and delivery of social work services are closely monitored and are included within both the Children's Services Risk Register and, where appropriate, the Corporate Risk Register.
 11. **Privacy Impact** – None
-

List of Background Papers

"The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer – Guidance Issued by Scottish Ministers"
Paper to Education and Children Policy Board, 18 August 2016

LF/LG
14 September 2016

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Appendix 1: Annual Report of the Chief Social Work Officer, 2015/16

1. Local Authority Overview

Renfrewshire's population of 174,560 is predominantly centred in the large town of Paisley and the four smaller towns of Renfrew, Johnstone, Erskine and Linwood. These five towns account for around 80% of the population, with most of the remaining residents living in semi-rural large villages. It is the tenth largest local authority in Scotland by population. There are areas of significant deprivation within Renfrewshire as well as areas of considerable affluence. As in other areas of Scotland, Renfrewshire has an aging population, with increasing numbers of older people and fewer of working age. There is a small but growing BAME population, who comprised 2.73% of the total population at the time of the last Census in 2011.

In 2015/16, new structures for social work services in Renfrewshire were implemented as a result of the integration of adult health and social care. Social work services for adults transferred to the newly established Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership under the management of a Chief Officer. Criminal Justice Social Work and social work services for children and families formed a new directorate – Children's Services – which also includes all education services provided by Renfrewshire Council.

The direction of Renfrewshire Council is governed by the Council Plan, which sets out 10 priorities for Renfrewshire. Of particular relevance to this report are the priorities focusing on public protection and on care and wellbeing. Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Strategy is also a key driver of service development and delivery.

2. Partnership Structures/Governance Arrangements

The responsibilities and duties of Social Work services are contained within the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, which gave local authorities the responsibility of "promoting social welfare". This includes a statutory duty to provide care and protection to the most vulnerable people in society, which often means that service users do not engage with services on a voluntary basis.

The role of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) is critical in terms of achieving this purpose. The overall objective of the CSWO is to provide professional advice on the provision of social work services to elected members and officers and to the Integration Joint Board; advice which assists authorities in understanding many of the complexities which are inherent across social work services. The CSWO should also assist authorities in understanding the key role that social work plays in contributing to the achievement of national and local outcomes, to improving local performance and in terms of the management of corporate risk.

In Renfrewshire, the role of CSWO is held by the Director of Children's Services, Peter MacLeod, who also fulfils the role of CSWO for the Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership. As a Director, the CSWO sits on the Council's Corporate Management Team. He reports regularly to the Education and Children Policy Board, the Children and Young People Thematic Board and the Integration Joint Board. In the Renfrewshire HSCP context, a CSWO Quality and Performance Sub-group has been established and meets on

a 3 monthly basis. The purpose of this meeting is to support the CSWO to evaluate quality of practice across social work services and to analyse performance reports in relation to a range of service areas. In addition to the CSWO, RHSCP Heads of Service attend this meeting along with operational leads responsible for adult protection, mental health, learning disabilities, and locality team services. Areas covered include:

- Significant events; incidents and alerts
- Complaints Overview
- Outcomes from recent Inspections of registered services
- Professional registration issues
- Contract monitoring and compliance
- Mental health officer functions including Guardianship
- Adult/public Protection
- Risk – significant events and actions
- Service Improvement / Redesign
- Good practice examples

A social services focussed conference is also being planned.

The CSWO has a key role in relation to local multi-agency public protection arrangements and sits on Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee, Renfrewshire Adult Protection Committee and the overarching Chief Officers Group. He is also a member of Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.

At a national level, the CSWO has Co-Chair of the National Steering Group on Joint Commissioning and Chair of the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS). He is also on the board of the Digital Health Institute, Macmillan Cancer Support and Realising Children's Services. He is a past President of the Association of Directors of Social Work (now known as Social Work Scotland).

Renfrewshire Council has 40 elected members across 11 multi-member wards and is governed by a Labour-led administration. Elected members oversee social work services principally through the Education and Children Policy Board and the Integration Joint Board, although issues may be reported to full Council or other Boards as appropriate. The CSWO provides a significant number of reports to these Boards throughout each year, as well as to full Council and other Boards as required. These include reports on policy developments, service redesign, budget position, improvement activity and performance and legislative changes impacting on social work. Policy Boards have cross-party representation. Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership, of which Renfrewshire Council is a key partner, also operates a number of thematic boards with specific remits, and Social Work involvement has been particularly strong on the Children and Young People Thematic Board, the Community Care, Health and Wellbeing Thematic Board, and the Safer and Stronger Thematic Board.

3. Social Services Delivery Landscape

Summary

In common with many areas of Scotland, there are significant demand pressures impacting on Social Work services in Renfrewshire. As noted above, the area has an ageing population, leading to increasing numbers of people assessed as having complex needs. This includes growing numbers of people with dementia and significant numbers of people with long-term conditions. Almost one-third of residents reported in the last Census that they had at least one such condition. This includes 7.2% of people reporting a physical disability, 6.9% with a hearing impairment, 5.2% with a mental health condition and 2.4% with a visual impairment. These are not mutually exclusive and some people report multiple conditions. National figures indicate that 27% of people aged 75-84 have two or more long-term conditions, and there is evidence that multi-morbidity increases with deprivation.

Renfrewshire has significant numbers of people living in areas classed as deprived. There are 9,000 people in Renfrewshire living in areas among the 5% most deprived parts of Scotland and the Ferguslie area of Paisley is ranked as the most deprived area of the country. Multiple deprivation is prevalent in some communities, with inequalities in health, housing, income, education and employment impacting heavily in some areas.

In relation to health needs in particular, average figures for Renfrewshire can mask the real inequalities which persist. There are marked differences in life expectancy and health in different localities; for example, people in Ferguslie are fourteen times more likely to be admitted to hospital for some conditions than people in Ralston, two areas of Paisley only two and a half miles apart. Some schools within Renfrewshire are each supporting hundreds of children who live in areas which are classed as Scotland's most deprived 20%. In one school, 92% of children fall into that category. Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Strategy is a flagship programme encompassing many projects focused on minimising and mitigating the impact of child poverty in particular, and wider issues of deprivation in general. The new service configuration which integrates social care and education functions means there is a clearer joint approach to identifying and tackling need include a cross-service focus on poverty and attainment.

Alcohol and drug misuse are correctly recognised as significant drivers of poor health outcomes, though the extent of misuse in any community can be difficult to quantify as problems can often be hidden. In parts of Renfrewshire, drug and alcohol related hospital admissions are two or three times the average. The impact of these factors is evident in the demand for services, and this is particularly true in relation to looked after children and child protection, where services are frequently involved because of substance misuse within families. The high levels of substance misuse and deprivation are a critical element in explaining the comparatively high rates of child protection cases and numbers of looked after children locally.

Areas of high demand within social work services in Renfrewshire continue to be the provision of care services for older people, managing the impact on child wellbeing of issues such as multiple deprivation and substance misuse, supporting relatively large numbers of looked after children, managing increased workloads in Criminal Justice Social Work (particularly in relation to unpaid work), and growing demand pressures in the Mental Health Officer service.

4. Finance

Budgets for social work services are split between those allocated to Children's Services and those delegated to the HSCP. The budget for adult services is in the region of £60 million whilst that for children and families and criminal justice services is in the region of £36 million. Many of the support costs are held in centralised budgets.

In common with other local authorities, Renfrewshire Council is operating in a period of unprecedented financial challenge. For a number of years, social work services in Renfrewshire have had a strong focus on early intervention and prevention as both a means of improving outcomes for the people the service supports and as a means of ensuring the service is able to meet the growing demands within the resources available. Social work services in Renfrewshire have benefitted from considerable support from elected members who have recognised the necessary role in protecting and supporting people. Services have engaged in a number of programmes in order to support delivery of the Council's budget strategy whilst continuing to focus on good quality outcomes for those the services work with.

5. Service Quality and Performance

Alongside the changing policy landscape, social work services continue to make good progress in terms of improving services to support improved outcomes for vulnerable people within Renfrewshire. Our key achievements for the past year are summarised here.

- Put in place arrangements to deliver on the new duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- Improving permanency planning for looked after children. Social Work is collaborating with the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) on a new approach, Permanency and Care Excellence. During 2015/16, 17 children were adopted.
- Continued to work with our partners in Development and Housing to provide supported employment opportunities for young care leavers.
- Updated our child protection training to include internet safety and child sexual exploitation.
- Established Families First teams into Foxbar, Gallowhill and Johnstone.
- Extended the Promoting Positive Thinking Strategies Programme (PATHS) into two more schools.
- Submitted a Transition Plan which outlines how we will develop arrangements to support the management of community justice services through a Community Planning Partnership approach.
- Established a new post to strengthen the links between youth justice and criminal justice services.

- With partners, delivered a new public awareness campaign in relation to child protection.
- Delivered a range of professional training to our own staff and provided training opportunities in relation to public protection to other agencies.
- Developed an action plan to address, with partners, the recommendations from the very positive multi-agency inspection of children's services across Renfrewshire.

6. Statutory Functions

The statutory duties of social work services to provide care and protection to the most vulnerable people in society are laid out in legislative frameworks which include, but are not restricted to, the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995, the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, the Children's Hearing Act (Scotland) 2011, the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Consequently, many of our service users do not engage with us on a voluntary basis. Access to the majority of services is based on an assessment of need, and Social Work staff work in partnership with individuals, carers, families and communities to meet these needs within the resources available.

The statutory functions cover the delivery of services in relation to looked after children, public protection (including child and adult protection), mental health legislation, Adults with Incapacity legislation, the supervision of offenders in the community, support for people with substance misuse issues, and reports to the courts, the Parole Board, the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration.

Significant preparatory work has been undertaken to ensure compliance with all elements of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 in line with legislative deadlines. This puts Renfrewshire in a strong position to respond once legal challenges in relation to parts of the legislation are resolved. Those elements which can already be delivered will continue to be. Criminal Justice Social Work services are also preparing for the transition to a community planning approach to the delivery of community justice services.

Looked After Children

Social work services have a range of statutory duties in relation to vulnerable children, including the duty to act as a corporate parent to children placed under a supervision requirement (Children's (Scotland) Act 1995), to operate a Fostering and Adoption Panel in its role as a fostering and adoption agency (Children's (Scotland) Act 1995), and to provide support to care leavers up until the age of 26 (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014).

The Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice operates as the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) who makes decisions based on the recommendations of the Fostering Panel and the Adoption Panel. These panels, which meet at least monthly, considers the assessment of applications to be foster carers and prospective adoptive parents, permanence plans for children, reviews of current foster carers, and the matching of individual children with prospective long term foster carers or adoptive parents. The Chief

Social Work Officer has overall responsibility for all matters relating to fostering and adoption and acts as the final point of appeal for all decisions.

Renfrewshire has historically had a high number of looked after children, a trend which is at least partly attributable to the area's levels of deprivation and substance misuse. The percentage of children who are looked after has tended to be higher than the national average for a number of years but a stronger focus on early intervention, prevention and permanency arrangements is leading to a reduction in numbers. At the end of 2015/16, there were 701 looked after children in Renfrewshire, of whom 295 were looked after and accommodated. This compares to 693 and 298 at the end of 2014/15 and 773 and 329 in 2011/12. Children's Services continues to work with the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children In Scotland to progress tests of change which improve practice in relation to permanency planning for looked after children. This is contributing to the steady fall in the numbers of looked after children and the growing number of adoptive and long-term fostering arrangements put in place to give children stability.

In Renfrewshire, adoptive placements were for secured for 17 children in 2015/16, with a further 14 children in pre-adoptive placements at 31 March 2016. Wherever possible, children requiring foster care are placed with local authority carers, and very few new placements are with external carers. This is possible in part due to success in recruiting and retaining local authority foster carers.

Secure Orders

Secure Orders can be made by a Children's Panel, on the authorisation of the CSWO or by a Sheriff as an alternative to remanding a young person to a young offender's institution. Secure orders are used infrequently and only in circumstances where the young person is at significant risk or poses significant risk to others. During 2015/16, nine young people from Renfrewshire spent time in a secure placement. In Renfrewshire, intensive intervention and community-based support packages are considered to be a better approach to dealing with complex cases. Children's Services plans to develop a close support unit which would allow much more intensive work with a small group of children and young people with the intention of diverting them from secure placements.

Referrals to Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

During 2015/16, 702 children and young people in Renfrewshire were referred to the Children's Reporter. Of these, 99 were on offending grounds. Although there was a slight increase in overall referrals from the previous year, there was a considerable decrease in the numbers related to offending, which is down 31% from 143 in 2014/15

Child Protection

Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee is responsible for implementing and overseeing the strategic approach to the protection of vulnerable children across Renfrewshire and ensuring partners work together to achieve their common goals in this area. All key partners are represented on the committee. The Committee has a lead officer to co-ordinate its work and Children's Services has a Child Protection Officer who supports Social Work best practice in this area. During 2014/15, a multi-agency inspection of Integrated Children's Services in Renfrewshire was undertaken and the final report from this was received during

2015/16. There are six recommendations for partners arising from this report and the improvement plan continues to be progressed through Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership.

During 2015/16, 18 children were the subject of a Child Protection Order under Section 57 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. This compares with 26 in the previous year. The number of children on the Child Protection Register at any one time varies depending on the circumstances and nature of risk attending to the children and families that are being supported. As at 31 March 2016, there were 79 children on the Child Protection Register, compared with 83 at the end of 2014/15; as a snapshot, the number is subject to considerable variation throughout the year.

Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)

The CSWO, in his role as Director of Children's Services, chairs the strategic multi-agency implementation group for GIRFEC in Renfrewshire. As reported to the Education and Children Policy Board on 18 August 2016, a recent decision by the Supreme Court has led the Scottish Government to defer implementation of some aspects of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Arrangements will be put in place locally to ensure that partners are ready to implement policy once a further view from the Supreme Court is established and guidance is made available by the Scottish Government.

Adult Protection

The Renfrewshire Adult Protection Committee is responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring the strategic approach to the management of the protection of vulnerable adults in Renfrewshire in terms of the Adult Support & Protection (Scotland) Act 2007. The Committee was established in April 2008 and consists of an elected member, officers from Renfrewshire Council and partner organisations and is led by an independent chairperson. The work of the Committee is supported by a lead officer who co-ordinates its work. The Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) has an Adult Protection Officer who supports best practice amongst practitioners in relation to processes and data quality. The HSCP undertakes day to day management of adult protection and the CSWO continues to have oversight as the professional social work lead.

During 2015/16, there were 1569 adult welfare concerns raised, and 953 adult protection contacts. Of the adult protection concerns raised, 90 were identified as an Adult Support and Protection issue requiring an investigation. During the year, 78 investigations were completed and 34 warranted a case conference. There were 27 initial case conferences and 64 review conferences during the year. The initial case conferences resulted in 17 new Adult Support and Protection Plans being put in place.

Mental Health and Adults with Incapacity

Local authorities have a number of duties under the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 to provide care and support to people with mental health disorders. These include duties to enquire into the circumstances of a person with a mental disorder who appears to be at risk, responsibility to provide services to promote wellbeing, and the duty to appoint a sufficient number of mental health officers (MHOs). An MHO is a registered Social Worker who has relevant experience, has undergone training and

continues to meet the accreditation requirements detailed in the legislation and accompanying directions. MHOs have a wide range of duties under the legislation in terms of preparation of reports, applications to the mental health tribunal service and monitoring and supervision of people subject to mental health legislation. Renfrewshire Council has an MHO team comprising 8 full-time MHOs, and 16 frontline social workers (including 9 team managers) who are qualified MHOs and carry a small number of these cases and cover MHO duty in addition to their team case load.

The Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 authorises a range of requirements for individuals with mental disorders, including detention in hospital, authorisation of the administering of particular treatments, and community-based orders which specify where a person lives. These are known as Compulsory Treatment Orders (CTOs); in 2015/16, the MHO team assessed 45 people as part of a CTO application. They also dealt with 95 short-term detentions and 15 emergency detentions. The service also works with 3 people subject a Compulsion Order and Restriction Order (CORO) which is a provision for mentally disordered offenders.

Under the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, Guardians can be appointed to manage on an ongoing basis the financial and/or welfare affairs of a person unable to look after those affairs him or herself. The Local Authority has a duty under the legislation to make application for such orders where it is necessary and no one else is doing so; these will seek to appoint the Chief Social Work Office as welfare guardian. This is an area of increasing pressure both locally and nationally.

As of 31 March 2016, the Chief Social Work Officer had responsibility for 104 Welfare Guardianships, including 28 new orders granted during 2015/16. This is an increase from the 19 new orders in 2014/15. Where the CSWO acts as Welfare Guardian, the day to day management of each case is delegated to a nominated officer. These are reviewed regularly by the CSWO with relevant managers.

The local authority also applied for an Intervention Order in 20 cases, up from 8 in 2014/15. These are in addition to the Welfare Guardianships, many of which also include an application for financial guardianship. The MHO Team Manager now has the authority to act as a Financial Intervener and manages these cases directly. The local authority also has a duty to supervise all private welfare guardianships, of which there are currently in excess of 430. The management of this activity is a significant challenge for the Authority given the number of guardianships being made.

Criminal Justice

The Criminal Justice service supervises a range of community-based requirements on offenders, as well as providing reports for courts and the Parole Board. Community-based orders are predominantly Community Payback Orders but the service continues to supervise a small number of offenders completing Community Service Orders, Probation Orders and Supervised Attendance Orders, all of which are reducing as they only apply to offences committed before 2012. As a result of funding changes to Criminal Justice Social Work Throughcare services for those in custody and those released on licence, Drug Treatment and Testing Order services are no longer shared with other local authorities. Renfrewshire continues to provide a Court Social Work service and the Pathways service to East Renfrewshire Council.

During 2015/16, the Criminal Justice Social Work team worked with 733 individuals on Community Payback Orders, including 568 with an unpaid work requirement. This is an area of work which continues to grow and the timescales for completion can be challenging for the service, partly as a result of the challenge in finding sufficient suitable work placements. The service also worked with 20 new individuals given Drug Treatment and Testing Orders, and 29 individuals newly released from custody on licence. At the end of 2015/16, 69 individuals were on licence in the community, including 16 individuals on a life licence.

Criminal Justice services operate a service to co-ordinate the range of statutory and voluntary services available to support female offenders. This includes interventions covering health improvement, literacy and life skills, and provides mentoring support and links to services for women who have been subject to gender-based violence. The service is delivering improved outcomes for women offenders by addressing the range of wellbeing and socio-economic factors which are frequently prevalent.

In partnership with the police, other agencies and other council departments, high-risk offenders are managed through the Multi-Agency Tasking and Co-ordinating Agency (MATAC) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) are in place to tackle domestic abuse. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) are in place for those convicted of sexual offences and violent offences since 31 March 2016. Renfrewshire Social Work leads and manages the Pathways Partnership Project service for those individuals subject to management and supervision in the community as a result of sexual offending.

Addictions

The day to day management of addictions services falls within the purview of the HSCP. Nonetheless, strong joint working remains a key feature of addictions services within Renfrewshire and the impact of substance misuse on children is a continued focus and this is reflected in the range of early intervention and preventative approaches taken in Renfrewshire.

The specialist RADAR service, which works with children and young people, remains within the Council as part of Children's Services.

Gender-Based Violence

The local Gender Based Violence Strategy Group is a partnership group and is chaired by the Head of Childcare and Criminal Justice. The CEDAR (Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse Recovery) project has recently been successful in attracting a further 5 year's funding to continue the programme of group work for children and their mothers.

Planning and Risk Assessment

Children's Services produce an annual Service Improvement Plan and report progress at mid year and year end to elected members through the Policy Board structure. Services within the HSCP are planned through the HSCP Strategic Plan and reported through the Integration Joint Board.

Wider partnership services for children are also planned through the multi-agency Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership (RCSP) and this group will produce a new Integrated Children's Services Plan during 2016/17.

The Council also has formal arrangements for the identification and oversight of potential service level risks. Again, the two bodies managing social work services each produce an annual risk management plan and report on this twice-yearly to elected members. Each also contributes to the Council's Corporate Risk Management Plan.

New arrangements for the delivery of criminal justice social work will be implemented in April 2017 with the abolition of community justice authorities. Planning for this change is well established in Renfrewshire with a transition plan having been submitted to the Scottish Government in 2016.

Leadership on Social Work Practice

During 2015/16, the CSWO continued to engage with senior managers and staff in relation to service developments, particularly in relation to professional leadership within the new governance structures. The CSWO continues to be the professional lead for social work staff within the Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership and sits on the Integration Joint Board. He continues to have direct responsibility for Mental Health Officers and Guardianships. In addition, he continues to take a prominent role in a number of national groups.

As part of his role, the CSWO sits on the newly-established Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership Care Governance Group, a twice-yearly meetings of senior social care managers as part of his professional leadership and governance role. The CSWO Governance group within HSCP arrangements considers issues including training, standards and staffing resources as well as other areas of importance to the social services workforce.

7. Improvement Approaches

Social work services for children and families in Renfrewshire were part of a multi-agency inspection which took place in early 2015. The positive inspection report made six recommendations and an improvement plan is in place to monitor and report on progress. The CSWO also continues to meet regularly with the Care Inspectorate's link inspector to discuss improvement activity within the service.

Services for children and families have a track record of adopting new approaches and Renfrewshire delivers a range of evidence-based early intervention programmes. Children's Services also leads on the Families First programme, which provides practical support to families across Renfrewshire, including supporting them to access services and income to which they are entitled. An independent evaluation of the first phase of the programme found it had a very positive impact on families involved.

As noted above, Renfrewshire continues to work with CELCIS to support improvements in practice in relation to permanency planning for looked after children.

In October 2016, a second epidemiological study of children in Renfrewshire will be undertaken with the support of the Dartington Social Research Unit.

8. User and Carer Empowerment

Strengthening service user and carer engagement and empowerment is embedded in social work services for children. In addition to the links with Who Cares Scotland and financial support for advocacy services, Renfrewshire also has a Champions Board for Looked After Children which provides regular opportunities for all looked after children in Renfrewshire to meet with elected members and senior Council officers to express their views. There are strong links with statutory and third sector partners who come together with the Council as the Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership. The service also links with the Renfrewshire Carers Centre to help support young carers. Service user engagement will be a central feature of the strategic commissioning approach Renfrewshire Council is adopting across council services.

Changes to the governance and structures within adult social work services have provided an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which service users and carers in that area are able to participate in service planning, design and delivery, and this is an area which will be developed during 2015/16.

9. Workforce Planning and Development

The development of professional social work and social care staff has continued to be a priority within Renfrewshire. Our staff are involved in front line assessment, support and care for a wide range of service users and carers and require to have the competence, skills and knowledge to carry this out effectively. Children's Services within Renfrewshire Council hosts the Social Work Training Team who work across Children's Services and the Health and Social Care Partnership to offer professional learning and development opportunities not only to council staff but to staff from partner organisations.

Our approach to learning and development in child protection has been refreshed and updated to reflect the complex nature of the work. The programme now includes training on internet safety and on recognising and dealing with child sexual exploitation. Training on adult and child protection is also offered to partner agencies free of charge.

There has been a focus on preparing for the implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, including the role of the Named Person, information sharing and the Child's Plan.

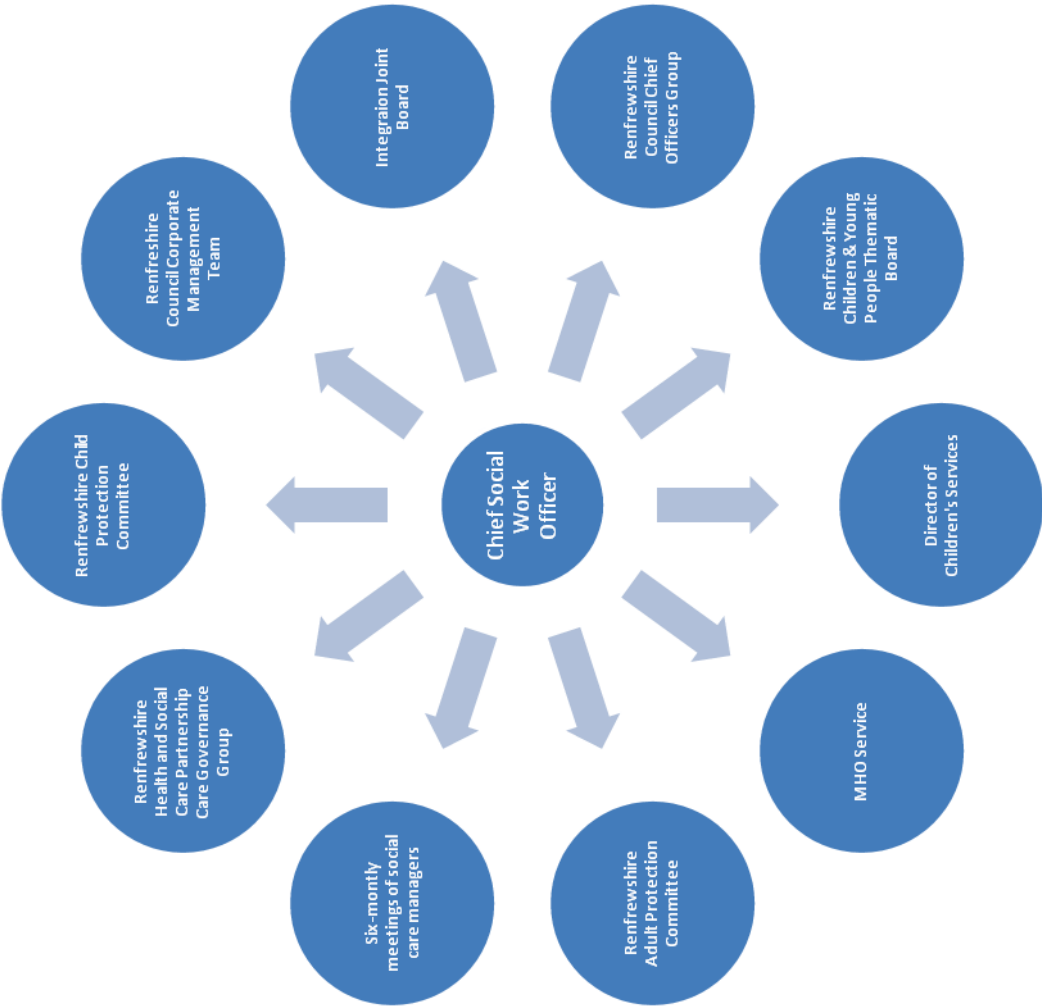
Our Philosophy of Care approach in the residential child care service has been supported by an extensive education programme developing staffs skills and competence in a range of areas including abusive behaviours, neglect and protection issue. This approach has been supported by our qualification agenda; all of our staff meet the national qualification standards.

Self-directed support is becoming embedded in assessment and care management practice, and experience from the early stages of implementation continues to shape and refine the processes which sit behind the model. Training to support staff with the SDS approach continues to be offered regularly.

Social work services for children have been redesigned in order to strengthen the frontline teams and in recognition of the changing pattern of demand (for example, the rise in the number of kinship carers providing homes for children not subject to statutory measures).

Appendix 2: The CSWO’s role in local governance arrangements

The Chief Social Work Officer has a key role in the following groups within Renfrewshire Council:





To: COUNCIL

On: 29 SEPTEMBER 2016

Report by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Heading: PROPOSED EXPANSION OF JOINT CIVIL CONTINGENCIES SERVICE TO INCLUDE WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

1. Summary

- 1.1 In November 2008 the Council approved the establishment of a Joint Civil Contingencies Service, (CCS) based in Renfrewshire Council and covering East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council areas. The service has been in operation since April 2009 and has supported significant improvements in the resilience of each Council area and the ability to respond to civil contingencies incidents and events.
 - 1.2 The service is governed by a Joint Management Board comprising of the Chief Executive's of each of the member Councils supported by a relevant Head of Service from each Council and the CCS Senior Officer.
 - 1.3 This report now seeks approval to expand the Joint Civil Contingencies Service to include West Dunbartonshire Council. Similar reports are also being considered by Inverclyde, East Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire Councils.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council:
 - i. approves the proposal to expand the Joint Civil Contingencies Service to include West Dunbartonshire Council.
 - ii. authorises the Chief Executive together with the Head of Corporate Governance to conclude the required changes to the "Minute of Agreement" and "detailed specification of service" for the Joint Civil Contingencies service to reflect the expansion of the service to include West Dunbartonshire Council.
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3. Background

- 3.1 In November 2008 the Council approved the establishment of a Joint Civil Contingencies Service, (CCS) based in Renfrewshire Council and covering East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council areas. The three Councils subsequently entered into a Minute of Agreement which defines their roles and responsibilities in relation to the CCS with Renfrewshire as the Lead Authority. The service has been in operation since April 2009 and has brought a number of benefits:
- Better use of available staff resources across the three Councils.
 - Increased resilience and service development, particularly in training and exercising.
 - Increased efficiency from reduced duplication of effort.
 - Improved relationships, training and information sharing arrangements with Category 1 Responders and other national agencies.
 - Significant performance improvements in resilience, contingency planning and emergency response.
 - Improved capacity and expertise to be able to respond to changing and emerging risks and threats – counter terrorism, and COMAH in particular.
 - Improved capacity to support organisational resilience, build community capacity and resilience and support local businesses and voluntary organisations with their business continuity management and plans.
- 3.2 Since the service was created, a range of initiatives including the development of Council Incident Officer roles, training and exercising programmes and a range of policies and procedures have been developed by the service that have been widely accepted as best practice and adopted within other Council areas across Scotland. The service has also been efficient, providing increased resilience for the three Council areas it serves while contributing to overall reductions in costs that mean Council contributions to the service have fallen rather than increased since 2008.
- 3.3 The service is governed by a Joint Management Board comprising of the Chief Executive's of each of the member Councils supported by a relevant Head of Service from each Council and the CCS Senior Officer.
- 3.4 Earlier this year the Joint Management Board of the CCS was approached by West Dunbartonshire Council with a request that they consider the expansion of the Joint Civil Contingencies Service to include the West Dunbartonshire Council area.
- 3.5 In considering this request the CCS Senior Officer undertook a review of current civil contingencies working arrangements and policies within West Dunbartonshire, the nature of relevant specific risks and response arrangements that are in place and the data on historic incident response requirements over the period from 2013 to 2016. This showed that there is no reason, in principle, why the service could not be successfully expanded to cover the West Dunbartonshire Council area and that there would be no detrimental impact on existing members of the service if this were done.
- 3.6 The analysis determined that the service could be provided for West Dunbartonshire Council at the same cost as for East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Councils on the basis that an additional transitional resource be provided to support the integration of the service over the first 2 years of operation. This report now seeks approval to expand the Joint Civil Contingencies Service to include West Dunbartonshire Council. Similar reports are also being considered by Inverclyde, East Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire Councils.

- 3.7 Should the proposal be formally approved by each Council, the initial annual budget contribution to the service from West Dunbartonshire Council would match East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Councils current contribution - £55,645. This figure is jointly reviewed and agreed annually by the Joint Management Board. In addition an administration employee resource will be provided by West Dunbartonshire Council for the transitional period, up to the value of £20,000 per annum, working directly to the Senior Civil Contingencies Officer in the Civil Contingencies Service to support the administration of the transition process including aligning and integrating existing systems and processes for the service. Arrangements for transitional training and development for West Dunbartonshire Council and area risk familiarisation for existing CCS officers will also be supported.
- 3.8 An additional transitional fund of £5,000 per annum will be provided by West Dunbartonshire Council for the first 2 years of the service to be used for any training requirements specifically targeted at aligning a group of West Dunbartonshire's officers to the Council Incident Officer programme that is currently in place across the existing 3 Councils and to provide a contingency to support any emergency incidents or events in West Dunbartonshire during the transitional period and any other unplanned ancillary costs associated with the integration of West Dunbartonshire's Civil Contingencies into the shared service.
- 3.9 Following agreement of all Councils the recruitment of professional officers to support the new expanded CCS service will be undertaken to ensure that the service continues to support each Member Council with an identified single point of contact and support officer within the service.

Implications of this Report

1. **Financial** – Renfrewshire Council currently supports the service with a contribution of £111,290 reflecting the larger size of the Council area relative to East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde. This will not be affected by the proposals outlined in this report.
2. **HR and Organisational Development** – The Joint Service is based in Renfrewshire and provided to each of the other member Councils from Renfrewshire. All employees of the service are Renfrewshire Council employees. HR support will be required in undertaking the recruitment and management of employees of the service.
3. **Community Planning**

Safer and Stronger Renfrewshire – The Joint Civil Contingencies Service contributes towards Renfrewshire being a safe and secure place for those living, working or visiting the area.
4. **Legal** – The Minute of Agreement and detailed specification of service for the Joint Civil Contingencies Service will require to be updated to reflect the proposed addition of West Dunbartonshire Council. This exercise will be led by Renfrewshire Council Legal services working with the agreement of each of the Member Councils
5. **Property/Assets** – none.
6. **Information Technology** – none.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on

equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health and Safety** – none.

9. **Procurement** – none.

10. **Risk** – none.

11. **Privacy Impact** – none.

List of Background Papers –

Agenda and papers for Special Meeting of Civil Contingencies Service Joint Management Board on 29 August 2016.

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To: Council

On: 29th September 2016

Report by: Lead Officer

Heading: Upkeep of Common Areas within Council Housing Stock including Garden Areas

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board at its meeting on 2nd June 2014 undertook to consider how tenants complied with specific provisions within their Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement in relation to common areas of gardens, ensuring that the landlord could and would take appropriate action.
- 1.2 At the meeting of the Board held on 6th June 2016, the Board approved the attached report and agreed that it be submitted to the Council for its consideration.
- 1.3 The scope of the review included inviting Housing Associations and Tenants and Residents Associations to present evidence.
- 1.4 The report summarises the evidence and findings presented to the Board and makes a number of recommendations.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Council consider the final report approved by the Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board.
- 2.2 That the Council's thanks be conveyed to those who participated in the review.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – none.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none.
3. **Community Planning / Council Planning** – none.
4. **Legal** – none.
5. **Property/Assets** – none.
6. **Information Technology** – none.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – none.
- (a) The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for approving scope of the review only. If required, following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** – none
9. **Procurement** – none.
10. **Risk** – none.
11. **Privacy Impact** – none.
12. **List of Background Papers** – none.

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To: Audit, Scrutiny & Petitions Board

On: 6th June 2016

Report by: Lead Officer

**Heading: Upkeep of Common Areas within Council Housing Stock including
 Garden Areas**

1. Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on 2nd June 2014, the Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board approved the purpose of the Review namely, that it would consider how tenants comply with specific provisions within their Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement in relation to common areas in gardens, ensuring that the landlord could and would take appropriate action and, in addition, agreed an annual programme of activity for the Board.
- 1.2 The Lead Officer submitted an initial scoping report on the Review of the upkeep of common areas within Council housing stock to the Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board at its meeting held on 30th September 2014. The Board considered and approved the purpose and scope of the Report and agreed the proposed provisional timescale for the Review. In addition, the Board approved that authority be delegated to the Lead Officer in consultation with the Convener, to alter the proposed timescale for the Review to accommodate the provision of material evidence including evidence provided by witnesses.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Review is to consider potential options for ensuring that internal and external areas of Council housing stock are maintained and that tenants should be made aware of their obligations.

2. Scope of Review

- 2.1 The scope of the Review would consider the terms of the Council's Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement particularly, in relation to the maintenance of gardens.
- 2.2 The Review would also look at evidence from Housing Services as to how compliance with the terms of the Tenancy Agreement was monitored.
- 2.3 The Review would further seek to identify areas of best practice from partner organisations including, Housing Associations.
- 2.4 In addition, local registered Tenants and Residents Associations would be contacted requesting their views on the subject matter of the Review.
- 2.5 The Review was requested by an elected member following concerns about the impact on the environment particularly within local authority housing areas.

3. Findings

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board notes the content of this report and considers and approves the following findings.
 - a) tenants of Renfrewshire Council occupy their homes by virtue of a Scottish Secure Tenancy and the Tenancy Agreement contains obligations on both landlord and tenant.
 - b) the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement confirms *inter alia*:
 - i) that it is the responsibility of the occupiers who use shared parts to keep them clean and tidy (this includes any shared stairs, windows and banisters and any bin chutes). If the tenants cannot agree on the arrangements for the necessary cleaning, or if they do not do it, the Council can decide exactly what the tenants should do and as a result, tenants must accept the Council's decision and if they do not carry out the necessary work, the Council may do the work and charge tenants accordingly;
 - ii) the tenant must take reasonable care to keep gardens from becoming over-grown or untidy and from causing a nuisance. If the tenant does not do so, the Council can decide exactly what work needs to be done. If the tenant still does not do the work the Council may do it and charge the tenants;

- c) it is the responsibility of tenants to clean shared parts and to take reasonable care of their gardens;
- d) tenants are made aware of their responsibility by Housing Staff when Tenancy Agreements are signed;
- e) tenants also watch a DVD compiled and produced by the Council at the signing of the Tenancy Agreement reinforcing the terms of the Tenancy Agreement;
- f) tenants receive a copy of the Tenancy Agreement;
- g) tenants, at sign-up, receive a Tenancy Pack. The pack includes information on how to advise the Council that repairs are required, bin collection, rent payments and tenants are again reminded that “they must keep gardens tidy and cut grass regularly;”
- h) Housing Services have recognised that some tenants may be unable to adhere to their obligations and two assistance schemes are provided:-
 - i) Common Maintenance Programme

This operates in tenement and deck access properties where there are shared common areas. The programme covers thirteen hundred properties across Renfrewshire, the properties being identified through the course of Housing Estate Management monitoring. Following consultation with Community Resources properties can be added to the programme and tenants and residents can approach the Council direct. The service attracts a charge. The service is provided by Community Resources.

ii) Garden Assistance Scheme

This Scheme supports approximately 2,200 tenants who can approach the Council directly. The scheme runs from April to October with Community Resources cutting grass and removing clippings eight times a year and cutting hedges twice in this period. The criteria to be admitted to this scheme is age / medical related for tenants and assistance can also be provided to owners by Community Resources if owners again meet the appropriate criteria. The owners are charged accordingly.

- i) if a tenant breaches the terms of his Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement in respect of not fulfilling his obligations in respect of common parts and / or gardens, Housing Services will follow their Estate Management procedures. These procedures include conducting home visits in an attempt to contact and consult with the relevant tenants. Written warnings can be issued including a final warning that if the work is not carried out Housing Services may instruct the work and charge the tenant accordingly;
- j) breaching tenancy obligations can ultimately result in action being taken to end a tenancy and evict a tenant. This is a last resort for any social landlord. Tenancy sustainment is the primary concern of housing providers. No eviction actions have been raised by Renfrewshire Council in respect of a tenant's failure to maintain gardens. Eviction actions are subject to the "reasonableness test" and action raised by Renfrewshire Council as a housing provider is subject to the independent and impartial scrutiny of a Sheriff;
- k) for tenants struggling to adhere to their tenancy obligations, referrals to support services and agencies will be made. Referrals include those to Money Advice and Housing and Social Work Support Services;
- l) officers from within the Council's Department of Development and Housing Services advise that almost all tenants who have been issued with written warnings take action to resolve any problems with only a very few tenants receiving a final warning where the work required is eventually undertaken by the Council and the tenant re-charged appropriately;
- m) the multi-tenure nature of housing estates within Renfrewshire contributes to the overall appearance and conditions within estates. Council ownership is often in the minority and many properties now lie within the private rented sector or are owner occupied;
- n) private sector stock (owner occupied and private rented) has increased on a year by year basis. Statistics show that from 73% of all stock in 2006, this has risen to 76% of all stock in 2014;
- o) private landlords require to be registered by the Council. They have to meet the fit and proper test. The statutory process, as outlined to the Board, is contained within the Anti-Social Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004. In deciding whether a potential landlord is fit and proper a number of considerations can be looked at including:-

- i) information as to whether or not the proposed private landlord has committed any offence including fraud, dishonesty, firearms offences, violence or drugs or has committed a sexual offence;
- ii) information that the proposed private landlord has practised unlawful discrimination in or in connection with the carrying on of any business, has contravened the Letting Code or has contravened the law relating to housing or landlord and tenant law;
- iii) certain information about anti-social behaviour;
- iv) a repairing standard enforcement order.

If the Council refuses an application for registration, the landlord can appeal a decision to the Sheriff Court which, if upheld, could result in an Order against the Council for a significant sum in respect of legal expenses. As explained to the Board by the Assistant Managing Solicitor (Licensing), untidy gardens are not a reason for refusing a landlord's application for registration.

- p) Renfrewshire Council's housing stock has reduced over the years as a result of large numbers of Right to Buy transactions and demolition of stock as part of regeneration strategies. In 2006 there were 15,000 Council houses in Renfrewshire this had declined to 12,497 in 2014;
- q) social rented stock in Renfrewshire is now in the minority and estimated to be 20,274 (24.082%) of all stock. There are 7,777 (9.24%) Housing Association properties and 12,497 (14.84%) Renfrewshire Council properties. There are 10,965 (13.02%) private rented sector properties and 50,484 (59.97%) of properties are owner occupied. There were also 2,464 vacant private sector homes (2.93%) (2014 figures). As at April, 2016 there were over 7,024 registered private landlords in Renfrewshire covering 8,703 properties;
- r) in their written submission, Ferguslie Park Housing Association confirmed that it operates both Garden Tidy Schemes and a Close Cleaning Service similar to the schemes operated by Renfrewshire Council. Charges are made by the Housing Association to residents. The Housing Association has also confirmed that they have not carried out any evictions for lack of garden maintenance and find that the use of estate management procedures assist the situation. They confirm that they do not carry out work for tenants who default and then re-charge. This is not included within their procedures. They feel that recovery of the costs involved is unlikely to be achieved. The Association's stock profile split is completely

different from the Council. They have houses rather than tenemental properties;

- s) Paisley South Housing Association, in conversations with the Lead Officer, confirmed that like the Council within traditional tenements they also had problems with mixed ownership. They too charged for their maintenance scheme and they had schemes to assist the elderly and disabled;
- t) River Clyde Homes, a Housing Association formed as a result of a major stock transfer there from Inverclyde Council advised that they had formed Cleaner, Greener Teams, their principal functions being:-
 - Care taking service
 - Environmental maintenance and contract management for common open spaces
 - Garden Tidy Scheme
 - Environmental Assessment
 - Neighbourhood Walkabout Programme Management
 - Rota for stair / common area cleaning and enforcement including letters and warning

They advised that their customers are welcome to join in the walkabouts. Their Cleaner, Greener Team inspect common areas and if said areas are not within the exclusive ownership of the Housing Association they will then work with other agencies, owner occupiers and private landlords in an attempt to solve problems. They have, in addition, set environmental standards as gold, silver and bronze with a gold standard requiring no action. The Cleaner, Greener Team will work with other agencies and individuals including home owners in an attempt to raise the grading to silver and gold. River Clyde Homes confirmed that their organisation was a Housing Association resulting from a major stock transfer and that their funding arrangements were accordingly different. This enabled them to set up these initial Cleaner, Greener Teams. It was also acknowledged by the Housing Association that with funding streams being under pressure, changes in the future may be required.

- u) tenants representatives were invited to take part and express their views. Views related to the upkeep of open areas rather than gardens attached to either individual houses or tenement properties. Open areas, which although outwith the scope of this review in relation to how tenants maintain their gardens, was an area of interest for tenants and their representatives. Individual areas of concern discussed were responded

to by the representative from Community Resources present. Issues raised included the maintenance of rose beds and their removal and the maintenance of open grass areas. The representatives were positive about walkabouts that had taken place. They did acknowledge however that areas discussed were not always directly related to Council owned stock nor related to individual tenant's gardens or other areas of responsibility. They acknowledged that, in the past, Housing Officers would have dealt with the whole of a traditional housing estate there being no private landlord and few owner occupiers;

- v) Housing Services advised that a similar model of "estate walkabouts" as described by the representatives from River Clyde Homes was in place within Renfrewshire. Council had reviewed the approach, as outlined in a report to the Housing and Community Safety Policy Board on 2nd March 2010 entitled "Review of Housing Services Regeneration Strategies and Estate Management Initiatives" and it was agreed that "instead of the annual estate walkabout programme, tenants, members and partners should report any issues through existing Estate Management and Repairs channels and that relevant Housing and Property and Environmental Services Managers will take direct responsibility for reporting progress on the resultant actions to Local Housing Forums, as part of their wider estate management responsibilities. Where required, local walkabouts can be arranged at any point in the year with appropriate officer support, and outputs reported back via the Local Housing Forum structure". The Board recognised the mixed reviews on the "walkabouts" and the need to streamline processes to reflect the responsibilities of the appropriate Council Department in the hope that issues are resolved as part of ongoing operational functions; subject to budgetary constraints;
- w) open spaces are not the responsibility of Housing Services. If open spaces are owned by the Council, the responsibility for maintenance thereof is delegated to Community Resources in the main. These are maintained in line with the outcome specifications developed by Community Resources since the Council's review of Streetscene Services which commenced in 2010;
- x) Housing Services advised that despite a tenant's obligations being clear and outlined in the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement and despite its management procedures, unfortunately some tenants do not comply with the terms of their tenancy agreement and the upkeep of common parts and garden areas can fall below standards expected. Where this is found through scheduled estate management inspections or through reports from other tenants or their representatives, there are clear procedures in place for staff to follow, from intervention, through support and if required,

through to warnings and ultimately the work would be done and the tenant re-charged;

- y) it was acknowledged by both Housing Services and by tenant representatives that, many residents, be they Council or Housing Association tenants, private tenants or owner-occupiers, may not be interested in maintaining a garden and some often do not have the resources to do so;
- z) Housing Services confirmed that by breaching the terms of their Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement, tenants could become subject to eviction proceedings. They were at pains to point out that this is always a last resort particularly for a social landlord and that any eviction process would always be subject to the “reasonableness” test namely, would the Court consider that it is reasonable, in all the circumstances, to evict a secure tenant from social housing for having an untidy garden;
- aa) depending on the nature and location of issues of key concern, appropriate Officers from Development and Housing Services and / or Community Resources will respond;
- bb) from the evidence presented, it became clear that many of the issues raised, particularly in relation to the maintenance of open spaces, do not specifically fall within the scope of this review as these open spaces are not managed and dealt with in terms of the Council’s Secure Tenancy Agreement.

3. Recommendations

Whilst representatives of Tenants and Residents Associations had views surrounding the maintenance of open spaces, there is no evidence to support the view that Housing Services are failing to advise Council tenants of their obligations under the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement or fail to address any issues raised with them which fall to be dealt with under their estate management procedures.

Housing Services operate two schemes which appear to work well. This was confirmed by representatives of the Tenants and Residents Associations. One representative confirmed specifically that this had made a significant difference particularly within her area, namely Glenburn.

- It is recommended that Housing Services should be encouraged to continue both schemes subject to budgetary consideration.
- Targeted estate site visits continue to be encouraged, for example through Local Housing Forums.
- Taking account of good practice identified from the evidence provided by River Clyde Homes, Housing Services consider refreshing the performance management guide within their Estate Management Procedures with pictorial guides using a similar system to the gold, silver and bronze standards for Council owned stock.
- Housing Services should consider, again subject to budgetary constraints, providing with each new tenants pack, a copy of the DVD played to tenants at their sign-up to the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement or providing a link through the Council's website depending on the preferred access route required by the customer.
- Housing Services and Community Resources should consider joint literature reflecting services available for all residents outlining and explaining the services available from the Council including, for example, the services of the Graffiti Squad, bin collections, bulk uplift etc.
- Acknowledge that with the increase in owner occupation and private landlords, the Council is often left as the minority owner in many Council areas and also in individual blocks of flatted dwelling houses with the resultant loss of control. The Board should also note that the Council has already taken the decision to offer for sale, single Council dwellings in larger common blocks where the Council has no other ownership. The majority of these dwellings are located in the Renfrew and Gallowhill areas as acknowledged within the report to Council on 13th May 2014:
 - ❖ Paisley North: 19
 - ❖ Paisley South: 1
 - ❖ Renfrew and Gallowhill: 69
 - ❖ Johnstone and Villages: 12
 - ❖ Houston, Crosslee, Riverside etc: 5
- That Housing Services continue to work with tenants outlining their obligations under their Tenancy Agreement and encouraging them to do all that is possible to maintain common areas and garden ground for which they are responsible.



To: Council

On: 29 September 2016

Report by: Director of Community Resources

Heading: Investment in Renfrewshire's Parks

1. Summary

1.1 At its budget meeting on 3 March 2016, the Council agreed to;

- provide £2.250 million to support major investment in Parks across Renfrewshire as follows;
 - £1million of capital resources
 - £1 million from Renfrew Common Good Fund,
 - £0.250million from Paisley Common Good Fund, and
- instruct the Director of Community Resources to develop a detailed and prioritised programme of investment in consultation with communities and key stakeholder groups and where appropriate consider community led delivery mechanisms to maximise the opportunity to lever in other external sources of funding and to provide a full report to Council after the summer recess.

1.2 Strategies and masterplans, along with detailed investment proposals have been developed in partnership with our stakeholders, including local community groups and friends of groups, to develop regeneration options and community led projects in our parks. They also support the Council's wider strategic priorities, including Tackling Poverty, Youth Unemployment, Community Empowerment, Paisley 2021 and also the National Play Strategy. The flagship parks at Robertson Park in Renfrew and Barshaw Park in Paisley have been the key focus of future investment proposals. Prior to the investment commitment by the Council, in March 2016, considerable joint working and progress had already been made on strategies and masterplans for both flagship parks. Ambitious master plans have been further developed which can be delivered through a combination of Council investment and

by pursuing potential external funding opportunities. The preliminary estimated total cost of these flagship master plans is £3.14 million for Barshaw Park and £2.437 million for Robertson Park respectively, total £5.577m.

- 1.3 Suitable projects have also been identified for 5 other neighbourhood parks across Renfrewshire. These are
- (i) Thomas Shanks Park, Johnstone
 - (ii) Barwood Park, Erskine
 - (iii) Houston Road Public Park, Bridge of Weir
 - (iv) Howwood Public Park, Howwood
 - (v) Kilbarchan Public Park, Kilbarchan
- 1.4 These 5 neighbourhood parks have sufficient community involvement and interest to support a viable investment programme, although prioritisation for current / early investment and potential complementary external funding opportunities is still being developed.
- 1.5 Master plans and key improvement priorities for the 2 flagship parks and the other 5 proposed neighbourhood parks have been developed through early stakeholder (community and friends groups) and officer joint working but exceed the Council's investment funding of £2.250m. However, a number of common early infrastructure priorities, in particular paths, roads & drainage and improved play facilities, could proceed, early in 2017, utilising the £2.250m and including dedicated employee resources, with a specialist set of skills (£125k). This specialist employee resource, employed by the Council, being used to support community and friends groups to pursue external funding opportunities (at a 100% funding level) that are additional to the Council's £2.250m investment.
- 1.6 It is being proposed that the Council's £2.250m investment funding be used to deliver the common early and key infrastructure priorities and be allocated as follows:
- £1 million (including a £50K employee resource allocation) Renfrew Common Good funding for the redevelopment of Robertson Park to provide improved infrastructure ie paths, roads & drainage and play facilities in the park
 - £750,000 capital resources and £250,000 Paisley Common Good Fund (including a £50K employee resource allocation) for the redevelopment of Barshaw Park to provide improved infrastructure ie paths, roads & drainage and play facilities in the park
 - £250,000 capital resources (including a £25K employee resource allocation) for investment in 5 neighbourhood parks across Renfrewshire
- 1.7 This investment by the Council in the common early priorities within infrastructure regeneration projects, along with dedicated specialist employee resources will act as a catalyst for external funding applications to realise the wider strategies and masterplans of the 2 flagship parks, 5 neighbourhood parks and across all of

Renfrewshire.

- 1.8 The common early priorities within the flagship projects at Robertson Park and Barshaw are being commissioned and further progressed through autumn 2016, to allow works to commence on site, weather permitting, in early 2017. The early priorities for the proposed 5 neighbourhood parks will take slightly longer, to allow more detailed project scopes, designs and costs to be fully developed. Site starts would be later, potentially spring 2017.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Council is asked to:
- (i) Approve the investment proposals and spend of the Council's £2.250m in the 2 flagship parks of Robertson Park, Renfrew and Barshaw Park, Paisley and 5 neighbourhood parks as set out and detailed in this report, including the dedicated & specialist employee resources to support community and friends groups in pursuing additional / complimentary funding opportunities and bids.
 - (ii) Note the anticipated commencement timescale of common early infrastructure works and improvements to play facilities at Robertson Park, Renfrew and Barshaw Park, Paisley is early 2017.
 - (iii) Note the anticipated commencement for investment in the 5 neighbourhood parks, as detailed in paragraph 1.3 of this report is spring, 2017.
 - (iv) Note that the investment proposals focus on parks which have already identified investment plans, through established stakeholder groups / community and friends groups.
 - (v) Note that future progress updates on the Council's £2.250m investment in Parks will be reported to the Environment Policy Board.

3. Background

- 3.1 All of the Council's parks are considered to be highly valued as community assets. The Council regularly assesses and reviews their condition and opportunities for investment. Wherever possible, this is undertaken in partnership with community groups such as Friends of Groups at Barshaw, Knockhill and Thomas Shanks Park; Community Councils; and Community Growing Grounds Groups.
- 3.2 A number of highly successful investment projects have been delivered in partnership with our communities and organisations such as the Lottery and Historic Environment Scotland. In particular, recent partnership investments have included £890,000 investment in new facilities and improved infrastructure at Knockhill Park,

Renfrew from the Big Lottery Fund, with an additional £100,000 provided to improve community cohesion there; and over £500,000 investment to restore the Grand Fountain in Fountain Gardens to its original condition funded by Historic Scotland.

- 3.3 In addition to these particular investments the Council also provides investment funding and support to community groups engaged in activities in parks & open spaces through the allocation of funding from Local Area Committees and from external funding applications. The Council also spends almost £9 million per annum on StreetScene activities across Renfrewshire. This spend includes maintenance activities to all of the Council's parks and open spaces.
- 3.4 Prior to the Council budget investment decision of March 2016, considerable progress had already been made on strategies and master plans for Barshaw Park Paisley and Robertson Park Renfrew. The strategies and master plans were developed in partnership with community and friends groups and link with wider corporate priorities including Paisley 2021, Tackling Poverty, Community Empowerment, Youth Unemployment, and National Play Strategy.

4. Barshaw Park, Paisley

- 4.1 Although £150,000 was allocated by the Council for investment in Barshaw Park to celebrate its centenary in 2012, it has otherwise suffered from a lack of investment over the last 40 years. In order to address this, the Friends of Barshaw Park were constituted in 2014 to
- promote community interest and involvement in the park,
 - meet the requirements of funders with regards to community involvement in redevelopment projects, and
 - provide an 'umbrella' group for all active groups within the park.
- 4.2 Over the last 12 months, the Council has worked in partnership with the Group to prepare an ambitious Master Plan which details a community vision for the park. This has involved consultation events, online questionnaires and interviews with groups operating in the park. The Master Plan comprises ambitious proposals to replace or repair infrastructure within the park (in particular paths, & drainage), renovate the walled garden, repair the boating pond, create an outdoor performance venue and introduce new play facilities.
- 4.3 This Master Plan has been developed to:
- meet the aspirations of the Council and park users in terms of facilities and attractions,
 - act as a catalyst for community led delivery mechanisms to maximise the opportunity to lever in other external sources of funding,
 - support Paisley's City of Culture 2021 bid, and
 - contribute to the Quality of Life within Renfrewshire, for residents, visitors and businesses.

- provide a suitable venue for events and attractions in the park
- 4.4 The aspirations described in the Master Plan will be delivered using a phased approach. Phase 1 common early priorities involving infrastructures repairs to paths, roads & drainage and improved play facilities, as set out in Appendix 1, will be funded directly by the Council and will enable subsequent, externally funded projects.
- 5. Robertson Park, Renfrew**
- 5.1 The Council has worked in partnership with community groups in Renfrew to prepare an ambitious Master Plan which details our vision for Robertson Park. These groups include the Renfrew Community Development Trust and Renfrew Community Council.
- 5.2 This Master Plan has been developed to
- meet the aspirations of the Council and park users in terms of facilities and attractions,
 - act as a catalyst for current and future community led delivery mechanisms to maximise the opportunity to lever in other external sources of funding
 - support the regeneration of Renfrew through complimenting Renfrew's range of attractions for both residents and visitors.
 - contribute to the Quality of Life within Renfrewshire, for residents, visitors and businesses
- 5.3 The proposals include renewal of roads and paths throughout the Park, provision of play facilities, creation of a hub which will incorporate a café and toilet facilities, upgrading of the model traffic area, upgrading of the Pets Corner and creating a new performance space.
- 5.4 The aspirations described in the Master Plan will be delivered using a phased approach in a similar manner to Barshaw Park. Phase 1 involving common early priorities and involving infrastructure repairs to paths, roads & drainage and improved play facilities is set out in Appendix 2 will be funded directly by the Council and will enable subsequent, externally funded projects.
- 6. Other Neighbourhood Parks**
- 6.1 Across Renfrewshire a number of other neighbourhood parks have been identified as suitable for investment. The parks have been selected on the basis of recognised and ongoing need for investment and significantly where local community groups are actively engaging with the Council. Investment would focus on addressing the condition of paths, boundaries and play equipment. The initial list of parks includes the 5 neighbourhood parks of Thomas Shanks Park in Johnstone, Barwood Park in Erskine, Houston Road Public Park in Bridge of Weir, Howwood Public Park in Howwood and Kilbarchan Public Park. This list may expand as more detailed

scoping works progress and external funding opportunities are explored with community groups.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - The Parks Investment proposals involve funding of £2.250m as approved at the Council meeting of 3rd March 2016 comprising £1m of direct capital allocation, £1m from the Renfrew Common Good Fund and £0.250m from Paisley Common Good Fund.

2. **HR & Organisational Development**

3. **Community Planning**

Children and Young People – Enhanced play facilities at key parks in Paisley and Renfrew combined with wider investment in parks across Renfrewshire will improve facilities for children and young people to play, be active and enjoy outdoor space.

Community Care, Health & Well-being – Improved parks contribute to encouraging greater levels of physical exercise. This investment will also attract more people outdoors and promote a sense of wellbeing through exposure to aesthetic and quality spaces.

Empowering our Communities – This project has engaged communities and friends groups, and responding positively to community needs and desires.

Greener – Improved parks enhances the quality and aesthetic of the urban environment. They provide places of peace and calm, encouraging exercise and active travel.

Jobs and the Economy – Investment in Parks contributes to the attractiveness of Renfrewshire for visitors and the investment in Barshaw Park in particular supports the Paisley City of Culture Bid 2021. Event spaces will complement the wider Council offering of venues for major public performances and therefore contribute to increased numbers of visitors.

4. **Legal** - none

5. **Property/Assets**- none

6. **Information Technology** - none

Equality & Human Rights - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the

mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

7. **Health & Safety** - none

8. **Procurement** - none

9. **Risk** - none

10. **Privacy Impact** - none

List of Background Papers – none

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Common Early Investment Priorities / Proposals for Robertson Park, Renfrew					
Appendix 1					
Investment Priorities	Cost	Issues for Consideration	Stakeholder Priority	Council Priority	
Improved paths / roads / drainage	£600,000	The deterioration of the infrastructure within Robertson Park needs to be addressed as quickly as possible to minimise future repair costs. An initial investment will restore the paths, roads and drainage systems within the park to halt their deterioration and protect future investment projects within the park from adverse ground conditions.	✓	✓	
Improved play facilities	£200,000	The play facilities within the park are the principal attraction for most visiting families. However, their popularity has resulted in them nearing the point where they become uneconomical to maintain. Initial investment will ensure that high quality facilities continue to be provided in the park whilst further investment is sought externally.	✓	✓	
Specialist resource	£50,000				
Total Cost	£850,000				

Common Early Investment Priorities / Proposals for Barshaw Park, Paisley					Appendix 2
Investment Priorities	Cost	Issues for Consideration	Stakeholder Priority	Council Priority	
Improved paths / roads / drainage	£650,000	The deterioration of the infrastructure within Barshaw Park needs to be addressed as quickly as possible to minimise future repair costs. Initial investment is required to restore the paths, roads and drainage systems within the park to halt their deterioration and protect future investment projects within the park from adverse ground conditions	✓	✓	
Improved play facilities	£150,000	The play facilities within the park are the principal attraction for most visiting families. However, their popularity has resulted in them nearing the point where they become uneconomical to maintain. Initial investment will ensure that high quality facilities continue to be provided in the park whilst further investment is sought externally	✓	✓	
Specialist resource	£50,000				
Total Cost	£850,000				



To: Council

On: 29 September 2016

Report by: Director of Development and Housing Services

Heading: Scottish Government's Review of Business Rates

1. Summary

- 1.1 Renfrewshire Council has been offered the opportunity to submit representations to the Scottish Government's recently announced Review of Business Rates led by Ken Barclay, and also to provide comments to a consultation in the 2017 Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) revaluation, possible transitional arrangements. The proposed submissions from the Council are attached. Annex 1, is the proposed response to the review led by Ken Barclay, this focuses on some of the key town centre regeneration issues facing the authority and makes recommendations to the Government Panel in terms of how the business rates system could be used to attract new investment to and reduce existing levels of vacancy within Renfrewshire's town centres. Annex 2, provides the proposed response to the 2017 NDR revaluation, possible transitional arrangements.
-

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council:-

- i. Approves the consultation responses from Renfrewshire Council as detailed in Annex 1 and Annex 2 attached and agrees that the responses be made publicly available via the Government's website.
-

3. Background

- 3.1 In July 2016 the Scottish Government announced it was setting up an expert Panel (led by Ken Barclay) to examine, enhance and reform the present business rates system in Scotland. The Panel have called for submissions to inform their review and wish to receive comments by 7 October 2016. The Panel will report to Scottish Government in July 2017.
- 3.2 The request for submissions to the Panel asks respondents to consider a number of points:
- How your suggestion will support business and investment;
 - Whether the impact will be universal or sector / region specific;
 - If it will carry a cost to the Scottish Government and how this could be met from within the rating system;
 - Whether your suggestion will reduce or increase costs for some or all ratepayers;
- 3.3 The basis of the review by Government is for solutions to be devised that are cost neutral i.e. if they carry a cost to the current level of business rate revenue then the cost of this could be met from within the rating system.
- 3.4 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (which came into force on 31st October 2015) allows for local authorities to approve a local relief scheme which reduces or remits any rate leviable by it in respect of non-domestic property. However, the regulations are clear that any loss of income from non-domestic rates as a result of implementing a local relief scheme must be funded from the Council's wider budget.
- 3.5 Officers are currently assessing the financial implications if such a local rate relief scheme was applied in Renfrewshire, potentially linked to the Council's town centre strategies.
- 3.6 The proposed revaluation of Scottish Business Rates (postponed from 2015) is planned to go ahead from April 2017. This review process sits separate from that process.
-

4. Glasgow City Region

- 4.1 We understand that Glasgow City Region (GCR) Cabinet intend to also make a submission to the Government's review. It is anticipated that this submission will focus principally on the existing business rates system as it applies to vacant industrial and commercial property. In April 2016 the Government amended the system to make empty commercial properties liable for 90% of their applicable business rates after the first 3 months (previously vacant industrial buildings did not pay business rates).

4.2 We understand the GCR response will make reference to potential implications if this issue is not addressed in the Governments review, including:

- Suppression of speculative developments;
 - Increased demolition of older properties;
 - Risk of increased rental rates;
 - Constraints on economic growth;
-

5. **2017 Non-domestic rating revaluation - consultation on possible transitional arrangements**

5.1 The above consultation was issued on 16 August 2016 with responses due by 11 October 2016. The consultation seeks views on whether, following the revaluation taking effect from 1 April 2017, there should be a period of transitional relief in order for businesses to manage the impact of any large changes in their rates bill.

5.2 Transitional relief is not a government subsidy – it is funded entirely by businesses through their rates payments. So, while those businesses who have an increase in their rates bill would see this phased in over a specified period, businesses who have a reduction in their rates bill would not receive the full benefit of this reduction until the end of the phasing period.

6. **Proposed comments**

6.1 The Council's proposed responses are attached at Annexes 1 and 2 to this report.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – No financial implications as a result of this report. Will depend on outcomes of Scottish Government's Business Rates Review.

2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None

3. **Community Planning** –

Community Care, Health & Well-being – None

Jobs and the Economy – Changes to the business rates system in Scotland could have a positive impact on the current levels of vacancy of commercial property in Renfrewshire and may result in increased investment and additional employment.

Safer and Stronger – Reducing vacancy in commercial properties could lead to citizens having a more positive attitude to their community.

4. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** – None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** – None
10. **Risk** – None as a result of this report
11. **Privacy Impact** - None

List of Background Papers

None

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Annex 1

Scottish Government - Barclay Review of Business Rates 2016

Response on behalf of Renfrewshire Council

29 September 2016

Renfrewshire Context

1. The regeneration of Renfrewshire's town centres is one of the Council's top priorities and we are committed to encouraging higher levels of investment in its town centres. One of the objectives that have emerged from this is strategies to reduce the level of vacancy of both commercial and residential properties in each of the town centres. The average vacancy rate in Scottish town centre is about 10% of all retail units. Renfrewshire has some town centres which are well below this average and some which have higher rates of vacancy.
2. Renfrewshire currently has some 6,310 properties that are subject to a business rates valuation.
3. In 2015/16 the Council collected approximately £93 million in business rate income.
4. Renfrewshire Council estimate at 2016 the retail vacancy rate in its 6 principal town centres is a combined average of 11.5%. This ranges from virtually no vacancies in Erskine to 16% in Paisley. Johnstone and Braehead centres have the next highest vacancy rates at 9% and 10% respectively, both close to the Scottish average.

Renfrewshire Submission

Renfrewshire's historic town centres (especially Paisley and Johnstone) have suffered from a downturn in demand for commercial space as compared to their historical supply.

Renfrewshire's historic town centres have a concentration of listed buildings (with Paisley having 122 listed buildings in its town centre alone). Unlike other commercial properties which are eligible for 10% rate relief, listed buildings benefit from 100% rate relief when empty and therefore the owners have little financial incentive to invest in their properties to encourage new tenants to occupy.

Of the approximately 76 currently vacant units in Paisley Town Centre, many have been vacant for a number of years and many of these are listed. Consequently the built fabric and appearance of these listed buildings at ground and upper floors is deteriorating. This has knock-on effect on perceptions of and demand to occupy these buildings. As a result owners are less willing to invest in both the listed and neighbouring unlisted buildings in these town centres.

Recommendation 1

Renfrewshire Council would advocate that the current system is revised to bring **listed buildings** into line with other types of commercial buildings when it comes to application of rate relief. As set out above, traditional town centres in Renfrewshire are disadvantaged by the current system due to having a concentration of listed buildings. Removing the present 100% rate relief for listed properties could incentivise owners to re-invest in their vacant properties.

Recommendation 2

Given the particular challenges faced in our historic town centres, it is suggested that Renfrewshire Council could become a “**pilot**” **local authority** for the Scottish Government to test a set of revisions to the current business rates system. Many of these vacant town centre properties are currently contributing zero in business rates. Therefore, it is proposed that a **pilot incentivisation scheme** be considered whereby landlords are provided with a financial benefit for bringing currently vacant properties back into use. We suggest that in traditional town centres 100% rates relief can be provided to landlords for a period of 2 or 3 years subject to various caveats about length of lease and net additionality to NDDR in the local area.

This could have the effect of making investment more viable and given the long term vacancy of many of these properties would not result in a net reduction in NDDR at a national level. [This is similar to the system advocated by the Government’s Advisory Group on Town Centres in 2013]. A modification of this would be to offer a sliding scale whereby vacant properties that are invested in and occupied with new tenants get 100% rate relief for 12 months and then 50% for the next 6 months and so on until they are a net contributor once again.

Recommendation 3

Another regeneration aim of the Council is to encourage more owners to consider **refurbishment of upper floors** of buildings in town centres which are currently vacant. Many of these properties have commercial premises at ground floor. Many of these premises are occupied but a large proportion are not in use. In instances where the ownership is one and the same (ground and upper floors), it is suggested that the owner be incentivised through reduced business rates for a fixed period (eg. 3 years) in return for investing in the refurbishment of the upper floors of the building for active use, either commercial or residential. Clearly if the new use is commercial there will be an increase in the NDDR payment for the property. Alternatively, if the end use is residential this would meet the regeneration aims for both national and local government in terms of traditional town centres.

Recommendation 4

Renfrewshire Council would extend a welcome and encourage the **Expert Panel to visit Renfrewshire** and see some of the practical issues facing this local authority first hand in overcoming vacancy in town centre commercial properties, particularly in listed buildings. The Council would be more than happy to facilitate such a visit and arrange site visits to Paisley and Johnstone town centres and arrange meetings with

the Paisley First (Business Improvement District) and local property owners and agents who can illustrate the context they face in these town centres. We believe this may be a useful exercise for the Panel in formulating their views on the above recommendations of Renfrewshire Council.

Annex 2

Scottish Government – 2017 Non-domestic rating revaluation – consultation on possible transitional arrangements

Response on behalf of Renfrewshire Council

29 September 2016

Question 1

Should the Scottish Government introduce a transitional scheme for the 2017 Revaluation?– Yes or No

*Renfrewshire Council Response - **Yes***

Question 2

Do you have views on how long any transitional relief should be in place?

Responses available: No scheme; 3 years; 4 years; 5 years

*Renfrewshire Council Response – **3 years** (but see comments below)*

Question 3

Do you have any views on how transitional relief should be funded?

Responses available: Either; Cap on bill reductions or Supplement on other ratepayers

*Renfrewshire Council Response – **Cap on bill reductions***

Question 4

Do you have any other comments on transitional relief?

There are, as the consultation outlines, pros and cons to any transitional relief scheme. Whilst those businesses who have an increase in their rateable value following the April 2017 revaluation exercise would benefit from this increase in their rates bill being phased in over a period, businesses whose bill reduces do not see the full benefit of this reduction immediately.

The interaction of any relief scheme and other existing reliefs (SBBS, empty property etc) is complex; as is the impact of any relief scheme for local authorities themselves, who may potentially benefit from a transitional scheme.

On balance, it is viewed that a transitional relief scheme is desirable. However this should be for a relatively short period in order that those small and medium sized business who potentially could benefit from a decrease in their rates bill (but do not currently qualify for SBBS) actually receive this benefit as soon as possible as for these businesses in particular, their rates bill could be a significant proportion of their running costs.

A period of 1-2 years suggested as reasonable as opposed to the 3-5 year term outlined in the consultation.



To: Council

On: 29th September 2016

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Consultation on Social Security in Scotland

1. Summary

- 1.1 Scottish Government has invited responses to a consultation on social security in Scotland.
 - 1.2 Responses to the consultation are required to be submitted by 28th October 2016. Attached to this report is a proposed Council response which has been developed at the request of and in consultation with the Council's administration group.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to approve the content of the proposed response for submission to the Scottish Government
-

3. Background

- 3.1 The consultation seeks views on the Scottish Government's proposals for social security in Scotland. The consultation is in three main parts; a principled approach, the devolved benefits and operational policy.
- 3.2 The first part of the consultation considers how the vision and principles can be reflected in legislation, and the ways that social security is delivered.
 - Fixing the principles in legislation – This considers how principles

can be reflected as either (a) a Claimant Charter or (b) writing principles into legislation

- Outcomes and the user experience – This considers whether the short, medium and long term outcomes that have been identified are correct
- Delivering social security in Scotland – This consider questions about how the new Social Security Agency might deliver social security, such as who should deliver social security benefits
- Equality and low income – A partial Equality Impact Assessment is attached to the consultation, and these questions consider the equality and low income considerations
- Independent advice and scrutiny – This considers the need for an independent scrutiny body, and whether there is a need for an independent function to oversee standards

3.3

The second part of the consultation relates to the devolved benefits, and considers in more detail the individual benefits that are due to be devolved, including:

- Disability Benefits (Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance, and Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit)
- Carer's Allowance – Scottish Government are proposing the increase Carer's Allowance so that it is paid at the same level as Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Winter Fuel & Cold Weather Payments
- Funeral Payments
- Sure Start Maternity Grant – Scottish Government are proposing to increase this payment to £600, and to make further payments for additional children and when children start nursery and school.
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Some Universal Credit flexibilities, including direct payment options for private rented sector tenants, and variations of single household payments.
- Job Grant – Scottish Government are proposing to introduce a new Job Grant to help young people aged 16-24 who are returning to work after a period of 6 months unemployment, and would be payment of £100 or £250 for those who have children.

3.4

The third part of the consultation relates to operational policy

- Information, advice and representation – This considers the role that publicly funded advice should play in the development of a new Social Security System
- Complaints, reviews and appeals – This considers the best way to handle complaints and concerns, and the role of internal review and appeals processes.
- Residency and cross-border issues – This considers the eligibility criteria about residency status, and plans that a residence test will

- be based on 'habitual residence'
- Managing overpayments and debt – This considers view on current arrangements for overpayments and the way that overpayments are recovered
- Fraud – Scottish Government proposes that officials should investigate fraud in the same way as 'Authorised Officers' do for DWP. This considers these current arrangements and whether there are improvements that could be made.
- Protecting your information – Scottish Government are proposing a 'Privacy by Design' approach to information handling and the consultation asks for view on controlled sharing of information from other public sector organisations.
- Uprating - This considers whether there should be a general Scottish uprating policy for devolved benefits and payments

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - None
 2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
 3. **Community Planning** – None
 4. **Legal** - None
 5. **Property/Assets** - None
 6. **Information Technology** - None
 7. **Equality & Human Rights** - None
 8. **Health & Safety** – None
 9. **Procurement** – None
 10. **Risk** –. None
 11. **Privacy Impact** - None
-

Appendix A

Renfrewshire Council Response

Social Security Consultation

Response to Scottish Government

September 2015

Renfrewshire Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Scottish Government on Social Security in Scotland.

The overview of the consultation makes reference to the constraints that are faced and the limitations to what Scottish Government can and can't do. It is correct that the primary focus should be the safe transition of benefits to the Scottish Social Security system, to make sure that citizens are not adversely affected by the transfer of powers. However, the new social security powers also offer a significant opportunity to improve and reshape the delivery of the devolved benefits.

At a local level, while there are no proposals at this stage around which agencies might be involved the delivery of social security, the balance need to be found between (a) using public sector organisations that already exist and might be well placed to deliver and (b) ensuring that organisations are sufficiently resourced to do so. The attached consultation response explores some examples of where connections to locally delivered services could add value to the social security system and improve user experience, but also examples where local authorities are already facing financial and administrative burdens within an already challenging financial context.

It is noted that Scottish Government has recently consulted on an ambition to eradicate child poverty, and a target to reduce relative child poverty to below 5%. As stated in Renfrewshire Council's response to the Child Poverty Bill consultation, it is recognised that Scottish Government has now gained significant taxation and social security powers, and it should look to use these to support more redistributive national policies in order to meet these targets. While a move to enshrine dignity and respect at the heart of the Scottish Social Security system is a critical one, there is a need to ensure sufficient resources are provided to match action with attitude. Proposals such as bolstering the Best Start Grant, and introducing a new Job Grant would be a support to low-income families, but it is suggested that they do not go far enough in order to meet the Scottish Government's proposed targets. For example, the consultation does not discuss Scottish Government's position on its ability to create new benefits, or to top-up reserved benefits. It is also unclear what Scottish Government's position is on the balance between universalism and targeting within the devolved benefits, and where each might be most appropriate to deliver on policy priorities.

1) Fixing the principles in legislation

2) Which way do you think principles should be embedded in the legislation?

- A. As a "Claimant Charter"?
- B. Placing principles in legislation?
- C. Some other way, please specify

Option A) A Charter

Placing principles in legislation adds complexity and often wording can be open to interpretation. A charter would make things clearer with more detail. Legislation for the claiming, awarding and payment of new social security benefits can be made in line with the principles of the charter without having to place additional layers of complexity including the principles in the legislation.

If you think option A. "a Claimant Charter" is the best way to embed principles in the legislation:

3) What should be in the Charter?

4) Should the Charter be drafted by:

- An advisory group?
- A wider group of potential user and other groups or organisations?
- Both
- Some other way, please specify.

The charter should be drafted by an advisory group working with a wider group of potential users and front-line staff who work directly with users, and other groups/organisations who have expertise in the subject area such as partners and 'back office' staff.

5) We are considering whether or not to adopt the name, "Claimant Charter".

Can you think of another name that would suit this proposal better? If so, what other name would you choose?

The use of the word claimant could be seen as stigmatising. It might be better to have a charter which involves both rights and responsibilities of parties involved beyond the claimant and describes more clearly what its purpose is. Scottish Social Security Charter could be an option.

6) Do you have any further comments on the "Claimant Charter"?

If you think option B, placing the principles in legislation" is the best way to embed principles in the legislation.

7) On whom would you place a duty to abide by the principle that claimants should be treated with dignity and respect?

- The Scottish Government
- The Scottish Ministers

- The Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency
- Someone else, please specify

The ultimate responsibility should rest with Scottish Government, although there should be mechanisms to ensure responsibility is seen as collective.

8) Do you have any further comments on placing principles in legislation?

As the Scottish social security system is a new development, principles should be set in legislation. However, it should be noted that legislation can only play a limited role in embedding dignity and respect, ultimately this is a societal change that is required to change culture and attitudes. For example, while legislation like the Equality Act clearly puts accountability for principles in legislation, the lack of enforcement means that it can be interpreted as 'lip-service'. How can the legislation be made meaningfully enforceable and through which mechanisms, and what are the costs associated with doing this?

9) Do you have any further comments or suggestions in relation to our overall approach, to fix our principles in legislation? For example, do you feel that there is no need to fix principles in legislation?

See above

2. Outcomes & the user experience

10) Are the outcomes (shown in the table on the previous page) the right high level outcomes to develop and measure social security in Scotland?

Overall, the outcomes seem reasonable.

It might be worth including others which reference value for money to the wider public (in terms of administration/fraud). The wider public's view of benefit recipients is often due to perceptions that some people receive benefits that shouldn't and some don't receive it who should. By embedding faith in the application, assessment, delivery and payment of awards then that in turn translates into positive views on the system and recipients.

- How will these outcomes be measured and tracked, and in particular how will we understand if achieving the outcomes can be related to social security? What will the costs and burden of measurement be?
- Some outcomes need clearer definition: what does 'public services experience less pressure' mean in practice? It can be unclear from whose perspective the outcomes are meant to be considered.
- The outcomes do not leave it clear what the Scottish Government is responsible for delivering and the distinction between these outcomes and the reserved system, and its relationship to passported benefits.

11) Are there any other outcomes that you think we should also include (and if so, why?)

There are some issues which need to be addressed within the outcomes of the system:

- People need to have an awareness of the cost of social security benefits (hand in hand with other powers around tax, and a clearer conversation with citizens around what they want to pay for)
- Reflecting how the system supports people to become more independent and require social security less, where this is appropriate
- A position around universalism vs targeted support, the current outcomes seem focussed on giving out rather than prioritising. Is this a realistic position considering many benefits aren't means tested?
- Correlation to other savings – how does it align to other priorities for example, early years

12) How can the Scottish social security system ensure all social security communications are designed with dignity and respect at their core?

Engage with current providers and user groups over current social security communications. Customers must be involved in this, and communications should be in Plain English. There needs to be transparency of decision making, with these decisions set in the context of wider decisions being made.

13) With whom should the Scottish Government consult, in order to ensure that the use of language for social security in Scotland is accessible and appropriate?

Customers and user representatives as well as advice groups, 3rd Sector and Voluntary groups, Local Authorities, DWP, Legal profession (for regs), Education Institutions (Plain English, context and interpretation for those who possibly have difficulty with communications (e.g. where English not first language/learning disabilities))

14) Are there any particular words or phrases that should not be used when delivering social security in Scotland?

Not claimant – customer would be better as it is less stigmatising

Any decision on this should be based on the context that many claimants will be claiming from the DWP and the Scottish Social Security System. Care should be given to ensure consistency with language as much as possible so not create confusion over terminology.

15) What else could be done to enhance the user experience?

- When people first get in touch
- When they are in the processes of applying for a benefit
- When a decision is made (for example, about whether they receive a benefit)
- When they are in receipt of a benefit
- Use of online and digital channels
- Regular contact and updates for the customer
- Effective signposting - esp between devolved and reserved benefits
- Very plain English definition of each benefit

- Clear information on awards, or no awards, with clear dispute rights. Clear information on what someone in receipt of benefit should expect and what their obligations are with regards changes in circumstance.
- Using information and data that already exists so there is less burden on both customers and administrators to process and evidence i.e. review Local Government Finance Act and use of Council Tax Reduction data in the context of Scottish Social Security

16)How should the Scottish social security system communicate with service users? (For example, text messaging or social media)?

All methods are appropriate however care should be made about easily outdated mobile numbers and email addresses for sending any personal information. When appropriate, formal written (post/email) communications are required. With regards to contacting claimants for further information, phone is generally the best method, however if carers/appointees/next of kin are involved that might not always be appropriate.

Any channels that are convenient, ensuring that the customer has both capability and availability to access those channels. Customer choice is important.

Aside from newer channels such as text and social media, there is a need to get the basic methods of communication right. For example, decision letter which are written in plain English, clear and easy to understand.

17)What are your views on how the Scottish Government can ensure that a Scottish social security system is designed with users using a co-production and co-design approach?

Its accepted that co-production is an ideal method for service design particularly in order to ensure that the service has dignity and respect, but it should be noted that co-production is not always quick, nor does it necessarily yield the most cost effective option. If co-production is used then it needs to be true co-production at the right stage, rather than consultation or ideas gathering.

Scottish Government needs to be clear and transparent about the balance of costs where the preference is customer choice, and manage expectations on what can be delivered within resources.

We are considering whether or not to adopt the name "User Panels". Can you think of another name that would better suit the groups of existing social security claimants which we will set up?

User Panels sounds quite formal, would a 'group' be more approachable, or something which focuses on wider customer voice?

3. Delivering social security in Scotland

18)Should the social security agency administer all social security benefits in Scotland?

There is an important role for social security to be delivered locally, and to allow the customer to interact locally with people who have the relevant local knowledge. Scottish Government do need to clearly consider the cost of the administration, especially where this involved adding an additional customer interface to an already complex system. Data sharing arrangements will be critical to managing the costs and efficiency of such a complex system.

The social security agency could administer all social security benefits in Scotland following the model where LAs are required to administer HB, blue badge schemes, EMAs, clothing grants and now SWF on behalf of other agencies such as DWP and Scottish Government. The social security agency could provide legislation, guidance, systems and manage the delivery with cost efficiencies being found at a national level, but with LAs providing local front facing delivery with joined up working with Benefits, Revenues, Social Work, Education, NHS Community Partnerships etc.

19) Should the social security agency in Scotland be responsible for providing benefits in cash only or offer a choice of goods and cash?

Cash is the preferred option, but ultimately there needs to be an element of flexibility and choice retained.

Consideration should be given as to how the devolved benefits will interact with the reserved benefits system. For instance, increasing Carers Allowance would be seen as a good idea; however for UC claimants any extra given from the Scottish social security agency would be lost within the UC assessment. Whilst a choice should be given, the SWF has shown savings have been made by collective resources using goods rather than cash only. Cash might not always be spent on the most efficient way to reduce costs/hardship for some customers; therefore consideration could be given whether some benefits would be better awarded in goods/discounts etc.

Consideration should also be given to whether a Scottish agency would have the capacity to deliver goods.

20) How best can we harness digital services for social security delivery in Scotland?

Scottish Government should consider a 'digital first' approach, while maintaining phone, face-to-face and other communication channels as an alternative.

Digital services have an important role in providing accessible applications and information, and can sometime break down barriers caused by face to face communication. However for certain people this is not ideal. Whether due to ill health, lacking in digital skills, have no access to digital hardware or the necessary connectivity there would seem to be an important need for face to face provision.

Consideration should also be given to the opportunities to use digital at the 'back end' of social security delivery, to automate processes or make them more convenient. It will be important to ensure that this can be effectively interfaced with DWP work in this area, and to understand some of the existing issues in this area, such as the current legislation and Memoranda of Understanding. For example, while the Welfare Reform Act has opened door to data sharing, this is then significantly limited by the MOU.

21) Should social security in Scotland make some provision for face to face contact?

Provision for face to face contact is important element. Face to face offers significant value in allowing interaction and communication between the two parties – there needs to be a variety of contact types so that they best suit the needs and requirements of individuals.

However, it is recognised that this is also the most expensive channel and need to be appropriate for the person and the circumstance (for example, alternatives may be more appropriate in more rural areas).

22) Who should deliver social security medical assessments for disability related benefits?

While dependent on the type of assessment, there needs to be consideration of how health service information can be used if it is available and already there. Medical assessments should be carried out by someone able to make a decision based on medical training and the impacts of conditions on day to day living/coping, rather than training in carrying out assessments.

23) Should we, as much as possible, aim to deliver social security through already available public sector services and organisations?

Yes, offers coherent approach with holistic targeting to assist claimants and target poverty/hardship. Should also reduce set up costs and administration as network already exists. Enhancement of existing network would be easier, reducing risk of disruption, for customers.

There is a danger if locally administered that it can create too many discrepancies and ‘post code lottery’ of entitlement. However, sometimes for equality, difference may be needed locally to reflect the area.

Using an existing network could help to mitigate the costs of set up and delivery, as where there is another level of complexity then there are likely to be higher costs. Where existing public sector services are used, it is important that they are appropriately compensated for the costs of delivering social security. For example, existing arrangements for the delivery of SWF and UC mean that local authorities are not appropriately compensated for the delivery of these benefits.

24) Should any aspect of social security be delivered by others such as the 3rd sector, not for profit organisations, social enterprises or the private sector?

It would depend whether any of the listed organisations can provide coherent cost effective national coverage consistently. Also would provision of benefits impact on their current advice role – conflict of interest?

Where considering the delivery of social security by another agency, the motivation and overriding business interest of the organisation needs to be considered to ensure it is compatible with the social security outcomes that have been identified.

One major problem with benefits is clients not claiming what they are entitled to. Jobcentre Plus offices as they stand at present have a focus on work and work related benefits. There’s no equivalent to the old Social Security offices that covered the full range of benefits. If there were frontline benefit staff trained to advise clients on every benefit they may be entitled to, that would be the ideal. If not, could an organisation be funded to offer that kind of advice?

4. Equality and low income

25)How can the Scottish Government improve its partial EqIA so as to produce a full EqIA to support the Bill?

These prompts could be helpful in framing your answer:

- What does the Scottish Government need to do, as it develops a Scottish social security system, to ensure that equality implications are fully taken into account?
- What does the Scottish Government need to do, as it develops a Scottish social security system, to ensure that any implications for those on low incomes are fully taken into account?
- Are there equality considerations for individual benefits that you would like to draw to our attention?
- Are there considerations about individual benefits for those on low incomes that you would like to draw to our attention?
- What are your views on how we can best gather equality information for the new Scottish benefits?
- What does the Scottish Government need to do to ensure that its social security legislation (including secondary legislation and guidance) aligns its vision and principles with equality for all those who need assistance through Social Security support?
- What does the Scottish Government need to do to ensure that a Scottish social security system provides the right level of support for those who need it and what are the possible equality impacts of this?

5. Independent advice and scrutiny

26)Do you think that there is a need for an independent body to be set up to scrutinise Scottish social security arrangements?

27)If you agree, does the body need to be established in law or would administrative establishment by the Scottish government of the day be sufficient?

Yes, without a second chamber in Scottish Parliament, and to avoid political blockage an independent body established via law, could scrutinise legislation and report back to the Social Security Committee (or any others where appropriate) in Parliament. The independent body could draw upon experts in the area (for fixed term appointments) but be publically accountable and transparent similar to the SSAC. It would make sense to use the SSAC or a similar model with responsibilities for scrutinising, which has an appropriate level of influence.

28)If yes, what practical arrangements should be made for the independent body (for example, the law could state how appointments to it are made and the length of time an individual may serve as a member of the body)?

Look at what works in the current Social Security scrutiny board and what doesn't. It needs to be independent and have a wide cross section of members with the needs of Scottish people at the heart of it.

29)Should there be a statutory body to oversee Scottish social security decision making standards?

Yes, to assess decision making and ensure it is fair and just across the country. This would need to include analysis by appropriate independent qualified persons, eg. External evaluators.

It does not necessarily need a new body; possibly widen existing body to include this remit. Depends on what you mean separate from? Separate from those that make decisions yes, not necessarily separate from the Social Security Agency. What could the role be for Audit Scotland or the Accounts Commission?

Eg. With SWF, the Scottish Government concluded that SPSO was required for 2nd tier review – if this is similar then would need an independent body

30) If yes, should this be a separate body in its own right?

31) Do you have any other views about the independent scrutiny of social security arrangements in Scotland (e.g. alternative approaches)?

Part 2: The Devolved Benefits

6. Disability Benefits

Thinking of the current benefits, what are your views on what is right and what is wrong with them?

Disability Living Allowance

32) What is right with DLA?

DLA recognises that there are different levels of need, in particular the lowest rate care component recognised that some people have significant needs that need some help often from another person, PIP does not have an equivalent of this. The lower rate also had passported appropriate benefits such as no non dependant deduction in Housing Benefit that recognised that the disabled person may need some help from another person living in the household and they were not then penalised by needing the person to be there.

The qualifying conditions were quite open, no points system, so disabled persons did not need to fit into a particular category it was their overall care needs that were looked at and how often they needed care.

DLA covered safety issues better for disabled persons in terms of falls etc, PIP relates it to individual tasks more which can make it difficult for someone with genuine needs in this area to qualify.

33) What is wrong with DLA?

As above the qualifying conditions were not always clear.

The highest level of care component required both day and night time needs, so many severely disabled

people who had a lot of additional costs could still only qualify for the middle rate of care component.

The more open criteria, this could also make it difficult for a person to properly explain their needs and know what information DWP were looking for to qualify. If they struggled or avoided tasks as no one was there to help them then they did not know to mention this as it was the help that they needed not necessarily the help that they actually got that was also relevant.

There are very limited points for supervising a medical condition, the higher points are connected to therapy. Someone with epilepsy for example would need to make it clear in each task section why they need supervision.

Personal Independence Payment

34)What is right with PIP?

There is a better recognition of mental health conditions, particularly relating to mobility and the enhanced rate.

There is more of a breakdown of tasks that may prompt a disabled person to remember their needs in those areas. Also they can see what was accepted and what was not by decision makers and can then obtain evidence of that need.

35)What is wrong with PIP?

- The mobility rate with regards to distance is too low at 20m. This disqualifies a lot of disabled persons who genuinely need financial support for their mobility difficulties.
- The descriptors do not make it clear regarding whether tasks can be done in a reasonable time, repeatedly or the effects of pain and fatigue. Although these are meant to run throughout the descriptors, decision makers, disabled people, their carers and the Tribunals all too often fail to take this adequately into account resulting in the disabled person losing out on vital assistance. Disabled persons with conditions like kidney failure, cancer etc who struggle with fatigue and similar issues often don't qualify because this has not been identified.
- If you receive kidney dialysis in hospital you do not qualify for PIP, again these disabled persons have to try to explain about fatigue etc around each descriptor instead of qualifying automatically
- The descriptors are often too restrictive, disabled people's needs are extensive and varied and don't always fall neatly in to tick boxes in terms of times and numbers.
- PIP are making very short awards, this means that the review form is sent at the end of the first year very shortly after the award has been made for a 2 year award. Disabled people then feel that they are on a continual treadmill to prove their needs. Whilst this may be appropriate for some conditions, in a lot of cases it is unnecessary and causes additional stress and worry.

Attendance Allowance

36)What is right with AA?

See DLA comments above apart from the lowest care component which is not part of Attendance Allowance. Good for capturing wide variety of needs and around supervision etc.

37)What is wrong with AA?

No lowest rate in the care component allowing for lower level of needs that still require financial support, particularly as this might allow a person to stay at home longer and avoid them going into care. They often need additional adaptations or support that Social Work or Health cannot supply and they need to be able to pay for this.

No mobility component that again might assist a person to remain at home rather than going into care and keep them independent and engaged in society and help prevent isolation.

38)Is there any particular change that could be made to these disability benefits that would significantly improve equality?

We need to improve how we describe what certain disability benefits are and what they are for – they have a very specific purpose. As above, the current assessment processes are often not suitable for claimants with some mental health conditions.

39)How should the new Scottish social security system operate in terms of:

- A person applying for a disability related benefit
- The eligibility criteria set for disability related benefits
- The assessment/consideration of the application and the person's disability and/or health condition
- The provision of entitlements and awards (at present cash payments and the option of the Motability Scheme)
- The review and appeal process where a person isn't content with the outcome

We want to make sure that the process is clear and accessible from start to finish, and that people claiming devolved benefits understand how and when their claim will be dealt with.

40) With this in mind, do you think that timescales should be set for assessments and decision making?

Targets and timescales are needed as often the delay in financial support can result in a condition becoming worse and then there is hospitalisation or a move into care that results in a far greater expenditure to the public purse. Expectations are also then clearer and there should be better information to claimants around current processing times. Prioritising certain types of claims in addition to DS1500 (terminal illness/end of life) cases could be considered after careful info gathering from Health and Social services on this. For example to help someone leave hospital earlier making beds available and costing less. This would need to be balanced with the needs of other claimants and the effect on their timescales though.

Timescales can also affect things like whether someone can get help with a new boiler, or a different type of housing. In some cases, the AA/DLA is the passporting benefit to these, so a delay not only affects the clients day to day expenditure, it can have a real effect on quality of life.

41)What evidence and information, if any, should be required to support an application for a Scottish benefit?

Relevant and up to date information should always be required to support any application. The decision makers should be responsible for requesting this information from the applicant, and where appropriate a 3rd party (assuming application declaration makes reference to allowing contact) should be asked to provide information. Whether there is a requirement for legislation to be drafted to oblige provision of information is also to be considered. The applicant should have responsibilities if appropriate, however medical evidence for instance would be more efficiently obtained from medical practitioners.

The Scottish Social Security agency should be able to request information on their behalf, but whether there are necessary regulations in place would need to be investigated, especially if requests are being made with organisations based outside Scotland.

42)Who should be responsible for requesting this information?

The request and costs if evidence is deemed required should come from the office assessing benefit. Evidence can be difficult and expensive to source from many places particularly medical and should be avoided if not needed and sufficient and probable evidence is coming directly from the claimant.

43)Who should be responsible for providing it?

This would depend on the nature of the disability and most appropriate source related to that

44)Should the individual be asked to give their consent (Note: consent must be freely given, specific and informed) to allow access to their personal information, including medical records, in the interests of simplifying and speeding up the application process and/or reducing the need for appeals due to lack of evidence?

- Being able to use existing information held – need to create legislative route to allow the data sharing
- A number of professions, family members etc can all be involved assisting someone who has a disability and they can provide vital info and confirmation of their needs. Indeed often the disabled person themselves underplay their needs and the family are the ones struggling to help and facing the reality of caring.
- The GP often does not know about home life and other professionals can be visiting the home and have a better understanding, e.g. For mental health issues the Community Psychiatric Nurse or psychologist can be more appropriate.
- Family members often know the needs and issues the best, but this evidence is all too often dismissed. It should be assessed appropriately and in a measured way relating to the disability. i.e. is it probably and likely then should be accepted.

45) If the individual has given their permission, should a Scottish social security agency be able to request information on their behalf?

Yes

46) Do you agree that the impact of a person's impairment or disability is the best way to determine entitlement to the benefits?

Yes

47) If yes, which aspects of an individual's life should the criteria cover and why?

All aspects, currently it is only self care relating to bodily functions and mobility, but there should be more flexibility for other needs particularly relating to remaining in your own home. Some of this is covered by other assessments e.g. home care needs by social services, but they are limited in what they cover and less choice even with self directed payments. A benefit award would allow much more choice and flexibility.

Scottish Government could explore a single assessment model to see if this is feasible. It could cover a number of different assessment elements from different perspectives, for example, existing joint assessments between social work and health that already include financial assessment questions. This should be approached with caution as it would require significant changes around data sharing and may require a significant level of upskilling (for example, around having conversations about household finances) but a more holistic view from the individual, medical professionals, family and carers could offer a truer assessment.

48) If no, how do you suggest entitlement is determined?

49) Currently there are only special rules for the terminally ill but should there be others?

As mentioned previously there is scope for a number of conditions including long term severe mental health conditions, genetic conditions that could be exempt from re-assessment or at the very least have longer awards made.

50) How could this be determined?

51) What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of automatic entitlement?

Advantages are faster more stream lined process for very vulnerable clients. Should speed up assessment and reduce appeals thus improving decision making.

Disadvantages could be whether certain conditions should have automatic entitlement over others.

52) Would applicants be content for their medical or other publicly-held records, for example prescribing and medicines information or information held by HMRC, to be accessed to support automatic entitlement where a legal basis existed to do this?

Most claimants support this as it makes it easier for them and because medical professionals do not have the time to supply this most of the time or it can depend where you live or your specific needs

53) Do you agree that the current UK-wide PIP and AA process for supporting people with terminal illnesses is responsive and appropriate?

Yes and No

54) If yes, should this approach be applied to all disability-related benefits for people with a terminal illness?

Yes, the principle is correct and PIP special rules is a great and very positive development - allowing advisers to make the claim remotely and quickly and without the initial phone call and first form sent out delaying the process.

55) If no, how could the approach could be improved?

Occasionally DS1500s are rejected by decision makers. Macmillan met with Atos last year and said that DS1500s should be accepted, end of, since then this appears to have improved.

Attendance Allowance - It would be great if the same telephone application process could be in place for this benefit and others, they do send the forms out quite quickly but why can't we make a remote claim the same as PIP. This would be another great and positive development and should be included in any Scottish specific system.

56) Should there be additional flexibility, for example, an up-front lump sum?

Yes, this would be helpful even with faster process. This should be considered as even with fast track it can be 2 weeks or more before a first payment.

57) In the longer term, do you think that the Scottish Government should explore the potential for a consistent approach to eligibility across all ages, with interventions to meet specific needs at certain life stages or situations?

Yes

58) What would the advantages and disadvantages of a single, whole-of-life benefit be?

A consistent approach with fewer applications for customers to make would be easier to administer and easier for customers to understand. By having one benefit, it would be easier to prevent confusion and possible gaps in eligibility based on age. Eligibility criteria could be made flexible enough to cover all age ranges within the one benefit. This could also be beneficial for people with multiple conditions, or those whose conditions are deteriorating.

This should be particularly explored for any conditions where needs will not change over time especially if the award is at the highest level. Re-introduction of appropriate indefinite / life awards could be considered creating longer award periods before being looked at/re-visited for certain conditions. As above, the decision maker would be best placed as someone with medical training.

59) Could the current assessment processes for disability benefits be improved?

Yes

60) For those people that may require a face-to-face assessment, who do you think should deliver the assessments and how? For example, private organisation, not-for-profit organisation, public sector body or professional from health or social care.

The face to face assessments for PIP have proved extremely poor in quality and expensive to deliver. Appeals have had a high success rate and have demonstrated that many cases where zero points were awarded, the person then passed at appeal. In particular exemptions have not been used enough for disabled persons with serious conditions where other evidence could have been used to avoid the time and expense of a medical. The medical assessments have proved very poor for mental health conditions in particular, with many claimants unable to attend a medical due to the severity of their condition and were then refused or removed from benefit.

People carrying out assessments should be suitably qualified to make decision not just trained to perform an assessment, and assessments should be carried out by an organisation that does not have any self-interest in the process.

61) What are the advantages and disadvantages of different types of assessments? e.g. paper based, face-to-face, telephone

Paper based can be good, as it allows time for a claimant to put down their info and also to obtain help from others to complete the info. The DLA form used to ask for info from (someone who knows you) and this could be used for relatives and support workers as well as for medical info. It did ask for those involved in treatment and for consent to allow the DWP to contact them, but did not make it very clear that they would only contact sometimes. Claimants would think that their health professionals would always be contacted as they had filled this in. If paper based then it should be clear what is likely to happen and when additional info would be helpful and what info.

Face to face can be good, depending on who is delivering this and the purpose. Too often the medical assessments although face to face have not allowed the client time to discuss their needs properly or allowed others with them to speak. They have been very procedural based and set questions with the medical assessor rushing through the questions and making assumptions. This is why many appeals are successful as the person is allowed to explain their needs fully.

Some claimants can explain their needs better face to face then on paper, but it very much depends on the context of these assessments and the individuals carrying these out and the claimants attending. They can be extremely stressful for claimants particularly those with mental health conditions who often then don't turn up to the appointment and are refused benefit.

Some claimants prefer the use of phone especially if they are unable to travel, however, we have also found that they do not explain their difficulties on the phone as well and are more likely to be rushed.

62) How could the existing assessment process be improved?

63) Could technology support the assessment process to promote accessibility, communication and convenience?

Yes. There is the possibility to link with telehealth initiatives going on in more remote areas, where the discussions around medical info and data security on Skype etc have already been thought through.

64) If yes, please explain what technology would be helpful e.g. Skype, video conferencing.

There is a lot of potential of using facilities like Skype, however, this needs to be balanced with access to these facilities and so that we ensure individuals are not disadvantaged because they cannot use technology. However, potential advantages could be claimants not having to travel to assessment centres or also could medical staff or other relatives and support workers give evidence this way for a claim?

65) If the individual's condition or circumstances are unlikely to change, should they have to be re-assessed?

No

66) What evidence do you think would be required to determine that a person should / or should not be reassessed?

As mentioned previously there is scope for a number of conditions including long term severe mental health conditions, genetic conditions that could be exempt from re-assessment or at the very least have longer awards made.

67) Who should provide that evidence?

Any available sources including G.P and other health services, or potentially school if a young person

68) Do you think people should be offered the choice of some of their benefit being given to provide alternative support, such as reduced energy tariffs or adaptations to their homes?

Yes

69) What alternative support do you think we should be considering?

This could be a possibility, if for example Fuel companies could be persuaded to contribute to this. However, there has been a long enduring principle of individual choice regarding disability benefit payments and this could be very difficult to decide on in a fair and just way. It could be more attractive if the value of the fuel assistance was higher than the benefit payment.

It should be noted that offering choice adds complexity and cost to the system, and if a fuel tariff was offered, it would need to be cheaper than the cheapest tariff on the market.

70) Would a one-off, lump sum payment be more appropriate than regular payments in some situations?

Yes

71) If yes, what are they?

72) What would be the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach?

The UK government recently scrapped a proposal with regards to changes in PIP for some aids. The policy intention document and consultation should perhaps help inform this answer. For some a one-off lump sum payment may be more appropriate however what would happen if after a one off lump sum payment, a regular payment is more appropriate. Would this be rejected? Whilst people have the right to individual choice, what would happen if the lump sum payment is spent on other things, or is stolen or lost for example. Could this place people in financial difficulty?

It may be difficult to assess and award fairly, also claimants would need to be very well informed on the pros and cons. Advantages could be purchasing equipment they could not otherwise purchase that could be of real benefit. This may be cheaper than rental in some cases, but would need to be weighed alongside any future potential costs of repair or replacement etc. Also the lump sum could be used to take steps to improve the condition, where appropriate

73) Should the new Scottish social security system continue to support the Motability scheme?

The Motability scheme seems to be popular, and it is important that the transport needs of disabled people are recognised and supported to ensure these needs are met. It is suggested that a benefits analysis would need to be carried out to further understand the scheme.

74) How could the new Scottish social security system support older people with mobility problems not eligible for a mobility allowance?

There may potentially be other options, for example community transport, other discounted options and deals – particularly for those who are not eligible for free transport. As above, where additional choices are added this adds complexity, and therefore cost to the system.

75) How could the new Scottish social security system better support people of all ages with mobility problems who are in receipt of a mobility allowance?

76) What kind of additional support should be available for people who need more help with their application and during assessment?

Additional support should include access to an advocate or someone who can support you through that process, for example by an increased investment in befriending and advocacy. It may be possible to provide online support if people are using a digital system. It might also be possible to link to other support which is already available at key life transitions or events.

77) How could disability benefits work more effectively with other services at national and local level assuming that legislation allows for this e.g. with health and social care, professionals supporting families with a disabled child.

Holistic approach should be taken with joined up working and shared services locally, helping with applications, administration, assessment and payment of benefits. There are potentially linkages with self directed support and adult care assessments

78)How do you think this might be achieved?

79)What are the risks?

80)If DLA and PIP help meet the additional costs of disability, what is the role of IIDB and its supplementary allowances (Constant Attendance Allowance, Reduced Earnings Allowance etc) in the benefits system?

In addition to the issues set out above, please tell us:

81)What is right with the IIDB scheme?

82)What is wrong with the IIDB scheme?

Is this still required as a separate benefit, can IIDB be incorporated into DLA and PIP?

Consideration should be given to the interaction of IIDB with Pension Credit and Housing Benefit – is there a possibility that this could be allowed to be disregarded from the assessment of other social security benefits?

83)Should different approaches be taken for people with life limiting conditions compared to people with less severe conditions?

84)What would be the advantages or disadvantages of such an approach?

85)Are there situations where a one off lump sum payment would be more appropriate than a regular weekly IIDB benefit payment?

86)What are they, and why? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach?

87)Should the Scottish Government seek to work with the UK Government to reform the IIDB scheme?

Where possible and where appropriate the Scottish Government should contribute within the reform proposals. At the very least any information which would come out of the reform proposal could inform any policy decisions taken in Scotland. If the UK Government move towards an employer liability scheme through tax/NI contributions that would be a reserved matter and may be easier to work together to obtain this if this was desired.

88)If yes, what should be the priorities be? What barriers might there be to this approach?

89)Do you agree with the Scottish Governments approach to Severe Disablement Allowance?

“Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) was available to people unable to work for at least 28 weeks in a row because of illness or disability. It was closed to new applicants in 2001. The equivalent benefit available now is Employment Support Allowance (ESA) which is not being devolved, and working age recipients of SDA are being transferred onto ESA. It is our understanding that by the time this benefit is devolved there will only be a very small number of pension age recipients of SDA in Scotland. The Scottish Government intends to ensure that this group of people who are still receiving this benefit when the powers are transferred, continue to receive this level of award through Scotland’s social security system.”

Yes. Due to the numbers it would be simpler to continue the current process rather than add risk by trying to change a benefit which will have ever-decreasing caseload.

7. Carer’s Allowance

90) Do you agree with the Scottish Government’s overall approach to developing a Scottish Carer’s Benefit?

Yes, as it would make sense to tie into any changes to the corresponding disability benefits that are being considered. It reduces the need for carers to claim second benefit to top this up, but there is still significant need to increase uptake.

Consideration should be given to how other benefits may overlap, for example, State Pension (if Carers Allowance is taken into account as an income people may not be better off after this is disregarded from the pension)

Care assessment does capture what carers do, which then influences the amount the person being cared for gets. Is there a way that this information can be used from Health and Social Care services?

91) Do you agree with our proposed short to medium term priorities for developing a Scottish carer’s benefit?

Yes, however full consideration should be given onto the impact of increasing Scottish Carer’s benefit within UC and other reserved benefits. Any increase in Scottish Carer’s benefit could reduce amounts of reserved benefits thus being of neutral benefit to the applicant. The way that UC is assessed, there are already instances of current CA claims resulting in a negative impact on UC entitlement. This could also be reciprocated in HB and CTR.

The proposal for exchanging some, or all, of a cash benefit for alternative support could be a way around this unintended issue. For instance pay at UK wide CA rate and top up extra with payment in kind. This may be more complex and issues around choice and dignity would have to be considered

92) How can we improve the user experience for the carer (e.g. the application and assessment process for carer’s benefit)?

93) Should the Scottish Government offer the choice of exchanging some (or all) of a cash benefit for alternative support (e.g. reduced energy tariffs)?

94) What alternative support should be considered?

95)How can we achieve a better alignment between a future Scottish carer benefit and other devolved services?

96)Do you agree with our proposed long term plans for developing a Scottish Carer's Benefit?

Yes, there do appear to be many unjust gaps in those who are entitled to CA currently.

97)Do you have any other comments about the Scottish Governments proposals for a Scottish Carer's Benefit?

See previous comments about ensuring no negative impact on entitlement to existing (reserved and devolved) benefits for Carers.

8. Winter Fuel and Cold Weather Payments

98)Do you have any comments about the Scottish Government's proposals for Winter Fuel and Cold Weather Payments?

As above, in the 'A Principled Approach' section – Scottish Government needs to consider its preferred approach around universalism and targeting. Does the blend of these two payments as means and not means tested work?

99) Could changes be made to the eligibility criteria for Cold Weather Payments? For example, what temperature and length should Cold Weather Payments be made on in Scotland?

Consideration should be given to extending eligibility criteria for disabled people or where child under 5 in the household. In addition the number of days required at the low temperature level could be reduced to say 5. There could be difficulty in paying directly to heating energy provider where electricity cards and non-network energy provided. For those on fuel meters, would this be more likely to encourage people to switch heating on where this is necessary?

In terms of the temperature, the level does seem to be fairly arbitrary on the temperature level and how things like wind, rain and snow impact on requirement for additional heating.

9. Funeral Payments

What should funeral payments cover?

Currently, the funeral payment does not cover the basics of a very cheap funeral, and sometimes does not even cover funeral directors fees and doesn't happen quickly enough. This needs to be more targeted but needs to cover the costs. It is important that funeral payments are made quickly, particularly as a number of funeral directors always ask for disbursement fees upfront, as they need to pay these. It could be explored whether funeral payments can be used to cover this, as you currently need a quote from the funeral director to make an application for funeral payments, but you need to admit the body to get the

quote, and to pay a deposit in order to admit the body. Disbursement fees are fixed in each local authority area, so this part of a funeral could potentially be paid directly to Funeral Directors.

Payments should take into consideration what the deceased had left in provisions, but also be means tested on the person organising the funeral. Is there a way of paying funeral directors directly in order to make the process easier?

Lastly, some of the elements consulted on relating to the Funeral Payment cover a 'traditional' UK funeral ceremony. How will this relate to citizens with other cultures and religions where burial and funeral provision may look significantly different?

100) Which of these elements do you think should be paid for by the Funeral Payment?

YES NO

Professional funeral director fees – advice and administration etc.	
Removal or collection of the deceased	
Care and storage of the deceased before the funeral	
Coffin	
Hearse or transport of the deceased	
Limousines or other car(s) for the family	
Flowers	
Death notice in a paper/local advertising to announce details of funeral (time and location)	
Fees associated with the ceremony e.g. for the minister or other celebrant	
Order of service sheets	
Catering for wake/funeral reception	
Venue hire for a wake/funeral reception	
Memorial headstone or plaque	
Travel expenses to arrange or attend the funeral	

Yes – Professional funeral director fees, Removal or collection of the deceased, Care and storage of the deceased before the funeral, Coffin (basic), Hearse or transport of the deceased, Fees associated with the ceremony, Limousines or other car for the family, Memorial headstone or plaque (to a certain level)

No – Flowers, Death Notice, Order of Service sheets, Catering, Venue Hire, Travel Expenses

101) Are there other elements that you think should be included or explicitly excluded?

102) How can we improve the process for identifying whether someone is responsible for the funeral and should receive the funeral payment?

This could be difficult taking into account the complex relationships within families. Those arranging the funeral might not be the same person as the executor, possibly due to distance, finance, disability, family breakdown, or any other absence

103) In terms of the Scottish Funeral Payment, are there any qualifying benefits (e.g. Pension Credit) that you would add to or take away from the current qualifying benefit list?

104) Is the three month application window for a Funeral Payment sufficient time for claimants to apply? If no, please explain your answer and suggest an alternative length of time in which a claim could be made.

Whilst in most cases, 3 months would be appropriate as funerals are generally arranged quickly; there is a lack of information and awareness about this support. In addition, grief and family breakdowns could result in delayed applications so arbitrary periods could be extended. While it would be expected that there is a cut off period, it might be best to take an average from data of rejected awards due to applying outwith time with the current process.

105) What are your views on the options for speeding up and simplifying the payment?

The average time between a death and a funeral is 7-10 days. This means that the proposed targets would likely result in all awards being made after the funeral has been arranged. In many cases, culture and social nature dictate that decisions when arranging a funeral are not always made with cost as a priority. What would make things simpler are clearer guidelines on what would be covered and the maximum amount payable for each expense. Funeral Directors would then be able to advise and broach the subject at the time of arranging a funeral. Funeral Directors would then more certainty over payment.

In cases where there is a terminal illness, applications could be made in advance and agreed in principle so close relatives would have the knowledge in advance of the arranging the funeral.

106) The other funds which are deducted from the DWP funeral payment are listed below. What sorts of funds do you think it is appropriate to deduct from a Scottish FP?

	Yes/No
Funds in the deceased's bank account	
Funeral plan/insurance policy	
Contributions from charities or employers	
Money from an occupational pension scheme	
Money from a burial club	

Funds in deceased's bank account – if over a certain limit then yes,

Funeral plan/insurance policy – yes

Contributions from charities and employers – no unless no next of kin, otherwise yes

Money from occupational pension scheme – no if no next of kin, otherwise yes

Money from a burial club - yes

107)Are there any other funds that you think are appropriate to deduct?

108)Which services should promote awareness of the funeral payment to ensure that claimants know about it at the relevant time?

Religious services (churches, mosques, synagogues etc.), Funeral Locations (Crematoriums/Graveyards etc.), Local Authorities (including Registrars/Social Work), Advice Agencies (including 3rd sector), HMRC, DWP (including Tell us Once Project), Hospitals/GPs, Care Homes/Hospices, Funeral Directors, Lawyers, Banks, Insurance Companies and any service industry involved in funerals – tombstone builders, florists, catering etc.

109)Are there any other points that you would like to raise in connection with the new Scottish Funeral Payment?

10. Best Start Grant

110)What are your views on who should receive the Best Start Grant?

As with all means testing, there will always be people at the wrong side of thresholds that would be deserving of an award. Basing on those on very low incomes would be a basic requirement, however income does not necessarily equate to disposable income. Qualifying benefits/criteria would be easier to administer than an income threshold. The Universal Credit eligibility criteria open the door for entitlement when incomes are higher than others, depending on number of children, amount of rent etc. UC is quite complex to unpick, hence why UC awards are selected for eligibility for a number of other benefits/grants etc.

Complex entitlement criteria and assessment could be more expensive than a fairly universal approach. Consideration should also be given, based on the analysis of why the benefit exists, at what point is the first payment most crucial. Is it immediately after the birth, or is it in the first few months. Parents of a first child would have an inbuilt delay before they could meet some of the eligibility criteria. Modelling could be done on whether the first payment is lowered but made universal, with those on low incomes who meet free early learning and childcare or free schools meal or clothing grant criteria being given higher awards for nursery/school starts and/or subsequent children.

What is the interplay between other payments like the uniform grant and free school meals? Is there a possibility to connect these?

The payment should be made to the person with care, who receives child benefit.

The main issues with the current system is parents that have to wait until after the baby is born to get their Sure Start Maternity Grant (i.e. working parents that are not on Income Support and have to depend on their Child Tax Credit award which can take some time to process) especially if these families do qualify but claim their grant before their child tax credit is awarded and they are advised that they do not qualify for the maternity grant - when in fact they do if they had claimed 2 weeks later.... This either leads to families not getting the money they are due to receive or having to reclaim again following their appropriate benefit award. It would be ideal to avoid this.

It would be ideal to identify families that are going to qualify before the baby is born and get the grant awarded at this stage (29weeks). It will also help expanding mums buy additional clothes for their bumps and take a significant amount of stress away from families leading up to their baby being born who will be concerned they have to buy all these baby items and they are going to have to wait until their baby is actually here and their appropriate benefits have been processed.

111)Should we continue to use the same system to determine who is responsible for a child for the purposes of the BSG application?

Yes – criteria needs to be simple

112)Do you agree that each of the three BSG payments should only be made once for each child? If no, what exceptions would you make to this rule?

Yes, unless in shared access agreements stipulate % age access, and payments should be split accordingly. It may be possible to use child benefit data to establish necessary information and reduce complexity.

113)Should we continue to use the same method as the SSMG to determine whether a child is the first child in a household? If no, what alternative method should we use?

Yes, probably the simplest method to determine residency without cross referencing UC, HB, CTR, EMA, SWF, school roll data.

114)Do you agree that we should retain the requirement to obtain advice from a medical professional before making a maternity payment?

Difficult, whilst promoting applicants seeking medical advice and ante-natal care should be retained, if the analysis shows that those most in need do not seek it then the current requirement is failing. Those most at need are missing out in entitlement. Could the maternity payment be split so proportion paid earlier if medical advice/ante-natal care sought? Would be it possible to use information from the MAT1B form?

115)Are there other points during the first five years of a child's life when families face greater pressure than at the start of nursery (other than birth and the start of school)?

It is difficult to identify anything else which would be applicable to the majority.

116)What are your views on defining „the start of nursery“ as the point of entitlement to a funded early learning and childcare place, for the purposes of making the second payment?

Depending on the circumstances the start of nursery will fluctuate from 2-5 and could also include nurseries and child minders. Would those who do not go to nursery receive anything? This will obviously go in hand with eligibility criteria.

117)Are there any particular issues related to the nursery payment that you think we should consider?

118)Are there any particular issues related to the school payment that you think we should consider?

119)Should the school payment be payable to all eligible children who begin primary school for the first time in Scotland, or should an upper age limit be included?

It would be easier to link the payment to the start of school in terms of Primary 1.

120)What are your views on our proposals in relation to the BSG application process?

The proposals would seem to be a fair approach.

Considering some of the interplay with nurseries and schools and various agencies, this benefit may be better delivered by local government, although health data would be required in order to make the first payment

121)What are your views on establishing an integrated application process for the BSG and Healthy Start?

This would make sense it will possibly increase take up, simplify application process and administration and maximise the Best start for children.

122)What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?

123)Would the option to receive items rather than a cash payment as part of the BSG have benefits?

It would be helpful to understand what sort of costs the payment is designed to meet in order to understand whether items would meet the policy intention. For example, using the money for books and toys needed at different developmental stages could be met through 'deals' being negotiated for certain items – allowing the payment to go further.

Whilst it could be argued that items instead of cash may stigmatise some people, items would be more cost effective and ensure the awards are spent on items that the benefit intention is there to cover. Collective purchasing of items would possibly allow more things to be bought thus maximising the award.

It might also be worth considering, whether there is any overlap with Community Care Grants for goods requested which are covered within this.

124)Which services should promote awareness of the BSG to ensure that claimants know about it at the relevant time?

Health Care professionals (GPs, midwives, ante/postnatal care clinics, health workers, nurses), Social Workers, Registrars, Child Benefit Agency, HMRC, DWP, Local Authorities (SWF/HB/CTR/DHP/EMAs/Clothing Grants), Childcare providers, Schools, Advice Agencies, 3rd Sector, Retailers who sell baby/children's goods (including Supermarkets)

11. Discretionary Housing Payment

125)Could the way that DHPs are currently used be improved?

The intention of DHPs is to offer short term assistance for those experiencing financial hardship. UK and Scottish Government policy has moved so DHPs are seen as the 'silver bullet' for welfare reforms. The discretionary nature of DHPs has been diluted because of covering the 'bedroom tax' shortfall regardless of financial hardship, however funding for other significant shortfalls is not matched.

If an extension of DHP provision is to be considered then change in regulations may be required. DHP might even benefit from being called something different and given a clearer purpose.

Future HB/UC regulation change will indicate that demand for DHPs will persist, and even if the requirement to mitigate the impact of the bedroom tax within UC is implemented this will be 2017/18 at the earliest.

DHP is so demand led it is difficult to manage – the description in the consultation budget does not seem to describe a fixed budget fund like DHP (as distinct to other social security benefits). If this remains fixed budget, then there has to be an element of discretion in order to manage demand.

DHP is very closely linked to reserved benefits, and future changes will continue to add increased demand and pressure. How will this be managed?

Data sharing as UC progresses mean that this will become more challenging, e.g. what is a housing cost?

126) Could the administration of DHP applications be improved?

There is always room for improvement; however the pressure that LAs are under to deliver an increase in DHP applications with no additional funding is immense.

127) Does the guidance for local authorities on DHPs need amending?

The guidance for local authorities is based on DWP policy and funding. The DWP have been reluctant to change legislation and guidance in line with high profile court cases. Local Authorities will also have a Policy for their priorities based on funding and on top of this due to the discretionary nature of the assessment awards will vary based on individual applications.

There are plenty of good examples of local authority policies and guidance which should be explored.

12. Job Grant

128) What should the Scottish Government consider in developing the Job Grant?

Establish what funding the DWP offer in terms of funding for work wear and travel. Consider the payment to cover necessary goods/expenditure for commencing work. Is it expected to cover subsistence awaiting first pay? (if so is there an overlap with other hardship payments?).

In terms of supplementing with free bus travel for a 3 month period, consideration should be given whether this is appropriate in all cases. For instance in our area some villages have little or no bus service (especially early in morning/late in evening) which might prohibit the use for some workers. Indeed for

those who commence work and work shifts, bus timetabling may mean that bus travel is not suitable. Whilst travel subsistence is commendable, different modes of travel (possibly combinations) should be considered: bus, train, ferry, underground, tram etc.

How does this interplay with similar offers from DWP and also local provision from local authorities?

All new payments will need to be considered by HMRC to establish whether it would be classed as a benefit for tax.

13. Universal Credit flexibilities

129) Should the choice of managed payments of rent be extended to private sector landlords in the future?

Yes, claimant choice is the preference.

Landlords can ask for managed payments for those that are more than 8 weeks in arrears for UC, and ask for safeguarded payments for HB under the same criteria or where the claimant has vulnerabilities. There is no reason why managed payments of rent by choice can't be extended. This, however, will add in further administrative work. Are there going to be portals developed between social and private sector landlords and UC in the future? Most is currently postal or email based and administrative delay by the DWP could become an issue (for instance change of payment details/address). Could a delay from a private landlord result in a delay in the rest of the UC payment? – these kind of questions would need fully clarified.

130) Should payments of Universal Credit be split between members of a household?

The ability to split payments already exists where there are vulnerability issues. The default position should be to pay one member of a household. Evidence should be obtained to see if the current provision for splitting payments works, and if any anecdotal evidence on whether this has unintended consequences (e.g. domestic abuse, hardship etc)

131) If Yes, please indicate if you think the default position should be:

- a) automatic payments to individuals, with the option to choose a joint payment
- b) automatic household payments, with the option to choose individual payments?

(b) in principle, but care should be taken to make sure that decision making elements do not delay payments being made

132) If yes, how do you think payments should be split? For example 50/50 between members of a couple or weighted towards the person who is the main carer if the claim includes dependent children?

133) Do you have any other comments about how the Scottish Government's powers over Universal Credit administrative flexibilities will be delivered?

Payment should be weekly or multiple weeks rather than monthly

At all times consideration should be given to the fact that UC is reserved and software reliant at times. Too much complexity could result in additional costs.

13. Universal Credit housing element

134) Do you have any comments about the Scottish Government's powers over the housing element of Universal Credit?

What consideration is being given to future legislation changes which will apply LHA rates to social sector housing? Whilst it is laudable that action is being taken to in effect remove the social sector size criteria being used, the future changes in regulations have shifted the goalposts. If the Scottish Government choose to mitigate this change, they could face legal challenge that they do not mitigate it in the private sector where both will be assessed under the same criteria.

135) Also worth considering are changes to funding for temporary and supported accommodation which will have more of an impact.

Part 3: Operational policy

14. Advice, representation and advocacy

136) What role[s] should publicly funded advice providers play in the development of a new Scottish social security system?

Similar to this consultation, advice providers should be involved in drawing up detail on the changes and delivery of the Social Security system and be represented at appropriate high level meetings for example Citizen's Advice Scotland and Rights Advice Scotland.

137) What steps need to be taken, to understand the likely impact of the transfer of the devolved benefits on publicly funded advice in Scotland?

Forecasts would be helpful to estimate demand for information and assistance in connection with the new devolved benefits. For example, predicted numbers requiring assistance with claims and likely take up numbers under new criteria. Also current claimants may have fears regarding potential changes in income which will mean that the public will seek out advice. Estimates from uptake after similar changes would be useful, but could also be difficult to measure accurately.

If any automatic health conditions criteria are to be used for disability benefits, would health have potential figures or other sources of the number of individuals in Scotland likely to qualify as this would be helpful to communicate to advice services and by area.

It is also necessary to define what is meant by 'publicly funded advice' – almost all advice services are publicly funded. In addition to local authority in-house advice provision, third sector advice providers are often funded by local authorities and other local public sector partners.

138)How could the transfer of the devolved benefits to Scotland be used to drive improvements in the provision of publicly funded advice?

Advice providers should be represented on any scrutiny or advisory body that is set up for Scotland. There should also be regular liaison meetings between key management of the delivery agents and advice providers on issues arising for claimants in order to ensure continuing improvement.

139)Do you think that Independent Advocacy services should be available to help people successfully claim appropriate benefits?

As you have stated a lot of claimants have specific issue related to managing mail or attending appointments, often they are caught in a Catch 22 situation refused benefit as their condition is so severe that they fail to attend medicals or respond to mail. Advocacy services are able to assist at this time and also make good use of volunteers and buddies to assist. In the past claimants were more likely to have family close by to assist, but this is less and less the case now.

Partnership working between advocacy services and advice agencies good be improved with more shared premises etc to assist vulnerable clients

140)What next steps would you recommend that would help the Scottish Government better understand the likely impact of the transfer of the devolved benefits on independent advocacy services?

15. Complaints, reviews and appeals

141)Do you agree that we should base our CHP on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's, 'Statement of Complaints Handling Principles'?

Yes, the process meets the Government's principles.

142)How should a Scottish internal review process work?

Minimise administration and make it simpler for applicants. Review all current review processes – HB, CTR, DHP, SWF, DWP mandatory reconsiderations (etc.) then create a review process encompassing all the good points of each existing review process.

143)What would be a reasonable timescale for the review to be carried out?

If all information is received, then 14 days is realistic. If the review requires further information 14 days could be unrealistic with a month being more realistic. In most cases it will depend what information is required and who can provide it.

144)Should a tribunal be used as the forum for dispute resolution for the Scottish social security system?

A tribunal is a good forum, however the overlap between some of the devolved benefits and its interaction with reserved benefits might constrain it.

There should also be more options on alternatives, also the current format could be much improved. Currently although tribunals are meant to be claimant friendly and informal, they are often the opposite. Far too often the most vulnerable clients are those who are put off by appealing and the process. They should be made more informal and more options on locally based Tribunals or more options for support and rep availability/funding.

145) If no, are there any alternative methods of dispute resolution that you think would be preferable to a tribunal?

146) How can we ensure that our values underpin the appeals process for a Scottish Social Security agency?

Have a link between feedback/outcomes at appeal and regulations/guidance/decision making/training for decision makers, customers, advisors. This will allow strong focus on improvement, consistency and transparency.

147) Are there any other values that you feel should be reflected in the design of the appeals process?

148) What do you consider would be reasonable timescales to hear an appeal in relation a decision on a devolved benefit?

The timescale for hearing an appeal will depend on the timescale for submission and administrative competence. Time needs to be allowed for both parties to prepare. Applicants will need time to arrange advice, advocacy and representation.

2-3 months from the date the appeal is lodged might be achievable but it will depend on the resource and funding. If the Tribunals are held in regional locations there might be variations in capacity

149) In order to ensure a transparent appeals process, what steps could be taken to ensure that those appealing fully understand and are kept informed at each stage of the appeals process?

Ensure effective and timely communication with clear details of what is happening, when an update should be received and what action the appellant has to take and by when.

150) How could the existing appeals process be improved?

There are a number of separate bodies that look at appeals currently, is there an opportunity to look at the uniformity of different processes? Also, a number of different agencies are using different terminology, is there an opportunity for a Scottish umbrella body for reviews and appeals?

Any appeals process should be transparent, independent, and well linked to advice, advocacy and representation. Consideration should be given as to how these appeals processes interact with reserved benefits.

16. Residency and cross-border issues

160) Should Scottish benefits only be payable to individuals who are resident in Scotland?

Yes there needs to be clear eligibility criteria to allow fairness and transparency. Entitlement should be based on residency as this is the clear mandate the Scottish Government has to govern and pass legislation within the legal boundaries of Scotland. By making a clear distinction, administration will be less complex.

161) What are your views on the “habitual” residence test currently used in the UK by DWP?

It is a fair test in principle, whether or not the procedure needs improved is another matter for discussion. It can be complex, particularly around EEA nationals and will need to be re-explored post-Brexit.

162) Are there other issues that the Scottish Government should take into account when it comes to residency rules?

Consideration should also be given on whether immigration test should also be satisfied – right to claim benefits within UK. This is not particularly clear from the consultation whether this is to be taken for granted. It is essential that if the social security system is more generous in Scotland, then care should be taken to minimise benefit tourism. Since the Scottish funding for Social Security is limited, priority should be given on providing the service for residents of Scotland whilst fulfilling any obligation via EU law.

163) What factors should Scottish Government consider in seeking to coordinate its social security system with other social security systems in the UK?

Consideration should be given to protecting claims for benefits where there is equivalence between Scotland and rest of UK. If a claimant makes a claim to Carers Allowance for instance, but moves to Scotland before a decision is made, it would be beneficial if either the application can be transferred or the claim date protected.

164) How can the Scottish Government ensure that no-one either falls through the cracks or is able to make a ‘double-claim’?

Assuming applications are based on NINOs for identification purposes, double-claims can be prevented by checking with the corresponding awarding body out with Scotland before putting any claim into payment. This will require either efficient communication processes, or access to each other’s benefit systems. In terms of ensuring that no-one falls through any gaps, that could be minimised with the design of the benefits, the processes and the delivery. Risk assessments should be done as and when the system is designed which will allow for consideration to be given to each solution for those potentially who could fall through the system, allowing for appropriate pro-active measures being taken.

17. Managing overpayments and debt

165) Could the existing arrangements for recovering social security overpayments be improved in the new Scottish social security system?

Yes, make the process more streamlined and efficient thus bringing cost savings. Where possible overpayments should be recovered from on-going deductions tied to income and expenditure, rather than invoicing. The policy of automatically not recovering overpayments due to official error should be revisited to be fair to the wider taxpayer. The policy should allow discretion where it is clear that the overpayment could have been prevented or minimised if the claimant had notified the relevant authority. Mistakes can happen, and there should be a responsibility for a claimant to notify that an award is incorrect.

166) What are your views on the role that financial advice can play in the recovery of overpayments?

When overpayments are created and recovered, it is essential that there is signposting to advice agencies to provide financial advice. This would also work in tandem with any possible appeal over the overpayment, which many people might not be able to deal with alone.

18. Fraud

167) Should the existing Scottish Government approach to fraud be adopted for use in our social security system?

Yes. Counter-fraud strategy must ensure appropriate measures should be taken, with dialogue with counterparts working for DWP. Legislation needs to be checked to ensure information can be shared, and obtained from any part of the UK and consideration should be given on the impact of the current social security fraud on the justice system.

168) If no, what else should be used instead?

169) If yes, should our existing counter-fraud strategy be adapted in any way?

170) How could the new Scottish social security system 'design out' errors and reduce the potential for fraud at the application stage?

Design forms so clear in what is being asked. Obtain appropriate evidence. Use all systems available to obtain information. Have effective communication between reserved benefits and other agencies within social security. Improve training and guidance for decision makers. Have clear legislation to remove gaps between it and policy intention. Ensure effective controls and monitoring is in place. Consider random review processes.

171) Should the Scottish social security system adopt DWP's existing code of practice for investigators?

Yes, this will allow robust counter-fraud investigation.

172) What are your views on the existing range of powers granted to investigators?

The existing powers seem proportionate and sufficient.

173) What are your views on conducting interviews under caution?

Conducting interviews under caution is a necessary part of the due investigative and potentially legal process when investigating fraud (a crime). Consideration should be given on how, where, when and with who interviews under caution are conducted to make them less stressful.

There should also be consultation with those who currently work in counter-fraud to identify if there is any unnecessary delay/stress being made on the system by legal professionals advising clients in a way to maximise legal aid, which in the long run places an unnecessary burden on the system.

174) What improvements could be made around conducting interviews under caution?

175) Should the Scottish Government retain the same list of offences which people can be found guilty of in terms of social security fraud?

Yes, unless there is clear evidence that change in legislation is required to make it efficient

176) Should the Scottish Government impose the same level of penalties for social security fraud as are currently imposed?

Not sure making the penalties less than the current penalties would send the desired message. Similar penalties would be sufficient.

19. Safeguarding your information

177) Should the existing Scottish Government approach to Identity Management and Privacy Principles be adopted for use in our social security system?

The existing approach should be adopted. Depending on design of delivery, and how it integrates with reserved/existing benefits, consideration should be given whether any adaptations are required.

178) If yes, should our existing Identity Management and Privacy Principles be adapted in any way?

179) Who do you consider should be consulted in regard to the Privacy Impact Assessment and what form would this take?

The Scottish Information Commissioner should be involved, and probably would be able to provide information on those who would be most appropriate for involvement.

180) What are your views on privacy issues that may affect the new agency?

181) Do you perceive any risks to the individual?

The design of delivery, and the systems required to provide social security would impact on the risk of privacy issues if there is no alignment and different agencies involved in making decisions/payments.

182) What solutions might be considered to mitigate against these?

183) Would you support strictly controlled sharing of information between public sector bodies and the agency, where legislation allowed, to make the application process easier for claimants? For example, this information could be used to prepopulate application forms or to support applications, reducing the burden on applicants.

Yes, strictly controlled sharing of information is required for efficient provision of social security for the benefit of applicants, improved decision making and the prevention of fraud.

Proper legislation that allows safe and secure sharing of information is critical to sharing of resource, local authorities, health information, HMRC, council tax data, financial assessment for care

Consideration should be given as to whether claimant consent should be more powerful than it actually is? For example, restrictions in current legislation means the secondary use of council tax data to allow for processing other payments such as uniform and free school meals is not possible, even where claimant has expressly given their consent.

184) Would you support strictly controlled sharing of information between a Scottish social security agency and other public sector organisations (for example local authorities) to support service improvements and deliver value for money?

Yes, this is already being done within existing social security arrangements. Every process could be improved upon, however in its current form it is effective and regulated.

185) What are your views on having the option to complete social security application forms online?

As long as it is an option then there should be no issues. Online applications are becoming the norm both within social security and in wider society.

186) Can you foresee any disadvantages?

187) What are your views on the new agency providing a secure email account or other electronic access to check and correct information for the purposes of assessing applications (noting that any such provision would need to be audited and regulated so that the security and accuracy of the information would not be compromised)?

Secure emails would need to be used in both directions. Possibly a secure online account similar to our My account could be used to securely access information.

20. Uprating

188) What are your views on the best way to ensure that devolved benefits keep pace with the cost of living?

At the point in time the decision is made whether to uprate is based on CPI in September. If this is negative there is no uprating, however this might not be the case in later months. As funding is linked to national uprating by UK Government, it would be difficult to increase benefits over and above what UK Government does.

That being said, the devolved benefits are not necessarily to cover against the cost of living, but specific types of expenditure – medical, caring, travel, maternity, children etc.

189) Are there any devolved benefits in particular where uprating based on a measure of inflation would not be effective?

190) If so, please explain which benefits and why.

Best Start Grant/Job Grant might not need uprated each year, but reviewed at start of each parliament, for example.

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To: Council

On: 29 September 2016

Report by: Director of Development and Housing Services

Heading: Business Gateway – appointment of member representative to national Management Group

1. Summary

- 1.1 The governance of Business Gateway has been reviewed at the national level. This has led to the agreement of a streamlined Management Group comprising eight member and six officers. The Scottish Local Government Partnership (SLGP) Cabinet has agreed that Renfrewshire should represent SLGP on this national group. This report seeks the approval of that appointment.
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2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council:-

- i. Approves the appointment of Cllr Mark Macmillan to represent SGLP authorities on the Business Gateway Management Group at a national level.
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3. Background

- 3.1 In 2008, following the Cabinet Secretary's decision to make Local Government responsible for local economic development, responsibility for the management of the Business Gateway service was transferred from Scottish Enterprise to local authorities. The service was transferred to a set of

lead authorities, supported by a national unit housed within COSLA. Since 2008 Councils have developed this service, aligning its work with other local economic development services and functions of Councils.

- 3.2 Members will recall that Renfrewshire was the lead authority for delivering Business Gateway (BG) services (on behalf of East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde). However, from October 2016 the three authorities will run their BG services on an in-house basis, as agreed by the Council's Economy & Jobs Board in August 2016.
- 3.3 The current governance structures for BG are seen as overly complex with a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities. Having said that, the need for governance structures for BG which provide a degree of rigour and consistency in the service and provide a forum for the individual operational parts to come together is recognised. The current set up is not the optimum design and the Business Gateway Management Group (BGMG) agreed to review the current approach during 2016.
- 3.4 Following a meeting of the BGMG in May 2016 to consider options for new governance. The BGMG concluded its preferred option to form a Board comprising 14 representatives of the 17 lead local authorities (including Renfrewshire) to provide governance and oversight for the BG. The 14 representatives would comprise eight members and six officers.
- 3.5 The proposals included either member or officer representatives to be appointed from the 12 Scottish Enterprise area lead authorities. To ensure representation from the non COSLA members and as Glasgow and Renfrewshire are Lead Authorities, one member and one officer representative would be nominated between Glasgow and Renfrewshire Councils as members of the SLGP (2 representatives in total).
- 3.6 At the meeting of the SLGP Cabinet in August 2016 it was agreed to nominate an elected member / officer from Renfrewshire and Glasgow to represent SGLP authorities on the Business Gateway Management Group.
- 3.7 It was proposed that due to Renfrewshire having the Enterprise portfolio lead on the Glasgow City Region Cabinet (via Cllr Mark Macmillan) that Renfrewshire should put forward the member representative for the BGMG on behalf of SLGP.
- 3.8 Meetings will be held quarterly and the Chair of the Board will be selected from the eight elected members. It is suggested that the appointment be made until 4 May 2017 (the date of the local government elections) after which representation can be reviewed and at agreed intervals thereafter.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – No financial implications as a result of this report.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community Planning** – None
4. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** – None
6. **Information Technology** – None
7. **Equality & Human Rights**
The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** – None
10. **Risk** – None
11. **Privacy Impact** - None

List of Background Papers

None

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To: Council

On: 29 September 2016

Report by: Director of Development and Housing Services

Heading: Paisley Townscape Heritage/Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (TH/CARS2): Grant Awards

1. Summary

- 1.1 In support of the Paisley Town Centre Heritage Asset Strategy, grant funding was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) for a second Paisley Townscape/Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (TH/CARS2). The Economy & Jobs Policy Board on 31 August 2016 approved the acceptance of the grant funding and subsequent signing of the HLF and HES Contracts of Grant. The TH/CARS2 project with an estimated total value of £4.5million will now be delivered over the approved five year period 2016-2021.
 - 1.2 This report seeks authority for a change to the Scheme of Delegation to enable the Head of Regeneration to approve and award third party grants within the TH/CARS2 project with a value up to £100,000 in respect of each grant.
-

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council:-
 - i. Authorises the Head of Regeneration to approve and award or refuse third party grants within the TH/CARS2 project with a value up to £100,000 in respect of each grant. Grants above £100,000 will require Board approval.
-

3. Background

- 3.1 As part of the Paisley Town Centre Heritage Asset Strategy and following the successful delivery of the Paisley THI/CARS project which focussed on the Causeyside Street/Johnston Street area, this potential continues to be recognised by national external funding bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland with the approval of funding for the delivery of the TH/CARS2 project.
- 3.2 The approved project focuses on the delivery of building repair, shopfront restoration, public realm improvements and an extensive programme of heritage education, training and events which will be complementary to the bid for UK City of Culture 2021.
-

4. Grant approval and refusal

- 4.1 A significant proportion of the TH/CARS2 project involves third party grants awarded to property owners to deliver building restoration. In the previous THI/CARS project, large scale grants were approved by the funders and Council Boards. In some cases this resulted in additional time required for the approval process and delayed the delivery of the works on site. In order to operate a more effective and timeous turnaround of grant applications, resulting in development on the ground at earlier stages of the project, it is suggested that the approval and award of grants under £100,000, or refusal of applications not meeting the required conditions is delegated to the Head of Regeneration. Grants would be approved and awarded or refused in accordance with the approved conditions of funding and within the approved cost plan. Grants over this value will be the subject of Board approval.
-

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – Funding for this project utilises approved Council budgets for the implementation of the Paisley Town Centre Heritage Asset Strategy, approved by Council in February 2014 and February 2015. Grants awarded to the Council by HLF and Historic Environment Scotland supplement this budget and will be monitored in accordance with the terms and conditions of grant.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community Planning** –
- Community Care, Health & Well-being** - The delivery of actions within the Heritage Asset Strategy have the potential to positively impact on physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

Jobs and the Economy – The TH/CARS2 project will contribute to meeting the outcomes of the Community Plan to;

- Be one of the best locations in Scotland to invest, in terms of its people, businesses and local communities.
- Have a growing local economy creating employment for a well trained, qualified and motivated workforce where unemployment is reduced and employment opportunities are growing.
- Be the best connected local economy in Scotland, internationally, nationally and regionally.
- Have attractive environments and successful town centres created through successful area regeneration that contribute positively to local community and economic growth

Safer and Stronger - Implementing the TH/CARS2 project will assist Renfrewshire citizens to have a positive attitude to their community.

4. **Legal** - TH/CARS2 grants will be awarded within the terms of the relevant Council policies and in compliance with the funder's terms and conditions of grant. All grants awarded under delegated powers will also be subject to the Council's approved standard conditions and may, depending on the terms of the contracts of grant and the Council's own policies, require standard securities to be taken over the affected properties.

5. **Property/Assets** – None

6. **Information Technology** - None

7. **Equality & Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** – None

9. **Procurement** – None

10. **Risk** – In compliance with the HLF and HES grants and in accordance with the Council's Project Management Framework, the TH/CARS2 project will actively monitor key risks, budgets and issues associated with project delivery.

11. **Privacy Impact - None**

List of Background Papers

- (a) Report to Economy & Jobs Policy Board 31st August 2016 'Paisley Townscape Heritage/Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (TH/CARS2): Grant acceptance'
 - (b) Report to Economy & Jobs Policy Board 18th March 2015 'Paisley Townscape Heritage and Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (Phase 2)'
 - (b) Report to Economy & Jobs Policy Board: 19th November 2014 'Paisley Heritage Asset Strategy: Progress Report 2'
 - (c) Report to Economy & Jobs Policy Board: 3rd September 2014 'Paisley Heritage Asset Strategy: Submission of Funding Applications'
-

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RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Application No: 16/0139/PP

DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING SERVICES
RECOMMENDATION ON PLANNING APPLICATION

Regd: 08/03/2016

Applicant

Agent

Miller Developments Ltd
Miller House
2 Lochside view
Edinburgh Park
Edinburgh
EH12 9DHGVA James Barr
206 St Vincent Street
Glasgow
G2 5SG

Nature of proposals:

Erection of residential development with associated remediation/enabling works and formation of vehicular access

Site:

144 Hawkhead Road, Paisley, PA2 7BG

Application for:

Planning Permission in Principle

Introduction

This application was the subject of a Pre-Determination Hearing in line with the requirements set out in Section 38A of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and the related Development Management Regulations.

Section 14(2) of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 requires that where an application has been subject of a Pre Determination Hearing under Section 38A, then the application must thereafter be referred to the Full Council for determination.

The Pre Determination Hearing took place at the Planning and Property Policy Board on 23rd August 2016.

The issues raised at the Pre Determination Hearing and through objection have been summarised in this report under the section 'Objections/Representations' and have been fully considered in the assessment of the application.

Description

Planning permission is sought, in principle, for the erection of a residential development (of approximately 500 units), with associated remediation and enabling works, including the formation of an internal road layout and accesses, SuDS ponds and landscaping at the former BASF chemical works site on Hawkhead Road, Paisley. The proposal would involve the redevelopment of the former industrial site (following its closure in 2015), for residential purposes. The application site extends to approximately 23 hectares in total. The site has been largely cleared of redundant industrial buildings. Existing residential areas surround the site to the north, north west and south. To the north east, lies the Scott's Road industrial area, to the east lies Hawkhead Cemetery and to the immediate west a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), with Hawkhead Railway Station to the immediate north.

Since cessation of the industrial operation, the site was sold to the applicant who has commenced demolition work on the buildings associated with the former use. As such the site is largely cleared with a limited degree of planting remaining along the site boundaries.

The current proposal would see the formation of three new access junctions onto Hawkhead Road, where possible utilising those already in place to serve the factory use. In addition, SuDS ponds are proposed along the boundary with the SINC, which is to be interspersed with planting. Existing mature planting shall be retained adjacent to the railway line and along the north eastern boundary with additional planting proposed to the south and north west of the site. Three play areas are also proposed, two within the landscape buffer to the west (one north west and one south west) and one centrally within the overall residential development. It is estimated that the site could be capable of accommodating in the region of 500 units but this would be entirely dependent on satisfactory layouts being demonstrated. The application proposes improvements to the surrounding road network through the provision of signalised pedestrian crossings as well as the provision of a new footbridge across the White Cart Water and additional footpath connections linking the site to the surrounding area in the interests of pedestrian safety and convenience.

History

15/0797/NO - Erection of residential development with associated remediation/enabling works and access. Accepted November 2015.

15/0090/HZ - Revocation of Hazardous Substances Consent 12/0509/HZ. Granted subject to conditions September 2015.

12/0587/HZ- Revocation of hazardous substances consents 01/0007/HZ, 02/0902/HZ and 06/0355/HZ. Granted September 2013.

12/0509/HZ - Storage of 40 Tonnes (T) (max) 2:5 dichloroaniline; 10T (max) 1-phenyl 3-methyl 5-pyrazolone; 45T (max) sodium nitrite solution 40%; 60T (max) 2,4,5 trichloroaniline; 25T (max) strontium nitrite; 5T (max) neodol 45-7E; 100T (max) 3,3 dichlorobenzidine di-hydrochloride; 10T (max) arquad HC; 50T (max) ortho-anisidine; 10T(max) sodium hydrosulphite and 5T (max) ammonia. Granted subject to conditions September 2013

06/0355/HZ - Installation of storage facility for diesel oil. Granted November 2006.

02/0902/HZ - Storage of 2.5 Dichloroaniline (5 tonnes). Granted November 2002.

01/0007/HZ - Claim for deemed hazardous substances consent in respect of the manufacturing, drying, grinding and dispersion of Classical organic Azo and Phthalocyanine pigments. Granted deemed consent January 2001.

Policy & Material Considerations

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

Scottish Planning Policy highlights the primacy of the Development Plan and relevant additional considerations. The extant Development Plan is the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan 2012 and the Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2014, as detailed below with relevant policies identified.

Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan 2012

Strategy Support Measure 10: Housing Development and Local Flexibility

Diagram 4: Sustainable location assessment

Clydeplan's - Strategic Development Plan Proposed Plan (2016)

The Proposed SDP is a material consideration as it is the settled view of the Clydeplan Authority

Adopted Renfrewshire Local Plan Development Plan 2014

Policy E1: Renfrewshire's Economic Investment Locations

Policy P1: Renfrewshire's Places

Policy P2: Housing Land Supply
 Policy I1: Connecting Places
 Policy I5: Flooding and Drainage
 Policy ENV2: Natural Heritage

New Development Supplementary Guidance

Delivering the Economic Strategy
 Delivering the Infrastructure Strategy: Infrastructure Development Criteria; Connecting Places and; Flooding and Drainage
 Delivering the Places Strategy: Places Development Criteria
 Delivering the Environment Strategy: Natural Heritage; Local Designations - Local Nature Reserves; Noise; Contaminated Land; Air Quality and; Pipelines and Controls of Major Accident Hazards

Material considerations

Renfrewshire Council's Residential Design Supplementary Guidance
 Renfrewshire Council's Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance

Planning legislation requires that planning decisions are made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the proposals shall require to be considered against the policies and guidance set out above, the comments of the consultees, any objections received, the approved use of the site and the potential benefits of developing this vacant brownfield site and any other relevant material considerations.

Publicity

Neighbour notification has been carried out in accordance with statute. The application was also advertised in the Paisley Daily Express on 16 March 2016, with a deadline for representations to be received of 31 March 2016. Following submission of a masterplan layout for the site, the application was re-notified on 26 July 2016, with a deadline for representations to be received of 18 August 2016.

Objections/Representations -

Three letters of objection have been received, the substance of which, can be summarised as follows:-

1. Concerns in relation to noise levels from building works and unwanted new neighbours.
2. Concerns that the development could lead to crime and litter levels increasing.
3. That the development could bring vermin and disturb other animals.
4. Concerns that overlooking of existing properties would result, that planting should be re-instated and that details of proposed residential units should be provided.
5. That the development would exacerbate traffic congestion.
6. That insufficient details of the proposed development have been provided.

Consultations

Director of Community Resources - Has requested that, through an Approval of Matters Specified in Conditions (AMSC) application the applicant should be required to submit a site investigation report, verification strategy/method statement and a verification report. Additional information in accordance with the applicant's noise assessment and air quality impact assessment has also been identified as being required to be submitted through an AMSC application.

Director of Community Resources (Design Services) - No objections, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions, to ensure that the recommendations contained within the applicant's Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy are satisfactorily implemented.

Director of Community Resources (Roads) - No objections subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions to secure satisfactory implementation of roads improvements as contained within the applicant's Transport Assessments and the provision of further details to satisfactorily secure pedestrian crossing of the White Cart Water and to surrounding areas.

Network Rail - No objections in principle. Should the Council grant this application, additional servitude rights of access/bridge agreements will have to be secured from Network Rail for the creation of any proposed pedestrian link through the under-bridge area. All surface water or foul arising from the development must be collected and diverted away from Network Rail Property and suitable barriers must be put in place by the applicant to prevent unauthorised and unsafe access to the railway. In addition where trees/shrubs are to be planted adjacent to the railway boundary these should be positioned at a minimum distance from the boundary which is greater than their predicted mature height. Details of all changes in ground levels, laying of foundations, and operation of mechanical plant in proximity to the rail line must be submitted to Network Rail's Asset Protection Engineer for approval prior to works commencing on site. The applicant has been advised of the requirements of Network Rail.

Glasgow Airport Safeguarding - No objections, subject to conditions relating to landscaping and layout of development.

West of Scotland Archaeology Service - No objections.

The Coal Authority - No objections.

Scottish Natural Heritage - No comments offered.

The Health and Safety Executive - As confirmation of the Revocation of Consent for the BASF site has been obtained, and that no other Sites/Pipelines are located within the vicinity, HSE does not advise against the proposed development.

SEPA - No objections, subject to a condition requiring that SUDS basin 1 is constructed entirely outwith the floodplain, or if sited within the floodplain, that the required volume of compensatory storage is to be provided to offset the loss of floodplain storage.

Director of Education and Leisure - No objections, subject to the provision of financial contributions from the applicant, by means of legal agreement, to satisfactorily mitigate impacts on education capacity on schools within the catchment area of the site, required as the direct result of the development.

Historic Scotland - No objections.

Summary of Main Issues

Environmental Statement - The application proposal was screened under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2011, to determine the requirement for an Environmental Statement to be submitted with any future planning application. It was concluded that although the proposal falls within Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2011, it was not considered likely that the proposed development would have a significant environmental impact which would require an Environmental Assessment to be undertaken. It was concluded that no significant long term impacts on the

environment were anticipated having regard to the characteristics of the development, the location of the development and the characteristics of the potential impact.

Proposal of Application Consultation Report - The applicant submitted a proposal of application notice (15/0797/NO) to the Council on 23 October 2015. This required a Pre-application Consultation (PAC) process prior to the submission of a planning application. The PAC report provides an overview of all pre-application consultations which have been undertaken, including details of a pre-application consultation event held on 10 November 2015 and individual presentations to the local and surrounding community councils between September 2015 and January 2016. The main public consultation event was held at the Accord Hospice, with the local Community Council and local Members invited and the event open to all interested parties. The summary states that attendees were generally supportive of the development, although key areas of concern related to vehicle movement during any construction phase, potential issues with the existing road network, particularly at peak times and education capacity within surrounding schools.

Planning Policy Statement - In support of the current application, the applicant's agent has provided a Planning Policy Statement which details the site history and surrounding land uses in the context of the current proposal. The statement identifies the relevant policy and material considerations to be taken into account in the assessment of the proposal. The statement asserts that delivery of the development would see the re-use of a significant brownfield site, which would assist in the delivery of Renfrewshire Council's housing land supply shortfall, whilst recognising that the proposal does not accord with the land use designation identified within the Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan.

Air Quality Impact Assessment - The Air Quality Impact Assessment provided by the applicant considers the potential air quality impacts associated with the proposed re-development of the application site for residential use and concludes that any resulting impact would be classified as negligible at all receptor locations. For surrounding local circumstances, air quality impact is considered to be 'not significant', assuming proposed mitigation measures are implemented during the construction phases of development.

Flood Risk Assessment - The applicant's Flood Risk Assessment considers risk from the White Cart Water to the west of the site, surface water run-off from adjacent land, existing drainage systems, proposed site drainage systems, groundwater and the site access and concludes that a degree of land raising within the floodplain would be required for the development with compensatory flood storage also proposed in accordance with SEPA's requirements.

Design & Access Statement - The applicant's Design and Access Statement submitted provides a history to the site and its location. The document also considers the proposals against the relevant planning policies and guidance, with regard to local amenities and access arrangements/provision. In terms of design, the applicant has considered built form in conjunction with environmental integration and enhancement.

Construction Method Statement and Surface and Ground Water Protection Plan - These documents consider the scope of works contained within the redevelopment of the former BASF site, namely site clearance works, demolition works, drainage and SUDS works, and earthworks and remediation, how they are to be managed, progressed and reported.

Transport Assessment - A Transport Assessment has been provided which examines the existing, surrounding road networks and available methods of public transport, with impact from the proposed development on this network analysed. In order to accommodate the proposed development the applicant identifies that a number of mitigation proposals would require to be put in place to reduce impact from the proposed development on the road network. The assessment is supported by a Travel Plan Framework for residents advising them of surrounding sustainable modes of transport.

Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment - The Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment provided by the applicant primarily considers the impact of road traffic from Hawkhead Road affecting the site and vibration from the railway line to the north of the site. The report also considers the impact from commercial premises to the east of the site on Hawkhead Road. In summary, the report concludes that in order to meet the relevant target criteria for residential developments, mitigation measures will be required, including the use of enhanced glazing panels and acoustic fencing.

Drainage Strategy Plan - The applicant's Drainage Strategy Plan, through investigation, concludes that the current development proposals can be drained in accordance with the recommendations of current planning guidance in conjunction with key stakeholder design criteria.

Education Impact Report - In response to discussions with the Council's Education Department, the applicant has submitted an Education Impact Report pertaining to denominational educational capacity. The document bases calculations relating to capacity on the number of proposed housing units. The applicant has formally confirmed agreement to the provision of financial contributions to mitigate impact on education capacity within the catchment of the site directly resulting from the proposed development. The level of financial contribution required has been agreed, following consultation with the Director of Education and Leisure and will be secured by means of an appropriate legal agreement (Section 75 Obligation).

Archaeological Data Structure Report - Following initial comments from West of Scotland Archaeology Services, the applicant has submitted an Archaeological Data Structure Report. The report provides a summary of the results of an archaeological walkover of the site and a history of the site and concludes that no visible archaeological remains were observed. Demolition works across the site have resulted in any visible archaeological remains being severely compromised. However the line of the former canal will be preserved by the concrete wall forming the boundary of the proposed development site in the north western corner and by the site boundary along the northern extent.

Geotechnical Report - This report confirms the results of various investigations into ground conditions, quantitative risk assessments, in situ soils and ground gassing characteristics, and ground and surface water and contamination status. A remediation strategy has also been provided to demonstrate the site's suitability for low rise residential development.

Scottish Ministers Direction - N/A

Assessment

Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case, the Development Plan comprises the Approved Glasgow and Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan (GCVSDP) 2012 and the Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2014 and associated New Development Supplementary Guidance, including the Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance. The proposal also requires to be assessed taking account of Scottish Planning Policy and Clydeplan's Strategic Development Proposed Plan 2016. In addition, the comments of the consultees and the issues raised through representations are material considerations in the assessment of the application.

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) sets out national planning policies which reflect Scottish Ministers' priorities for the operation of the planning system and for the development and use of land. SPP aims to support sustainable development and the creation of high quality places. It sets out two overarching policy principles namely a presumption in favour of

development that contributes to sustainable development; and, placemaking which seeks the creation of high quality places. It considers that the planning system should support economically, environmentally and socially sustainable places by enabling development that balances the costs and benefits of a proposal over the longer term. The aim is to achieve the right development in the right place.

For proposals that do not accord with development plans, the primacy of the plan is maintained. The presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development is a material consideration. The proposal subject of this application comprises a significant housing development on a brownfield site where services are available and a supporting infrastructure network exists. The proposal is therefore considered in principle to be sustainable in terms of location.

In relation to placemaking, the applicant has submitted an indicative masterplan layout which demonstrates that residential development could be accommodated sensitively, as a complementary use of the site consistent with the wider surrounding area. SPP also indicates that planning the right development in the right place requires the promotion of sustainable patterns of development appropriate to the area. The location chosen for this development is considered to accord with the aims of SPP.

SPP further states that Development Plans should identify a generous supply of land for each housing market area within the plan area to support the achievement of the housing land requirement across all tenures, maintaining at least a 5 year supply of effective housing land at all times and enabling the provision of a range of attractive, well-designed, energy efficient, good quality housing, contributing to the creation of successful and sustainable places.

In this regard the LDP identified land across the Renfrewshire area to meet the housing land requirements with the focus on brownfield land to meet the majority of the housing land requirements. Following examination of Renfrewshire's Local Development Plan, the Reporter concluded that there was a shortfall in housing land in Renfrewshire, with insufficient land identified to meet the housing need and demand. In addressing the Housing Land Supply deficit, the SPP states that land requirement can be met from a number of sources, including windfall development. The current application demonstrates such a site, as brownfield land is considered to be in accordance with the Council's Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance 2015 (HLSSG).

Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan (GCVSDP)

The Approved Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan 2012 provides the framework for local authority development management decisions and outlines a Spatial Vision for the city-region to 2035 along with a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) to deliver that vision. The Approved SDP establishes the principle of development where development proposals conform to its policy direction and provisions. Strategy Support Measure 1 'Delivering the Spatial Development Priorities states that the Spatial Development Strategy is clear and consistent in its intent, to support sustainable economic growth and development.

The Strategic Development Plan (SDP) requires local authorities to continue to audit their housing land supply, with a view to maintaining a five year effective housing land supply across all tenures throughout the period to 2020. If further sites are needed, their identification for release should be guided by the use of the Criteria set out in Diagram 4, to find the most suitable locations; the absence of insurmountable infrastructure constraints and availability of the necessary funding for any new infrastructure needed; the site being of a scale which is capable of delivering its house completions in the next five years and; the vision and planning principles of both the Strategic Development Plan and Local Development Plan.

With regard to the SDP, the site comprises a cleared industrial/business (brownfield)

location, in close proximity to Paisley town centre and public transport links. It lies adjacent to existing residential development and the applicant's accompanying Transport Assessment identifies the provision of further infrastructure proposals required to enhance sustainability. The applicant has also detailed in their supporting information that delivery of the development could be achieved within the next five years, through a phased scheme, following any grant of planning permission. The development of this brownfield site for residential purposes is therefore considered to accord with the Spatial Development Strategy of the SDP outlined in Diagram 4.

Taking the above into consideration, although the site has not been identified as a housing development site through the preparation of the Adopted Local Development Plan or as one of the additional housing sites identified by the Reporter following Examination of the Local Development Plan, the proposals are assessed as having no significant implications for the Spatial Development Strategy. The SDP requires that such applications are to be considered within the context of the local development plan and that the assessment is a matter for the Local Authority.

Clydeplan's - Strategic Development Plan Proposed Plan (2016)

The Proposed SDP 2016 was submitted to the Scottish Ministers for Examination on 26th May 2016 and represents the settled view of Clydeplan, the Strategic Development Planning Authority of which Renfrewshire is a constituent part and therefore it has to be considered in the assessment of this proposal.

The Proposed SDP 2016 sets out a Spatial Development Strategy which supports a presumption in favour of sustainable development that contributes to economic growth. It acknowledges the city region's legacy of development and infrastructure and recognises that maximising the benefit of those resources is fundamental to ensuring the long term success of the city region.

Adopted Local Development Plan and New Development Supplementary Guidance

The site is identified in the adopted plan as being a Local Industrial Area and Policy E1 applies. Since this designation however, economic factors have resulted in the closure of the industrial operation at this location, subsequent demolition of buildings and its resultant brownfield status. Although the factory closure was announced in October 2013, interest in the site for business or industrial use has not been forthcoming and alternative uses have therefore been proposed by the applicant in order to re-use the site for an alternative purpose. Renfrewshire Council's Industrial and Business Land Supply Update 2015, confirms that Renfrewshire has 130.1 hectares of marketable industrial land supply and an estimated 10 year demand of only 31 hectares to 2025, with supply significantly exceeding demand in the region. The removal of the application site from the industrial land supply would therefore have a low impact on supply, whilst allowing a brownfield site to be brought forward for redevelopment which would contribute to the identified housing land supply deficit in the area.

In terms of the New Development Supplementary Guidance, whilst the area covered by Policy E1 does extend across Hawkhead Road to the north, to Scott's Road, only the land to the west of Hawkhead Road is proposed for a change of use to residential, with the land to the east remaining as a local industrial area. Given the divide of the site, across Hawkhead Road, it is not considered that the current proposal would significantly impact upon the existing industrial/business use in the area.

Overall, the loss of the site from the Renfrewshire's industrial land supply is considered acceptable in principle, subject to consideration of the proposal against the relevant Places policies and guidance.

Policy P2 considers housing land supply and advises that planning permission will be granted, in accordance with detailed guidance, providing the site is shown to be effective and

can be delivered to address the identified shortfall. In addition, it should not undermine the spatial strategy of the plan and its design would comply with the criteria for implementing the spatial strategy. In this regard, it is not considered that the proposal would undermine the spatial strategy of the LDP. A detailed design has not yet been submitted, as the application is in principle. However, an appropriate design can be ensured through the submission of an approval of matters specified in condition (AMSC) application. The proposal also satisfies the framework set out within the Council's Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance.

Policy P1 and the New Development Supplementary Guidance, Places Development Criteria, set out a number of criteria which new residential developments are required to meet. It considers that development proposals require to ensure that the layout, built form, design and materials of all new developments will be of a high quality. In addition, density will require to be in keeping with the density of surrounding areas, surrounding land uses should not have an adverse effect on the proposed residential development and development proposals should create attractive and well connected street networks which will facilitate movement. In addition, Renfrewshire Places Design Guide sets out standards in relation to separation distances, layouts, parking provision and open space. Assessing the development in terms of these criteria, the following conclusions can be made.

As the proposal is in principle at this time, density, form, design and scale cannot be considered in detail. However, appropriateness can be determined through the assessment of an AMSC application. With regard to layout, the applicant has provided a masterplan for the site, which identifies the proposed road network, open space provision, SuDS arrangements and planting locations, all of which are considered appropriate for the location.

With regard to the applicant's Transport Assessment and proposed network enhancements, the Director of Community Resources (Roads) has raised no objections to the proposals subject to delivery of the required pedestrian crossings and additional linkages to be provided by the installation of the footbridge across the White Cart and the improvements to surrounding footpath links, commensurate with Policy I1.

Open space provision has been incorporated into the applicant's overall masterplan for the site and includes a riverside park and children's play areas with footpath linkages. These works would be augmented by means of access to the established SINC to the west of the site, by the applicant's proposed bridge link. This bridge would be a component of a package of sustainable measures proposed in the Transport Assessment, to integrate the proposed development with surrounding land uses. In terms of natural heritage and protection of the adjacent SINC (Policy ENV2), the applicant has demonstrated an enhancement of the site from the previous industrial use, with the proposed use seeing an increased area of landscaping and open space provided across the White Cart Water to serve the development. This is considered to enhance the designated site for nature conservation at Jennyswell.

Policy I5, and the Flooding and Drainage SG, set out a series of criteria which require to be considered. These generally require minimum standards to reduce the risk of flooding in new developments and to ensure that the risk of flooding is fully considered in the assessment of new development proposals. The applicant has, through the submission of a Drainage Strategy and Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), demonstrated that the buildings and persons occupying the developed site would not be put at risk from flooding. The Director of Community Resources (Design Services) is satisfied that an appropriate condition can be imposed to ensure the development is delivered in accordance with the applicant's supporting documentation.

In terms of contamination, the Director of Community Resources (Environmental Services) is satisfied that conditions could be imposed on any consent given requiring the submission of a site investigation, including remediation measures and a verification report (prior to the commencement of use of the site for residential development and subsequently occupation

of any dwelling) to ensure the site is suitable to accommodate development of the nature proposed.

With regards to potential noise impacts upon the residential development, the applicant has undertaken a noise assessment which has been considered by the Director of Community Resources (Environmental Services) and is considered to be acceptable subject to conditions relating to construction details.

In relation to air quality, an assessment has been undertaken, identifying a number of best practice measures to be implemented on site during earthworks and construction of the development, to the satisfaction of the Director of Community Resources (Environmental Services). A condition has also been requested in relation to the submission of a dust management plan, prior to the commencement of development works on site to protect the amenity of the surrounding area.

As the site was formally covered by a hazardous substances consent, it has been necessary to consult with the Health and Safety Executive on the current proposals, although the operations covered by this consent ceased with the operation of the previous use. As the hazardous substances consent was revoked in 2015, the Health and Safety Executive has confirmed that it does not advise against the current proposals.

In addressing the points raised by the objector above, which have not been assessed previously within the main body of the report, the Director of Community Resources (Environmental Services) has requested the imposition of conditions relating to noise and construction details associated with the AMSC application. Instances of criminal activity and littering are for the consideration of the Police and Community Resource respectively and are not material to the consideration of the current planning application. Having consulted with Scottish Natural Heritage, no objections have been raised in relation to the potential for impact on wildlife as a result of the current proposal. As stated above, the current application is in principle only at this time, as such the exact number of units to be provided on site cannot be confirmed, although supporting documentation confirms that around 500 units can be accommodated. Full details of units and their potential for overlooking shall be assessed upon submission of an application for the approval of matters specified in conditions should consent be granted.

Recommendation and reasons for decision

The proposal has been assessed against the relevant policies in the Development Plan and the relevant material considerations. The above assessment has concluded that while the development does not accord with Development Plan policy, it has been demonstrated that the proposed use can be accommodated at this location, subject to conditions, without significant detrimental impacts. It is also acknowledged that the proposed development will result in the re-use of a vacant site and an enhancement in the visual amenity of the site by creating an attractive landscaped development.

It is therefore recommended that the members be disposed to grant the application subject to the successful conclusion of a Section 75 legal obligation to secure the provision of a financial contribution in mitigation for education impacts directly arising from the development; the provision of pedestrian linkages from the site across the White Cart Water and surrounding areas; and the imposition of appropriate conditions following the conclusion of ongoing consultation with Community Resources and the appropriate additional conditions as detailed below.

Index of Photographs

Site has been visited and photographs archived.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT subject to a Section 75 Agreement

Other Action

- 1 A Section 75 Agreement requires to be concluded to secure a financial contribution towards education impacts and pedestrian linkages.

Conditions and Reasons

- 1 **Reason for Decision**
The proposal does not accord with the provisions of the Development Plan but other material considerations were considered to carry sufficient weight to justify the grant of planning permission
- 2 That before any residential or landscaping development commences, an Application for Approval of Matters Specified in Conditions shall be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority detailing the following matters;
 - (a) the siting, design and external appearance of all buildings and other structures;
 - (b) the means of vehicular and pedestrian access to the site;
 - (c) the layout of the site, including all roads, footways, and parking areas including surface treatments;
 - (d) the provision and means of pedestrian access to open space, amenity space and play provision (distinguishing where appropriate between private and public spaces);
 - (e) the details of, and timetable for water and soft landscaping of the site, in accordance with Glasgow Airports Advice Note 3 'Potential Bird Hazards from Amenity Landscaping and Building Design;
 - (f) the design and location of all boundary walls and fences;
 - (g) the phasing of the development;
 - (h) the provision of drainage works;
 - (i) the disposal of sewage;
 - (j) the submission of a detailed survey showing the location and nature of all trees and hedges within the site, those which are proposed to be removed, and those which are to be retained and how they are to be protected during construction;
 - (k) details of existing and finished ground levels, and finished floor levels, in relation to a fixed datum, preferably ordnance datum;
 - (l) the provision of external space for the storage of three waste stream receptacles for general waste, dry recycling and food waste;
 - (m) details of the acoustic barriers to be provided along the boundary with Lambert Contracts Ltd yard to the north east of the site to ensure that road traffic noise levels do not exceed 55dB in gardens;
 - (n) details of the glazing specification for bedrooms facing onto the railway line to the north of the site; and
 - (o) a remediation method statement (RMS) identifying the proposed methods for implementing all deferred remediation works specified in 11.

Reason: The approval is in principle only and to enable these matters to be considered in detail.

- 3 That all drainage works to be implemented within the application site to accommodate the development, shall be in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment, dated February 2016 and produced by Kaya Consulting Limited and the Drainage Strategy Plan, dated March 2016, produced by Goodson Associates.

Reason: To ensure that drainage for the site is provided in accordance with the approved plans.

- 4 An earthworks, site specific dust management plan (DMP) which incorporates the mitigation measures recommended within the Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) by Ricardo Energy & Environment (ref ED 59078004, Issue No. 2, dated 04/03/2016) shall be submitted to, and approved by, the Planning Authority prior to commencement of any below platform earthworks associated with the development. Any additional site specific measures should be included within the DMP. There is the potential that the site may be developed in a phased manner by various parties, therefore all parties must adhere to the site DMP.

Reason: In the interests of amenity.

- 5 A construction site specific dust management plan (DMP) which incorporates the mitigation measures recommended within the Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) by Ricardo Energy & Environment (ref ED 59078004, Issue No. 2, dated 04/03/2016) shall be submitted to, and approved by, the Planning Authority prior to commencement of any above platform construction of the development. Any additional site specific measures should be included within the DMP. There is the potential that the site may be developed in a phased manner by various parties, therefore all parties must adhere to the site DMP.

Reason: In the interests of amenity.

- 6 That SuDS Basin 1 hereby approved shall be constructed entirely outwith the floodplain, or if sited within the floodplain, the required volume of compensatory storage shall be provided to offset the loss of floodplain storage.

Reason: To ensure that the location for SuDS Basin 1 will not result in an overall loss of floodplain storage and increase the potential for flood risk.

- 7 That no development shall commence on site until written approval has been provided by the Planning Authority of a site investigation report (characterising the nature and extent of any soil, water and gas contamination at the site), prepared in accordance with current authoritative technical guidance.

Reason: To ensure that the site condition has been adequately established.

- 8 That no development shall commence on site until written approval has been provided by the Planning Authority of a remediation method statement (RMS) identifying the proposed methods for implementing all recommendations in relation to the Remediation & Enabling phase of works contained within the site investigation reports. The RMS shall be prepared in accordance with current authoritative technical guidance and shall clearly identify; those remedial works to be undertaken prior to construction as part of a Remediation / Enabling phase of works; and those remedial works to be deferred to other parties and to be completed during the construction phase.

Reason: To ensure that the site will be made suitable for its approved use.

- 9 Prior to construction of any unit hereby approved, a Verification Report confirming completion of remedial works specified in the approved remediation / enabling phase of works Remediation Method Statement (Condition 8 above) shall be submitted to the Planning Authority and approved in writing.

Reason: To demonstrate that works required to make the site suitable for use have been completed.

- 10 Prior to occupation of any residential unit within the relevant phase of development, a Verification Report confirming completion of all deferred remedial works specified in the approved Remediation Method Statement (RMS) (Condition 2 (o)) shall be submitted to the Planning Authority and approved in writing.

Reason: To demonstrate that works required to make the site suitable for use have been completed.

Fraser Carlin
Head of Planning and Housing

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Background Papers
For further information or to inspect any letters of objection and other background papers, please contact David Bryce on extension 7892.



Renfrewshire
Council

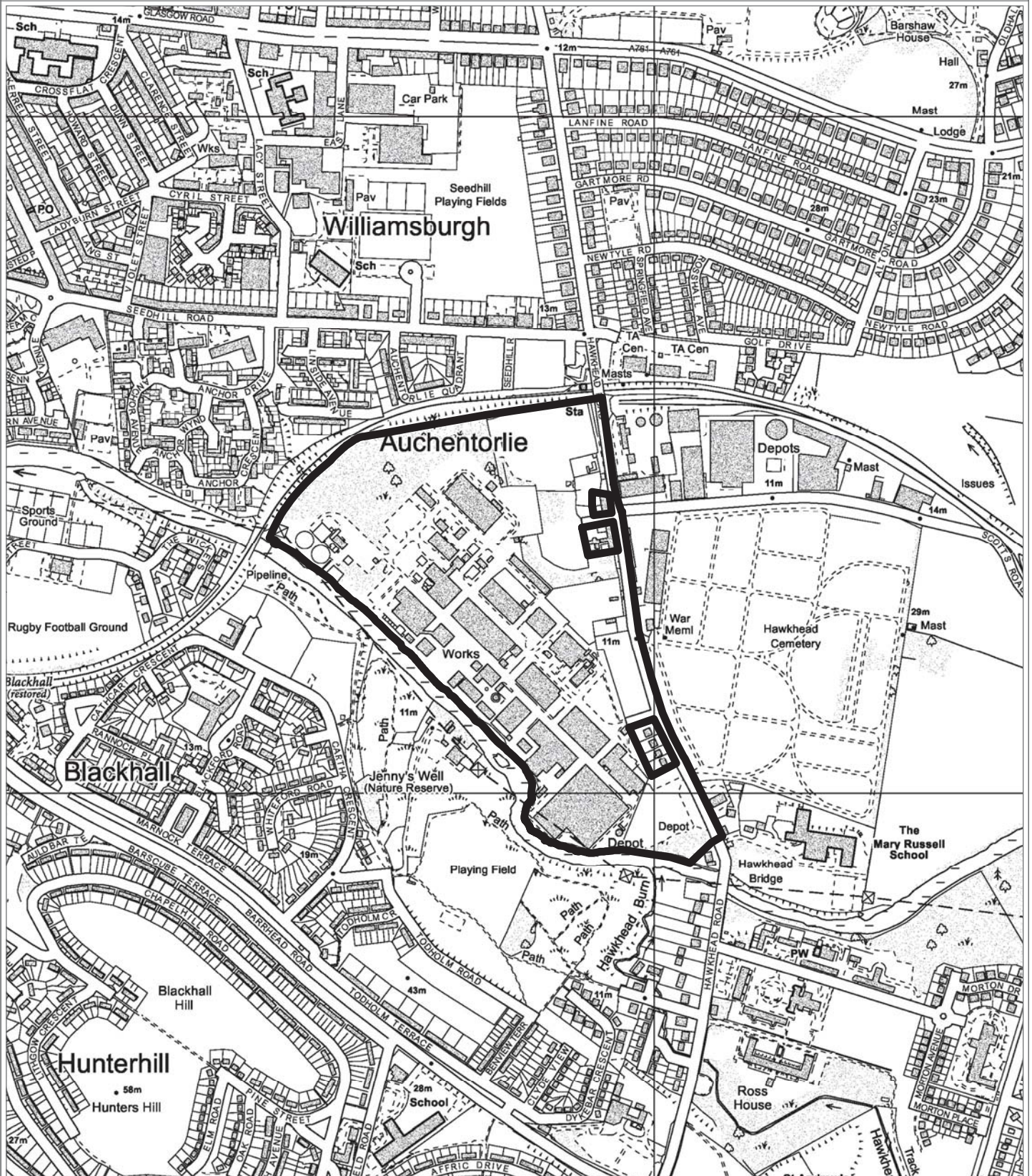
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144 Hawkhead Road,
Paisley, PA2 7BG



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User: ptcameronr1

Date: 11/08/2016



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RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Application No: 16/0291/PP

DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING SERVICES
RECOMMENDATION ON PLANNING APPLICATION

Regd: 21/04/2016

Applicant

Agent

Gladman Developments Ltd.
2 Eliburn Office Park
Eliburn
Livingston
EH54 6GR

Nature of proposals:

Erection of residential development including formation of vehicular access, open space and landscaping, provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) and associated engineering works (Planning Permission in Principle)

Site:

Land to North East of Strathgryffe Crescent, Gryffe Castle, Bridge of Weir

Application for:

Planning Permission in Principle

Introduction

This application was the subject of a Pre-Determination Hearing in line with the requirements set out in Section 38A of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and the related Development Management Regulations.

Section 14(2) of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 requires that where an application has been subject of a Pre Determination Hearing under Section 38A, then the application must thereafter be referred to the Full Council for determination.

The Pre Determination Hearing took place at the Planning and Property Policy Board on 23 August 2016 and the issues raised at the hearing mirror those raised through written objections to the application.

The issues raised at the Pre Determination Hearing and through objection have been summarised in this report under the section 'Objections/Representations' and have been fully considered in the assessment of the application.

Description

Planning permission (in principle) is sought for residential development on an area of agricultural land located within the greenbelt to the north west of Bridge of Weir. The application site extends to approximately 4.4 hectares on the north side of Kilmacolm Road. The site is bounded to the east and south east by mature woodland, subject of a Tree Preservation Order, beyond which sits Gryffe Castle, a Category B listed building formerly used as a children's home and converted to private residential use in 2002. Kilmacolm Road defines the southern and western boundaries of the site adjacent to existing residential development at Strathgryffe Crescent. The northern edge of the site is currently undefined. The applicant indicates that one vehicular access to the site will be taken from Kilmacolm Road.

Although the application is in principle an indicative layout has been submitted illustrating a development of approximately 80 dwellings with a mix of detached, semi detached and terraced houses.

History

16/0012/EO - Request for a screening opinion as to the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment for residential development. Environmental Impact Assessment not required 10/03/2016.

15/0787/NO - Proposal of Application Notice for the erection of residential development. Accepted November 2015.

Policy & Material Considerations

Scottish Planning Policy

Scottish Planning Policy highlights the primacy of the Development Plan. The extant Development Plan is the Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan 2012, Clydeplan's Strategic Development Plan Proposed Plan (2016) and the Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2014 as detailed below with relevant policies identified.

Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan 2012

Strategy Support Measure 1: Delivering the Spatial Development Priorities
 Strategy Support Measure 8: Green Infrastructure: An Economic Necessity
 Strategy Support Measure 10: Housing Development and Local Flexibility
 Diagram 3: Spatial Development Strategy and Indicative Compatible Development
 Diagram 4: Sustainable location assessment

Clydeplan's - Strategic Development Plan Proposed Plan (2016)

The Proposed SDP is a material consideration as it is the settled view of the Clydeplan Authority.

Policy 1: Placemaking
 Policy 7: Joint Action Towards the Delivery of New Homes
 Policy 8: Housing Land Requirement
 Policy 14: Green Belt
 Policy 16: Managing Flood Risk and Drainage
 Policy 18: Strategic Walking and Cycling Network
 Table 1: Placemaking Principles
 Schedule 14: Strategic Scales of Development
 Diagram 11: Assessment of Development Proposals

Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2014

Policy ENV1: Green Belt
 Policy ENV2: Natural Heritage
 Policy ENV 3: Built Heritage
 Policy P2: Housing Land Supply
 Policy I5: Flooding and Drainage

New Development Supplementary Guidance

Delivering the Environment Strategy: Green Belt; Housing in the Green Belt; Contaminated Land ; Natural Heritage; Trees, Woodland and Forestry; Listed Buildings; Noise;
 Contaminated Land
 Delivering the Places Strategy: Places Development Criteria
 Delivering the Infrastructure Strategy: Flooding and Drainage and Infrastructure Development Criteria

Material considerations

Renfrewshire's Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance 2015 requires to be considered in addressing the Council's shortfall in housing land supply. The replacement Renfrewshire Local Development Plan will set out a framework for new and appropriate housing sites for meeting housing need and demand in Renfrewshire.

Planning legislation requires that planning decisions are made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the proposal requires to be considered against the policies and guidance set out above, the supporting information submitted, the comments of the consultees, any objections received and any other relevant material considerations.

Publicity

Neighbour notification has been undertaken in accordance with statute. The application was also advertised in the Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette on 27th April 2016, with a deadline for representations to be received by 18th May 2016.

Objections/Representations

There has been 135 letters of objection and 1 letter of support submitted in relation to this application. The issues raised can be summarised as follows:

1. The spatial policy of the Clyde Valley Plan considers that sites for development should follow the sequential approach of firstly brownfield; brownfield within green belt and finally green belt. The proposal contravenes this strategic policy as it is green belt land.
2. Development of this site ignores the Renfrewshire Local Development Plan and is an expansion into the green belt contrary to Policy ENV1.
3. The application fails to reflect and adopt the main considerations and requirements of the Renfrewshire Local Development Plan, Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance 2015 and the various incorporated documents, guidance and policies.
4. The application does not undertake a sequential test of sites within Bridge of Weir but promotes a case that there is a shortfall of housing within the 5 year effective supply. The proposal would not only permanently remove a significant green belt area in an important location, but would make it difficult to halt other such opportunistic proposals.
5. There is land available within the confines of the village that is ripe for development on a smaller scale such as the site at Bulls Garage which is already becoming an eyesore.
6. There are other brownfield sites which adjoin the settlement boundary of Bridge of Weir and are sustainable in terms of location and proximity to different transport modes.
7. The essential character of the village would be severely eroded by such large scale development in a wholly inappropriate setting, in the green belt and adjacent to an important listed building.
8. The site is not contained in landscape and visual terms with a minimum landscape boundary proposed of 7.5 to 10 metres in width.
9. The proposed development breaks the long standing western edge of the village and the tree belt proposed for the western boundary does not provide a robust and defensible boundary. There is therefore nothing physical to mark the extent of western expansion.
10. Bridge of Weir as a village has the important characteristic of separation from other surrounding villages. If the application was approved it would decrease the area of open countryside between Bridge of Weir, Quarriers Village and Kilmacolm.
11. The application site is rolling countryside and clearly visible from public roads, clearly separated from the settlement area by the policies and gardens of Gryffe Castle, a category 'B' listed building.
12. The wooded grounds of Gryffe Castle are one of only two remaining extensive areas of

mature, deciduous and mixed woodland in the village. This amenity is used by local residents and visitors. The proposed development would negatively alter the landscape character of this valuable asset.

13. The areas health care facilities, services and infrastructure would be unable to cope with the demands of further residential development. Further expansion will result in a negative impact on Bridge of Weir's village structure and community.

14. Primary and High Schools within the catchment are at or very close to capacity, in part due to high numbers of placement pupils.

15. There are already two new housing developments in the Bridge of Weir area; Shillingworth and Weirs Wynd and these will put further pressure on the local schools where some classes are already large.

16. The roads through Bridge of Weir would be unable to accommodate the increase in traffic from the development.

17. The volume of traffic at the times of the "school runs" will be increased causing unnecessary delays for people travelling to work.

18. Kilmacolm Road is a fast, busy road which has already had traffic calming measures applied. At peak times the traffic is frequently queued back beyond the edge of the village. The village is at saturation point for parking.

19. When added to the developments at Brookfield and Shillingworth, the volume of traffic will cause even more problems at Spurryhillock Roundabout and on the entry slip roads to the A737. The traffic lights at the slip roads cannot accommodate the level of traffic at the moment.

20. Public transport is poor so would result in a minimum of 80 more cars additional to the 42 (minimum) from Shillingworth and 200 at the old Merchiston site using the local road network.

21. It is currently difficult to enter and leave the Gryffe Castle driveway at peak times due to high volumes of traffic. The proposed development would make the situation much worse as it would add volume and another bottleneck.

22. No direct pedestrian access is proposed from the development to the village amenities, including the school.

23. No safe route to the schools exists for children from the proposed development without impacting on the property rights of other users and in particular the residents of Gryffe Castle, where a proposed access route is planned.

24. Approximately 45 healthy and mature trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) would have to be felled to accommodate any pavement and the boundary wall of Gryffe Castle would require to be moved back from the road and the requisite permission of owners would be required.

25. The types of homes proposed and approved in the vicinity are not in accordance with the affordable homes the government seeks.

26. This development poses a threat to many different animal species due to loss of habitat and foraging grounds. There are regular sightings of bats, owls, birds of prey, a multitude of bird species, foxes, deer and the common lizard.

Consultations

The Director of Community Resources (Roads) – Has raised a number of concerns which require to be addressed and additionally recommends a suite of conditions to deal with detailed matters.

The Director of Community Resources (Design Services) – The Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA) is considered to be acceptable for a planning application in principle and should form the basis of any related DIA for a detailed application.

The Director of Community Resources (Environmental Services) – States that a number of conditions will be required in relation to site investigation, remediation strategy and/or method statement and verification reports and subject to compliance with the mitigation measures detailed within the report titled 'Enviro Centre, Kilmacolm Road, Bridge of Weir, Noise Impact Assessment Report', dated March 2016.

The Director of Education and Leisure – States that any development at this site would impact on the accommodation and provision of curricular and social spaces within Bridge of Weir Primary School and Gryffe High School. The proposed development would, if approved, result in an increase in pupil roll beyond operational capacity to the detriment of education provision.

West of Scotland Water – No response.

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport - Request the provision of a footway and bus shelter on the north side of Bridge of Weir Road.

Bridge of Weir Community Council – Object to the proposal on the basis of location within the green belt contrary to the LDP, that a defensible green belt boundary exists and development of this site would set a precedent for further residential development along Kilmacolm Road, inadequate service provision and impact on local road network/traffic and pedestrian safety.

Kilbarchan Community Council – Object to the proposal on the basis of its impact on the surrounding road network.

Summary of Main Issues

Environmental Statement - A request for a screening opinion determined that although the proposal would fall within Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2011, it was not considered likely that the proposed works would have a significant environmental impact which would require an Environmental Impact Assessment be undertaken on the basis of no significant long term impacts on the environment having had regard to the characteristics of the development, the location of the development, and the characteristics of the potential impact.

Appropriate Assessment – N/A

Design & Access Statement - The applicant states that the application proposal creates a logical extension to the existing settlement form and reflects its position on the periphery of the settlement edge by introducing a robust defensible green belt boundary by introducing new mixed species structure planting along the northern edge of the site. This, it is submitted, supplements green infrastructure with internal landscaping to soften the built form. It is submitted that the proposal will have no direct affect on Gryffe Castle and its setting by setting development back from the northern and eastern sectors of the site to mitigate against any filtered views through the trees from Gryffe Castle's south facing facade and its access road. It is further stated that development of the site would comprise a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses similar to densities of surrounding

development.

Other Assessments

Pre-Application Consultation Report - Outlines the process which has been undertaken and confirms that pre-application consultation, set out by statute, including a public exhibition, was satisfied. It states that approximately 80 members of the public visited the exhibition and 15 completed questionnaires were received. It is stated that in general terms the questionnaires raised concerns over the infrastructure impact of the proposed development, the overarching need for more housing development in Renfrewshire and the impact of the proposals on the green belt. The applicant claims that following the event, access arrangements for the site have been reviewed in particular whether the site will be accessed by a roundabout or signal controlled junction. The general feedback favoured a signal controlled junction which was seen as a positive intervention to control traffic speeds on Kilmacolm Road.

Planning Statement – The applicant states that Renfrewshire Council is failing to maintain an effective 5 year housing land supply, as required by national planning policy and therefore additional housing sites in sustainable locations that can be delivered in the short term require to be brought forward. The applicants accept that the council has been proactive in approving the Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance (HLSSG) as a framework to facilitate this and consider that this proposal represents an opportunity for the housing land supply issue to be positively addressed. It is submitted by the applicant that it has been demonstrated that the application complies with the HLSSG and with Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). It is submitted that it has been demonstrated that the benefits of approving the proposal, in terms of augmenting the housing land supply, and supporting the economy are neither significantly nor demonstrably outweighed by any adverse impacts.

Soil and Agriculture Report – It is stated that the site is currently primarily utilised as grassland, defined as category 4, type 4.1 in the Land Classification for Agriculture which is non prime and supports a narrow range of crops. It is recommended in the report that any topsoil from the site should be reused on the site, or utilised for the continual improvement of soil resources in neighbouring localities.

Utilities Report – It is reported that there is existing 11kV infrastructure, low pressure gas mains, water mains and telecoms infrastructure within close proximity of the site boundary and proposed new site entry. It is stated that there is a potential requirement for the protection or diversion of localised infrastructure but required works are expected to be minor. It is claimed that initial investigations have illustrated that the site is deliverable from a utilities perspective and solutions necessary to support the water supply will be progressed as part of the detailed design.

Archaeology Report – The report states that based on the results of assessments, there is a low potential for the discovery of buried archaeological remains within the proposed development site. It is submitted that there would be no significant effect upon the setting of Gryffe Castle, which is set within its own grounds and enclosed by mature woodland.

Economic Effects – The applicants claim that the proposed development will have a number of positive economic effects, including supporting a number of construction, retail and public service jobs as well as providing increased expenditure into the local Renfrewshire economy.

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey - The applicants recommendations are that any development of the site is preceded by a suite of activity surveys in order to determine use of the site by foraging and commuting bats. It is recommended that the site is enhanced for foraging and commuting bats by retaining as much of the existing hedgerow as is practical and by incorporating additional native hedge, tree and shrub planting into landscaping proposals. It is suggested that a bat sensitive lighting scheme should be designed to ensure

that habitats are maintained as dark corridors and buildings are enhanced for roosting bats by the addition of bat boxes or bat tubes.

With regard to badgers, the applicant recommends that precautionary measures are used during any proposed construction activity and that any excavations are covered during the hours of darkness. It is recommended that any works affecting potential bird nesting habitat should be carried out outside the breeding season and that additional native hedge, tree and shrub planting be incorporated into the landscaping proposals. With regard to invertebrates and other species, it is recommended that an Ecological Clerk of Works is present prior to any planned vegetation clearance to check the area for hedgehogs and moles and that native trees and shrubs are planted within the development to mitigate for any potential loss of such habitat.

Landscape and Visual Appraisal –

Affects on the landscape: The applicants assessment concludes that in terms of landscape resources within the site, minor adverse effects are anticipated as a result of the removal of part of the mixed species hedgerow and complete removal of the existing pastoral grassland and that once the new structural planting is established, a minor beneficial effect is predicted. It is stated that the Clyde Basin Farmlands regional character area, within which the site is located, will be largely unaffected by the proposed development with minor adverse effects predicted through the construction and operational stages of development. It is also considered that the Rugged Upland Farmland type will also be largely unaffected, and whilst there will be moderate adverse effects during the construction stage, the effects will reduce to minor adverse once the development is completed.

Affects on visual amenity: The applicants assessment states that the landscape effects will be localised and contained within the site boundary, with only minimal indirect effects on the wider landscape setting in the long term. Once the new structure planting is established, a minor beneficial effect is predicted as the new tree belt along the northern boundary establishes a link to the existing woodland areas to the east and west. It is stated that Gryffe Castle and its grounds will not be affected by the proposed development as the application site lies wholly within the agricultural lands located to the west of the listed building group and its setting. It is submitted by the applicant that the Clyde Basin Farmlands regional character area within which the site is located, will be largely unaffected by the proposed development with minor adverse effects predicted through the construction and operational stages of development. It is claimed that the Rugged Upland Farmland landscape type will also be largely unaffected, and whilst there will be moderate adverse effects during the construction stage, the effects will reduce to minor once the development is completed. In terms of visual assessment, it is claimed that the development will be visible from select locations to the south and west, with views from the north and east largely obscured by intervening features such as vegetation, localised landforms and buildings. The report concludes that once complete, the new development will complement existing housing.

Air Quality Assessment - The applicants submit that the primary long-term concern in relation to air quality is the emissions generated by traffic and the subsequent impact on the local ambient air quality at residential and public areas located within the vicinity of the main road network. The two main pollutant concentrations of concern from this source are nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter. It is submitted that the air quality assessment predicts no significant change in nitrogen dioxide and particulate concentrations at all locations on the comparison of the 'with and without' development scenarios. The magnitude of impact for both pollutants is considered to be negligible.

Drainage Strategy Plan and Flood Risk Assessment – The applicants submit that the development can be drained in accordance with the recommendations of the latest planning guidance and design criteria. It is stated that the foul water from the development is to be discharged to the existing, publicly owned, combined sewerage network and that the surface water drainage from the site will incorporate full SUDs measures to control the discharge

from the site and reduce the pressure on the existing drainage system. It is claimed that in the main this will be achieved using detention basins and filter trenches; surface water will discharge, either to the combined sewerage network or to the natural watercourses to the west of the site. It is concluded that the Type 1 Flood Assessment presented above confirms that the site is at low risk of flooding from tidal, fluvial, groundwater and pluvial sources.

Preliminary Environmental Assessment Report – The applicants report recommends that sufficient gas monitoring installations are included in the site investigation specification to suitably assess the potential for ground gas generation within the in situ soils. It is submitted that with the exception of the southern boundary adjacent to Kilmacolm Road, the site is not indicated to lie within a flood risk area. The report states that the site lies out with a Radon affected area and no Radon gas protective measures are necessary within the site area and that a review of BGS Geology and Coal Authority Reports indicate that the site can be considered stable.

Noise Assessment – The applicants report states that due to the proximity of the A761 Kilmacolm Road, there is potential for noise from road traffic to impact on future residents. The assessment concludes that sufficient mitigation measures, including acoustic fencing and window design, could be incorporated into the detailed design to ensure that both the external and internal living areas can be reduced to levels appropriate for future residents.

Traffic Statement – The applicants state that the site will be accessed by a new signalised junction, which will be constructed at the existing priority junction between A761 Kilmacolm Road and Strathgryffe Crescent. It is further stated that a junction assessment has been completed for the proposed site access junction and for the A761/B790 signalised junction within Bridge of Weir. It is claimed that the results show that development traffic can be accommodated at these locations. The report concludes that accessibility from the development to local services is good in terms of walking and cycling, with the village centre being less than 1km distant. It is stated that a network of paths is proposed to provide good connectivity within the development and that pedestrians will be provided with a signalised crossing across the A761 to link into the footway on the southern side. The report concludes that the scale of development proposed is not anticipated to have a detrimental impact on the local network.

Planning Obligation Summary – N/A

Scottish Ministers Direction – N/A

Assessment

Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case, the Development Plan comprises the Approved Glasgow and Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan (GCVSDP) 2012 and the Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2014 and associated New Development Supplementary Guidance, including the Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance. The proposal also requires to be assessed taking account of the Scottish Planning Policy and Clydeplan's Strategic Development Plan Proposed Plan 2016. In addition, the comments of consultees and the issues raised through representations are material considerations in the assessment of the application.

Scottish Planning Policy

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) sets out national planning policies which reflect Scottish Ministers' priorities for the operation of the planning system and for the development and use of land. SPP aims to support sustainable development and the creation of high quality places. It sets out two overarching policy principles namely a presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development; and, placemaking which seeks the creation of high quality places. It considers that the planning system should support

economically, environmentally and socially sustainable places by enabling development that balances the costs and benefits of a proposal over the longer term. The aim is to achieve the right development in the right place. It is not to allow development at any cost.

The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan for decision making. For proposals that do not accord with development plans, the primacy of the plan is maintained. The presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development is a material consideration. The proposal subject of this application comprises a significant housing development on green belt land with no defensible green belt boundary. There is limited services and facilities to serve this new development along with a lack of necessary infrastructure to successfully deliver homes at this location. Therefore it is considered that the proposed development is not sustainable, nor will it enhance the existing village of Bridge of Weir.

In relation to Placemaking, it is difficult to see how this development will complement the local features such as landscape, topography and skylines when development of this site will have an adverse impact on these features.

SPP indicates that planning the right development in the right place requires the promotion of sustainable patterns of development appropriate to the area. The location chosen for this development does not optimise the use of existing resource capacities. There are resource capacity constraints at this site. It is located adjacent to the existing settlement, however it is difficult to see how this particular site would have the most benefit for the amenity of local people or the vitality of the local economy.

On Enabling the Delivery of New Homes SPP indicates the planning system should identify a generous supply of land within the plan area to support the achievement of the housing land requirement across all tenures, maintaining at least a 5 year supply of effective housing land at all times; enable provision of a range of attractive, well-designed, energy efficient, good quality housing, contributing to the creation of successful and sustainable places.

In this regard the LDP identified land across the Renfrewshire area to meet the housing land requirements with the focus on brownfield land to meet the majority of the housing land requirements along with a number of green belt release sites to help stimulate supply in the short term. However, following the examination of Renfrewshire's Local Development Plan, the Reporter concluded that there was a potential shortfall in housing land in Renfrewshire and that the LDP did not identify sufficient land to meet the housing need and demand. In response, three additional green belt housing sites, identified by the Reporter, were released to address the potential shortfall in housing land supply. Furthermore, the Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance 2015 (HLSSG) was produced in order to provide a framework to assess sites which could come forward in the short term to contribute to the housing land supply. The application site under consideration is not one of those sites identified by the Reporter for release and neither does it meet all of the requirements set out in the HLSSG.

Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan 2012

The Approved Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan 2012 provides the framework for local authority development management decisions and outlines a Spatial Vision for the city-region to 2035 along with a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) to deliver that vision. The Approved SDP establishes the principle of development where development proposals conform to its policy direction and provisions. Strategy Support Measure 1 'Delivering the Spatial Development Priorities states that the Spatial Development Strategy is clear and consistent in its intent, to support sustainable economic growth and development.

The Fundamental Principles of the Strategic Development Plan include the acceptance that development and investment proposals whose location and development compatibility

accords with the Spatial Development Strategy and its related frameworks, will be deemed to support the Spatial Vision and Strategy. Diagram 3 sets out the range and type of development which the Authority would expect as part of the Spatial Development Strategy and with regard to Green Belt indicative forms of development considered to be in line with the strategy include: green infrastructure; woodland creation; sustainable access and natural leisure facilities; biodiversity and biomass planting. This proposal for a significant residential development within the green belt is therefore not a development considered to conform to the Spatial Development Strategy.

It further considers that new strategic development proposals which do not reflect the Spatial Development Strategy and its related frameworks are deemed not supportive of the Spatial Vision and Strategy. Where this is the case, it states that proposals will require to be assessed upon their own merits by the relevant local authority adopting the sustainable location assessment set out in Diagram 4. When the proposal is assessed against Diagram 4, the following conclusions can be made:

Climate Change - Minimising the Development footprint of the city-region/minimising the carbon footprint of the city- region/mitigating greenhouse gas emissions - The development of the site subject of this application, due to its size, and location in the green belt will not contribute toward the aims of minimising the development footprint or carbon footprint of the city-region or mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. Notwithstanding this, Renfrewshire Council accepts that additional sites are required to facilitate the development of new homes to meet identified need and that there may be a requirement for development of green belt land, however, the application proposal, due to its size and location is not considered to be a sustainable development.

Low Carbon Economy - Supporting sustainable economic competitiveness/supporting key economic sectors and new environmental technology sectors/supporting the farming and rural economy - Although it is widely accepted that the housebuilding industry makes a significant contribution to the Scottish economy, this is not dependant on the development of the application site. The application site, although identified as Class 4.1 (non-prime) under the McCauley Land Capability for Agriculture classification, is defined as being land capable of producing crops and could be utilised for farming purposes. Therefore the development of this site would neither support sustainable economic competitiveness, new environmental technology sectors nor farming and the rural economy.

Sustainable Transport - Supporting sustainable access and active travel/providing appropriate public transport access/supporting future public transport services - The application was accompanied by a Transport Assessment which demonstrates that the development of the site could be accommodated within the existing road network. The Director of Community Resources has not objected to the proposal in this regard subject to conditions to ensure that appropriate pedestrian linkages to existing facilities and the transport network can be achieved.

Green Network - Developing green infrastructure/supporting green belt objectives/supporting biodiversity networks and designations - Paragraph 4.48 of the Approved SDP and Strategy Support Measure 8 'Green Infrastructure: an economic necessity' establishes that the green belt is central to the sustainable planning of the city-region, that it is an important strategic tool and has a significant role to play in achieving key environmental objectives by directing planned growth to the most appropriate locations, supporting regeneration, creating and safeguarding identity through place-setting and protecting the separation between communities. Although the application site is located on the edge of Bridge of Weir in proximity to some areas of existing housing, it comprises a large natural agricultural site in a prominent green belt location, which adds to the local landscape character and setting of Bridge of Weir. Additionally it has no obvious spatial connection to the village and no defensible green belt boundary, whereas the existing boundary formed by the TPO protected woodlands of Gryffe Castle provides a more robust settlement edge. The

application site is not considered to be an infill site as it is located to the west of this wooded area, which already acts as a defensible green belt boundary, and as such is set apart from the remainder of the built up area of Bridge of Weir. The development of this site does not therefore support the green belt objectives of maintaining the identity of settlements and protecting and enhancing their landscape setting.

Water Environment - *Managing flood-risk/improving and safeguarding water quality* - The Director of Community Resources is satisfied that the DIA submitted in support of the application is acceptable for a planning application in principle and to demonstrate that appropriate drainage can be achieved. The Director of Community Resources considered there to be no requirement for a Flood Risk Assessment. It is not evident that there will be an unacceptable impact on water quality.

Network of Centres - The application is for residential development and it is not therefore considered that this part of the assessment criteria is directly relevant.

Low Carbon Energy - *Developing green energy and/or energy smart-grids/contributing to a low carbon energy and technology future* - It is not evident that the proposal would contribute to developing green energy or that it would contribute to a low carbon energy and technology future.

Taking all of the above considerations together leads to the conclusion that the application site is not a sustainable location, and as such the set tests under Diagram 4 are not satisfied.

With regard to housing land supply the Approved SDP indicates that Local Development Plans should allocate sufficient land which is effective, or likely to be capable of becoming effective, so as to deliver the scale of house completions required across all tenures both in the period to 2020, and from 2020 to 2025.

It is stated in Strategy Support Measure 10 that where the supply needs to be augmented, priority should be given to bringing forward for earlier development any sites which have been allocated in the Local Development Plan for construction in the period 2020 to 2025. It continues that if further sites are needed, their identification for release should be guided by the criteria in Diagram 4 to find the most suitable locations. It considers that these sites must be absent of insurmountable infrastructure constraints and be of a scale which is capable of delivering its house completions in the next five years. Such sites should also be compatible with the vision and planning principles of both the Strategic Development Plan and the Local Development Plan. It is accepted that there remains a potential Housing Land Supply shortfall within Renfrewshire and that additional housing sites are required. However, such sites require to be in sustainable locations.

The application site has not been identified as a housing development site through the preparation and adoption of the Local Development Plan or as one of the additional housing sites identified by the Reporter following the Examination of the Local Development Plan. The application site has been assessed against the criteria of Diagram 4 but fails to satisfy the set tests. It is considered that the proposal does not contribute to sustainable development nor accord with the Vision and Spatial Development Strategy of the Approved SDP.

Proposed Strategic Development Plan 2016(SDP)

The Proposed SDP 2016 was submitted to the Scottish Ministers for Examination on 26th May 2016 and represents the settled view of Clydeplan, the Strategic Development Planning Authority of which Renfrewshire is a constituent part and therefore it has to be considered in the assessment of this proposal.

The Proposed SDP 2016 sets out a Spatial Development Strategy which supports a presumption in favour of sustainable development that contributes to economic growth. It

acknowledges the city region's legacy of development and infrastructure and recognises that maximising the benefit of those resources is fundamental to ensuring the long term success of the city region. Through Policy 1 'Placemaking', it seeks to embed the creation of high quality places firmly as part of its Vision and Spatial Strategy.

It considers that in support of the Vision and Spatial Development Strategy, new development proposals should take account of the Placemaking Principles set out in Table 1, including maintaining and enhancing landscape character and supporting the objectives of the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Belt. The application proposal would neither maintain nor enhance the landscape character of Bridge of Weir nor support the objectives of the Green Belt in this location and therefore does not comply with Policy 1 Placemaking.

The Proposed SDP advocates a consistent approach to the consideration of development proposals across the city region and considers that proposals which are in locations or at a scale or of a nature not identified in the SDP could undermine the Vision and Spatial Development Strategy. To assist in the development management process Section 10 of the Plan 'Implementing the Plan and Development Management' sets out 'thresholds for strategic scales of development', within Schedule 14. With regard to Greenfield Housing Schedule 14 considers that 10 or more units outwith the Community Growth Areas or sites outwith those identified in LDP's are considered to be strategic. Given that the proposal comprises a housing development where an indicative number of 80 dwellings is proposed on a site located within the Green Belt designated through the Adopted LDP, it is considered to fall within the definition of strategic scale of development.

The Proposed SDP states that Diagram 11: 'Assessment of Development Proposals' should to be used by local authorities when assessing strategic scale development proposals or other proposals that may impact on the Plan Strategy. This Diagram will determine whether strategic scale development proposals comply with the policies, schedules and diagrams of the SDP, and Box 1, sets out the considerations relevant to each development type which will ascertain whether it supports the Vision, Spatial Development Strategy and Placemaking Policy. When the proposal is assessed against the relevant policies and schedules, the following conclusions can be made.

Policy 8 'Housing Land Requirement', states that Local Authorities should make provisions in Local Development Plans for the Housing Land Requirement set out in Schedule 8 and Schedule 9, allocate a range of sites which are effective or expected to become effective in the plan period to meet the housing land requirements, provide for a minimum of 5 years effective land supply at all times, undertake annual monitoring of completions and through Section 10 of the Plan 'Development Management' take steps to remedy any shortfalls through the granting of planning permissions that contribute to sustainable development and accord with the Vision and Spatial Development Strategy, Local Development Plans and other local strategies. It is accepted that there is a shortage in the effective housing land supply in Renfrewshire and therefore the application proposal is being assessed against Section 10, of the Plan.

Policy 14 'Green Belt' states that in support of the Vision and Spatial Development Strategy, Local Authorities should designate within Local Development Plans, the boundaries of the Green Belts to ensure that the objectives set out in paragraph 8.15 are achieved. Paragraph 8.15 considers that the Green Belt is an important strategic tool which has a significant role to play in supporting the delivery of the Spatial Development Strategy and achieving the objectives set out below. When the potential impact of the application proposal is considered against these objectives, the following conclusions can be made:

Directing planned growth to the most appropriate locations - the application site is located within the designated Green Belt and has not been identified through the LDP as an appropriate location for planned growth.

Supporting regeneration- the application site is located within the designated Green Belt and will not therefore support the regeneration of Renfrewshire or the city-region as a whole.

Creating and safeguarding identity through place-setting and protecting the separation between communities/landscape setting and identity of settlements - the application site is a large green belt site in a prominent green belt location, which currently adds to the local landscape character and setting of Bridge of Weir. Bridge of Weir currently has a robust and defensible green belt boundary in this location in the form of a TPO protected area of woodland associated with Gryffe Castle. Development of the application site would breach this boundary and would not therefore safeguard the setting of Bridge of Weir. Additionally, as a result of the existing green belt boundary the application site has no obvious spatial connection to the village and no defensible green belt boundary, whereas the existing boundary provides a more robust settlement edge.

Protecting open space and sustainable access and opportunities for countryside recreation - the application proposal will not result in the protection of open space nor would it protect sustainable access opportunities for countryside recreation.

Maintaining the natural role on the environment - the proposal for a large housing development will not maintain the natural role of the environment in this location but will impact on the setting of Bridge of Weir and the surrounding agricultural landscape.

Supporting the farming economy of the city region - the proposal is for housing development and will not support the farming economy of the city-region.

Meeting requirements for the sustainable location of rural industries including renewable energy, mineral extraction and timber production - the application proposal does not comprise a rural industry.

The application site is designated as Green Belt within the Adopted LDP and currently performs the functions set out in paragraph 8.15 of the Proposed SDP. Development of the site for housing would undermine many of these functions including protection of the identity of Bridge of Weir, and its landscape setting and would not therefore support the delivery of the Spatial Development Strategy.

Policy 16 'Improving the Water Quality Environment and Managing Flood Risk and Drainage'. This policy seeks to support the Vision and Spatial Development Strategy and to achieve the objectives set out in paragraph 8.28 which include securing improvements to water and drainage capacity and reducing flood risk. The Director of Community Resources is satisfied that the DIA submitted in support of the application is sufficient at this stage to demonstrate that the site can be appropriately drained and is not subject to risk from flooding.

Policy 18 'Strategic Walking and Cycling Network' requires that development proposals should maintain and enhance the strategic walking and cycling network. The application proposal does not disrupt existing walking and cycling connections but does not propose any significant enhancement.

Taking all of the above considerations together leads to the conclusion that the application proposal does not meet the relevant criteria in Box 1 and is therefore regarded as a Departure from the Strategic Development Plan. To ascertain whether this Departure is acceptable, the proposal requires to be assessed against the criteria of Box 2. When the proposal is assessed against these criteria, the following conclusions can be made:

Given its location in the designated Green Belt, with no defensible green belt boundary, the proposal will not make a significant or positive contribution to sustainable development through either a modal shift or contribution to carbon reduction;

The proposal will not provide significant economic benefit which would otherwise be lost to the city region or Scotland;

The proposal would not respond to economic issues, including the protection of jobs or create a significant number of net additional permanent jobs to the city region;

There is no specific locational need for the proposal;

The proposal would not enhance nor promote natural or cultural heritage, including green infrastructure, landscape and the wider environment.

The proposal would not improve health and well-being by offering opportunities for social interaction and physical activity, including sport and recreation.

It is not evident that the proposal would support the digital connectivity to a rural area which does not presently benefit from such connectivity.

It can be concluded therefore that the development proposal is an unacceptable departure from the Strategic Development Plan and it is therefore deemed contrary to the Proposed Strategic Development Plan 2016.

Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2014

When the proposal is assessed against the relevant policies of the LDP and New Development Supplementary Guidance, the following conclusions can be made.

The application site is located in the green belt and is subject to assessment against Policy ENV1 'Green Belt'. Policy ENV 1 states that, amongst others, the green belt in Renfrewshire aims to identify appropriate locations to support planned growth, where required, as well as maintaining the identity of settlements and protecting and enhancing the landscape setting of an area. It states that appropriate development within the green belt will be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that it is compatible with the provisions of the New Development SG.

The New Development SG 'Delivering the Environment Strategy – Green Belt' considered that development within the green belt is appropriate in principle where it is for the purposes of or in support of a use which requires a green belt location including agriculture, forestry and recreational uses. The application proposal for residential development does not support one of these purposes and is not an acceptable form of development in the green belt.

The New Development SG 'Delivering the Environment Strategy – Housing in the Green Belt', sets out a number of criteria against which proposals for residential use in the green belt require to be assessed and considers that the majority of the criteria must be met. When the application proposal is assessed against these criteria the following conclusions can be made:

The development is required to maintain and support an established activity that is suitable in the green belt; The application proposal is not required to maintain or support an established activity that is suitable in the green belt.

It is demonstrated that there is a need for the residential use to be located out with the settlement; it has not been demonstrated that there is a need for the residential use to be located outwith a settlement.

The proposal demonstrates outstanding quality of design; The application is in principle only and it has not been demonstrated that the proposal will constitute outstanding quality of design.

The proposal integrates with, complements and enhances the established character of the area and has no significant impact on the landscape character - In this case the applicant has provided a Design and Access Statement (D&A) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in justification of development at this location. The LVIA states that the application site is located within the 'Rugged Upland Farmlands Character Type' where development should generally be of a small scale and well sited so as to maximise the natural screening and integration provided by topographical features and that new residential development should, wherever possible, be located within existing settlements. The character assessment states that large scale development is unlikely to be appropriate. In this regard, although the application is in principle, the indicative layout for the development suggests that the site could accommodate in the region of 80 houses which is not considered to be small scale in the context of the surrounding landscape and in relation to the existing settlement of Bridge of Weir. Although the indicative layout illustrates a development set within landscaped buffers, the site is on a prominent edge of the village with little containment on its boundaries which could be identified as an appropriate and defensible edge to the green belt, whereas the Gryffe Castle woodland currently presents a robust defensible boundary. It is not considered therefore that the proposal integrates with, complements or enhances the established character of the area but would have a significant adverse impact.

The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to the provisions of policy ENV 1.

Policy P2 'Housing Land Supply' states that the Council will maintain a 5 year supply of effective housing land at all times and prepare Supplementary Guidance including a framework to guide the release of additional housing land where a 5 year supply of effective housing land is not being maintained. It is accepted that there is a potential shortfall in the supply of effective housing land and the Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance was approved in 2015.

Policy P2 further states that the Council will grant planning permission in accordance with the detailed guidance provided that a number of criteria are met. When the application proposal is assessed against these criteria the following conclusions can be made.

The site is shown to be effective and can be delivered to address the identified shortfall - The applicant has submitted a representative site delivery timetable which claims that 30 units could be completed by the end of 2018, 60 units by end of 2019 and 80 units by end of 2020. This timetable would appear to be achievable and to demonstrate that the site can be delivered to address the identified potential shortfall.

It will not undermine the spatial strategy of the plan – With regard to the criteria of the Spatial Strategy, it has been demonstrated above that the proposed development will not contribute positively to the character and appearance of Bridge of Weir nor will it protect its setting or the natural environment. The proposal does not accord with the adopted LDP Spatial Strategy the focus of which is on the development of previously used sites, concentrating on existing built-up areas and key redevelopment sites, aiming to facilitate sustainable development and a low carbon economy. It is acknowledged that sites have been identified outwith Renfrewshire's urban areas but these have been of a scale which are able to be supported by existing infrastructure, services and facilities.

Its design would comply with the criteria for implementing the spatial strategy – The application is in principle only and therefore these details would require to be assessed through the submission of further planning applications.

It is concluded therefore that application proposal does not comply with Policy P2 - Housing Land Supply.

The Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance 2015 (HLSSG) provides a framework for

release of further housing land against which residential planning applications are to be assessed. The HLSSG sets out the circumstances within which the additional release of land for housing will be supported but demands that those sites meet the "main" and "other" considerations.

For the reasons set out earlier in this report, the proposals are not considered to satisfy the first three 'Main Considerations' set out in the HLSSG with reference to (1) Scottish Planning Policy - Sustainability and Placemaking Principles; (2) compliance with the Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan - Spatial Development Strategy, sustainable location assessment (Diagram 4) or Strategy Support Measure10; nor the adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan - including the Spatial Strategy, Policy P2 - Housing Land Supply of Policy ENV1 - Natural Heritage.

Similarly, the proposals are not considered to have satisfied all of the HLSSG 'Other Considerations' and in particular with reference to failing to create or be contained within robust defensible boundaries, setting a precedent for further expansion, by having a significant effect on the character and amenity of the surrounding area and the potential to impact on the prior provision of infrastructure required by existing housing land allocations which are either not yet consented or are committed.

It is concluded therefore that application proposal does not comply with the framework for release as required by the HLSSG.

The New Development Supplementary Guidance 2014, Places Development Criteria, sets out a number of criteria which new residential developments are required to meet. It considers that development proposals require to ensure that the layout, built form, design and materials of all new developments will be of a high quality; density will require to be in keeping with the density of surrounding areas; surrounding land uses should not have an adverse effect on the proposed residential development and that development proposals should create attractive and well connected street networks which will facilitate movement.

Although the indicative layout illustrates a development set within a degree of landscaping including landscaped edges to the north and south west on the boundaries to the green belt, there is no robust, well defined established defensible green belt edge and it is considered that to allow development in this location could encourage further encroachment into the designated green belt. Given that the application is in principle only, it is not possible to make an assessment in relation to density, design and materials other than that a development of a similar density to surrounding areas could be accommodated within the plot and design and materials could be reflective of the surrounding area.

Policy ENV 3 'Built Heritage' considers that the built heritage which includes listed buildings, should be safeguarded, conserved and enhanced where appropriate. It considers that development proposals within or in the vicinity of built heritage assets will be required to demonstrate that there is no negative impact to their site or setting in accordance with the provisions set out in the New Development SG. The New Development SG considers that amongst others, development proposals relating to listed buildings and their settings will require to meet a number of criteria in addition to Historic Environment Scotland's, 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment'. In this regard, due to the location of Gryffe Castle to the east of the application site separated from it by a dense tree belt of over 20 metres in width, it is not considered that development of the application site would impact unacceptably on the setting of the listed building, however, the character of the landscape on the approaches from the north west would be altered.

Policy I5, 'Flooding and Drainage' considers that new development must not have an impact on existing drainage infrastructure or increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and requires to be assessed against the New Development SG which sets out a number of criteria which require to be considered. These generally require minimum standards to reduce the risk of

flooding in new developments and to ensure that the risk of flooding is fully considered in the assessment of new development proposals.

In this regard, the Director of Community Resources has offered no objection to the proposal in principle and is satisfied that the DIA submitted in support of the proposal is sufficient at this stage to demonstrate that the site can be appropriately drained. The Director of Community Resources is satisfied that any issues arising from surface water flooding can be addressed through a detailed application.

In relation to the Infrastructure Development Criteria it has been generally demonstrated through the Traffic Assessment (TA) that appropriate access, parking and pedestrian arrangements could be achieved. The Director of Community Resources maintains that a number of conditions are necessary to ensure that the development can be accessed appropriately and to deal with detailed matters.

The SG on 'Contaminated Land' requires sufficient information to be submitted to establish whether contamination is present at an application site so that appropriate conditions can be attached to ensure that the necessary remediation action will be undertaken to prevent unacceptable risks to human health or the environment. In this regard the Director of Community Resources (Environmental Services) is satisfied that sufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that any potential contamination of the site can be adequately addressed.

With regard to the issues raised through objection and through the pre determination hearing which have not been dealt with in the above assessment, the following conclusions can be made. A large volume of objection relates to matters of the principle of the development, i.e. loss of green belt land and detailed matters which are not known at this time. The site has not been identified through the Adopted Local Development Plan 2014 as a housing site and, for the reasons already outlined, its release from the green belt would not comply with the Spatial Strategy of the plan. Further concerns extend across a number of detailed considerations including number and details of house types, access arrangements and parking. These specific details cannot be assessed through a PPIp application but would be assessed through the mechanism of further detailed applications.

With regard to issues raised in relation to educational capacity and other service provision, it is noted that the Director of Education has highlighted that the existing school provision within the area will require to be addressed.

With regard to wildlife on the site, a Habitat Survey was submitted in support of the application which sets out a series of conditions to ensure that ecological issues are adequately addressed.

The developer sets out a case to suggest that this site could be both deliverable and effective. However, greater weight should be given to the potential of the proposal site to set an undesirable precedent for further green belt development in the surrounding area as applications for development at Branscroft, Kilbarchan, Sandholes Road, Brookfield have been refused and residential development proposals at Whitelintgate, Bridge of Weir are under consideration.

Although planting is proposed it is considered that there would be no well-defined or defensible green belt boundary formed to replace that which already exists. The existing boundary formed by the woodland area provides a more robust settlement edge which should not be compromised or eroded. Development of this site is therefore unacceptable and would not comply with the Spatial Development Strategy of the Approved Strategic Development Plan 2012, Proposed Strategic Development Plan 2016 and Adopted Local Development Plan 2014. Nor does it represent an exception which can be justified through the Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance 2015.

Recommendation and reasons for decision

In light of the above assessment, it is concluded that notwithstanding the potential shortfall of an effective land supply, as set out in the Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance 2015, the supporting information submitted with the application and the justification provided for the development, it has not been demonstrated that this is an appropriate site for residential development, which would not impact unacceptably on the purposes of the green belt in this location and which can be developed with a defensible green belt boundary. The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary Policy ENV1 and associated New Development Supplementary Guidance. For these reasons it is considered that the proposal cannot satisfy the requirements of Policy P2 and the Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance 2015, as the residential development of this site would not comply with the Spatial Strategy of the LDP.

There is no justification for setting aside the policies of the SDP and LDP for a site which is in an unsustainable location and greater weight should be given to the development plan at both strategic and local levels. It is therefore recommended that this application be refused.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

Other Action

Conditions and Reasons

- 1 The proposal does not accord with the Spatial Development Strategy and related Spatial Frameworks of the approved Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan and Clydeplan's Strategic Development Plan Proposed Plan 2016 in terms of its location and development compatibility and therefore fails to support the Spatial Vision of the Plan.
- 2 The proposal is contrary to Policy ENV 1 of the Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan in that it would result in development within the designated Green Belt without appropriate justification and due to its location and scale would not be commensurate with the aims of maintaining the identity of settlements and protecting and enhancing the landscape setting of an area.
- 3 The proposal is contrary to the Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan New Development Supplementary Guidance - Delivering the Environment Strategy as it does not require a specific green belt location and does not maintain or support an established activity which is suitable in the green belt. The proposal would thereby introduce an inappropriate form of development into the Green Belt, result in an unacceptable erosion of the Green Belt and result in an adverse and detrimental impact on its character.

- 4 The proposal is contrary to Policy P2 of the Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan and the Housing Land Supply Supplementary Guidance 2015, and due to its scale and location, the proposed development would undermine the Spatial Strategy of the Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan. The proposal would thereby introduce an inappropriate form of development into the Green Belt, result in an unacceptable erosion of the Green Belt and result in an adverse and detrimental impact on its character.

Fraser Carlin
Head of Planning and Housing

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Background Papers
For further information or to inspect any letters of objection and other background papers, please contact David Bryce on extension 7892.



Renfrewshire
Council

16/0291/PP

Land to North East of Strathgryffe Crescent,
Gryffe Castle, Bridge of Weir



1:6,000

User: ptcameronr1

Date: 11/08/2016



Notes:
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