

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Special Meeting of the Moray Council

Wednesday, 24 April 2024

Council Chambers, Council Office, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX

PRESENT

Councillor James Allan, Councillor Peter Bloomfield, Councillor Neil Cameron, Councillor Tracy Colyer, Councillor Theresa Coull, Councillor John Cowe, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Amber Dunbar, Councillor Jérémie Fernandes, Councillor Donald Gatt, Councillor David Gordon, Councillor Juli Harris, Councillor Sandy Keith, Councillor Scott Lawrence, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Marc Macrae, Councillor Paul McBain, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor Bridget Mustard, Councillor Kathleen Robertson, Councillor Derek Ross, Councillor John Stuart, Councillor Draeyk van der Horn, Councillor Sonya Warren

APOLOGIES

Councillor Neil McLennan, Councillor Ben Williams

IN ATTENDANCE

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development), Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance, Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Head of Economic Growth and Development, Head of HR, ICT and Organisational Development, Chief Financial Officer, Strategic Planning and Development Manager, Legal Services Manager, Rowena MacDougall, Planning Officer and Democratic Services Manager.

1. Chair

The meeting was chaired for Items 2 – 16 by Councillor Kathleen Robertson and Items 17 and 18 by Councillor Donald Gatt.

2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 21 and 23 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from Group Leaders or Spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Member's interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

3. Resolution

The meeting resolved that in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the public and media representatives be excluded from the meeting for Items 17 - 19 of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information of the class.

Para number of the minute	Para Number of Schedule 7a
---------------------------	----------------------------

5	1 Information Relating to Staffing Matters
6	1 Information Relating to Staffing Matters 11 Information relating to any consultations or negotiations in connection with labour relations
7	6 Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person(s) 8 Information on the amount of expenditure proposed to be incurred by the Authority.

4. Welcome Back

The Council joined the Chair in welcoming Councillor Cameron back to his first meeting following a period of illness.

5. Varying Order of Business

In terms of Standing Order 29, the Chair sought agreement from the Council to suspend Standing Order 29 and deal with the confidential items on the agenda first to ensure they could be considered by all Councillors as the Chair and one of the confidential report authors needed to leave, possibly prior to the report being considered.

This was unanimously agreed.

6. Short to Medium Term Financial Planning [Para 1]

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) to consider feedback from consultation on those savings approved subject to consultation and to consider amendments to the Council's budget projections since the budget was approved.

Councillor Gatt moved to approve the recommendations and agree Option 3 as detailed in paragraph 6.3 of the report. This was seconded by Councillor Macrae.

Councillor Leadbitter confirmed that although he was not in disagreement with the motion from Councillor Gatt, he wished to test what the Council thought and seconded by Councillor Fernandes proposed approving the recommendations and agree Option 2 as detailed in paragraph 6.3.

On the division there voted:

For the Motion (14)	Councillors Gatt, Macrae, Allan, Bloomfield, Colyer, Cowe, Divers, Dunbar, Gordon, Keith, McBain, Mustard, Robertson and Ross
---------------------	---

For the Amendment (9)	Councillors Leadbitter, Fernandes, Cameron, Coull, Harris, Lawrence, Morrison, Stuart and Warren
Not Voted (1)	Councillor van der Horn

Accordingly, the motion became the finding of the meeting and the Council agreed to:

- i) note the revised estimated out-turn for 2023/24 and revised budget for 2024/25;
- ii) approve option 3 as detailed in paragraph 6.3; and
- iii) approve the savings summarised in Appendix 2, having first considered the results of the consultation as summarised in paragraphs 5.7 - 5.8 and more fully in Appendix 3.

7. Voluntary Early Retirement Application [Para 1 and 11]

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) asking the Council to consider an application under the terms of the agreed Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) Scheme.

Following consideration, the Council unanimously agreed:

- i) to proceed with the proposed reduction of the post outlined in Appendix A; and
- ii) approve the application for Voluntary Early Retirement contained therein.

8. Buckie Dredging Update [Paras 6 and 8]

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asking the Council to homologate the decision made by the Chief Executive and to inform the Council of additional costs to the approved dredging works that are required in Buckie Harbour to ensure that the Council is meeting its obligations.

Following consideration, the Council unanimously agreed to homologate the decision made by the Chief Executive to approve additional costs of up to £450,000 to the approved dredging works that are required in Buckie Harbour to ensure that the Council is meeting its contractual obligations.

9. Transformation Strategy

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) asking the Council to approve a first iteration of work towards a new Council Transformation Strategy.

Following consideration, the Council unanimously agreed to:

- i) approve the first iteration of work towards developing the Council Transformation Strategy (Appendix 1) to ensure a continued focus on delivery transformation projects to support the Council's financial sustainability and provide a sound foundation for essential future transformation work; and
- ii) further development work set out in the report.

10. Moray Town Centre Health Check 2023

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) reporting the key findings of the Moray Town Centre Health Check 2023 and to ask the Council to consider adopting the Moray Town Centre Health Check Report 2023 as a material consideration in future retail planning policy and planning application decision making.

Following lengthy consideration, the Council unanimously agreed to:

- i) note the findings of the Moray Town Centre Health Check Report 2023 and the first town centre perception survey;
- ii) adopt the Moray Town Centre Health Check Report 2023, as set out in Appendix 1, as a material consideration in future retail planning policy and planning application decision making from 30 April 2024;
- iii) the publication of the Town Centre Health Check Report 2023 on the Planning and Development website pages; and
- iv) note the ongoing work to source town centre footfall counters.

11. Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment 2023

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asking the Council to consider and approve the Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment 2023.

Following consideration, the Council unanimously agreed:

- i) to note the findings of the Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment 2023;
- ii) the Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment, as set out in Appendix 1;
- iii) the Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment 2023, as set out in Appendix 1; as a material consideration for future planning policy and planning application decision making from 30 April 2024 and submit this a part of the Local Development Plan Evidence report; and
- iv) to delegate authority to the Head of Economic Growth and Development to prepare a StoryMap of the Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment and for this to be published online.

12. Draft Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) seeking the agreement of the Council to approve the draft Moray Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and Delivery Plan ahead of public consultation.

Following consideration, the Council agreed to:

- i) approve the draft Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) (Appendix 1) and Delivery Plan (Appendix 2); and
- ii) note that following public consultation on the draft strategy and delivery plan, the final versions will be presented to Council on 26 June 2024 for approval.

13. Natural Capital Enhancement Opportunities

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) presenting the results of studies conducted to identify natural capital enhancement opportunities in Moray and to seek the agreement of the Council to progress the opportunities identified via the local development plan and development of a suitable project delivery model.

Following consideration the Council unanimously agreed:

- i) to note the contents of studies conducted to identify natural capital enhancement opportunities on Moray Council managed land (Appendix 1) and the wider Moray area (appendices 2 and 3); and
- ii) that the opportunities identified be progressed as part of the Council's next local development plan and through development of a suitable project delivery model to be presented to and agreed by a future meeting of the Council.

14. National Planning Framework 4 Policy 11c - Maximising Net Economic Impact Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asking Council to agree the draft Maximising Net Economic Impact Supplementary Planning Guidance and that it be subject to public consultation for a period of 12 weeks.

Following consideration, the Council agreed:

- i) the draft Maximising Net Economic Impact Supplementary Planning Guidance and that the draft is made available for public consultation for a period of 12 weeks;
- ii) that responses to the draft be reported back to a future meeting of the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee; and
- iii) that external consultancy support is commissioned to work with Officers and partners to develop a Regional Socio-Economic Impact Plan.

15. Tribute to Member of Staff Leaving

The meeting, in noting that this would be the last meeting of the Council prior to the Head of Economic Growth and Development, retiring from the Council, joined the Chair in paying tribute to Mr Grant for his contribution to the delivery of Council services in Moray and wished him well for the future. She further thanked him for all his help to herself and fellow Councillors over the years.

16. Draft Moray Woodland and Forestry Strategy 2024

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asking Council to agree the draft Woodland and Forestry Strategy as part of the evidence for the new Local Development Plan and to agree that the draft Strategy be subject to public consultation for a period of 12 weeks.

Following consideration the Council unanimously agreed:

- i) the draft Moray Woodland and Forestry Strategy 2024
- ii) the draft strategy is made available for public consultation for 12 weeks; and
- iii) that responses to the draft will be reported back to the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee.

17. Biodiversity Study

Prior to consideration of the item, Councillor Gatt took over the role of Chair of the meeting as Councillor Robertson had to leave the meeting at 12.30pm.

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informing the Council of the contents and recommendations from a Biodiversity Study undertaken to provide evidence for the next Local Development Plan.

Following consideration, the Council unanimously agreed to:

- i) note the contents and recommendations within the Biodiversity Study and their relation to the next Local Development Plan; and
- ii) approve the approach outlined in paragraph 4.6 to outsource ecological expertise for larger or complex planning applications.

Councillor Robertson left the meeting following the consideration of this item.

18. Moray Local Development Plan 2027 Evidence Report

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asking the Council to approve the Evidence Report for the Moray Local Development Plan 2027 and delegate authority to the Head of Economic Growth and Development to submit to the Scottish Ministers for the Gatecheck.

Following consideration, the Council unanimously agreed to:

- i) approve the Evidence Report for the Moray Local Development Plan 2027 (LDP27);
- ii) note that the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report will be submitted to the SEA Gateway;
- iii) delegate authority to the Head of Economic Growth and Development to update the Evidence Report to include references for core documents and other relevant evidence and consultees; and

- iv) delegate authority to the Head of Economic Growth and Development to submit the Evidence Report to the Scottish Ministers via the Scottish Government Division for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) for the Gatecheck.