

Minute of Meeting Clyde Muirshiel Park Authority Joint Committee.

Date	Time	Venue
Friday, 04 September 2020	11:30	Remotely by MS Teams ,

Present

Councillor Tom Begg, Councillor Bill Binks, Councillor Andy Doig and Councillor Audrey Doig (all Renfrewshire Council); and Councillor Innes Nelson and Councillor David Wilson (both Inverclyde Council).

Chair

Councillor Audrey Doig, Chair, presided.

In Attendance

F Carswell, Interim Park Co-ordinator, F Carlin, Head of Planning & Housing Services (Lead Officer), A MacArthur, Head of Finance, S Jones, Assistant Regeneration Manager, M Ball, Principal Accountant (Management Accounting) and E Currie, Senior Committee Services Officer (all Renfrewshire Council); and M Ferris, Senior Manager and S Afzal, Auditor (both Audit Scotland).

Declarations of Interest

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

Additional Item

The Chair intimated that there was an additional item of business in relation to a Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Governance Update which had not been included in the notice calling the meeting. The Chair, being of the opinion that the item, which is dealt with at item 4 below, was urgent in view of the need to advise members of the position, authorised its consideration.

1 Minute

There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 19 June 2020.

DECIDED: That the Minute be approved.

2 Revenue Budget Monitoring

There was submitted a revenue budget monitoring report by the Treasurer in respect of the Joint Committee for the period 1 April to 24 July 2020.

The report intimated that gross expenditure was currently £83,000 underspent and income was currently £109,000 under recovered resulting in a net overspend of £26,000, which was projected to climb to £166,700 due to the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in the closure of the regional park at the end of March 2020. The outdoor spaces had now re-opened but the income generating activities remained closed except for a takeaway café service at Castle Semple which re-opened in July 2020.

At the Joint Committee meeting held on 19 June 2020 it had been agreed that only 50% of the reserves balance of £112,036, held as at 31 March 2020, could be utilised to meet the projected overspend and that any overspend above the value of £56,000 would require to be approved by the Joint Committee.

It was noted that at this stage in the financial year, the projected year-end overspend of £166,700 was above the agreed threshold and the total value of the current reserves balance. The projected outturn was based on no commercial income being generated in 2020/21.

It was currently anticipated that historic project balances would be released in the course of 2020/21 which would also be directed to address the in-year projected deficit. This might result in a position where total project balances, when added to the full general reserve balance of £112,036, would meet the current projected overspend. In this event, any residual reserve balance would require to be returned to requisitioning councils and the report proposed that, in this event, balances were returned in proportion to the requisition payments made in 2020/21.

The report further proposed that if the total of project balances and general reserves were insufficient to meet the actual deficit incurred that funding to address the remaining deficit be provided by requisitioning councils, again in proportion to the requisition payments made in 2020/21.

DECIDED:

(a) That the decisions of Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Councils to terminate the agreement governing the Joint Committee with effect from 1 April 2021 be noted; and

(b) That it be agreed that in winding up the Joint Committee, all available reserve and project balances be utilised to address the current year projected deficit, with any residual balance being distributed in proportion to the agreed requisition contributions for 2020/21. In the event that there were insufficient reserve balances to meet the actual deficit incurred, it be agreed that additional funding be provided by requisitioning councils in proportion to the requisition contributions in 2020/21 to address the shortfall.

3 Audited Annual Accounts 2019/20

Under reference to item 4 of the Minute of the meeting of this Joint Committee held on 19 June 2020, there was submitted a report by the Treasurer relative to the audited annual accounts 2019/20.

The report intimated that in accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 the audited accounts must be approved for signature by the Joint Committee no later than 30 September each year. This year, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, this date had been extended to 30 November 2020, however this was not required for the audited accounts of this Joint Committee.

Section 10 of the regulations required that the Joint Committee consider any report made by the appointed auditor before deciding whether to sign the audited accounts. The findings of the appointed auditor, Audit Scotland, formed Appendix 1 to the report. Details of three adjustments made to the accounts during the course of the audit were contained in the report.

It was noted that page 11 of the audited accounts made reference to a required signature by the Treasurer. This would be amended to make reference to a required signature by the Lead Officer.

Following approval, the audited accounts, which formed Appendix 2 to the report, would be signed by the Lead Officer, the Chair and the Treasurer by secure digital signature.

DECIDED:

(a) That the findings of the 2019/20 audit, as contained in Appendix 1 to the annual audit report, be noted; and

(b) That the audited accounts 2019/20 be approved for signature by the Lead Officer, Chair and Treasurer.

4 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Governance Update

The Lead Officer submitted a report updating the Joint Committee on the recent decisions by Renfrewshire Council and Inverclyde Council to terminate the Minute of Agreement and dissolve the Park Authority Joint Committee with effect from 31st March 2021.

The report intimated that Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Authority Joint Committee (Park Authority) was governed by a Minute of Agreement (MoA) which was most recently agreed by Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire Councils in 2004. On 17 February 2020, North Ayrshire Council gave notice of withdrawal from the MoA and following consideration by the remaining Councils it was concluded that the governance arrangements as they currently stood were disproportionate to the size and operation of activities within the Park and the most appropriate option was to terminate the MoA and for the Park Authority to be dissolved.

At meetings of Renfrewshire Council's Environment and Infrastructure Board held on 26 August 2020 and Inverclyde Council's Environment and Regeneration Committee held on 27 August 2020 it had been agreed that the MoA be terminated and that the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Joint Committee be dissolved from 31 March 2021.

Prior to the termination of the MoA, each Council would confirm their share of the liabilities and moveable assets of the Park Authority and thereafter, individual Councils would manage separately the financial arrangements for those services which were provided solely within their respective boundaries. Renfrewshire Council was the employing authority for park staff and any organisational development changes would be agreed in full consultation with partner organisations and staff.

Following the dissolution of the Joint Committee, each local authority would make investment and operational decisions separately regarding the parts of the Regional Park lying within their respective boundaries. These arrangements would not affect the designation of Clyde Muirshiel as a Regional Park or the Country Park designations for Muirshiel and Castle Semple. Each Council would also investigate partnership opportunities in relation to marketing and promoting the recreational and environmental education role of the Regional Park.

Liaison with Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire Councils would continue to ensure the protection and enhancement of the Regional Park's natural environment, while opportunities for ongoing community involvement in park activities would be encouraged. Opportunities to generate income by providing services under service level agreements would continue to be investigated to support the ongoing provision and development of activities within the Regional Park.

DECIDED: That the decisions of Renfrewshire Council and Inverclyde Council to terminate the Minute of Agreement and dissolve Clyde Muirshiel Park Authority Joint Committee with effect from 31 March 2021 be noted.

5 Date of Next Meeting

DECIDED: That it be noted that the next meeting of the Joint Committee would be held at 11.30 am on 11 December 2020.