

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

At a Special Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held by video conference on Thursday, 26 August 2021 at 1.00 p.m.

**Present:** Provost William Hendrie, Bailie Denis Agnew and Councillors Jim Bollan, Jim Brown\*, Gail Casey\*, Karen Conaghan, Ian Dickson, Diane Docherty, Jim Finn, Daniel Lennie, Caroline McAllister, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Iain McLaren, Marie McNair, John Millar, John Mooney\*, Lawrence O'Neill, Sally Page, Martin Rooney and Brian Walker.

\* Arrived later in the meeting

**Attending:** Joyce White, Chief Executive; Peter Hessett, Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration (Legal Officer); Stephen West, Chief Officer – Resources and Section 95 Officer; Peter Barry, Chief Officer – Housing & Employability; George Hawthorn, Manager – Democratic & Registration Services; Elaine Troup, Communities Manager and Christine McCaffary, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

**STATEMENT BY CHAIR**

The Provost advised that the meeting was being audio streamed and broadcast live to the internet and would be available for playback.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

It was noted that there were not declarations of interest in the item of business on this agenda.

**RECORDING OF VOTES**

The Council agreed that all votes taken during the meeting would be done by roll call vote to ensure an accurate record.

**REVIEW OF THE SCHEME OF ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing & Employability providing an update on the first phase of consultation on the Scheme of Establishment.

After discussion and having heard officers and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to consult further for a period of 16 weeks based on the findings and proposed boundary changes detailed in the Review of Scheme for Establishment for Community Councils: Stage 1 Consultation report;
- (2) to Community Council elections being delayed until after the 2022 local elections at a date to be set by the Returning Officer; and
- (3) to note the requirement to further amend the timetable for the remainder of the review process.

Note:- Councillors Brown, Casey and Mooney joined during discussion of the above item.

The meeting closed at 1.49 p.m.

DRAFT

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held by video conference on Thursday, 26 August 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

**Present:** Provost William Hendrie, Bailie Denis Agnew and Councillors Jim Bollan, Jim Brown, Gail Casey, Karen Conaghan, Ian Dickson, Diane Docherty, Jim Finn, Daniel Lennie, Caroline McAllister, Douglas McAllister\*, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Iain McLaren, Marie McNair, John Millar, John Mooney, Lawrence O'Neill, Sally Page, Martin Rooney and Brian Walker.

\* arrived later in the meeting

**Attending:** Joyce White, Chief Executive; Angela Wilson, Chief Officer – Supply, Distribution & Property; Peter Hessett, Chief Officer – Regulatory & Regeneration (Legal Officer); Stephen West, Chief Officer – Resources and Section 95 Officer; Victoria Rogers, Chief Officer – People & Technology; Peter Barry, Chief Officer – Housing & Employability; Malcolm Bennie, Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture & Facilities; Laura Mason, Chief Officer – Education; Sylvia Chatfield, Head of Mental Health, Learning Disability & Addictions; Michael McGuinness, Economic Development Manager; Gillian McNeilly, Finance Manager; George Hawthorn, Manager – Democratic & Registration Services and Christine McCaffary, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

**STATEMENT BY CHAIR**

The Provost advised that the meeting was being audio streamed and broadcast live to the internet and would be available for playback.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

**RECORDING OF VOTES**

The Council agreed that all votes taken during the meeting would be done by roll call vote to ensure an accurate record.

## MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 23 June 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

### OPEN FORUM

The Provost advised that the undernoted Open Forum questions had been received from Mr Graham Parton, Ms Susan Dick, and Mr Jim Thomson. He then invited each of them to put their questions to Council:-

#### **Question from Graham Parton – Land owned by Susan Dick**

Please could I have a note of the other areas of land Susan apparently rejected as unsuitable and to which were referred to in the last open forum response? We need these for our own records if nothing else.

She received no response to this when she asked directly to the Council after the last open forum meeting as you will be aware of course that WDC are refusing to meet or discuss with Susan or myself anything in regards to the field.

I'd like you to note that I, Graham Parton, am not the landowner so I cannot and did not give permission in writing or verbally for the Council or any contractors/contractors to be on Susan's land so if I could ask that your records be updated to reflect this fact and I'd like confirmation that this has been done.

Councillor McColl provided the following response:-

Thank you for your question. In answering I am assuming that the question relates to the response to the previous Open Forum question by Ms Dick in May. In response to that question Councillor McLaren advised that he understood that a number of sites were ruled out because they were unsuitable due to the requirements of Ms Dick's business. Ms Dick herself stated a request that she did not want to be told of the "offering of unsuitable land on a leased basis". It's understood that there is some reference to past discussions on possible sites. Clearly this establishes the fields of possible options because there is not a great supply of land within the parameters Ms Dick has set as acceptable. Now Ms Dick has, in her own questions, addressed the fact that she rejected Knowetop as unsuitable. That's also not in dispute. Councillor McLaren's previous answer in May addressed Sheepfold and also other land which could not be further identified due to commercial sensitivity and unfortunately that is still the case and I can't identify that here today. The position regarding the lack of your authority in respect of Ms Dick's land is noted. So we appreciate that, so thank you for the clarity and we can confirm that we will only communicate with Ms Dick directly and through her agents hence forth. So that will happen and the records will have been updated.

Mr Parton asked the following supplementary question:-

Basically, what was said at the last meeting was that Susan had rejected fields, and that was numerous fields. Susan's only rejected Knowetop Farm which was offered as a lease and not as a swap, a swap land and when we went there it was a rubble site so obviously it wasn't acceptable to us. So the question is why was he allowed to say that Susan had rejected all these fields when Susan hasn't been spoken to about the fields and when they spoke to the Council Officers who we were dealing with they said they had never offered us any field or talked to us about except the Knowetop and possibly Sheepfold. So we'd like to know what these other fields are because they might be acceptable to Susan. You don't know that, I don't know that, it's Susan who needs to see the fields surely.

Councillor McColl responded as follows:-

In answering that, Councillor McLaren would have given his answer in good faith based on the information he's given by our officers. What I will commit to doing Graham, I will speak to the officers involved in all of this and I will write to yourself and copy in Ms Dick with definitive answer.

Having heard Mr Parton, Councillor McColl confirmed that he would write directly to Ms Dick only.

### **Question from Susan Dick – Land at Milton**

I'd like to give a bit of background firstly.

My land is supposedly needed for the roads leading to Exxon development although not all of it will be developed this Council seems to want all of it from me - only half of it will actually be used.

WDC in 2017 arranged soil testing on Sheepfold as a check for equestrian suitability paid for or otherwise arranged a separate report as to suitability of it for horses and also mentioned in Council documents that it was suitable for myself and my horses and even mentioned that this showed how WDC were helping to come to an amicable solution and generally how great they were.

All of this info is readily available from your own archives and indeed was relayed to me as a response to an open forum question at that time, I'm sure some of you may remember it as indeed some of you, Councillor McLaren in particular as far as remember, read out the response to me in person at the meeting, if not yourself then it was Richard Cairns, many of you that will hear my question today will have been present.

I was allowed a site visit and given the test and suitability report documents.

Years went by and in that time [named officer] was appointed due to shall we say “difficulties” endured by myself at the hands of WDC staff – [named officer] was appointed to sort out the matter.

Sheepfold was again discussed from around August 2020 and another site visit arranged in March 2021. I was told by [named officer] of WDC in front of a witness (I cannot remember if this was on site or during the zoom call beforehand) that Sheepfold could in essence be mine in return for my land, I would have to give up my field right away and wait 2 yrs for access (note that I was not told 5 yrs). WDC would store my equipment, trailers and buildings, I would be paid for loss of use of my field for the 2 yrs and a plot could be found for the re burial of my 2 deceased ponies.

I when looking round the field queried where the road through it would go as I wanted to know how much of the 10 acre site would be left. [named officer] did not know anything of the road but later indicated that it would be at opposite end of field than I had last seen on maps. Maps were asked for by myself and promised to be sent/given. I asked about access points and about having access to prepare the area for horses and I asked about testing the land as testing for bark, leaves, grass and fruit as well as water really needed to be done.

I was waiting for updates on my queries and upon hearing nothing put in the open forum request you heard last time.

I was shocked to hear that I had apparently rejected Sheepfold when I had not as I was awaiting replies to my queries and also a few days after the open forum response I was only offered cash for my field when I felt we were talking about land swaps for not one but 2 fields. There is a private landowner involved in the other site and I will not drag them into this but myself and [named officer] of WDC were in discussions over 2 fields not just one.

My land agent of Galbraiths then spoke to [named officer] and they discussed a proposal similar to what was discussed with myself MARCH 2021 as apparently no offer was off the table and my land agent was to out forward a proposal items such as WDC paying for alternative grazing till Sheepfold was ready were discussed. He is now being rebuffed by WDC agents and told it is only cash on offer and it seemingly has an impending deadline to boot and an ominous “or else” feel about it.

Please explain to me why Sheepfold is not being discussed any more (do not tell me I rejected it when we all know that’s not true as nor did I reject the other bits of land you can’t provide information on) when so much bother had been gone to and time taken and subsequently seemingly wasted? Yes I was looking for early entry but I had not said no to this aspect and we were in very early discussions not to mention the bombshell of the wait time had just been dropped on me out of the blue. I wouldn’t like to think WDC were actually putting barriers in the way to make an

amicable solution not be possible.

I genuinely feel as if I have been at best misled over this and at worst actually lied to. I was led to believe a solution was being sought.

I categorically did not reject Sheepfold and had not given any answer on whether I would or wouldn't accept the wait for the 2 years (I was originally told 2 years so I'm not sure where the 5 years came from) nor the other many alternative sites you alluded to in the last response and which no one can give me details of as I have asked (only Knowetop Farm was rejected on horse welfare grounds as being too far away for equestrian safety).

It is very distressing to myself on top of all the other events that have occurred and which some are now the subject of 2 insurance claims to be suddenly offered cash, which with no land on offer makes my ponies future and indeed their very lives uncertain.

You know I need land for my ponies and you seemingly have land which could be suitable and could maybe bring this debacle to an end.

So please explain yourselves.

Councillor McColl provided the following response:-

It would seem there has some kind of serious miscommunication here because the information that I'm looking at here in front of me quite clearly states that our officers at the Council believe that the Sheepfold deal wasn't suitable for you because of the timescales. I respect that you have told me that that is not necessarily the case. You know accordingly if you do wish Sheepfold to be further considered, and what we'd suggest as a matter of urgency is that you instruct your agents to communicate that quite explicitly with the Council so there could be no misunderstanding. I would also say though that it has to be borne in mind that the provision of Sheepfold or, you know any other parcel of land, wouldn't be considered in addition to the value of your land as an alternative or with a balance of payment either way if it wasn't up to the same value. As I said the soonest way that all matters could be negotiated with all parties satisfaction is if things are conducted through you agents in line with appropriate commercial knowledge of practices. I appreciate that there has clearly been a miscommunication here because one side believes one thing and you obviously believe another and we need to get that resolved. I'm happy to help with that in any way offline and wouldn't want, as I said in the previous answer, to be negotiating this in a public forum, but I'll do what I can to help move things along. I would suggest that you get in touch with your agents and ask them to make that very, very clear to our officers.

Ms Dick asked the following supplementary question:-

Could I just say that I have been mentioning that to my agents and my agents have been trying their hardest to communicate that to Aaron who is the District Valuer and the response that Aaron has given back is that there is absolutely no land on offer now or in the future. He has communicated that so if he communicates that again is that something that can be addressed with help at your end because with a way out of this we can all be happy.

Councillor McColl responded as follows:-

Yes, absolutely. What I would say if you want to ask you agents, or if you are emailing them directly if you want to copy me in on that so I've got a copy of the correspondence and I'll be copied in on the responses as well and that way I can help keep things on track. I'm more than happy to do that, absolutely.

**Question from Jim Thomson – Land owned by Susan Dick**

I have been resident in Bowling for 27 years and, as planning convenor for the Community Council, am fully cognisant of the proposals in respect of the former Esso site and the potential economic benefits this will bring throughout the area.

What I fail to see however is any valid grounds for West Dunbartonshire Council's decision to retract the offer of the Sheepfold site to Susan Dick. As you will be aware, I have attended meetings where the offer of land, in principle, was put forward but no specific list of discarded sites within the area was ever given to her and WDC's failure to do so seems unjustifiable, given that some might have been suitable in terms of the ponies' welfare and Susan's business.

However when the offer of Sheepfold came forward that is the site which both she and her partner Graham felt would suit these requirements. While the site itself might not be ready for immediate use it would however in the interim give her somewhere to store her items and re-bury her ponies before the works begin: furthermore the fact that she asked [named officer] of WDC's Asset Team for maps and information on where gates would be etc, and that she and her partner attended a site visit, indicates that they had most certainly not discounted the site.

Sheepfold is undoubtedly a more valid solution than the cash you are proposing. As you will be aware, Susan has continuously emphasised that she does not want money for her site - what she instead wants, and needs, is land for her ponies to ensure their continued good health. Not only would this be the better option for her, it would also be a much more inexpensive option for the Council and therefore constitutes a more responsible use of taxpayer's money.

Could I therefore ask why Sheepfold, or indeed some other possible sites, cannot be back on the table for discussion? The Council's proposal to

instead just buy her site with no regard whatsoever for the inevitable and significant negative impact this would have on the wellbeing of the ponies, and the loss of a service much valued by the local community, is extremely inappropriate.

Councillor McColl provided the following response:-

I dealt with most of that, not answered, dealt with most of that in my answers to the previous questions that we had. Obviously we want to try and get the best possible solution which is an exchange of land here because that meets your needs and it meets our needs and gives us the site that we wanted to develop so hopefully we'll be in a better position when I come back to you on Monday and have some clarity on what the situation is and as I said I'm going to do what I can to try and help get a positive resolution for both sides of this, but I'll be in correspondence with you no later than Monday.

Mr Parton, Ms Dick and Mr Thomson left the meeting at this point.

### **GLASGOW CITY REGION CITY DEAL UPDATE**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Regulatory & Regeneration providing an update on progress with the implementation of the Glasgow City Region, City Deal.

After discussion and having heard officers in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the progress of the Glasgow City Region (GCR), and
- (2) to note progress of the Council's City Deal project for the Exxon site.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive on the above.

After discussion and having heard officers in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the information provided on COVID-19 in West Dunbartonshire since the update provided to the June 2021 Council; and
- (2) to note the information provided in relation to the additional support and advice that the Council was providing to communities and businesses across West Dunbartonshire to help alleviate the impact of COVID-19.

Note:- Councillor Douglas McAllister joined the meeting and Councillor Millar left the meeting during consideration of the above item,

## COMMITTEE TIMETABLE – OCTOBER 2021 TO JUNE 2022

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 23 June 2021, a report by the Chief Officer – Regulatory & Regeneration was re-submitted seeking approval of a committee timetable for the period October 2021 to June 2022.

Following discussion Councillor Douglas McAllister, seconded by Councillor McColl moved:-

- (1) that the following dates for October 2021 be agreed:-

Wednesday, 6 <sup>th</sup> October	9.30 am	Tendering Committee
Wednesday, 6 <sup>th</sup> October	10 am	Planning Committee
Wednesday, 20 <sup>th</sup> October	10 am	Licensing Committee
Thursday, 21 <sup>st</sup> October	9.30 am	Appeals Committee
Wednesday, 27 <sup>th</sup> October	10 am	West Dunbartonshire Council

- (2) that the report be continued to the September meeting of Council to consider and agree meeting dates beyond 27 October; and
- (3) that meetings of Council and its committees will be hybrid style meetings, commencing with the Council meeting 29 September 2021.

The motion was agreed by the Council.

### ADJOURNMENT

The Council agreed to adjourn the meeting for a period of 15 minutes.

The meeting reconvened at 5.05 p.m. with all those listed in the sederunt present, except for Councillor Millar.

### CLOTHING GRANTS AND SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR MUSIC TUITION AND CURRICULUM CHARGES

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on the recent changes to the minimum value of clothing grants for the academic year 2021/22 and funding allocated to fund music tuition and curriculum charges.

Councillor Conaghan, moved:-

Council agrees to implement a level Clothing Grant across all pupils and agrees to remove instrument hire charges. As noted in the report at page 128, "...there is sufficient funding available from within existing budgets and the additional Scottish Government funding..." to achieve this.

Councillor McNair asked if Councillor Conaghan would accept the following addendum to her motion:-

We welcome the increase in school clothing grants but are concerned about the difference in thresholds between those on Universal Credit and Tax Credits, and ask that officers bring a report back in the future that looks at this issue.

Councillor Conaghan confirmed her acceptance to the addendum and Councillor McNair then seconded the motion.

As an amendment, Councillor Rooney seconded by Councillor Mooney moved:-

This Council notes that Scottish Government austerity measures had forced some councils to cut musical training and to introduce charging. Fortunately, in West Dunbartonshire we have largely protected musical services in our schools despite the funding pressures but the additional funding will allow us to remove any historical charges.

The Council also notes that the previous Labour Administration doubled the school clothing grants for eligible pupils and is pleased to note that the Scottish Government is following our lead. However, we want to go further and align the primary school pupil school clothing rate with the secondary school rate so that all eligible pupils receive £150 each year and the top up payment of £30 is to be paid to eligible primary school pupils in advance of winter.

The Council therefore agrees Scenario 2 with the additional funding will come from the redistribution of the £835,000 of funding received from the Scottish Government and this will be built into future years budgets.

In addition, this Council agrees to double the School Clothing Grant from £150 to £300 and this means the Council will have to find another £727,000 between 2022 and 2027 to fund this initiative.

The aim will be to increase the clothing grant through a series of incremental changes, that we will double the school clothing grant over the next 6 years, so that we can provide a School Clothing Grant of £150 at the start of the School Year in August and that we will provide a second School Clothing Grant of £150 in January each year.

On a roll call vote being taken 10 Members voted for the amendment, namely Councillors Bolland, Casey, Lennie, Douglas McAllister, McBride, Mooney, O'Neill, Page, Rooney and Walker and 11 Members voted for the motion, namely Provost Hendrie, Bailie Agnew and Councillors Brown, Conaghan, Dickson, Docherty, Finn, Caroline McAllister, McColl, McLaren and McNair. The motion was declared carried.

## **LAW AND PRACTICE IN RELATION TO MARCHES AND ON EDUCATION TO ADDRESS SECTARIANISM AND RACISM**

A joint report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Regulatory & Regeneration and Chief Education Officer providing details of what education is offered within West Dunbartonshire schools on tackling racist and sectarian behaviour and outlining the law and practice on marches with particular regard to their routing.

Councillor Douglas McAllister, seconded by Councillor Conaghan moved:-

That consideration of the report be continued to a future meeting of Council, but not the September meeting, to allow time for responses from the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Justice to be received.

The Council agreed the motion.

## **GENERAL SERVICES BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT - PERIOD 4 TO 31 JULY 2021**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources advising on both the General Services revenue budget and the approved capital programme to 31 July 2021.

After discussion and having heard officers in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note that the revenue account showed a projected annual favourable variance of £0.022m (0.01% of the total budget), excluding any variance projected for COVID-19 which was expected to be fully funded by Scottish Government funding carried forward from 2020/21 and that to be received in-year 2021/22;
- (2) to note that the capital account showed that expenditure and resource use for 2021/22 was lower than budget by £10.001m (18.59% of budget), made up of £9.992m (18.58% of budget) relating to project slippage, and an in-year underspend of £0.009m; and
- (3) to note the position regarding the audit process and the reporting requirements thereof.

## **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 31 JULY 2021 (PERIOD 4)**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing & Employability providing an update on the financial performance to 31 July 2021 (Period 4) of the HRA revenue and capital budgets for 2021/22.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note that the revenue analysis showed a projected annual favourable variance of £0.002m; and
- (2) to note the net projected annual position in relation to the capital plan was highlighting an in-year variance of £1.499m, which was made up of slippage of £1.799m (3.72%) and overspend of £0.300m (0.62%) as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

### **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on treasury management during 2020/21.

Having heard the Finance Manager in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the information provided within the Annual Report as appended to the report; and
- (2) to note that the report would be referred to the Audit Committee for further scrutiny.

Note:- Councillors Conaghan and O'Neill left at this point in the meeting.

### **COMMUNITY PLANNING SUPPORT**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture & Facilities seeking approval to continue the arrangement for the support of Community Planning to be provided by Argyll & Bute Council.

Councillor McColl, seconded by Councillor Dickson moved:-

That Council agrees the recommendations in the report, subject to the Chief Officer obtaining confirmation from the Trade Union Conveners that they have no objections. If that's not the case then the report will be continued to the next meeting of Council.

As an amendment, Councillor Rooney seconded by Councillor Bollan moved:-

That Council agrees Option 2 as detailed in the report and retains the provision of support in West Dunbartonshire Council.

On a roll call vote being taken, 8 Members voted for the amendment, namely Councillors Bollan, Casey, Lennie, Douglas McAllister, McBride, Mooney, Rooney and Walker and 11 Members voted for the motion namely, Provost Hendrie, Bailie

Agnew and Councillors Brown, Dickson, Docherty, Finn, Caroline McAllister, McColl, McLaren, McNair and Page. The motion was declared carried.

## **NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

### **Motion by Councillor Ian Dickson – Wave 70/30 Campaign**

Councillor Dickson moved:-

Council supports the Wave Trust's 70/30 campaign to reduce child abuse, neglect and other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) by at least 70% by the year 2030.

Council asks officers to bring a report to a future meeting of this Council on how the ambitions of this campaign can best be achieved in West Dunbartonshire.

The Council agreed the motion.

### **Motion by Councillor Sally Page – Water Safety Policy and Lido on Loch Lomond**

Councillor Page moved:-

This Council agrees to write and adopt a Water Safety Policy.

This Council agrees to draft an initial proposal for a Lido on Loch Lomond in Balloch, to provide a supervised swimming area.

Councillor McColl asked if Councillor Page would accept the following addendum to her motion-

Add at the end,

The report should outline the potential benefits as well as potential risks and liabilities, along with comments from our partners in Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

Council also asks the Leader of the Council to write to Council Leaders in the Glasgow City Region and neighbouring authorities asking them to ensure they take every appropriate opportunity to educate their citizens who visit areas like West Dunbartonshire, on the dangers open water swimming.

The Council Leader is also asked to write to Scotrail and the British Transport Police to ask that they take steps to provide information and advice to travellers visiting Balloch and other tourist areas with open water.

Councillor Douglas McAllister asked if Councillor Page would accept the following addendum to her motion:-

Council agrees that we contact whoever is responsible for the multi-member working group, probably the relevant Scottish minister, and ask that we are allowed a representative on that group.

Councillor Page confirmed her acceptance of both addendums and the Council agreed the motion as amended.

### **Motion by Councillor David McBride – Estate Management**

Councillor McBride, seconded by Councillor Casey moved:-

Council continues to acknowledge the exceptional hard work of our staff during the Covid pandemic. For many, working practices, additional duties and priorities have altered the way they work as they serve and respond to the communities of West Dunbartonshire.

As restrictions ease the Council must continue its focus on recovery of all council services and this includes Housing Operations of Estate Management.

While the vast majority of tenants have continued to maintain their garden to high or acceptable levels, there has now been two summer growing seasons where for entirely practical reasons our housing estates have not had the regular inspections, individual tenant engagement and enforcement action to ensure gardens are maintained or clear of rubbish.

While some tenants may need the assistance of our Care of Garden scheme, others may lack the skills or equipment and may need to assistance and encouragement of Estate Officers to provide a helping hand to get started. However, there may also be some tenants who require greater encouragement and even enforcement action to ensure they comply with the tenancy agreement which they have signed up to and help ensure are housing estates are maintained to acceptable standards.

Council applauds the action taking by community groups including the newly formed Dumbarton West Community Action Group who arranged a special one off skip siting in conjunction with Greenspace and Waste Services to be deployed locally to allow local residents to clear some bulkier items stored in gardens. However further assistance maybe required to clear the estates further

Council acknowledges there is a backlog of outstanding actions required to address the outstanding works and to tackle any complaints from local tenants. To ensure our tenants do not suffer a third summer growing season in a row of unacceptable standards a rigorous action plan needs to be developed now and implemented during between now and next spring.

Council therefore requests the Chief Executive brings a report to the next Council meeting including options for elected member consideration so that any necessary works can be progressed as a matter of urgency. This report should identify costs, funding options including reserves and include but not restricted to:-

Audit of all or estates to gather the full extent of the problem that exists.

Analysis of action required e.g. assistance, additional waste collections, Care of Garden Scheme or enforcement action.

A breakdown of additional resources required, e.g. staff overtime, additional staff recruitment relaxing the criteria of the Care of Garden Scheme.

Temporary waiver of fees for Special Uplifts & Care of Garden Scheme. Consideration of skips being supplied to encourage tenants to clear gardens of larger household items, similar to the successful community action in Dumbarton West.

Audit of common areas within estates to ensure we are maintaining these to acceptable levels.

Council believes this report should be compiled in consultation with the WDTR0 and seek their views on what measures and funding would be acceptable and welcome by them.

This Council must ensure that by next summer our estates are again well maintained and a pleasant environment for our tenants and residents.

Councillor McColl asked if the report could come back to the October meeting of Council to allow sufficient time to consult with WDTR0. Councillor McBride agreed to some flexibility with the timing, but asked that officers try to submit the report to the September meeting if possible.

The Council agreed the motion.

### **Motion by Councillor John Millar – Nuisance Gulls**

On behalf of Councillor Millar, Councillor Rooney moved:-

This Council recognises the nuisance that gulls cause during the breeding season when they swoop on people and animals when attempting to protect their young.

The Council introduced a service in 2014 for gulls nesting on domestic properties. The service relies on homeowners contacting the Council to remove nests and eggs from rooftops at the start of the breeding season.

Council is concerned that the gull population seems to be increasing and if accurate then this could lead to increases in increase nuisance.

Council calls on the Chief Executive to write to the Scottish Government to establish whether there is anything that can be done in partnership with local Councils to manage the number of gulls and reduce their impact on our communities. This Council also agrees to promote the service in advance of next year's breeding season.

Councillor McLaren asked if Councillor Rooney would accept the following addendum to the motion:-

Add at end,

Council is concerned that there has been a sharp decline in natural-nesting gull populations since 1969 (as reported by the Seabird Monitoring Programme in 2019) and that many species, including the herring gull, are currently on the red list of Birds of Conservation Concern. Council notes that it is illegal to cull these birds, and that council policy on how and when nests may be removed from roofs is already in line with nationwide legislation.

Council requests that after the current Seabirds Census (2015-2021) is published a briefing will be arranged for Elected Members to present and discuss its findings.

Councillor Rooney confirmed his acceptance, and the Council agreed the motion with addendum.

### **Motion by Councillor Martin Rooney – Avoidable Drug Deaths in West Dunbartonshire**

Councillor Rooney, seconded by Councillor Casey moved:-

Council notes that Scotland has now had the highest drug deaths rate in Europe for 7 years in a row. In West Dunbartonshire the number of deaths reduced from 32 in 2019 to 29 in 2020. However, this was still the second highest rate ever in Scotland.

This Council agrees that people with addictions have been badly let down by the Scottish Government and its agencies and calls on the Chief Executive to bring forward a report to a future Council meeting setting out the scale of the challenges and the initiatives that are in place to reduce avoidable drug deaths in West Dunbartonshire.

As an amendment, Bailie Agnew seconded by Councillor McNair moved:-

The Scottish Government has accepted responsibility for its part in failing to tackle the problem, and in December 2020 appointed Angela Constance MSP to a newly created Minister of Drugs Policy post.

Since then commitments have been made to spend a quarter of a billion pounds addressing the emergency over the next 5 years, with the immediate priority being getting more people into treatment; and £100 million will go towards improving and increasing the provision of residential rehabilitation while £4 million is being spent on the implementation of Medication Assisted Treatment standards.

Council calls on elected representatives across Parliaments and Councils to work together to address the drugs emergency in Scotland and across the UK.

Council ask the HSCP Chief Officer to bring a report to a future Council meeting setting out the scale of the challenges and the initiatives that are in place to reduce avoidable drug deaths in West Dunbartonshire.

On a roll call vote being taken 8 Members voted for the amendment, namely Provost Hendrie, Bailie Agnew and Councillors Dickson, Docherty, Finn, McColl, McLaren and McNair and 8 Members for the motion, namely Councillors Casey, Lennie, Douglas McAllister, McBride, Mooney, Page, Rooney and Walker, with one Member abstaining, namely Councillor Bollan.

There being an equality of votes, Provost Hendrie, Chair, used his casting vote in favour of the amendment which was accordingly declared carried.

Note:- Due to technical difficulties Councillor Caroline McAllister left the meeting during discussion of the above item and before the roll call vote was taken.

### **Motion by Councillor Martin Rooney – Mental Health Services in West Dunbartonshire**

Councillor Rooney moved:-

This Council is concerned with the increase in mental health issues as a result of COVID-19 and the public health emergency.

There are reports of services not being able to cope with the demand and delays in and the ability of public services and partners to meet the demand.

There are significant concerns about whether we have the skills or capacity to deal with people with mental health issues.

Council agrees that a report should come to a future meeting setting out the details of the mental health issues and our capacity to respond effectively to these.

Bailie Agnew asked if Councillor Rooney would amend the third paragraph of the motion to read:-

Council has significant concerns about whether we have adequate capacity to deal with the current caseload and how COVID-19 may impact the HSCP's ability to recruit.

Councillor Rooney confirmed his acceptance to the rewording of the paragraph and the Council agreed the motion, as amended.

Note: Councillor Caroline McAllister re-joined the meeting during consideration of the above item.

The meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.

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**AUDIT COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of the Audit Committee held by video conferencing on Wednesday, 16 June 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

**Present:** Councillors Jim Brown, Karen Conaghan, Jonathan McColl, John Mooney, Martin Rooney and Lay Member Mr Christopher Johnstone\*.

**Attending:** Joyce White, Chief Executive; Jo Gibson, Head of Community Health & Care Services, West Dunbartonshire Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP)\*; Stephen West, Chief Officer – Resources; Angela Wilson, Chief Officer – Supply, Distribution & Property; Malcolm Bennie, Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture & Facilities; Andi Priestman, Shared Service Manager – Audit and Fraud; Gillian McNeilly, Finance Manager; Fiona Taylor, Senior Nurse; and Gabriella Gonda, Committee Officer.

**Also Attending:** Mr Christopher Gardner and Ms Zahrah Mahmood, Audit Scotland.

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Daniel Lennie, John Millar, Brian Walker and Lay Member Mr Christopher Todd.

\* Arrived later in the meeting

**Councillor John Mooney in the Chair**

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of Meeting of the Audit Committee held on 10 March 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

**OPEN FORUM**

The Committee noted that no open forum questions had been submitted by members of the public.

## **PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2020/21 TO 2030/31 AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021/22 TO 2030/31**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing Members with the opportunity to further scrutinise the Prudential Indicators for 2020/21 to 2023/24 and the Treasury Management Strategy (including the Investment Strategy) for 2021/22 to 2023/24 and indicative indicators for the period 2030/31.

After discussion and having heard the Finance Manager in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee noted that Council:-

- (1) agreed the following Prudential Indicators and Limits discussed in Appendix 1 to the report and set out within Appendix 6 to the report for the period 2020/21 to 2023/24.
  - Capital Expenditure and Capital Financing Requirements (Tables A and B); and
  - Forecast and estimates of the ratio of financing costs to Net Revenue Stream (Table D).
- (2) approved the policy for loans fund advances discussed in Appendix 1 to the report in section 3;
- (3) approved the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22 to 2023/24 (including the Investment Strategy) contained within Appendices 2 to 6 to the report;
- (4) agreed the following Treasury Prudential Indicators and Limits discussed in Appendix 2 to the report and set out within Appendix 6 to the report for the period 2021/22 to 2023/24:
  - Operational Boundaries (Table F);
  - Authorised Limits (Table G);
  - Counterparty Limits (Table J); and
  - Treasury Management Limits on Activity (Table L);
- (5) noted the draft Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators for the period 2024/25 to 2030/31 discussed in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report and set out within Appendix 6 to the report;
- (6) approved the statement by the Section 95 Officer regarding the gross debt level in comparison to the Capital Financing Requirement (Appendix 2 to the report – Point 2.3);

Note: Lay Member Mr Christopher Johnstone left the meeting after this item.

### **INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2020/21 – PROGRESS TO 19 MAY 2021**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources advising Members of:-

- (a) progress at 19 May 2021 against the Audit Plan for 2020/21;
- (b) recently issued Internal Audit reports and action plans; and
- (c) the status of implementation progress relating to action plans from previously issued Internal Audit reports.

After discussion and having heard the Shared Service Manager – Audit and Fraud in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

### **INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2021**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources advising of:-

- (a) the work undertaken by Internal Audit in respect of the Annual Audit Plan 2020/21; and
- (b) the contents of the Assurance Statement given to Members of West Dunbartonshire Council, the Chief Executive and the Section 95 Officer (Chief Officer – Resources) in support of the Annual Governance Statement, and outlining how audit assurances are obtained.

After discussion and having heard the Shared Service Manager – Audit and Fraud in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

### **AUDIT SCOTLAND LETTER: WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL – INTERIM AUDIT TESTING 2020/21 – JUNE 2021**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources advising Members of the 2020/21 mid-year report which has been received regarding Key Internal Controls, from our external auditors – Audit Scotland – and providing information as to management actions implemented following receipt of this report.

After discussion and having heard Mr Christopher Gardner and Ms Zahrah Mahmood from Audit Scotland in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the report and the agreed management actions.

## **ANNUAL REPORT ON THE AUDIT COMMITTEE - 2020/21**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an Annual Report on the Audit Committee for 2020/21.

After discussion and having heard the Shared Service Manager – Audit and Fraud in further explanation of the report the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to review and endorse the Chair's Annual Report on the Audit Committee for 2020/21; and
- (2) that the report would be presented to a future meeting of the Council.

## **AUDIT SCOTLAND – COVID-19 GUIDE FOR AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEES**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on sub-group activity in relation to the Audit Scotland COVID-19 Guide for Audit and Risk Committees.

After discussion and having heard the Shared Service Manager – Audit and Fraud in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the work of the sub-group in establishing the Council's position against the COVID-19 Guide for Audit and Risk Committees and that this report would be circulated to all Elected Members of the Council and to Lay Members.

## **CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020-21**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources advising on the outcome of the annual self-evaluation undertaken of the Council's compliance with its Code of Good Governance and inviting Committee to consider the Annual Governance Statement that will be published in the Council's Abstract of Accounts.

After discussion and having heard the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the outcome of the recent self-evaluation process in considering how the Council currently meets the agreed Code of Good Governance together with the issues identified and improvement actions; and
- (2) to consider the detail of the Annual Governance Statement and approve the actions identified by management to improve the internal control environment.

## **ACCOUNTS COMMISSION REPORT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SCOTLAND OVERVIEW 2021**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing information on a national audit report, for information and consideration, which has been received from the Accounts Commission.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Resources in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the content of the report and the report's key messages as detailed at para 4.1 to the report.

The meeting closed at 11.46 a.m.



**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by the Chief Social Work Officer****Council: 29 September 2021**

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**Subject: Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2020-21****1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide the Council with the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) Annual Report for 2020-21 (Appendix 1) which provides information on the statutory work undertaken on the Council's behalf, including a summary of governance arrangements, service delivery, resources and workforce.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** The Council is asked to note the content of the Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2020-21 and approve its submission to the Office of the Chief Social Work Advisor to the Scottish Government.

**3. Background**

- 3.1** The requirement for each Council to have a Chief Social Work Officer was initially set out in section 3 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and is also contained within section 45 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994.
- 3.2** The role of the CSWO is to provide professional guidance, leadership and accountability for the delivery of social work and social care services – both those provided directly by the HSCP and also those commissioned or purchased from other providers.
- 3.3** The CSWO Annual Report has been prepared in line with national guidance: 'The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer' (Scottish Government: 2016). This report also fulfils the statutory requirement for each CSWO to produce an annual report on the activities and performance of social work services within the local area.
- 3.4** Following approval, the annual report will be provided to the Chief Social Work Advisor to the Scottish Government and will be posted on the Council and HSCP websites.

#### **4. Main Issues**

- 4.1** Each CSWO produces an annual report based on a template agreed with the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser, however once again this year, given the workload implications caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, an amended template has been provided. This ensures local reporting arrangements continue whilst having due regard to current pressures being experienced across the sector.
- 4.2** The Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser will use completed reports to prepare a national overview later in the year.
- 4.3** The report for 2020-21, understandably, makes significant reference to the work of teams across Children & Families, Adults and Justice services in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The adaptability of staff, managers and users of services has been paramount to the continued provision of social work services in local communities.
- 4.4** Enhanced oversight arrangements, public protection activity and information pertaining to demand, performance and achievements is balanced by recognition of the challenges faced by services during 2020-21.
- 4.5** The report notes that the programme of national inspection activity was largely paused due to the pandemic, however refers to this recommencing more recently, particularly the joint inspection of adult support and protection.
- 4.6** Recruitment to a range of posts across services continued, reflecting both the continued commitment to practice and performance improvement within a shift for much activity to remote means. As a profession based on building relationships to engage with and support individuals, families and carers towards better outcomes, this enabled vital social work services to continue during the pandemic but has similarly presented challenges where relational practice is pivotal to comprehensive, rights-focussed assessment and interventions.
- 4.7** In line with Scottish Government, professional and public health guidance, services have continued to adapt to lockdown, the relaxation of restrictions and the impact of these increasing once again during the past year. The focus on the most vulnerable in our communities, however, has remained constant and the learning from the many challenges of the past year is already informing opportunities for service development, adaptation and change during 2021-22. As such, priorities for service delivery, support to staff and managers and details of recovery planning are included.

## **5. People Implications**

- 5.1** The CSWO Annual Report refers to workforce planning and development which recognises activity to support staff compliance with professional registration as well as recruitment and retention activity.
- 5.2** Furthermore, the report highlights the range of staff wellbeing supports that have been provided during 2020-21 and the continued importance of staff wellbeing as a priority to support the workforce.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

- 6.1** There are no financial or procurement implications arising from the CSWO annual report, however the report highlights the financial implications upon the HSCP budget and the importance of spend that is compliant with procurement arrangements.
- 6.2** Budgetary oversight of services provided by the HSCP continues to be provided by the HSCP Board and senior officers continue to address these issues to meet statutory duties; the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will undoubtedly continue to shape the budgetary and financial arrangements for HSCP services during 2021-22 and beyond.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** Provision of statutory social work services requires appropriately qualified and skilled staff; analysis of activity and future demand is intended to inform future service planning to continue to meet statutory duties.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1** There is no equalities impact as the report does not recommend a change to existing policy, function or strategy.

## **9. Environmental Sustainability**

- 9.1** There are no implications for environmental sustainability.

## **10. Consultation**

- 10.1** The CSWO Annual Report has been informed by information provided by managers across the HSCP; members of the HSCP Senior Management Team have also been consulted on the report content.

## **11. Strategic Assessment**

- 11.1** Analysis of activity, resources and performance within the CSWO Annual Report provide assurance that the planning and delivery of social work services in West Dunbartonshire continue to reflect statutory requirements.
- 11.2** The report also demonstrates how services support the Council's strategic priorities and the HSCP Strategic Plan, working with local residents and communities to improve lives.
- 11.3** The strategic direction of services will undoubtedly continue to reflect the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic during 2021-22 and shape how services are prioritised and designed to meet the needs of our communities in West Dunbartonshire.

**Jonathan Hinds**  
**Head of Children's Health, Care and Justice**  
**Chief Social Work Officer**  
**4 August 2021**

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**Person to Contact:** Sylvia Chatfield, Interim Chief Social Work Officer, Head of Mental Health, Learning Disabilities & Addictions; tel: 01389 738234; [sylvia.chatfield@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:sylvia.chatfield@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

**Appendices:** Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2020-21

**Background Papers:** None

**Wards Affected:** All

# **West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership**

## **Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report**

**2020-21**

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## **1. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **Role of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO)**

The requirement for each Council to have a Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) was initially set out in Section 3 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and further supported by Section 45 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994.

The role of the CSWO is to provide professional governance, leadership and accountability for the delivery of social work and social care services, not only those provided directly by the HSCP but also those commissioned or purchased from the voluntary and private sector. Social work services are delivered within a framework of statutory duties and powers and are required to meet national standards and provide best value.

West Dunbartonshire Council has resolved that the Chief Social Work Officer role is held by the Head of Children's Health, Care and Justice.

The Chief Social Work Officer is a 'proper officer' of the Council in relation to social work functions and is a member of the Senior Management Team within the HSCP and a non-voting member of the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Board.

### **Covid-19**

At the time of writing last year's CSWO annual report, a UK-wide lockdown had only recently been implemented. As we all faced the unknown impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic, social work was one of the priority professional groups designated as an essential workforce. This reflects the critical role of social work, as reflected in legislation and statutory duties. By its very nature, the social work profession has always adapted to meet local and national demands, priorities and the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities and this was never more apparent than during the past year.

At its meeting of 25 March 2020, HSCP Board members approved the suspension of normal governance arrangements during the Covid-19 pandemic and accepted alternative Board meeting arrangements. The Board approved delegation of authority to the Chief Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the HSCP Board and the Chief Financial Officer, to be enacted "if required", to meet immediate operational demand on decisions normally requiring Board approval. The Chief Officer and the Chief Financial Officer have continued to meet weekly with the Chair and Vice Chair of the HSCP Board to provide an opportunity for scrutiny of the delegated responsibilities. The frequency of Board meetings also increased to provide appropriate oversight of key issues and allocation of additional Scottish Government funds to support changes to service provision.

Throughout this annual report, information on services, performance and delivery continually refers to the pandemic and how individual teams and services responded and adapted to its impact. A number of significant actions have taken place over the past year to ensure services to children, young people, families and adults continued to be provided in the context of the pandemic. It is to the credit of the entire social work and social care workforce that these vital services in West Dunbartonshire continued and is testament to the dedication, commitment and individual strength of each social worker, social care worker and manager.

As the scale and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded on a daily basis from March 2020, services moved rapidly to reflect guidance from Public Health Scotland and legislative changes within the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020. Actions were focussed on ensuring provision of essential services, within the context of protecting staff, service users and our wider communities.

Sections 16 and 17 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 allowed local authorities to dispense with specific social care assessment duties for children, adults and carers to enable a response to urgent care needs without undue delay. Locally, social work services did not require to use these powers and this is reflected in continued survey responses to Scottish Government to monitor the extent to which these powers have been used.

Throughout the past year the key focus for service planning and delivery has remained on those individuals and families at risk and this model of prioritisation continues to be kept under ongoing review by operational managers.

Prioritising services during the pandemic continued to be at the core of work to respond to the pandemic, focussed on:

- Child protection (including ensuring pathways for new referrals from agencies and continuing to see and support children at greatest risk, including those on the child protection register);
- Adult support and protection (including pathways for referrals, methodology to progress investigations and provide robust decision-making);
- Justice social work (prioritising supervision of those deemed to require a higher level of supervision and support, suspension of unpaid work and new opportunities to address this as well as the impact of periods of closure of Dumbarton Sheriff Court for routine business).

Social work services moved quickly to a largely remote model of working, with some core work continuing in premises primarily focussed on duty services for child protection, justice and adult services (where a joint hub for all adult services was implemented). This model reflected the moves of the wider Council to protect staff by supporting home working wherever possible and to limit the need for staff to travel to work or enter buildings where alternative, home-based working allowed. Alongside this, a significant move to virtual and digital working included meetings taking place by teleconference and using a range of online meeting platforms including Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

The following summarises a number of key developments over the past year, many of which are explored in greater detail later in the report. This is by no means exhaustive but highlights the wide-ranging, dynamic and pivotal activity by social work and social care teams, as well as key partners, in ensuring services continued to be provided, within an adaptive model:

- Joint work to maintain contact with the most vulnerable children and families between social work, education and health teams;
- Provision of a personal protective equipment (PPE) store for HSCP, Council and third sector organisations;
- A combined duty team for all adult services, ensuring consistent overview of concern referrals, including adult support and protection;
- Comprehensive local guidance written and implemented across teams, regularly reviewed and updated, as national guidance including from Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland, was issued and amended;
- Daily care home meetings to review access to PPE, infection rates, clinical and care requirements of residents, staffing needs etc.;
- Redeployment of a number of social care and administrative staff from HSCP teams to the Council's Humanitarian Assistance Centre to support children and adults who were shielding, vulnerable or at risk;
- Daily reports on staffing capacity, absence, PPE needs etc. to assist service planning and redeployment as required;
- Weekly contact and 'eyes on' children whose names were on the child protection register;

- A comprehensive resource tracker across all services to direct budgets, supplies etc. to areas of increased demand or vulnerability;
- Business continuity plans and service prioritisation models, particularly in the early weeks and months of the pandemic, to plan for the impact of staff absence and other critical events;
- Working with key partners to support their reduced operating models including Scottish Court Service and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration including virtual and blended children's hearings (combining in-person and digital means);
- Workforce models for children's houses and residential care homes for adults;
- Managers' database for high risk offenders including an agreed communications protocol with partners;
- Planning with Scottish Prison Service for early release from prison of eligible individuals to manage the impact of Covid-19 in custodial settings;
- Weekly data returns to the national Covid-19 dataset to monitor and manage public protection activity and continued service provision across children, adults and justice services;
- Additional support and remote assistance to care-experienced young people including provision of digital devices to address social isolation, digital exclusion and support access to education;
- Continued planning for Brexit including impact on staff, children and young people from the EU;
- Recovery plans as services adapted to the pandemic and prepared for services to scale up towards established provision and practice (and scaling these back as infection rates entered a second and third wave).

## Population Profile

In 2020, the population of West Dunbartonshire was 88,340 (National Records for Scotland, 2021). This is a decrease of 0.7% from 88,930 in 2019. Over the same period, the population of Scotland remained almost the same with only an increase of 0.05%. The population of West Dunbartonshire accounts for 1.6% of the total population of Scotland.

The number of births in West Dunbartonshire in 2020 was 771 which, in common with a number of other Scottish local authorities, was much lower than the figures of 845 in 2019. In West Dunbartonshire, 18% of the population are aged 0-15, slightly higher than Scotland (17%), and 9.7% of the population are aged 16-24, which is smaller than Scotland (10.4%). In terms of overall size, the 45 to 64 age group remains the largest age in 2020, with a population of 25, 6646 (29%).

People aged 65 and over make up 19% of West Dunbartonshire's population, which is similar to Scottish population. Currently West Dunbartonshire ranks the third most deprived area in Scotland (equal with North Ayrshire) with 40% of data zones being among the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland. Only Inverclyde (45%) and Glasgow City (44%) have higher deprivation (Scottish Government, 2020<sup>1</sup>).

## Partnership Arrangements

The Chief Social Work Officer participates in a range of groups and forums to ensure the proper delivery of social work functions. These include the 'Nurtured' and 'Safer' Delivery & Improvement Groups (DIGs) which lead on the relevant strategic priorities of West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership as well as the Public Protection Chief Officer Group, the HSCP Board, HSCP Audit & Performance Committee and the Senior Management Clinical & Care Governance group. These arrangements support work with a range of key partners including the Council, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, third sector, Police and Scottish Children's Reporter Administration to ensure that services are developed and provided across West Dunbartonshire that reflect local strategic priorities.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-index-multiple-deprivation-2020/pages/5/>

As part of its ongoing activity during 2020-21, the Nurtured Delivery and Improvement Group published the integrated children's services plan for 2021-23, with the strategic outcomes themed around the SHANARRI outcomes for children and young people (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included).

### **Clinical and Care Governance**

The HSCP Clinical and Care Governance group has a responsibility to provide scrutiny and oversight across health, care and social work services in West Dunbartonshire. The group meets quarterly to ensure that services provide quality, effectiveness and efficiency to meet the needs of local residents and communities, as well as evidencing good practice around professional standards, risk management, staff learning and development.

The Clinical and Care Governance group comprises the HSCP Chief Officer, Heads of Service, Chief Social Work Officer, Chief Nurse and is chaired by a Clinical Director; the group also reviews progress around quality assurance improvement plans arising from inspections.

Self-evaluation and improvement activity is regularly reported in addition to compliance with statutory and mandatory training for staff across the HSCP. Furthermore, the group is a key part of the partnership governance arrangements for initial and significant case reviews and significant clinical incidents. The Clinical and Care Governance Group will publish their annual report later in 2021.

### **Public Protection Chief Officers Group (PPCOG)**

West Dunbartonshire's multi-agency Public Protection Chief Officers Group (PPCOG) is responsible for the strategic co-ordination of public protection services in West Dunbartonshire and is chaired by the Council Chief Executive. Core membership also includes the Chief Nurse: Public Protection (NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde), the Divisional Commander (Police Scotland) and the Chief Officer (HSCP). The Chief Social Work Officer, the Council's Chief Education Officer and the Locality Reporter Manager (Scottish Children's Reporter Administration) also attend the PPCOG. The group scrutinises the strategic direction and performance of services for child protection, adult protection, multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) for the management of high risk offenders, violence against women and the Alcohol & Drugs Partnership.

The PPCOG regularly reviews the purpose and function of the group in terms of assurance and governance. During 2020-21, the PPCOG met more frequently, to ensure senior oversight of public protection arrangements during the Covid-19 pandemic. As part of this, the strategic risk register for the PPCOG was regularly updated by group members to provide focus on risks being managed by them in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic within a multi-agency approach to risk management. This continues to be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure that senior officers have appropriate oversight of actions and resources required to mitigate risks here and includes risks beyond those specifically related to the impact of Covid-19 on public protection.

The Performance and Assurance Reporting Framework (PARF) provided PPCOG members with a quarterly report on performance against targets for child protection, high risk offenders, adults at risk and vulnerable adults. Work is currently ongoing to refresh the report to fully reflect the national minimum data set for child protection.

### **Chief Social Work Officer Oversight**

In addition to the above arrangements, the CSWO has maintained oversight of social work practice and performance by a range of means, including:

- Meetings with managers for children's and justice services;
- Social work governance meetings with operational managers for adult social work services and the Heads of Service for Health & Community Care and Mental Health, Learning Disabilities & Addictions;
- Regular meetings with the lead officer (child protection) and independent joint Chair of the Adult Protection Committee and Child Protection Committee;
- HSCP Senior Management meetings including the HSCP Chief Officer, operational Heads of Service, Head of HR, Chief Nurse and Chief Finance Officer;
- Extended Management Team meetings (including managers across all HSCP services).

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, these groups met more frequently, with daily touch-down meetings for senior officers and managers as services responded to the pandemic, to maintain close oversight to support services.

The national CSWO Committee moved to weekly meetings during the pandemic, providing an important forum to consider key policy changes, the impact of Covid-19 on social work practice and a professional response to national recovery planning.

The impact of the pandemic on social work services was the subject of a report in December 2020 by the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) with Social Work Scotland which looked at the professional response by CSWOs. In addition, Social Work Scotland published a CSWO annual survey in March 2021, providing an important national oversight of the experience of CSWOs. These reports noted the significant increased demand on CSWOs, particularly in response to the pandemic and 'the need for this role to be more strongly resourced, recognised and supported at local and national levels'.

A range of management information has continued to be provided to the CSWO and operational managers to inform service planning. This includes:

- Quarterly performance and review data for child protection, adult protection and MAPPA (also reported to the Public Protection Chief Officers Group);
- Monthly management information report for children's and justice services (including service demand, initial response, case allocations and performance against key performance indicators) – this report is also shared with the HSCP Chief Officer and Council Chief Executive;
- Registered practitioners subject to performance improvement plans or other formal measures including referral to the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC);
- Professional practice discussion as part of quarterly meetings with the link inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

## **2. SERVICE QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE**

The role of CSWO includes responsibility for ensuring that the social services workforce practices within the standards and codes of practice as set out by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

During 2020-21, the CSWO, HSCP Chief Officer and other Heads of Service continued to engage positively with the link inspector and other colleagues from the Care Inspectorate, where service performance, strategic planning and inspection activity were reviewed. In addition to quarterly meetings with Care Inspectorate colleagues, operational Heads of Service met fortnightly with the link inspector during 2020-21 to provide updates on service responses to the pandemic, review any notable developments in services including initial and significant case review activity and to discuss any national learning that could support continued service development. This close communication continues to support a focus on service quality within robust arrangements for governance and accountability.

## Care Inspectorate Inspections

The Care Inspectorate provided notice in early 2020 that West Dunbartonshire adult support and protection services would be inspected within a joint model of inspection with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Healthcare Improvement Scotland, however this activity was suspended as a result of the pandemic. This inspection activity will, however, recommence during 2021, as part of scrutiny and assurance across 13 Police Scotland Divisional areas and concern hubs that align to these boundaries.

One service was inspected in West Dunbartonshire during the past year: Crosslet House, Dumbarton, one of our residential care homes, achieved a grade of 'Very Good' for the quality indicator: 'how good is our care and support during the Covid-19 pandemic?'

## PUBLIC PROTECTION

During 2020-21, the HSCP Board approved funding to support the creation of two distinct lead officer posts: one for adult protection and one for child protection. This followed recognition that the previous arrangement of one combined post presented challenges in terms of the span of responsibility. Recruitment to the child protection lead officer post has been completed and an interim adult protection lead officer is in post while recruitment on a permanent basis takes place.

It is also proposed to create two additional public protection posts for a fixed term of two years: one for learning and development, to support single and multi-agency training and professional development across services with responsibility for public protection, whilst the other post will focus on performance, audit and quality assurance. This will be progressed during 2021-22.

## Child Protection

The following provides an analysis of child protection activity during 2020-21, in line with the format of the national minimum dataset, created by the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS).

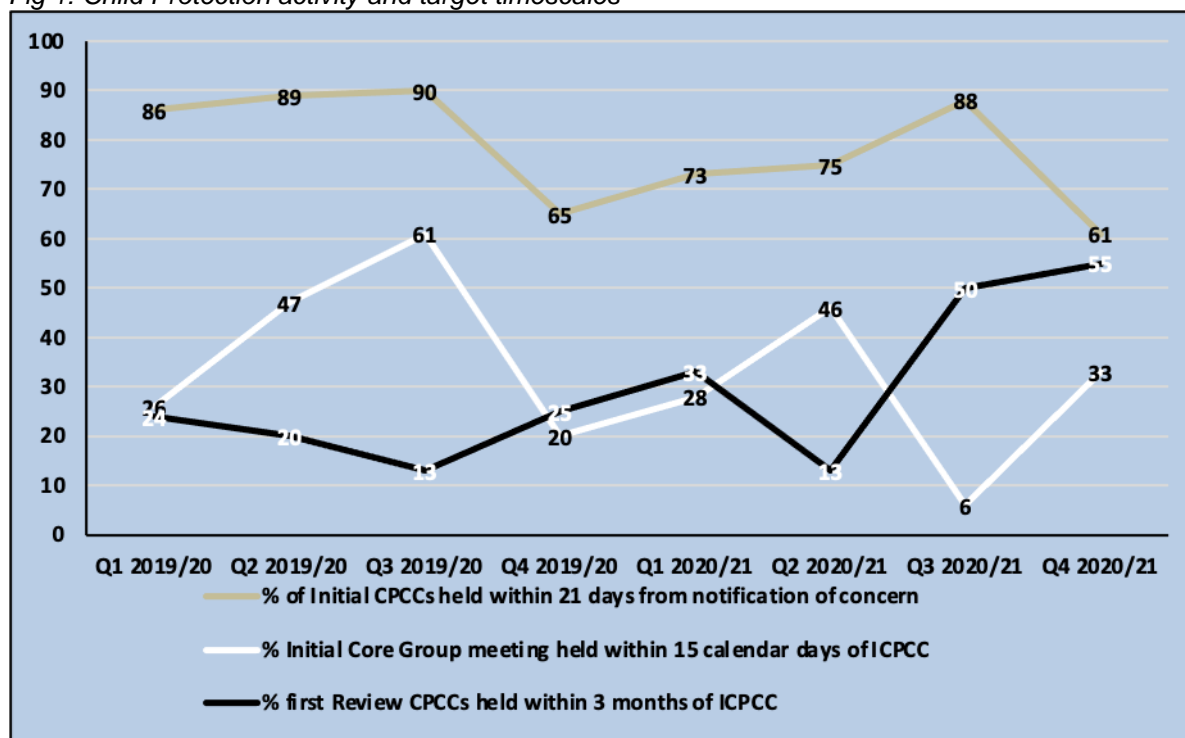
In 2020-21, the most noted concern report for children at the time of child protection registration was domestic abuse, as was the case in the previous year, however this increased during 2020-21 which may reflect the impact of the introduction of multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) in April 2020 which focus on women and children at risk of significant harm; the impact of lockdown restrictions on perpetrator behaviour and risk to individuals is also likely to have been a significant contributory factor.

Parental mental health was the next most reported concern for children being placed on the child protection register in 2020/21 (41%). This increased by 15% from 2019-20. Again, lockdown pressures are widely perceived to have impact on presenting mental health problems in children, young people and their parents. The impact of school closures and restrictions on interacting with others outwith the family home will have also impacted on the mental and emotional wellbeing of children, young people and their families.

A similar picture is evident when considering parental drugs misuse, where concerns in this regard increased from 28% in 2019-20 to 39% in 2020-21.

Performance against timescales for child protection activity is included in Figure 1, below:

Fig 1: Child Protection activity and target timescales



There were fewer initial child protection case conferences held within 21 days in 2020-21, reflecting the impact of restrictions upon the submission of information by multi-agency services to inform these meetings. Meanwhile, the percentage of initial core group meetings held within 15 calendar days of an initial child protection case conference reduced, followed by a notable recovery in the fourth quarter of 2020-21.

Furthermore, other than Q2 in 2020-21, there more review child protection case conferences were held within 3 months compared to 2019-20.

Despite the challenges experienced since March 2020, services have continue to work together to reduce the risk to children and young people. This has been achieved by convening additional Child Protection Committee (CPC) meetings to monitor Covid-19 related issues.

Due to the impact of the pandemic, there was reduced capacity to develop and deliver training and learning sessions as well as additional complexities around the virtual nature of training which limited methods of interaction. To address this, the training subgroup of the Child Protection Committee is taking forward a range of activities to support the multi-agency workforce. This includes the development of a training strategy, completing a training/learning needs analysis and sharing learning resources between multi-agency partners.

The capacity to undertake audit and review work was also affected, although the lead officer is now supporting a plan which will address this. Nevertheless, some audit work has continued, including an audit of Initial Referral Discussions to inform priorities for practice.

The Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration moved children’s hearings from face-to-face to virtual hearings. Despite some challenges with technology, meeting the needs of those most vulnerable and at-risk children has been achieved and all orders have been reviewed; emergency transfers, along with Child Protection Orders, have been ratified at children’s hearings. Plans are in place to deliver virtual hearings on a new, more stable, IT platform in 2021 along with the gradual return to face to face hearings, as lockdown eases.

Partners have worked well together to improve access to digital means of communication, for example by providing iPads to vulnerable families to ensure they could engage in children's learning. This also assisted families in continuing to receive contact from agencies, whether by virtual support or attending meetings such as child protection case conferences.

The most vulnerable children in West Dunbartonshire have continued to receive robust support from our partners and young people with emotional wellbeing issues have been prioritised. Our Specialist Children's Services focussed on a quick response for those young people with mental health problems who were most at risk. In addition, visits were also made to families to ensure they had the resources they needed prior to lockdown, to minimise the negative impact lockdown would cause.

Specialist links were also made with Sandyford Services for Family Nurses to support contraceptive choices and with Shelter Housing to support people with accommodation issues during these difficult times.

Education hubs were created during the pandemic for both key workers and vulnerable pupils during term and non-term time. These have included the provision of social work bases within the Hubs to facilitate child protection engagement. There has also been a blended learning approach with guidance on regular contacts for those children and young people who are most vulnerable and at risk. This included a number of children who attended Education Hubs due to the risk and impact of domestic abuse.

The provision of free meals via vouchers, packed lunches and direct payments to eligible families and all Early Years and P1 to P3 pupils was implemented, along with the provision of digital resources to support access for the most vulnerable children and young people.

In response to increasing concerns about incidents of inappropriate image sharing and correspondence between young people, their peers, and strangers online, a short life working group was created to share knowledge and information across the partners in supporting those who may be at risk of this type of harm and to ensure key messages to parents and young people were disseminated as widely as possible during the pandemic when the risk to young people's online safety increased.

The West Dunbartonshire Community Volunteer Service has continued to connect the local community and the third sector to the child protection agenda. During the last year, this has included providing a Covid support service, accessed by a range of local partners including GPs and duty social work. They have also helped families in need with supplies of food, prescriptions, power top-ups and welfare calls etc. In addition, they assisted the HSCP in maintaining contact with individuals who were shielding, providing support and assistance.

Work has commenced on a suicide prevention and response protocol to ensure a joined-up approach across all services with clear guidance for the response when a young person completes suicide. This protocol will also ensure those who may be affected by the death of the person who completes suicide, are identified quickly and receive the support they require. Furthermore, work continues on the introduction of Equal Protection from harm legislation, led by a short life working group to develop a local protocol.

At the end of 2020-21, the Child Protection Committee agreed revised terms of reference for the training subgroup which will explore the training needs of multi-agency partners, methods of training and learning delivery as well as short and long term goals.

Priority areas for improvement across partners over the next twelve months are:

- Update single agency and multi-agency training Calendar and deliver training priorities based on recent multi agency audit;

- Develop participation and feedback from families and staff to support service improvement;
- Conclude a programme of Audit and reporting to inform further evaluations;
- Progress a strategy for action to address the increased risk to children and young people from online offending;
- Update local interagency procedures to align with the revised National Guidance for Child Protection In Scotland (scheduled for 2021) and development of a Suicide Prevention and Response protocol;
- Focus on supports to parents with mental health issues.

### **Adult Support and Protection (ASP)**

During 2020-21, referrals for adults at risk decreased by 7%, from 539 in 2019-20 to 500 in 2020-21. Of a total of 500 inquiries, 77% were complete within 5 working days against a target of 85%.

The number of inquiries taken to investigation decreased by 18%, from 65 in 2019-20 to 53 in 2020-21. Of the 53 investigations, 89% were commenced within 8 working days of referral, exceeding the target of 80%.

The number of investigations taken to case conferences decreased by 25%, from 12 in 2019-20 to 9 in 2020-21, of which four were held within 20 working days of referral. Meanwhile, vulnerable adult referrals increased by 68%, to 1196 during 2020-21 from 713 in 2019-20.

The progress of working groups as part of the Adult Protection Committee to develop local policies and procedures around Large Scale Investigations, hoarding and financial harm was affected by the pandemic. As referred to above, whilst recruitment to the lead officer post for adult protection continues, a temporary lead officer will ensure continued support to the independent Chair of the Adult Protection Committee.

The ability to provide ongoing training for new and existing Council Officers was impacted by the restrictions arising from the pandemic, however the service has continued to explore methods to safely deliver training. Partners and providers were consulted via a training survey and suggestions included updating online 'iLearn' material, ongoing use of external providers for Council Officer training and the provision of basic and detailed awareness training in-house through a Training for Trainers model.

An independent audit was commissioned in early 2021 to consider strengths and areas of development for adult support and protection practice; an improvement plan has been developed which provides a framework for development in 2021-22.

Local policies were updated and developed to uphold multi-agency awareness of key processes and best practice, including interagency adult support and protection guidance, case recording standards and the social work & social care supervision policy. Plans for wide implementation and future training events will be taken forward in 2021-22.

### **Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)**

West Dunbartonshire is part of North Strathclyde MAPPA arrangements, along with five other local authority areas, Police Scotland, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, NHS Highland and the Scottish Prison Service which are all deemed 'responsible authorities'. A dedicated MAPPA co-ordinator provides professional advice and guidance within a small MAPPA Unit which supports responsible authorities to fulfil their statutory duties around information sharing and joint working to assess and manage the risk of individuals managed within MAPPA.

The CSWO continued to attend the North Strathclyde Strategic Oversight Group in 2020-21 which moved to remote, increased meetings during the pandemic and the Justice Service Manager is a member of the Management Oversight Group.

The local service achieved 100% compliance with key performance indicators for cases managed at level 2 and 3 (multi-agency risk management) being reviewed no less than 12 weekly. Furthermore, Justice Services were fully compliant with all national key performance indicators related to MAPPA meetings being convened and notifications submitted to the MAPPA Unit within fixed timescales; no exceptions were reported during 2020-21.

Initial Case Review (ICR) notifications across North Strathclyde and, indeed, nationally, increased during 2020-21; within West Dunbartonshire, one Initial Case Review was completed in October 2020 and the decision was made not to proceed to a significant case review based on progress made within the service to improve practice. Key learning points were identified and have been progressed within an improvement plan which guides local improvement activities, including:

- Enhanced access to training for staff and managers;
- Opportunities for expanded training including accredited interventions;
- Quality assurance and practice governance;
- Additional support for service improvement.

## **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

### **Locality Children's Services**

Locality based children's social work services were, in early 2020, beginning to benefit from work to resolve earlier challenges around staffing and caseloads during 2019 which put teams in a somewhat stronger position just prior to moving into a period of remote working and significant adjustment as a result of the pandemic.

Staff moved to primarily remote working, supported by the development of a range of local guidance, informed by statutory and public protection duties as well as national guidance. Managers and staff worked closely with all partners including health, education and Police Scotland to maintain services and decision making as well as agreement on immediate plans to safeguard children and young people, including the provision of a range of placements and secure care.

An additional management information tool was developed, highlighting the most vulnerable children and families across social work, health and education services; this was continually updated to provide assurance regarding prioritisation, particularly early in the pandemic response.

The service continued to work into the local community addressing a range of ongoing needs, risks and vulnerabilities, all of which were initially subject to a prioritisation process which supported staff to focus on those most in need. This also mitigated any staff absence with targeting of resources. Children subject to legal orders, those named on the child protection register and women and children at risk due to domestic abuse were all prioritised for safety planning to reduce risk and promote strengths wherever possible.

Duty services continued to provide an immediate crisis response, children and young people continued to be accommodated in places of safety and trafficked young people were successfully supported into local accommodation.

Further local practice guidance reflected emerging national guidance and advice regarding specific duties including for children on the child protection register and people who had experienced domestic abuse. This remains in place and continues to be updated to reflect

the developing nature of the pandemic and emerging evidence in respect of working practices and changing expectations.

Prioritisation of direct visits to maintain contact with the most vulnerable children, including those on the child protection register was supported by close partnership working, particularly with Education colleagues as education hubs were established.

The service developed in its capacity to utilise technology including the use of digital platforms for a range of purposes, including for looked after children to maintain relationships with their families during lockdown. Child protection and other meetings were undertaken using teleconferencing facilities which (notwithstanding some of the challenges) facilitated ongoing multi-agency collaboration and planning for those children and young people most at risk.

Contact arrangements between children and their families and assessment of parental capacity continued, albeit within challenging conditions. Initially these were managed using a blended direct and virtual model in which the primary focus was the maintenance of relationships, although this impacted on the progress of some plans for children, given the lack of face-to-face contact and limitations on assessment ability. The service has gradually moved to a more positive position, however the recovery plan for the service will reflect the impact of lockdown on children's plans.

Oversight of performance and demand has continued, with managers receiving monthly data reports and more specific weekly data which focuses on achievement of key timescales for children's hearings, reports to case conference, initial referral discussions (IRDs) and current child protection investigations.

During 2020-21, as part of improvement actions arising from local audit activity related to case management, the team improved recording around decision-making for allocation processes, allowing better tracking of timescales for allocation within a specific prioritisation system.

A more recent quality improvement action has been the local management review (LMR) process which provides assurance and oversight of interventions, including work to review all plans for children who are looked after or in kinship care.

Policy developments also continued: by the end of 2020-21, the service launched an adult services "Parental Strengths and Capacity Assessment" to be undertaken by adult social work services colleagues for individuals with caring responsibilities for children. This is a significant development, strengthening the shared responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, adding significantly to the quality of assessments for children where parental mental health, addiction or other issues may impact on their ability to provide safe, nurturing care.

Furthermore, work on the local Carers Strategy has developed, with a specific focus on arrangements for young carers and young adult carers. An action plan which develops the statutory requirements for young carers' statements will seek to provide a more sustainable approach to local support and the provision of respite opportunities for young carers.

Support and respite arrangements for children with additional support needs were initially paused during the first months of the pandemic, however these have been gradually scaled up in accordance with national guidance; transition planning for young people with additional support needs has also been maintained, with specific additional aspects of the Carers Strategy identified for parents of children moving into adult services by providing support towards the development of an adult carers statement (where required), as a key element of the transition planning process.

Scottish Government Winter Support funding towards the end of 2020 provided significant opportunities for children with additional needs to engage in safe activities at home, as well as exercise and respite. Many of the items purchased will also provide longevity for safe diversionary activities within the home. Children who are looked after, in kinship placements and other vulnerable families were also supported in a range of ways including outdoor activities, IT equipment for diversionary and leisure activities or which enhanced the home environment for families.

An emerging trend has seen an escalation of organised crime activity related to drug dealing, exploitation, violence and domestic abuse. Staff and managers continue to work closely with police and other colleagues to support better planning for vulnerable children, young people and women affected by this activity.

The service's recovery planning includes continued joint work with key partners including the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) to plan for remote and in-person children's hearings, as well as further expanding contact space and varied means to support and assess the needs of children, young people and families.

### **Services for Looked after Children and Young People**

The number of children and young people looked after in West Dunbartonshire on 31 March 2021 reduced slightly, by ten, from the same time last year to 493. There was a slight increase in the number of children requiring specialist residential services outwith the local area; the number of children in foster placements reduced marginally.

The breakdown of placement type is included in Figure 2, below:

*Fig 2: Placements for looked after children & young people 2020-21*

	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>Change (n)</b>
<b>Kinship care</b>	209	208	+1
<b>Fostering (internal)</b>	52	54	-2
<b>Fostering (external)</b>	57	58	-1
<b>Residential schools</b>	26	21	+5

This reflects the ongoing need for kinship and external fostering placements; as such, the service continues to recruit local foster carers and this activity will be extended over the next two years to enable children to remain in their local area and reduce the demand for external placements. Significant effort has been made to reduce the number of children in long term fostering placements and the service has continued to support children to move to permanent families. Around 30 children had their permanence route agreed through our formal panels during 2020-21 and, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, there were a number of children in pre-adoption placements.

The demands on service provision during the last year have been significant with a growth in the number of children requiring support away from home. Over the next year, links to work around The Promise, as a national policy priority will support the service to focus on early intervention within the community and it is anticipated that this will enable a further reduction in the need for formal care provision.

### **Family Placement Service**

At 31 March 2021, children were placed with 109 fostering households, of which 52 were registered with West Dunbartonshire Council and 57 were provided by external agencies. Carers provide a mix of short breaks, interim, long term and permanent placements and fostering is key to ensuring better outcomes for children within loving homes.

Figures 3 and 4, below, illustrate the level of activity over the last year:

Fig 3: Fostering Panel activity 2020-21 and change from 2019-20

	2020-21	2019-20
<b>Fostering Assessments</b>	*	*
<b>Approvals</b>	*	*
<b>Reviews</b>	28	29
<b>Changes in registration</b>	7	13
<b>De-registrations</b>	*	5
<b>Transfer from independent fostering agency</b>	0	0

\* fewer than 5

Fig 4: Adoption and Permanence Panel activity 2020-21 and change from 2019-20

	2020-21	2019-20
<b>Adoption assessments</b>	5	5
<b>Adoption approvals</b>	5	5
<b>Adoption reviews</b>	0	0
<b>Matches</b>	8	7
<b>Permanence decisions</b>	11	15
<b>Routes</b>	16	22
<b>Matches</b>	8	8

Over the last year, the Family Placement service, comprising Fostering and Adoption teams, has continued to assess people wishing to be foster carers, adoptive parents and supported carers. The service has also provided support and training to existing carers and, despite, the pandemic, there has been a steady, positive interest in both fostering and adoption across West Dunbartonshire.

Staff have developed other ways to work with carers and prospective adopters including regular online support meetings and informal drop-in sessions to enable carers to come together for peer support and to share views around a variety of issues, including those arising from Covid-19. All foster carer reviews took place within timescales and the team has used this learning to schedule all reviews for the year ahead, ensuring support, evaluation and oversight of fostering placements.

Our carers have always been a significant support to our children and over the past year their dedication in difficult, unprecedented circumstances has been outstanding. They have coped well with additional demands which arose from periods of isolation, home schooling and unpredictable developments within some children's care plans. Carers have navigated these with limited face-to-face contact with professional supports and have worked tirelessly to ensure that children's experiences have been positive and that their wellbeing and interests continue to be met.

Activity to engage new carers and adoptive parents has continued using virtual training and engagement sessions including home study assessments for new carers/adopters. Staff have worked imaginatively with children and carers to enable them to make connections with new 'forever families' through adoption. Despite the challenges, this led to positive outcomes and these new ways of working will be consolidated into custom and practice for the future. This will reflect the principles of The Promise, recognising the need for children being able to remain in their local area.

The adoption service has continued to work co-operatively with other local authorities and approved voluntary sector agencies to identify families for children. During 2020-21, a number of permanent family destinations have been found, with more children in pre-adoptive placements awaiting legal support to move to adoptive homes.

## **Alternative to Care Team**

The Alternative to Care (ATC) team has continued to operate a 24 hour support service across 7 days. This includes an out of hours support line for families and staff between 8am and 10pm, when young people are more likely to require supports.

The team worked to support young people who were at risk of family or placement breakdown to reduce the likelihood of them requiring a care placement, as well as responding to family crisis situations through intensive and early intervention. This included focused approaches and diversionary activities with young people, parents and carers. As the pandemic continued, service demand has risen, alongside which staff have supported other young people, including unaccompanied children seeking asylum and working into our children's houses when Covid-19 impacted on the capacity of residential staff teams.

The ATC team has also provided additional support to foster carers during lockdown and with remote learning which impacted on children and carers alike. Carers have provided positive feedback around this and the involvement of the team has contributed to placements being sustained.

The Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) service experienced a small reduction in referrals although demand began to return towards normal levels in the last quarter of 2020-21. A small number of dedicated FGDM staff developed the range of supports to families across the area, reflecting the value of this model of intervention and support as a significant component to building family capacity and echoing the ethos of The Promise as a primary driver for the further development of services. As such, the team are looking to develop this methodology further as communities move out of restrictions.

## **Children's Houses**

The last year in our three children's houses has provided a significant challenge for our young people as well as our staff, arising from Covid-19. Despite this, they adapted well. Staff continued to provide reassurance and the best possible care to children and young people within a homely, loving environment. The context of providing care in residential settings during the pandemic has been challenging across the HSCP, however within our children's houses, national and local guidance helped to define learning here.

Staffing levels were impacted by the occasional need for individuals to isolate however close working with Public Health Scotland was invaluable in the early months to provide guidance and reassurance that all measures to manage the impact of Covid-19 to reduce transmission were being implemented successfully. In addition to necessary physical changes, it has been particularly important to provide emotional support and continuity for our children and young people.

Staff continued to maintain strong links with families, social work teams, Young People in Mind (for mental health and wellbeing support), the Children's Reporter and other key services. They have also supported our children and young people with online learning and with the impact of loss of routine due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Although no formal inspections took place, regular contact continued with Care Inspectorate colleagues, during which no issues were identified which would have impacted on the inspection grades previously achieved:

Despite the challenges that have presented this year, there have been a number of achievements, including:

- Supporting young people to return home and maintaining links with staff and other young people;
- Review of staff supervision arrangements;

- Activities to support young people's wellbeing and learning;
- Eco garden project;
- Equine supported learning project;
- Cycling proficiency certificates awarded to young people;
- Cultural awareness days;
- A number of young people secured places on or completed college courses, secured employment and one achieved a place on a university placement.

To assist children moving into our children's houses and other care settings, the service worked with the Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum (STAF) to introduce wellbeing boxes for every child who moves to a care setting. This included research-based, well considered items to help a child or young person feel more secure in those early days. Initial feedback has been positive and, as part of the commitment to The Promise, training is being rolled out across residential staff, social workers and foster carers. The team will continue, with children and young people, to review and improve the initial experience of moving into care settings.

### **Throughcare and Aftercare**

During 2020-21, the Throughcare and Aftercare team supported over 90 young people as they prepared to move towards independent living, as well as offering support, advice and guidance to young people taking up after care support, up to the age of 26.

The team has two services registered with the Care Inspectorate: Adult Placement and Housing Support, however no inspections took place during 2020-21 due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, regular contact has been maintained with the Care Inspectorate representative and there has been positive feedback received on the work of the service during the last year.

The team has continued to build on close working relationships with housing colleagues; through the development of the local care leavers housing protocol, young people have been able to access quality housing as a priority. Full rent abatement has been implemented for young people in full time education and this initiative continues to be further refined. The team promote and are the check point for care experienced young people applying for council tax exemption.

Multi-agency work continued through 2020-21 to ensure our continuing care guidance aligns with the requirements of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

These supports, along with the care experienced bursary have supported young care leavers into full time education: 15 young people were supported via these initiatives to attend further education in during 2020-21.

With the impact of Covid-19, working remotely meant adopting new ways of working, particularly around communication with young people, utilising a range of digital platforms. Home working has impacted on how services have continued to be provided, however a model of remote and office based activity will shape the service into the future. In addition, a further social worker post was developed in the team to strengthen the skill mix of support to young people.

The team worked to ensure provision of mobile phones and devices to enable young people to access electronic transfer of allowances and links to the Department for Work and Pensions have been strengthened to support young people to make electronic claims. Furthermore, the team gained a 'Connecting Scotland' award for 48 devices and data packages which were distributed to young people who were digitally excluded.

In recognition of the impact of Covid-19 on young people's mental health, the team applied for funding to support physical activity amongst care leavers. Our "Active Care leavers" grant

allowed the provision of sports equipment such as bikes, weights, online classes etc, which all promoted physical activity.

Further support from the Scottish Government Winter Support Fund enabled the service to provide or replace household items for supported carers during the pandemic. These additional funding opportunities were important, positive developments during a time of significant challenge.

Finally, the manager of the service has been working with partners in the public and third sector to develop a joint Asylum, Migration and Integration fund (AMIF) bid for two support workers to provide dedicated support to unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and to help them to engage in their local communities.

### **West Dunbartonshire Champions Board**

The aim of the Champions Board is to create a platform for all care experienced young people across West Dunbartonshire to build strong, positive and long lasting relationships with their corporate parents which enable positive change.

Since March 2020, when the global pandemic struck, interactions between young people and their corporate parents have been largely restricted to digital and online methods. This has challenged the positive relationships which had been established over recent years, however young people have been particularly understanding and responded well to the efforts made in continuing to keep in touch.

Online events and activities during over the past year have included cooking classes, treasure hunts, one-to-one meetings and drop in sessions. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok have also provided opportunities for engagement, information and online links for further help and support in relation to Covid-19.

Reflecting the commitment of our young people to being part of local and national changes, a number of them took part in national working groups including 'Creating a Gold Standard Practice for Accessing Care Records' and 'Better Hearings' (Children's Hearings Scotland). Our care experienced young people have also been part of interview panels for Children's Hearings panel members and have taken part in a number of research programmes.

Regular national online meetings with other Champions Boards enabled sharing of best practice as different areas worked to meet the demands and impact of the pandemic on care experienced young people in terms of access to support, education, peers and emotional wellbeing. West Dunbartonshire Champions Board has also been part of the development of a group across many local authority areas to examine the impact, challenges and opportunities of the introduction of 'The Promise' as a key driver for change for whole systems improvement for children and young people with care experience.

Another positive development during 2020-21 was the Champions Board securing new premises in a central location, offering a positive opportunity for young people, their families, corporate parents and others to meet, re-engage and promote positive relationships as restrictions ease. As the service enters its final year of funding from the Life Changes Trust, the future arrangements for the Champions Board and ways to ensure the ongoing engagement of young people to shape services and work with partners to deliver on The Promise will be a key focus for the year ahead.

Finally, as part of the commitment to ensure that the views of children and young people continue to inform service developments, a new online opportunity was developed in partnership with Viewpoint to include the latest wellbeing self-assessment questionnaires as well as a version for children with communication difficulties. Young people and their social workers continue to be supported to use this new development.

## **The Promise**

Following publication of the independent care review in February 2020, The Promise Scotland was established to enable Scotland to 'keep the Promise' to care experienced children and young people, in the broad context of changes to policy, culture and practice to enable children and young people to grow up 'loved, safe, respected and able to realise their full potential'. Work on the Promise to 2030 will be included in three 3-year plans, complemented by an annual Change programme.

The local commitment to the Promise principles is reflected in many of our staff, children and young people who contributed to the findings of the independent care review and are already committed to ensuring the change required is met positively, as referenced above.

Since the creation of The Promise, teams across the HSCP and key partners within the Nurtured Delivery and Improvement Group as part of West Dunbartonshire Community Planning have met with the national Promise team to consider how existing practice can be built on to continue our local improvement journey to children and young people.

The Promise is at the centre of the vision for redesigning children's social work services in the next year, recognising that established models for services do not always work effectively for everyone and reflecting the commitment to making services better, using a whole community approach to support those most in need.

During the last quarter of 2020-21, funding from the Promise Partnership Fund was secured to enable a fixed term dedicated lead officer post. Supported by match funding from the HSCP Board to develop the post for two years, the post will support corporate parents and other stakeholders to understand and develop changes to practice and other developments that uphold The Promise at a local level and support staff, partners, children and young people, to assist with the developments around the first Promise Plan for 2021-2024.

## **ADULT SERVICES**

### **Mental Health Officer (MHO) Service**

The Covid-19 pandemic had a very significant impact on statutory activity related to interventions under the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, and the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003.

In terms of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, there was a suspension of all but the most urgent Sheriff Court business during the initial lockdown period (April to August 2020). A small number applications were processed and orders granted on the basis that the welfare of individuals was considered to be significantly compromised should statutory measures not be in place.

The consequence of this suspension in activity was a considerable backlog of applications and renewal applications to be addressed once court restrictions started to ease. This inevitably impacted upon the MHO service resource, where prioritisation of cases was based on those individuals in need of immediate attention, notably where a Guardianship Order was required to facilitate the discharge of a person from hospital.

Some provision was made within temporary amendments to legislation to process (among other things) statutory interventions, as outlined in sections 16 and 17 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020. The team ensured adherence to all relevant legislation and good practice guidance and continued to liaise closely with key partners, particularly colleagues in the Council's legal services team.

Interventions under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 decreased markedly during the initial lockdown period. Subsequent to the easing of restrictions, there was a significant increase in activity, albeit not unexpected and is likely to be due in part to the impact of the pandemic on people with existing mental health conditions and those who were unknown to services but found the circumstances of the pandemic to be challenging.

One impact of the pandemic was the decrease in community support provision which impacted on care packages. The increase in hospital admissions of older people with dementia subject to compulsory measures might reflect this. Reduced home support services, closure of day centre provision, and respite services are likely to have contributed to the wider impact on people's mental health and wellbeing needs and increased reliance on carers and informal support networks.

Vacancies in the MHO team were successfully filled and the service is once again at full complement. In addition, a social worker from another team successfully completed the MHO training programme and will be eligible to practice.

### **Mental Health Services**

The Covid-19 pandemic introduced a significant alteration in service delivery since March 2020. The service continues to adapt and transform in response, having introduced remote team working and enhanced digital technology including remote service user video conferencing.

During 2020-21, 4,838 referrals were received, an increase of 4.9% on the previous year. This rise is less than previous years and may largely be a result of lockdown. Latterly referrals during March 2021 began to increase, compared to the final quarter of 2020-21.

Despite restriction, 53,378 service user appointments were offered, an increase of 26.1% on the previous 12 months. Different methods of contact were adopted, including telephone and video contact via the NHS Near Me model. The team also were responsible for providing "isolation and support welfare" calls to people who received a positive Covid-19 result.

The service continued to provide an immediate same-day response service to known service users. The HSCP supported the development of Mental Health Assessment Units, where all emergency mental health referrals from Police, Ambulance and GPs will be routed instead of attending Emergency Departments. This service will operate 24 hours, 365 days a year and has an in-reach capability, with unscheduled care staff being able to attend homes or community sites as necessary. The service will have direct medical supervision and is an enhanced service from previous unscheduled care provision for local residents.

During 2020-21, the peer support worker role, commissioned from a third sector partner, enabled individuals to make better links with community assets; this development will be monitored to measure the impact on discharge from statutory services and supporting self-recovery.

The Primary Care Mental Health Team have continued to focus on meeting the Psychological Therapies target of delivering treatment within 18 weeks of referral and the also commenced a non-medical therapist service that provides mentalisation-based therapy for people with a borderline Personality Disorder. Two additional staff are delivering this enhanced service provision

Learning from the pandemic is reflected in the service's recovery plan which includes extensive review of systems following staff consultation and process mapping; an example of this is how new requests and existing clients' needs are reviewed by an Area Resource Group to support social care needs within the model of Self Directed Support. Enhanced governance processes for social care packages have supported the team to meet demand

alongside the introduction of a revised policy and new eligibility criteria in addition to the 'My Life Assessment'.

## Care Homes

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on residents in care homes and the staff who care for them was significant and continues to be a key focus for local services. Social work, health and care services recognised the need for additional support for enhanced infection prevention and control, end of life care, support for residents during lockdown and staff wellbeing.

In May 2020 the Scottish Government issued an update to the National Clinical and Practice Guidance for Adult Care Homes in Scotland during the Covid-19 pandemic. Enhanced national professional and clinical oversight structures for care homes were established within which NHS Scotland Executive Nurse Directors and Chief Social Work Officers were included, reflecting the critical role of social work to deliver on behalf of local communities.

As nursing colleagues led on clinical oversight, the role of the CSWO and operational managers included ensuring services were delivered in a way that upheld human rights, welfare and wellbeing of residents as well as the social care workforce and community based social work services.

The Scottish Government recognised the need for additional resources to support CSWOs and their teams to undertake their professional roles and within West Dunbartonshire this additional funding supported reviews of residents' care plans and care assurance visits.

The HSCP initiated a care assurance process in advance of the national request for care assurance visits for local authority care homes, to seek assurance on infection prevention control measures and to provide support to maintain care quality in the context of the pandemic.

Multi-disciplinary assurance processes were developed and care assurance visits have been undertaken by a senior nurse and a senior social worker with the intention of working with care home managers and staff to support scrutiny of processes and procedures and benchmark them against current guidance. This has assured that processes are in place or identified areas where support may be required to strengthen actions to achieve the aim that homes are able to continue to provide safe, effective, person centred care for their residents.

Visits used the principles of appreciative enquiry to document and celebrate good practice and identify areas of improvement where support might be required to secure improvements. This involved discussions with the care home managers, staff and residents alongside observation of the units and interactions with staff and residents. Assurance visits focussed on infection prevention and control; resident health and care needs and workforce, leadership & culture.

Before the pandemic, productive collaborative relationships existed between non-local authority care home providers, the HSCP and Scottish Care. Relationships were strengthened during course of the pandemic. Social work, social care and nursing colleagues will continue to build on this, supported by increased Chief Nurse capacity, investment in District Nursing to support the appointment of a District Nurse Team Lead with a lead for quality in the District Nursing Service, care assurance within care homes and further social work resources, enabled by additional Scottish Government funding, to support individual reviews for residents.

This joint approach to support care homes was reflected in daily meetings of the multi-professional care home assurance support and oversight group, which reviewed rates of Covid-19 amongst staff and residents, implemented changing national guidance around infection control, care and, as restrictions ease, visits from family members in a

compassionate and informed way. The CSWO has continued to join this meeting, chaired by the Chief Nurse, alongside colleagues from the Care Inspectorate, HSCP Clinical Directors, Public Health, District Nursing and Scottish Care which also considers care home data to support continued improvements.

It is intended that multi-disciplinary care assurance visits will continue until at least June 2022 with a minimum frequency of twice per year; proactive support will be offered at times of transition i.e. appointment of a new care home manager or at the onset of an outbreak whilst continued learning and improvement support will be provided.

Given that the threat from the pandemic has not ended, the group continues to review local oversight and support arrangements to ensure that the balance of assurance and support is proportionate, reflects care home providers' priorities for improvement and is responsive to their support requirements. Partners will continue to review these local arrangements to ensure they remain robust and will also explore how to appropriately extend the scope of interest and support across other adult social care services.

### **Community Older Peoples Team and Sensory Impairment Team**

These integrated teams include a range of social work and health professionals, working with individuals aged 65 years and older to support them to live as independently and for as long as possible in their community.

The teams received on average 66 new referrals per week during 2020-21, reduced from around 80 per week in the previous year. The initial impact of the pandemic was reflected in a reduction in referral levels however these began to increase in early 2021. Public health guidance and restrictions impacted on waiting times and a review of referrals noted that individuals were increasingly being referred to the service over the past year with greater frailty and more complex needs.

In line with practice requirements and the added significance of the impact of the pandemic in care homes, staff undertook a programme of care assurance visits and statutory reviews of residents within care homes, supported by some additional Scottish Government funding to increase capacity.

The community older people's team developed a daily integrated duty system to respond to referrals which included senior management oversight of referrals and triage/screening to ensure urgent and high priority issues and concerns were addressed. All adult support & protection inquiries and vulnerable adult concerns were managed through this process, providing greater co-ordination and oversight.

The impact of the pandemic meant that work on the iHUB Frailty Collaborative was paused, however the service will participate when this restarts, given the priority of supporting people aged 65 and over with frailty within a partnership approach with GPs and district nursing services.

A particular challenge over the past year, given the impact of the pandemic, was managing statutory timescales around supervision of Guardianship Orders and senior managers will continue to monitor performance here and identify opportunities for improvement, within regular allocation and review meetings. Nevertheless, quality assurance activity continued during the year and results were shared with staff as part of a learning process, with any common themes being reviewed on a team basis.

### **Learning Disabilities Service**

In 2021-22 the Learning Disabilities service continued to implement the key recommendations from the national strategy (Keys to Life, 2013) and have embedded its

four strategic outcomes, Independence, Choice and Control, Healthy Life and Active Citizen, in support planning and care review processes.

The integrated approach to service delivery across community health and care, as well as third sector providers, has supported the delivery of effective and targeted specialist services, prioritised around the key aims of people with a learning disability using an outcome-focussed approach to promote person-centred assessment and planning. This has been achieved at a time of immense challenge due to the pandemic, which required significant adjustment to service provision to meet client and carer need.

Risk assessments helped to ensure the most vulnerable people continued to receive support during restrictions and lockdown – this was particularly important when day-care provision ceased, albeit the service operated an emergency support for clients in critical need. Some day-care support roles moved to enhance this community support whilst frontline services such as housing support, supported living and care at home continued to offer face-to-face contact.

Carers in particular have had to meet the challenge of reduced day care services and the service sought to support them during this time, whilst also recognising their resilience and capacity to navigate the challenges of lockdown and restrictions over the past year. Meanwhile, the Work Connect service supported the wider community through the Council's resilience group, including welfare calls and food parcel distribution to vulnerable residents.

Other developments included review of the Transition Group that supports joint working with key partners including education, children's services and other adult services who contributed to improvements in the transition of young people with additional support needs (including learning disability) into adult services. More young people had their adult service needs identified up to two years in advance, in recognition of the importance of this significant transition for young people to support their care in a person-centred, compassionate approach.

Joint work with colleagues in housing services and housing developers also progressed during 2020-21 to identify future housing stock that can best support people within a 'core and cluster' model of support. A number of people moved to new build accommodation within the Dumbarton harbour area and the service will continue to work in partnership to expand on further housing provision during this year.

### **Addiction Services**

During 2020-21, the service received 851 referrals for people experiencing problems with drugs or alcohol requiring assessment for treatments and support. 96.6% of referrals were seen within 21 days, exceeding the Scottish Government HEAT target of 90%. During the first phase of the pandemic the team also offered assessment appointments to 97% of people within this timeframe. A total of 19643 appointments were offered.

Throughout this challenging period, an assertive outreach approach by health and social care staff included face-to-face, telephone and Attend Anywhere appointments. This ensured the most vulnerable and high risk adults with chaotic and complex drug and alcohol use, often with co-existing mental health issues, could engage with services. The team also supported the Special Needs in Pregnancy (SNIPS) multi-professional model of care to vulnerable women throughout their pregnancy and post-birth.

A further example of co-production during the last year was joint work with children's services colleagues to develop a Parental Capacity, Strengths & Support assessment. The assessment integrates well-being indicators and focuses on the adult service user's strengths and achievements as well as pressures and areas for improvement in relation to their child's well-being. This will be embedded fully to the practice of all health and social care staff early in 2021-22.

## **Independent Review of Adult Social Care**

A national independent review of adult social care arrangements was announced in September 2020 by the First Minister, the main aim of which was to identify improvements for adult social care, focussed on improving outcomes for users of services, their carers and families, whilst including the views and experience of people employed in adult social care.

The review was published in February 2021 and, whilst it did not specifically consider the role of social work in adult care or the implications of any potential change in adult social care arrangements upon the social work profession, it made a series of recommendations within the report which was accepted by the Scottish Government in February 2021. Chief Social Work Officers provided individual and collective input to the work of the review, meeting with the Chair and highlighting the central role of social work in the provision of services to adults in need of care.

The new Programme for Government is expected to take the review forward and the CSWO and other senior officers will continue to participate in local and national discussions about the future model of provision of social work and social care services for adults, as well as consideration of the implications for children's and justice services, within the context of the duties, values and role of the social work profession.

## **JUSTICE SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

Justice Services have continued to provide support, interventions and monitoring to individuals subject to statutory orders and licences. Despite the impact of Covid-19 on service delivery the team has continued to take forward a range of improvement actions during 2020-21 in relation to public protection and reducing reoffending. These included an audit of training needs by staff and managers to inform workforce development, updated Level of Service Case Management Inventory (LSCMI) risk assessment guidance and plans to implement the SAPROF accredited structured professional judgement risk assessment tool. Staff also completed training in interventions to support their work with registered sexual offenders as well as trauma-informed practice.

New performance reporting on a monthly and quarterly basis was implemented to improve monitoring of service performance against key performance indicators. Clear governance structures for Justice Services have continued to maintain oversight, with regular reporting on practice during the pandemic, performance and adherence to professional standards. Internal mechanisms include the HSCP Board, Audit & Performance Committee, Public Protection Chief Officers Group, Community Planning Safe Delivery & Improvement Group (DIG) and MAPPA regional strategic oversight group. External oversight and scrutiny has been provided through regular Care Inspectorate meetings and quarterly returns to the Justice Division of the Scottish Government.

All work-related risk assessments were reviewed to include the risk associated with Covid-19 to enable staff to maintain office working safely, albeit on a reduced basis. As the unpaid work service re-started in July 2020 it was introduced incrementally in each locality across the local authority area; work squad capacity was reduced to maintain social distancing and all control measures were implemented to help the sustainability of the service.

### **Workload**

During 2020/21, justice social work services experienced some notable decreases in demand compared to the previous year. This is fully reflective of the impact of the global pandemic which saw the closure of Scottish courts, the cessation of temporary release of prisoners and requests for statutory reports. Figure 5, below, provides further information:

Fig 5: Demand for Justice Services (2020-21 compared to 2019-20)

	2020-21	2019-20	Change %
<b>Criminal Justice Social Work Reports</b>	455	636	-28%
<b>Community Payback Orders</b>	234	426	-45%
<b>Drug Treatment and Testing Orders</b>	5	12	-58%
<b>Diversion from Prosecution</b>	21	30	-30%
<b>Throughcare(Community)</b>	32	50	-36%
<b>Throughcare (Custody)</b>	22	50	-56%
<b>Home Circumstance Reports</b>	119	143	-22%
<b>Home Detention Curfews</b>	17	19	-10%

Within recovery planning, service modelling anticipated an exponential growth in community-based sentencing, including the need to address a backlog of cases. Additional funding as part of the Scottish Government response in December 2020 supported Justice Services to start to address the backlog of unpaid work hours by commissioning third sector partners to provide online workshops with service users.

Services were also commissioned to provide digital support and learning to service users to mitigate digital poverty and develop access to Justice Services on a virtual platform.

Further funding in March 2021 will enable the service to recruit to some additional posts to enhance capacity for service recovery alongside additional provision for services to courts including bail supervision and structured deferred sentences.

### **Community Payback Orders**

Community-based services were suspended twice during 2020-21 on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer for seven months approximately. During the first period of suspension, staff moved to primarily working from home, continuing to support individuals by telephone and digital contact, with prioritisation of direct contact focussed on those who presented the highest risk of re-offending and harm. A number of staff were reassigned to assist with the Council's Humanitarian Response Centre, including calls to individuals who were shielding.

In January 2021 the service built on learning from the first suspension of services and, with the support and guidance of the national Unpaid Work Forum, home learning packs were introduced to provide educational support to individuals subject to a Community Payback Order (CPO) whilst encouraging learning at home. Targeted learning packs about drugs/alcohol and relationships were also used whilst unpaid work squads were deployed as national guidance and restrictions permitted; this included ongoing collaborative work with the Council's Greenspace project where individuals worked to restore memorial benches across West Dunbartonshire.

Third sector partners, Street Cones, were commissioned to deliver creative workshops using online platforms, designed around lived experiences. This work will continue in addition to unpaid work squads during 2021-22.

Having secured a new workspace for unpaid work orders in the previous year, work is ongoing to configure these premises to enable delivery of a wider range of supports and learning for the recovery phase of the service onwards. The team continues to maintain face-to-face contact with service users in line with assessed risk levels and these continue to increase incrementally in line with public health guidance.

### **Diversion from Prosecution**

During 2020-21, the service provided Diversion services to 21 people (a decrease of 9 on the previous year) who had not been convicted of an offence. Here, individuals were

supported to address the underlying causes of their behaviour such as addiction support, mental health and emotional wellbeing, housing, income maximisation and employability.

The service has taken forward improvements around the referral process; this and other earlier interventions from the point of arrest will be priorities for development in 2021-22.

### **Drug Treatment and Testing Orders (DTTO)**

The DTTO service is provided by an integrated care team hosted by West Dunbartonshire and working across East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute, to support individuals whose offending is primarily due to their established addiction issues, encouraging recovery, reduced offending behaviour and promoting stability.

2020-21 required new and diverse ways of working to continue to support individuals. The easing of restrictions will enable more direct contact alongside the use of mobile technology; testing has also been reintroduced and is being continually reviewed to ensure best practice for service users and stakeholders within a safe, robust community-based model.

### **Prison Throughcare**

The provision of services to individuals prior to their release from custody and into the community continues to support successful reintegration. All temporary home leaves were suspended during 2020-21 in line with Government pandemic guidance; it is expected that this will restart early in the next year.

Meanwhile, staff completed further training in the assessment and management of high risk offenders during autumn 2020.

### **Community Justice**

During 2020-21, community justice activity has focussed on three pathways: Point of Arrest; Custody to Community and Community Sentences, reflecting key components of the community justice continuum. A Justice Settings sub-group of the Alcohol and Drug Partnership facilitated good progress with aligning and developing activity to these community justice pathways and outcomes.

Other key developments included:

- Arrest Referral Scheme (Point of Arrest): third sector partners submitted a successful bid to the Drug Deaths Taskforce Fund which has enabled a 2 year pilot in Clydebank Custody Suite to be implemented in partnership with Police Scotland;
- Prison Custody and Liberation data (Custody to Community): the council's homeless service Lead Officer offered a housing options service to the majority of individuals being released from custody to the local area, minimising pandemic-related barriers and, through existing relationships, maximising the use of technology to assist here;
- Strengthening Partnership Working (Community Sentences): Justice Social Work and Police Scotland colleagues worked together at strategic and operational levels, including through the Alcohol and Drug Partnership Justice Settings sub-group to develop and implement short, medium and long-term improvements for people in the justice system affected by addiction.

Community justice priorities for 2021-22 include a refresh of current governance arrangements, in line with the recommendations of the Community Justice Scotland scrutiny report; development of partnership approaches to violence prevention; undertake consultation and engagement activity within a co-production approach in Justice Social Work

Services; further develop the Arrest Referral Scheme and develop a whole systems prison release pathway.

## **Violence against Women**

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) is located within West Dunbartonshire's Community Planning arrangements, however work is ongoing to further develop the VAWG Partnership as both a key aspect of the PPCOG and as a specific key strategic group within community planning partnership arrangements.

During the pandemic, the activity of the group continued to report into the PPCOG, providing assurance and oversight, whilst retaining oversight, scrutiny and progress in respect of other key areas of development.

Throughout 2020-21, partners focussed on delivering the National Violence against Women Covid-19 action plan, ensuring that services continued to be available to women and children at risk and remained responsive to locally identified trends during this period.

In addition, a key local aspect supporting planning and decision making was the successful implementation of local multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) from April 2020. Despite this occurring at the onset of the pandemic, West Dunbartonshire's MARAC has developed positively over the past year and, as anticipated, received and managed incrementally higher numbers of referrals, reflecting both the prevalence of domestic abuse in the area and the likely impact of lockdown. The MARAC process is further complemented by local multi-agency tasking and co-ordination (MATAC) arrangements and the Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme, ensuring a holistic response within the area.

A local MARAC steering group is now in place, enabling developmental opportunities for representatives and potential Chairs, whilst also retaining oversight of local systems and processes, including the development of audit and quality assurance processes and training needs analysis for practitioners. All representatives for local MARAC arrangements have been trained by Safe Lives with additional Chairs training due to take place during 2021-22.

## **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**

The West Dunbartonshire Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Programme continues to address childhood adversity and trauma across the life course. The Programme supports workforce development and development of a Nurtured Strategy.

In 2020-21, ACEs workforce development activities moved online. Since the re-launch of West Dunbartonshire's ACEs Hub as a strength-based 'Resilience' Hub in February 2020, membership has remained at around 400. The Hub, which is a community of practice, includes staff working across the Council, HSCP and third sector. The first virtual Resilience Hub meeting was held in March 2021 with 70 local staff attending.

The ACEs documentary film, 'Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope' continues to be a key resource to increase ACEs awareness among the local workforce. The film was shown online in December 2020 with 60 people attending and participating in the post-film panel discussion. This brings the cumulative total to 1060 staff who have seen the film since 2018.

Planning is underway to look at implementing the national Trauma Training Plan locally, supplemented by the range of national training material in both a targeted and universal approach. This is being co-ordinated by the local Trauma Champion alongside local trauma-informed leaders in services including Justice, Education and HR. They are working collectively to implement the six elements of the Improvement Service and Scottish Government Trauma-Informed Approach to Scotland's Covid-19 Recovery, Renewal and Transformation via a reformed ACEs/Trauma Reference Network.

## Children and Young People's Mental Health

National Policy and investment to support measures to improve mental health and emotional wellbeing services for children, young people and adults remains a priority. Locally within the Nurtured Delivery and Improvement Group, a working group for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing community supports and services was established in June 2020. The group works in line with the national framework which promotes a 'whole system' approach and sets out the supports that children and young people (aged 5-24 years or 26 years old if care experienced) should be able to access for their mental health and emotional wellbeing within their community.

During 2020-21, Glasgow University were commissioned by the Health & Social Care Partnership on behalf of the wider community planning partners to undertake a comprehensive review and analysis of children and young people's community mental health and wellbeing services and supports.

The review sought to understand the prevalence of collaboration and explored how sectors worked together to support children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing. Phase two involves engagement within a co-production approach to seek the views of children, young people and their families on local needs and will take place in summer 2021. This work will build on the Children's Neighbourhood Scotland (CNS) programme and will inform action planning by the working group.

The working group developed an 'animation' outlining the purpose of the group. This was co-produced with our lead young person from the Champions Board who co-wrote and provided the voice over. The animation aims to convey the key work of the group to the wider community, in particular children and young people.

A number of short term projects were delivered to support children and young people with emotional wellbeing, isolation and loneliness, access to physical activity opportunities and support for parents and carers of children with complex needs. The planning and development of a new distress brief intervention associate programme is also in progress; this new service will provide time-limited support to young people experiencing distress.

### 3. RESOURCES

The HSCP Board approved the 2020-21 revenue budget on 25 March 2020 which included specific funding streams from the Scottish Government including Primary Care, Mental Health Action 15, Alcohol and Drug Partnership, Carers, Scottish Living Wage and Investment in Integration.

Since mid-March 2020 the HSCP reflected its response to the Covid-19 pandemic in the Local Mobilisation Plan (LMP) and associated costs through the financial tracker returns to the Scottish Government. The final submission for 2020-21 is expected to include full year costs for the HSCP of £8.068m. It is assumed that Scottish Government funding for these costs will continue into 2021-22. Total funding of £13.038m was received in 2020-21 resulting in a significant underspend of £4.970m which will be held in an earmarked reserve to address future Covid-19 cost pressures.

At the start of the pandemic the most significant cost to be fully understood was financial support to externally commissioned services including residential care, especially for older people and social care support across all client groups. The Scottish Government committed to support the social care sector during the pandemic to help the longer-term sustainability of the sector. The HSCP Board currently commission approximately £47m with external providers, however the level of support and how long it will continue for is an

ongoing and emerging issue, making costs difficult to predict. Early estimates of £4.2m were included in the financial tracker with final costs for 2020-21 being £2.164m.

The most significant element of this £2.164m sustainability cost was related to support to care homes totalling £2.097m with other provider support of £0.067m. The sustainability support for other providers was mainly in relation to small amounts of personal protective equipment (PPE) or social care support fund payments in accordance with relevant guidance. With the exception of care homes, other providers continued to be paid based on planned levels of care until 30 November 2020 and at approved levels thereafter.

The final outturn position at 31 March 2021 was an overall surplus of £13.744m as detailed below in Figure 6:

Fig 6: 2020/21 Final Outturn against Budget

<b>West Dunbartonshire HSCP Board</b>	<b>2020/21 Annual Budget £000</b>	<b>2020/21 Net Expenditure £000</b>	<b>2020/21 Underspend/ (Overspend) £000</b>
<b>Consolidated Health &amp; Social Care</b>			
Older People, Health and Community Care	47,983	45,717	2,266
Physical Disability	3,278	3,214	64
Children and Families	25,255	25,500	(245)
Mental Health Services	11,342	10,244	1,098
Addictions	3,520	2,933	587
Learning Disabilities	17,511	16,868	643
Strategy, Planning and Health Improvement	1,862	1,392	470
Family Health Services (FHS)	29,959	29,955	4
GP Prescribing	19,432	19,003	429
Hosted Services - MSK Physio	6,703	6,247	456
Hosted Services - Retinal Screening	840	719	121
Criminal Justice - Grant funding of £2.1m	198	(6)	204
HSCP Corporate and Other Services	7,145	4,468	2,677
Covid-19	10,810	5,840	4,970
IJB Operational Costs	329	329	0
<b>Cost of Services Directly Managed by West Dunbartonshire HSCP</b>	<b>186,167</b>	<b>172,423</b>	<b>13,744</b>
Set aside for delegated services provided in large hospitals	32,276	32,276	0
Assisted garden maintenance and Aids and Adaptations	505	505	0
<b>Total Cost of Services to West Dunbartonshire HSCP</b>	<b>218,948</b>	<b>205,204</b>	<b>13,744</b>

The key explanations and analysis of budget performance against actual costs are detailed below:

- Older People, Health and Community Care reported an underspend of £2.266m mainly related to the timing of the opening of the new Queens Quay Care Home, reducing demand for care home/nursing beds arising from shorter stays, supporting people at home for longer and the impact of the pandemic on both care home resident numbers and the cost of care at home services.
- Mental Health Services reported an underspend of £1.098m mainly due to additional Action 15 funding, staffing vacancies and recruitment delays and additional income due

from NHS Highland under the terms of the Service Level Agreement for access to in-patient beds. This is based on a 3 year rolling average.

- HSCP Corporate and Other Services reported an underspend of £2.677m mainly due to additional primary care funding and non recurring underspends from Scottish Government funding initiatives..
- A Covid-19 underspend of £4.970m was mainly due to reduced spend on Community Assessment Centres and provider sustainability along with additional funding received in advance of need from the Scottish Government. This underspend has been transferred to an earmarked reserve for the ongoing response to the pandemic in 2021-22.
- The movement in earmarked reserves is an overall increase of £12.186m, bringing the closing balance to £17.440m. There were a number of draw-downs and additions amounting to £0.104m and £12.290m respectively.
- The movement in unearmarked, general reserves is an overall increase of £1.558m, bringing the closing balance to £4.367m which is in excess of the 2% target as set out in the Reserves Policy.

## Financial Outlook

The first medium term financial plan was approved by the HSCP Board in March 2020 covering the period 2020-21 to 2024-25.

The 2021-22 revenue budget was approved on 25 March 2021 while the HSCP continued to react to, and look to recover from, the Covid-19 pandemic. The identified budget gaps and actions taken to close these gaps, to present a balanced budget, took into account current levels of service, however it was recognised that the longer term impact of the pandemic are unquantifiable at this time.

The HSCP Board revenue budget for 2021-22 to deliver against strategic priorities is £200.948m, including £30.851m relating to set aside (notional budget allocation). The budget identified a potential funding gap of £0.941m which will be addressed through an application of earmarked reserves totalling £0.323m and a number of approved savings programmes equating to £0.618m, mainly relating to service redesign projects currently underway.

The HSCP Board will closely monitor progress on the delivery of its approved savings programmes, through robust budget monitoring processes and the HSCP Project Management Office (PMO). As part of its commitment to a strong governance framework around regular and robust budget and performance monitoring and on-going assessment of risk, the HSCP Board and the senior management team, will monitor these developments and take appropriate action as required.

The risk of financial sustainability has long been identified as a key strategic risk of the HSCP Board and the ongoing reaction to and recovery from the pandemic adds a further layer of risk to its stability going forward. The indicative budget gaps for 2022-23 and 2023-24 are detailed in Figure 7, below and illustrate the scale of the risk:

Fig 7: Indicative Budget Gaps for 2021/22 to 2023/24

	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m
Indicative Revenue Budget	72.244	74.424	76.717
Indicative Funding (including application of earmarked reserves)	72.744	71.211	72.226
<b>Indicative Budget Gaps</b>	<b>nil</b>	<b>3.213</b>	<b>4.491</b>

Due to uncertainties surrounding the legacy impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the update of the plan has been delayed and the refresh is expected to be reported to the HSCP Board in November 2021. It is also anticipated that this will incorporate any quantifiable impact of the Scottish Government progressing with the recommendations of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care.

In 2021-22 the HSCP Board intends to respond to these challenges by continuing to build on the strong governance frameworks already in place, continue to engage and collaborate with stakeholders, manage and mitigate risk and invest in the workforce and local communities.

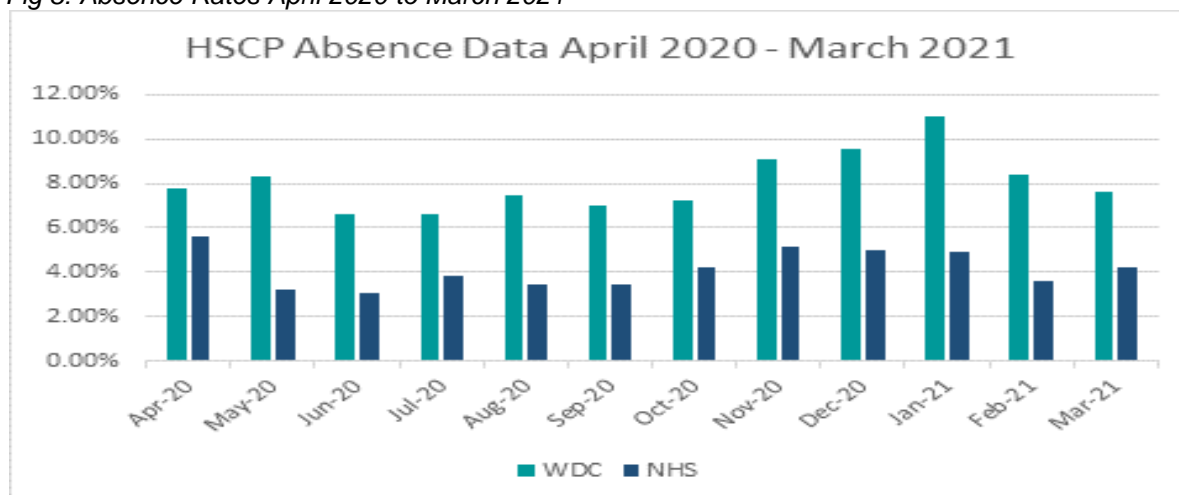
#### 4. WORKFORCE

##### Workforce Planning

Early in the pandemic, as part of the national response, the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) provided localised lists of registered social workers who were available to support services and to mitigate any significant staff absence as a result of the pandemic. Locally, services managed to maintain service provision primarily within the existing workforce, where increased flexibility and willingness to work additional hours ensured a level of continuity for service users, carers and families.

During 2020-21, in response to the pandemic, absence levels were monitored daily to enable service continuity, contingency planning and to inform any need to transfer staff to support other essential services within the HSCP or other frontline services. Figure 8, below, shows the absence trend over the last year. Overall, absence levels were lower than previous years, however this is expected to increase as the impact of the pandemic continues.

Fig 8: Absence Rates April 2020 to March 2021



As more became known about the longer-term impact of Covid-19, programmes of support for employees experiencing Long Covid were developed. Staff who were shielding during periods of lockdown and restriction continued to be supported remotely, whilst easing of shielding helped more recently with increasing staffing levels across teams.

Non-Covid absence levels on the whole remained lower than preceding years, however in later months, absence levels increased again; whilst this is not entirely unexpected, the provision of targeted HR interventions will ensure staff and managers receive appropriate levels of support.

Managers continue to provide informal support and supervision to staff within established processes, albeit utilising telephone or video calls and within the established frequency, reflecting relevant supervision policies.

## Support to staff and managers

A range of supports were promoted to staff and re-enforced within staff briefings, team meetings and Trade Union meetings including the National Wellbeing Helpline and the National Wellbeing Hub. Coaching for Wellbeing was a further support online option for staff including support in building resilience, improving wellbeing and, where appropriate, how to lead and support others who may be struggling.

In addition, all HSCP staff were encouraged to take part in mental health check-ins, provided by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, which took place in August 2020 and February 2021 and which will be repeated.

West Dunbartonshire Council provided a series of wellbeing webinars which were available to all HSCP staff, covering a number of topics including supporting a remote workforce, Mindfulness etc. Furthermore, staff were encouraged to use their annual leave allowance and managers encouraged staff to fully utilise their leave to maintain a healthy work/life balance.

Many services continue to work in response mode as the pandemic restrictions continue. Many staff having been working from home since March 2020 and all employees have had to adapt their normal working practices. As part of restart planning and scaling up direct service provision, it will be essential to continue to support the wellbeing of all employees.

During 2020-21, HR colleagues, operational managers and Trade Unions have worked together to highlight, respond to and support social work staff who have continued to work during the pandemic, despite the very real impact on their professional roles and their personal lives. Meetings of the Joint Staff Forum were held weekly and, more recently, fortnightly, to ensure that trades unions and staff side were able to raise any concerns relating to, or support required for, employees in a timely manner.

Recruitment and retention of staff continued to be challenging in certain service areas, however staff retention was supported by funding for some post-qualifying training opportunities. Within Children and Families, many social workers joining the organisation were newly or recently qualified, with robust induction, mentoring and development measures in place to support them. This means, however that the skill mix within teams has been more challenging to maintain, with more experienced social workers holding more complex cases whilst newer colleagues develop their skills and experience.

Recruitment to adult services has also continued, however the pandemic appears to have, understandably, impacted on the number of people seeking new job opportunities. Nevertheless, as part of the Learning Network West consortium, a number of social work student placements are being developed across the HSCP for 2021-22, enabling future social workers to gain diverse, challenging and supportive experience prior to qualification.

The Cabinet Secretary approved the deferral of publication of the first full 3 year workforce plans until March 2022 and this was replaced with a shorter interim plan to cover the period April 2021 to March 2022. The shorter interim workforce plan was developed and submitted to the Scottish Government in May 2021 and there are plans in place to commence work on the full 3 year workforce plan with the Workforce Planning Group being re-established.

A degree of flexibility with workforce plans is required to take account of any future changes to levels of Covid-19 cases and the impact this has on restrictions. The 3 year plan will also consider that some of our existing services will change or may be delivered in a different way and some new services may be required.

The return to the workplace for staff will primarily be dependent on Scottish Government guidance and Public Health advice, however in all instances this will be based on the

requirements of the role being carried out and will also take into account any personal circumstances of individuals. This is currently being reviewed by managers and discussed with staff.

Furthermore, proposals for some fixed term additional capacity are being scoped for 2021-22 to undertake specific pieces of work to move services forward. This will also assist in scoping the shape of the workforce for the future, as teams and key partners work differently and service design reflects learning from the pandemic.

## **Workforce Development**

Supervision sessions continued to be the main opportunity for staff to discuss career development, learning and profession-specific training to support them in their roles.

Despite Covid-19, leadership development programmes have continued, however uptake levels were not particularly high due to service pressures and other priorities. During 2021-22, there will be an increased focus on leadership programmes and development, such as Project Lift, Leading for the Future etc. as part of the remobilisation of services into the new model of working and delivery of services.

A number of staff continue to be supported on other leadership programmes through the NHS and the Council, representing positive opportunities for staff to develop into leadership and management roles.

Within Children and Families, Joint Consultative Committees (JCC) are now in place for locality services and looked after children's services; this builds on significant work over the past two years to address a number of long-standing issues of concern pertaining to staffing, recruitment, workloads and premises. This model has been particularly valuable as the pandemic continued during 2020-21, ensuring improved opportunities to identify and resolve matters as they arose. Alongside this, regular Council workforce updates and NHS Core Brief emails contributed to a range of additional communications with staff and managers.

At the end of 2020, West Dunbartonshire HSCP staff took part in an 'Everyone Matters' pulse survey, with a local response rate of 52%. The survey asked about wellbeing, worries, support and change and responses were generally quite positive but reflected the uncertainty as a result of changing restrictions and will continue to inform HR and employee wellbeing priorities over the next year.

Staff will be offered the opportunity to take part in the annual iMatter staff engagement survey once again during summer 2021. Following this, team action plans will be developed to support improvements and to identify what is important to staff.

Finally, the creation of an Organisational Development Officer post within the HSCP will provide additional strength to the development of the workforce and the wider organisation during the next year. Learning by services from the response to, and recovery from, the pandemic will be an important source for longer-term organisational development activity across teams.

## **5. KEY PRIORITIES FOR RECOVERY**

The organisation has continued to learn from the experiences of staff and service users around the use of technology as a response to the pandemic-related restrictions on service provision; this will inform future investment in new technology to support staff who will continue to work in different ways and also support service delivery, including the continued use of remote and digital services where appropriate. Local and regional workstreams will progress this activity into 2021-22, given the learning from moving several aspects of service provision onto digital platforms.

Returning to the workplace for staff will primarily be dependent on Scottish Government guidance and Public Health advice. West Dunbartonshire Council's accommodation strategy will also determine the speed of any return to the workplace, however in all instances this will be based on the requirements of the role being carried out and will also take into account any personal circumstances of individuals. This is currently being reviewed by managers and being discussed with staff as part of the Council's restart planning process.

The key areas of priority for social work services in West Dunbartonshire are expected to focus on a number of key areas:

- Exploring how redesigning services can integrate to recovery work, including a community based family support model and review of current "duty" services across adults and children's services to improve access to services, consistency of approach to referrals of concern and requests for assistance;
- Ongoing work with Council and Health Assets teams to review the future needs for services, informed by a significant review of workstyles for staff that reflect learning from the pandemic;
- Review and update risk assessments for operational social work activity, reflecting up-scaling direct contact with users of services, buildings reintroducing public access etc.
- Online or blended models for child protection and adult protection training if face-to-face training is not possible in the short term;
- Securing appropriate technology to ensure ongoing flexibility of working and to promote digital engagement with services users where this is appropriate, safe and manageable;
- Identifying how we can support new members of staff and students within increased levels of home working;
- Contingency planning to meet a spike in demand, including for child and adult protection services as well as a backlog of demand for justice social work and mental health services as Sheriff Courts plan for a return to normal criminal and civil business;
- Continued activity to scope how services can operate in ways that protect the health of the workforce, individuals using our services and the public by following national and local guidance and protocols;

Finally, as acknowledged throughout this report, the past year has presented unforeseen, fast-changing and hitherto unknown challenges to service users, staff and managers which have impacted on us all, both personally and professionally. Despite this, in writing this report, I am again struck by the courage, commitment, tenacity and dedication of my social work, social care and health colleagues and their ability to not only ensure provision of essential services to the most vulnerable in our communities but to continue to innovate, inspire and achieve in the most uncertain and demanding of circumstances. Again, the successes of the past year are theirs; whilst the impact of Covid-19 will continue for some time, I am certain that the resilience and strength of our staff and our key partners will continue to improve lives with the people of West Dunbartonshire.

**Jonathan Hinds**  
**Head of Children's Health, Care and Justice**  
**Chief Social Work Officer**  
**August 2021**

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration****Council: 29 September 2021**

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**Subject: Council and Committee Timetable – November 2021 to June 2022****1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The Council is asked to approve a committee timetable for the period November 2021 to June 2022.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Council:-

- (a) agrees a timetable of meetings for the period November 2021 to June 2022 as shown at Appendix 1 to this report; and
- (b) agrees that where a meeting agenda contains three or less reports the Chair, in consultation with the Clerk, will decide whether the meeting is held remotely or in hybrid form.

**3. Background**

- 3.1** At its meeting on 26 August 2021 the Council agreed meeting dates for the month of October 2021 and to continue consideration of meeting dates for the period November 2021 to June 2022 to the September meeting of Council.
- 3.2** It was also agreed that the September 2021 meeting of Council and its committee meetings to be held thereafter would operate as hybrid style meetings that allows a limited number of Elected Members and/or officers to be present in the Civic Space, Church Street, Dumbarton with the remaining members and officers joining remotely via Zoom.
- 3.3** A timetable of meeting dates from 1 November 2021 to 30 June 2022 now needs to be approved to allow Elected Members and officers to plan Council and constituency business for the months ahead.

**4. Main Issues**

- 4.1** The timetable proposed in Appendix 1 to the report is based on the current governance arrangements that have been in place for the last year. The current programme of meetings has worked satisfactorily and ensured that Council business is dealt with timeously.

- 4.2** Appendix 2 of the report shows the dates proposed by the Administration at the Council meeting on 26 August.

#### Planning Committee

- 4.3** Meetings of the Planning Committee will be held monthly from November 2021 to June 2022. If there is insufficient business in any month the meeting will be cancelled following consultation with the Chair.

#### Appeals Committee

- 4.4** Meetings of the Appeals Committee have been scheduled to meet one Thursday per month with the exception of July and December. In the event that there are no appeals to be heard the scheduled monthly meeting will be cancelled in consultation with the Chair and similarly additional dates may be set if there are a number of appeals to be considered at any one time.

#### Licensing Board

- 4.5** The Licensing Board agrees its own timetable of meetings therefore the dates shown in the appendices are suggested dates only.

#### Other issues

- 4.6** It should also be noted that the meeting dates of the Joint Consultative Forum and Community Planning West Dunbartonshire Management Board are determined by each of these bodies and therefore the dates shown in the appendices are suggestions only.

- 4.7** The meeting dates of the West Dunbartonshire Health & Social Care Partnership Board and its Audit & Performance Committee are set by the Board. The dates shown in Appendix 1 are dates that will be considered at its meeting on 20 September.

- 4.8** In accordance with Standing Orders, the date of the Statutory Meeting of Council i.e. the first meeting of the newly formed Council following the local government elections in May 2022, will be set by the Chief Executive and therefore the dates shown in the appendices are provisional.

- 4.9** It is anticipated that the remainder of the committee timetable for 2022/23 will be presented to the Council meeting scheduled to be held on 22 June 2022.

#### Hybrid meetings

- 4.10** It should be noted that some meetings can be short. Examples of this are the Tendering Committee; special meetings and trust committees. A considerable amount of setting-up and officers resource is required to

operate hybrid meetings. Therefore, Council may wish to consider whether it is best use of these resources to hold meetings with fewer than three reports of business in hybrid form or if these should continue as remote meetings.

## **5. People Implications**

- 5.1** Since the introduction of remote meetings in June 2020, two members of the Committee Services team have been required at the majority of meetings. The team has coped however, this has had an impact on other work that the team carries out.
- 5.2** The introduction of hybrid meetings will require a third member of the team to assist at meetings putting considerably more pressure on the small team, particularly during periods of annual leave or sickness absence.
- 5.3** If the number of meetings were to increase this would put significant pressure on the limited resources in Committee Services.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1** A programme of meetings based on the frequency similar to last year's timetable will have no financial implications. However, any increase would have an impact on the staffing resources currently available. The continuation of daytime meetings also removes the need for overtime costs for some of the officers who have to attend these meetings.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** If the Council fails to approve a timetable of meetings at this time then all matters requiring Council/committee decision will need to be submitted to special meetings of Council. Given that a Council meeting would not be a suitable forum to consider regulatory matters such as planning and licensing, it is recommended that Council approves the proposed dates as detailed in the appendix attached, or agrees alternatives.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1** An initial equalities impact screening was carried out on venues for committee meetings. The outcome of that screening was that there would be little or no impact on equalities groups in West Dunbartonshire.
- 8.2** The introduction of live audio streaming provides that meetings are now accessible to some groups that may not have previously been able to attend.

## **9. Consultation**

- 9.1** Finance and legal officers have been consulted on the content of this report.

## 10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1 This report does not have a direct impact on the Council's strategic priorities. However, it is essential that the Council's decision making structures are effective therefore enabling the Council to make the necessary decisions and monitor the work of Council departments which will implement the strategic priorities across a range of services.

**Peter Hessett**  
**Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration**  
**Date: 10 September 2021**

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**Person to Contact:** Christine McCaffary, Senior Democratic Services Officer,  
Email - [christine.mccaffary@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:christine.mccaffary@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

**Appendices:** **Appendix 1** - Timetable of Meetings of West  
Dunbartonshire Council and its committees – November  
2021 to April 2022

**Appendix 2** – Timetable proposed by the Administration  
at Council meeting on 26 August 2021

**Background Papers:** None

**Wards Affected:** All

## Council and Committee Timetable November 2021 – June 2022

### November 2021

			<u>Format</u>
Tues 2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov	2pm	Licensing Board	TBC
Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup> Nov	10am	Housing and Communities Committee	Hybrid
Wed 10 <sup>th</sup> Nov	9:30am 10am	Tendering Committee Corporate Services Committee	Hybrid Hybrid
Mon 15 <sup>th</sup> Nov	10am	HSCP Audit and Performance Committee	TBC
Wed 17 <sup>th</sup> Nov	10am 2pm	Infrastructure, Regeneration & Economic Development Committee Audit Committee	Hybrid Hybrid
Thurs 18 <sup>th</sup> Nov	10am	Community Planning West Dunbartonshire Management Board	TBC
Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup> Nov	10am	HSCP Board	TBC
Wed 24 <sup>th</sup> Nov	2pm	<b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b>	Hybrid
Thurs 25 <sup>th</sup> Nov	9:30am	Appeals Committee	Hybrid
Mon 29 <sup>th</sup> Nov	10am	Cultural Committee	Hybrid

## **December 2021**

Wed 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec	9:30am 10am 2pm	Tendering Committee Licensing Committee Educational Services Committee	Hybrid Hybrid Hybrid
Thurs 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec	2pm	Joint Consultative Forum (provisional)	TBC
Wed 8 <sup>th</sup> Dec	10am 2pm	Licensing Board Planning Committee	TBC Hybrid
Wed 22 <sup>nd</sup> Dec	10am	<b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b>	Hybrid

## **January 2022**

Wed 12 <sup>th</sup> Jan	9:30am	Tendering Committee	Hybrid
Mon 24 <sup>th</sup> Jan	10am	Cultural Committee	Hybrid
Thurs 27 <sup>th</sup> Jan	9:30am	Appeals Committee	Hybrid

## **February 2022**

Wed 2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb	10am 2pm	Licensing Committee Housing & Communities Committee	Hybrid Hybrid
Thurs 3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	10am	Community Planning West Dunbartonshire Management Board	TBC
Wed 9 <sup>th</sup> Feb	10am	<b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b>	Hybrid

Tues 15 <sup>th</sup> Feb	10am	Licensing Board	TBC
Wed 16 <sup>th</sup> Feb	10am 2pm	Planning Committee Infrastructure, Regeneration & Economic Development Committee	Hybrid Hybrid
Thurs 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb	9:30am	Appeals Committee	Hybrid
Mon 21 <sup>st</sup> Feb	10am	HSCP Board	TBC
Wed 23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	9.30am 10am	Tendering Committee Corporate Services Committee	Hybrid Hybrid

### **March 2022**

Wed 2 <sup>nd</sup> March	10am	Audit Committee	Hybrid
Mon 7 <sup>th</sup> March	10am	HSCP Audit and Performance Committee	TBC
Wed 9 <sup>th</sup> March	10am	<b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b> (Budget and Statutory reports)	Hybrid
Wed 16 <sup>th</sup> March	9:30am 10am	Tendering Committee Educational Services Committee	Hybrid Hybrid
Mon 21 <sup>st</sup> March	10am	HSCP Board	TBC
Wed 23 <sup>rd</sup> March	2pm	<b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b>	Hybrid
Thurs 24 <sup>th</sup> March	9:30am	Appeals Committee	Hybrid
Mon 28 <sup>th</sup> March	10am	Cultural Committee	Hybrid

## **April 2022**

Tues 19 <sup>th</sup> April	10am	Licensing Board	TBC
Wed 20 <sup>th</sup> April	9:30am 10am	Tendering Committee Planning Committee	Hybrid Hybrid
Wed 27 <sup>th</sup> April	10am	Licensing Committee	Hybrid
Thurs 28 <sup>th</sup> April	9:30am	Appeals Committee	Hybrid

## **May 2022**

Thurs 5 <sup>th</sup> May		LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS	
Mon 23 <sup>rd</sup> May	10am	HSCP Board	TBC
<b>Wed 25<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>10am</b>	<b>West Dunbartonshire Council (Statutory Meeting) (provisional)</b>	Hybrid

## **June 2022**

Wed 8 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30am 10am 2pm	Tendering Committee Planning Committee Licensing Committee	Hybrid Hybrid Hybrid
Wed 15 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30am 2pm	Audit Committee Educational Services Committee	Hybrid Hybrid
Mon 20 <sup>th</sup> June	10am	HSCP Audit and Performance Committee	TBC

Wed 22 <sup>nd</sup> June	10am	<b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b>	Hybrid
Thurs 23 <sup>rd</sup> June	9.30am	Appeals Committee	Hybrid
Mon 27 <sup>th</sup> June	10am	HSCP Board	TBC

**Exceptions:**

- The Licensing Board, as a separate legal entity, sets its own timetable. Any dates shown here for Licensing Board meetings are subject to the Board's decision. Council asks that the Chair of the Board considers raising these proposals with the Clerk to the Board, with a view to presenting the proposals for discussion and decision as soon as practicable.
- The Health and Social Care Partnership Board and its Audit & Performance Committee and the Community Planning West Dunbartonshire Management Board also set their own meeting timetable. The meetings shown here are suggestions only.

**TIMETABLE OF MEETING DATES PROPOSED BY ADMINISTRATION AT COUNCIL MEETING ON 26 AUGUST 2021**

**2021**

**October**

Wed 6th Oct	9:30am Tendering Committee	} October dates already } agreed by Council on } 26 August 2021 } }
	10am Planning Committee	
Wed 20 <sup>th</sup> Oct	10am Licensing Committee	
Thurs 21st Oct	9:30am Appeals Committee	
Wed 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct	10am <b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b>	

**November**

Tues 2nd Nov	2pm Licensing Board
Wed 3rd Nov	10am Housing and Communities Committee
Wed 10th Nov	9:30am Tendering Committee 10am Planning Committee
Wed 17th Nov	10am Infrastructure, Regeneration & Econ Dev Committee 2pm Audit Committee
Thurs 18th Nov	10am Community Planning WD Management Board
Mon 22nd Nov	10am Cultural Committee
Wed 24th Nov	10am Corporate Services Committee
Thurs 25th Nov	9:30am Tendering Committee 1pm HSCP Board Audit & Performance Committee 2pm HSCP Board

**December**

Wed 1st Dec -	9:30am Tendering Committee 10am Licensing Committee 2pm Educational Services Committee
Thurs 2nd Dec	2pm Joint Consultative Forum (provisional)
Wed 8th Dec -	10am Licensing Board 2pm Planning Committee
Wed 22nd Dec	10am <b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b>

**2022**

**January**

Wed 12th Jan	9:30am Tendering Committee 10am Planning Committee
Mon 24th Jan	10am Cultural Committee
Thurs 27th Jan	9:30am Appeals Committee

## **February**

Wed 2nd Feb	10am Licensing Committee 2pm Housing & Communities Committee
Thurs 3rd Feb	10am Community Planning WD Management Board
Wed 9th Feb - Tues 15th Feb	10am <b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b>
Wed 16th Feb	10am Licensing Board 10am Planning Committee 2pm Infrastructure, Regeneration & Econ Dev Committee
Thurs 17th Feb	9:30am Appeals Committee
Wed 23rd Feb	9.30am Tendering Committee 10am Corporate Services Committee
Thurs 24th Feb	1pm HSCP Board Audit and Performance Committee 2pm HSCP Board

## **March**

Wed 2nd Mar	10am Planning Committee 2pm Audit Committee
Wed 9th Mar - reports)	10am <b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b> (Budget and Statutory
Wed 16th Mar	9:30am Tendering Committee 10am Educational Services Committee
Wed 23rd Mar	10am <b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b>
Thurs 24th Mar	9:30am Appeals Committee 2pm HSCP Board
Mon 28th Mar	10am Cultural Committee

## **April**

Tues 19th Apr	10am Licensing Board
Wed 20th Apr	9:30am Tendering Committee 10am Planning Committee
Wed 27th Apr	10am Licensing Committee
Thurs 28th Apr	9:30am Appeals Committee

## **May**

Thurs 5th May	LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS
Wed 18th May	2pm <b>West Dunbartonshire Council (Statutory Meeting)</b> <b>(provisional)</b>

## **June**

Wed 8th June	9:30am Tendering Committee 10am Planning Committee 2pm Licensing Committee
Wed 15th June	10am Audit Committee 2 pm Educational Services Committee
Wed 22nd June	10am <b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b>
Thurs 23rd June	9:30am Appeals Committee 1pm HSCP Board Audit and Performance Committee 2pm HSCP Board

**Exceptions:**

At the discretion of the Convener, the Tendering Committee may start earlier (but not earlier than 9am) to avoid clashing with the start of other committees.

The Licensing Board, as a separate legal entity, sets its own timetable. Any dates shown here for Licensing Board meetings are subject to the Board's decision. Council asks that the Chair of the Board considers raising these proposals with the Clerk to the Board, with a view to presenting the proposals for discussion and decision as soon as practicable.

The Health and Social Care Partnership Board and its Audit & Performance Committee and the Community Planning West Dunbartonshire Management Board also set their own meeting timetable. The meetings are shown here are suggestions only.

## WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by  
Chief Education Officer &  
Chief Officer Shared Services Roads & Neighbourhood  
(West Dunbartonshire & Inverclyde)

Council: 29 September 2021

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**Subject: Leamy Foundation**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members that officers will continue discussions with the Leamy Foundation to establish how we can best work together.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked:

- To note that officers will continue to engage with the Leamy Foundation with a view to reaching shared goals; and
- To note that there is potential for the Council to enter a partnership agreement with the Leamy Foundation for 2 years from October 2021 to October 2023.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 At a meeting of Council on 23 June 2021, the Chief Education Officer presented a report on the work that the Leamy Foundation performs and how that work is funded. Members noted the report and information it contained and agreed the following:

*“Council confirms that we hope to consider the Leamy Foundation a Strategic Partner and Council officers will engage with the Leamy Foundation to continue to identify approaches to working together on shared goals; and that a report will be brought back to Council no later than September to detail the approaches to working together on shared goals although, these would all be subject to overcoming the significant challenges in terms of Procurement Law.”*

- 3.2 In August 2021 Council Officers met with the Leamy Foundation to begin discussions around shared working approaches and goals.

**3.3** The Leamy Foundation is a local charity based in Alexandria. The Leamy Foundation aspires to create positive, confident and connected communities promoting active community food growing and developing natural heritage outdoor learning resources.

#### **4. Main Issues**

##### **4.1 Shared Goals**

The Leamy Foundation and Council officers met in August 2021 and discussed partnership approaches relevant to the Council's Food Growing Strategy and Strategy for Excellence and Equity.

##### **4.1.1 Food Growing Strategy Goals:**

- develop and manage Growing West Dunbartonshire group (35 Community food growing groups), including charring Monthly meetings;
- deliver annual spring events;
- increase the number of community based "learning for sustainability" food growing resources;
- increase number of community involvement activities;
- reduce carbon footprint via locally grown food and reduced food waste;
- develop a network of community based and led social prescription gardening resources and activities throughout West Dunbartonshire. (89% of participants reporting improved wellbeing); and
- secure external investment for Community food growing groups;

##### **4.1.2 Delivering Excellence and Equity Goals:**

- deliver curriculum projects to support capacity building of schools and early learning centres to provide children and young people with learning contexts to support an understanding of global ecological issues and to develop awareness of ways in which they can contribute as young citizens to reducing the carbon footprint;
- deliver the 'Learn and Grow' project supporting outdoor learning focussing on sustainable food sources with children, young people and families;
- support the Holiday Hunger initiative delivering family Learn and Grow holiday programmes; and
- engage with pupil nurture groups using outdoor learning and food growing to support mental and emotional wellbeing building resilience, and confidence.

#### **4.1.3 Alexandria Town Centre**

The Leamy Foundation have been contributors, along with other members of our community, towards the recently approved Masterplan for Alexandria. Their support has been in relation to projects developing green corridors and improved connections from the town to the River Leven. The Foundation will be able to contribute towards projects as they develop, in particular our drive towards the '20 minute neighbourhood' ambitions of the Council and our place making works.

**4.2** The recently approved Alexandria masterplan identifies a number of key projects and as funding is sourced there may be opportunity for the Leamy Foundation to play a role in supporting this Town centre regeneration works.

#### **4.3 Partnership Agreement**

Council Officers from Greenspace and Educational Services will now work towards producing a partnership agreement with the Leamy Foundation building on joint goals.

**4.3.1** The goals of a potential partnership for Greenspace would be to include:

- increase the number of new community volunteers, family and community leaders;
- reduce the Net Zero Carbon impact via use of locally grown food, reducing food waste; and
- Create community food growing hubs in each of West Dunbartonshire's three main towns.

**4.3.2** The goals of a potential partnership for Educational Services would be to include:

- ensure all educational establishments have a growing space and support from Learn and Grow;
- increase the number of 'Learning for Sustainability' food growing resources/ activities in schools/ELC; and to
- increase the number of Learn and Grow family projects targeting areas of high deprivation.

**4.3.3** The partnership could form one overarching Council agreement.

### **5. People Implications**

**5.1** There are no people implications arising from this report.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

- 6.1** As the final details have yet to be confirmed with the Leamy Foundation the detailed budgetary allocations are not yet finalised. However, it is anticipated that any costs associated with a potential partnership would come from within existing resources.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** Without the benefit of the usual financial and organisational checks which would be carried out under a regulated procurement exercise, there is a risk to the delivery of programmes. It is therefore intended that as part of the process in preparing the future report to Council, the financial stability of the Leamy Foundation is a consideration.
- 7.2** The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 requires that for regulated contracts (those for goods and services over £50,000 and over £2m for works) are advertised on the Public Contracts website and that all potential bidders are to be treated in an equal and transparent manner. The Act also provides remedies of damages and set aside/amendment of contracts for breaches of the legislation. Accordingly if the Council were mindful to conclude a partnership, it may only be possible to do so to a limited extent or alternatively it may only be possible following a formal procurement process.
- 7.3** The Leamy Foundation has no known links to Serious and Organised Crime which would have significant political and reputational ramifications for the Council.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1** An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken and there are no issues of concern relating to this report.

## **9. Environmental Sustainability**

- 9.1** This report is relevant to the Council's Climate Change Strategy by addressing an approach which is anticipated to promote the following aims:
- 'Learning for Sustainability' food growing resources / activities in schools / ELCC and local communities;
  - Community volunteers, family, and pupil leaders; and
  - Reducing the Net Zero Carbon impact via use of locally grown food, reducing food waste.

## **10. Consultation**

- 10.1** All Chief Officers, Legal Services and the Corporate Procurement Unit have been consulted on the contents of this report.

## 11. Strategic Assessment

11.1 This report aligns with the strategic priorities of the Council for 2017 - 2022.

**Laura Mason**  
**Chief Education Officer**  
**11 August 2021**

**Gail Macfarlane**  
**Chief Officer Shared Services Roads &  
Neighbourhood**

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**Person to Contact:**

Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer  
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Gail Macfarlane, Chief Officer Shared  
Services Roads & Neighbourhood  
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**Appendix:**

None

**Background Papers:**

Equalities Impact Assessment

Report to Council - 23 June 2021

**Wards Affected:**

All Wards

