

THE MORAY COUNCIL**MINUTE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE MORAY COUNCIL****WEDNESDAY 3 JULY 2013****COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN****PRESENT**

Councillors J.S. Cree (Convener), A.G. Wright (Council Leader), G.G. Alexander, G.S. Coull, J. Cowe, L. Creswell, J.A. Divers, P. Gowans, M. Howe, B. Jarvis, G. Leadbitter, J. Mackay, G. McDonald, E.M. McGillivray, A.C. McKay, A.J. McLean, F. Murdoch, P. Paul, R.H. Shepherd, A.A. Skene and C.P. Tuke.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillors J. Allan, M.J. McConachie, S. Morton, D. Ross and M. Shand.

IN ATTENDANCE

The Chief Executive, the Corporate Director (Corporate Services), the Corporate Director (Environmental Services), the Corporate Director (Education and Social Care), the Head of Financial Services, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Head of Direct Services, the Transportation Manager, the Environmental Services Manager, the Educational Resources Manager, Mr M Cross Principal Planning Officer, the Equalities Officer and the Democratic Services Manager as Clerk to the meeting.

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

In terms of Standing Order 28, the meeting agreed to vary the order of business set down on the agenda and take Item 8 "Sustainable Education Review" as the first item of business in order to allow the Corporate Director (Education and Social Care) to depart the meeting at the earliest convenience.

2. URGENT BUSINESS

The Meeting agreed to accept a verbal update on the issue of electric vehicle charging points which had been discussed at the meeting of the Economic Development & Infrastructure Services Committee on 25 June 2013 on the Chairman certifying that in his opinion it required to be considered on the grounds of urgency in order to give early consideration to further developments relating to the decision taken by that Committee.

The Meeting further agreed to accept an urgent acclamatory motion by Councillors McLean and Coull in relation to the European Pipe Band Championships held in Forres on 29 June 2013.

3. DECLARATION OF GROUP DECISIONS

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillor's Code of Conduct the meeting noted that both the SNP Group and the Administration Group had discussed Item 5 "Revenue Budget Savings Options for 2014/2015 to 2016/17.

There were no other declarations from group leaders or spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how members will vote on any item on the Agenda nor any declarations of Members Interest in respect of any Item on the Agenda.

4. SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION REVIEW

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Education and Social Care) asking the Council to consider the engagement of external advisors to support the undertaking of a review of the school estate and to agree the process and remit to be used by advisors in undertaking the review. The report further asked the Council to consider granting delegated authority to the Head of Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport to appoint external advisors and to establish a steering group to oversee the review of the school estate.

Following consideration, the Council agreed to:

- (i) the process and remit to be used by advisors in undertaking the review of the school estate and that this include consultation with a cross section of pupils from across Moray;
- (ii) grant delegated authority to the Head of Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport to appoint external advisers, and
- (iii) establish a steering group to oversee the review of the school estate consisting of the Chair and Depute Chair of Children and Young Peoples Services Committee, the SNP Group and Labour Group respective spokespersons.

5. UNAUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2012/13

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) a note of the Unaudited Accounts for The Moray Council for the year ended 31st March 2013.

During discussion, clarification was sought in respect of the information relating to capital expenditure as detailed in paragraph 9 of the report and it was agreed that the Head of Financial Services would provide to Members an explanatory table in respect of reconciliation relating to capital expenditure.

Thereafter, the Council noted the Unaudited Accounts of the Moray Council for the year to 31st March 2013.

6. 2012/13 REVENUE OUTTURN AND ANALYSIS OF VARIANCES

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) advising the Council of the actual outturn and the major variances from budget for 2012/13.

Following consideration, the Council:-

- (i) noted the actual outturn for 2012/13 and the major variances of expenditure against budget;
- (ii) approved the release from the provision for continuing budget pressures as detailed in the report;
- (iii) approved that expenditure relating to late redeterminations of general revenue support granted as detailed in the report was approved to be met from reserves;
- (iv) agreed to review the position when figures for the half year are available after 30th September 2013, and
- (v) to amend the wording at paragraph 6.11 of the report relating to those services currently being reviewed to read "it is recommended that no budget increase is applied at the moment to the following.....etc"

7. REVENUE BUDGET SAVINGS OPTIONS FOR 2014/15 TO 2016/17

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) seeking approval for a number of savings identified following review of the ongoing budget by the Administration Group.

The Convener stated that, with regard to his area of particular responsibility, he had read with great interest the equality impact assessments and in particular those relating to the public toilets, where there were issues in which he was relatively uninformed, particularly in regard to the range of special requirements that people of all ages may have and was grateful to the Equalities Officer for preparing the report which left him better informed of the equalities issues.

Councillor Wright stated that the equality impact assessments had highlighted a range of issues which were not immediately apparent and moved that the Council defer any decision on the closure of public toilets until September 2013 in order to allow further investigation of other options for delivery to be undertaken. Councillor Cree seconded the motion.

Following further discussion during which consideration was given as to this matter being progressed through the Area Based Review Working Group, the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) advised that the Area Based Review Working Group already had an extremely large agenda and as it was unlikely that there would be any change in the position during the rest of the financial year, suggested that there be no closure of the public toilets within the current financial year.

Councillor Wright, in agreement with Councillor Cree, stated that he was content to amend his motion to that effect.

There being no one otherwise minded, the Council agreed to defer any decision on the closure of public toilets until the end of the current financial year in order to allow further investigation of other options for delivery to be undertaken.

Following further discussion, Councillor Coull raised concerns regarding the proposal to remove the subsidy from the 309 subsidised bus service. He stated that in relation to the equality impact assessment and the options outlined in Appendix 1, in his opinion the impact on those required to attend the Job Centre in Buckie had not been taken into account. He further stated that as there is no Job Centre located within Keith and the recent announcement by the Government that those seeking unemployment benefit will be required to attend the Job Centre on a weekly basis, the removal of this service will, in his opinion, place an additional financial burden on those people coupled with an extended journey time and therefore moved that the Council agree Option 1 to retain part of the contract provision. Councillor McLean seconded the motion.

In response to his concerns, the Convener stated that the impact of reduced public transport on those requiring to register as unemployed would be something that should be considered under welfare reform and asked the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) to investigate with the Department of Works and Pension to investigate whether there is any possibility of the provision of an outreach facility.

Following further discussion, Councillor Murdoch, seconded by Councillor Wright moved as an amendment, that the Council agree to amend the budget to reflect the reduction in Public Transport for the withdrawal of all subsidised bus services and to allocate additional funding of £70,000 to mitigate the impact, as detailed in bullet points 1 – 5 of paragraph 4.8 of the report.

On a division there voted:

For the Motion (7)	Councillors Coull, McLean, Gowans, Howe, Leadbitter, McDonald and Paul
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For the Amendment (13)	Councillors Murdoch, Wright, Alexander, Cowe, Cree, Cresswell, Divers, Jarvis, J Mackay, McGillivray, A McKay, Shepherd and Tuke
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Abstentions (1)	Councillor Skene
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Accordingly, the amendment became the finding of the meeting and the Council agreed to withdraw the subsidised bus services and allocate £70,000 additional funding to mitigate the impact as detailed in bullet points 1 – 5 of paragraph 4.8 of the report.

Thereafter, the Council agreed:-

- (i) to defer any decision on public toilets until the end of this financial year in order to allow for consideration of other options for delivery;
- (ii) to approve the implementation of savings identified in paragraph 3.3. of the report;
- (iii) that Councillor Morton submits a report back to Members in 6 months time showing that the current annual grant to the Scottish Local Government Forum Against Poverty provides the Council with value for money; and
- (iv) to amend the budget to reflect the reduction in Public Transport as detailed in bullet points 1 – 5 of paragraph 4.8 of the report.
- (v) to note that the issues raised regarding the impact of reduced public transport on those requiring to register as unemployed will be considered under welfare reform to investigate whether there is any possibility of the provision of an outreach facility.

8. ACCLAMATORY MOTION: EUROPEAN PIPE BAND CHAMPIONSHIPS, FORRES JUNE 2013

The meeting joined Councillors McLean and Coull in expressing thanks and congratulations to all those involved in the successful European Pipe Band Championships which had taken place on 29 June and in particular to the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association for agreeing to hold the event in Forres and to Councillor Alexander for in his role as Chieftain of the Event.

9. AREA BASED REVIEW – PROGRESS REPORT

Under reference to paragraph 9 of the Minute of the Meeting of the Moray Council dated 27 March 2013, there was submitted a report by the Chief Executive providing the Council with an update on progress of the Area Based Review Working Party, which is working on a ten year plan to describe the future of public services in Moray and a 4 year council plan incorporating the financial plan to meet the challenging financial targets previously reported.

Following consideration, the Council agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the report and provided feedback to the working party in respect of the detailed workstreams and the approach being taken to prepare the medium and longer term planning documents for the council;
- (ii) that economic development should be recognised as the most important priority to enable Moray communities to flourish in the years ahead; and

- (iii) that the working party will start to work with other council and community partner groups to oversee projects that relate to the workstreams listed in this report.

10. NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 3

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Environmental Services) asking the Council to agree a response to a Scottish Government consultation document: National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3).

During discussion, Councillor Wright in welcoming the report, stated that in terms of the response and following on from discussions at the Area Based Review meetings, the submission relating to Buckie as a port location be expanded to include its potential beyond offshore renewable and that reference be included to it being seen as a strategic port for the whole of Moray. This was agreed.

Following further discussion, it was further agreed that the terms of the response reference to the A95 be expanded to improve its recognition as a strategic transport route and that particular reference be made in regard to its importance to the whisky industry which was an important part of the economy for the whole of the UK.

Following discussion, regarding the importance of Members lobbying for Moray at every opportunity, Councillor Murdoch advised the meeting that the Moray Economic Partnership would, when appointed, task its public relations officer to collate an information 'crib sheet' that could be used by Members to assist them in promoting Moray when attending meetings/ conferences.

Thereafter, the Council agreed:-

- (i) the terms of its response, and that this included welcoming the inclusion of the previous submission, but that further representation were to be made regarding
- Buckie as a port location for offshore renewable – to include reference to it being seen as a strategic port for whole of Moray
 - Improved recognition of A95 as a strategic transport route and in particular reference to be made in regard to its importance to the whiskey industry which was an important part of the economy for UK
 - Keith as an infrastructure hub for renewable energy
 - Improved guidance on national wind energy spatial frameworks
 - A96 and A95 to be included in NPF3 as National Developments
- (ii) to note that the Moray Economic Partnership will task its public relations officer when appointed to collate an information 'crib sheet' that could be used by Members to assist them in promoting Moray when attending meetings/ conferences.

11. UPDATE ON PLUGGED IN PLACES PROGRAMME - ELECTRIC CAR CHARGERS

Under reference to paragraph 10 of the Minute of the Meeting of the Economic Development & Infrastructure Services Committee dated 25 June 2013 the Council noted the update by the Head of Direct Services on the location of a charging station for electric vehicles following discussions with Transport Scotland which would now see the placement of a charging station in both Elgin and Keith.