

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Moray Council

Wednesday, 27 September 2023

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

PRESENT

Councillor Peter Bloomfield, Councillor Neil Cameron, Councillor Tracy Colyer, Councillor Theresa Coull, 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 Neil McLennan, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor Bridget Mustard, Councillor Kathleen Robertson, Councillor Derek Ross, Councillor John Stuart, Councillor Draeyk Van Der Horn, Councillor Sonya Warren, Councillor Ben Williams

APOLOGIES

Councillor James Allan, Councillor John Cowe

IN ATTENDANCE

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance, Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Chief Financial Officer, Acting Head of Education Resources and Communities, Head of HR, ICT and Organisational Development, June Burnett, Development Officer, Democratic Services Manager and Caroline O'Connor, Committee Services Officer.

1. Chair

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Kathleen Robertson.

2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Orders 21 and 23 and the Councillors' Code of conduct, Councillor Robertson declared that the Conservative Group had discussed items 7 (Notice of Motion - Telford Bridge) and 12 (Local Visitor Levy) on the agenda and had agreed a position as a Group.

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 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
18	Para 1 Information in relation to staffing matters
19	Para 8 and 9 Information in relation to terms and/or expenditure to be incurred by the Authority
20	Para 1 Information relating to staffing matters

4. Order of Business

Councillor Robertson, in her role as Chair confirmed that she has the ability to accept late papers onto the agenda, however she felt that it was not acceptable to expect Members to read over 171 pages in less than 2 days before a meeting and expect full deliberation of the report. She therefore withdrew the report on the Cloddach Bridge report from the meeting agenda.

She further added that members may wish to question the other late paper on the ELC and Primary School Staffing, however confirmed that with the exception of the covering report, the papers remained the same as those presented to the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on 19 September.

Councillor Robertson further confirmed that Item 13 on the agenda had been withdrawn due to operational reasons and will come back to a future meeting of the Council.

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) understood the concerns around the Cloddach Bridge report, however highlighted that deferral of the report may have risks if not discussed today with regards to funding from the UK Government and proposed considering the report at a Special Meeting of Moray Council following the Special Corporate Committee on 4 October 2023. She further added that any further delay reduces the time available for Officers to produce a Full Business Case, should that be the Council's decision.

Members confirmed that they would be happy to hold a special meeting on 4 October 2023.

Councillor McLennan sought clarification on why Item 19 on the agenda was to be held in confidence.

In response, the Chief Executive confirmed that the report related to staffing issues.

5. Minutes of meeting of 23 August 2023

The minute of the meeting of 23 August 2023 was submitted and approved.

6. Written Questions

The Council noted that no written questions had been submitted.

7. Notice of Motion - Lift the Ban

In terms of Standing Order 35a there was submitted a Notice of Motion by Councillor Fernandes, seconded by Councillor Leadbitter in the following terms:

Right to work for asylum seekers

[Lift the Ban](#) is campaigning to restore the right to work for everyone waiting for more than 6 months for a decision on their asylum claim.

People seeking protection in the UK should be able to work and make the most of their potential, to provide for themselves and their families, similar to Ukrainian refugees who do already have the right to work.

Restrictions on right to work can lead to extremely poor mental health outcomes and waste of potentially invaluable talents and skills, both for the local economy and wider society.

The Council's own risk register lists Human Resources (People) at [Very High](#) with a likelihood of 5 out of 5, and that it is "difficult to recruit in a range of areas including certain subject teachers, vehicle technicians, specialist professional posts, senior management, clerical and administrative roles, temporary and relief staff, and community care employees."

Allowing people seeking asylum the right to work would lead to positive outcomes for individuals as well as benefiting public and private sector organisations in the region who are struggling with recruitment and retention.

A [majority of Scots](#) believe that Scotland needs to attract more people through immigration to work in key industries and public services.

In 2022 the [Shortage Occupational List was expanded](#) to include positions like social care, nursing, opening the possibility of employment for people seeking asylum. Council welcomes the [UK Migration Advisory Council report in March 2023 into labour shortages in the construction and hospitality sectors](#) and the potential use of the immigration system as a response, with a further report following a call for evidence due to be published this autumn.

Action

Council therefore agrees:

- To confirm support for the Lift the Ban campaign and our belief that the right to work is a fundamental human right;
- To formally join the Lift the Ban coalition alongside other local authorities, following the lead of Glasgow who joined earlier this year; and
- To instruct the Council Leader to write to the UK Government urging that they introduce legislation giving people seeking asylum the right to work, setting out the significant workforce pressures Moray is currently facing.

Financial Consequences

- There are no financial consequences.

Councillor Robertson stated that the Notice of Motion requested that a letter be written to the Westminster Government, and as agreed at the previous meeting of Moray Council, any Notice of Motion requesting a letter be sent must include the wording for the letter at the time of submission and as yet the wording had not been received and she therefore declared the Notice of Motion not competent and would not be considered at this time.

In response, Councillor Fernandes expressed disappointment and would re-submit the Notice of Motion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

8. Notice of Motion - Telford Bridge

In terms of Standing Order 35a there was submitted a Notice of Motion by Councillor Harris, seconded by Councillor Ross in the following terms:

Telford Bridge, Craigellachie - Ownership and Future Development

Background

The Telford Bridge in Craigellachie is a world-renowned engineering structure conceived and designed by Thomas Telford and constructed between 1812 and 1814 following a large public fundraising exercise.

The bridge has been recognised as a landmark of importance by both the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Institution of Civil Engineers.

The bridge is currently used as a footbridge over the Spey and is a popular landmark for visitors and locals alike in Speyside. Many visitors come to Moray Speyside specifically to see this historic structure.

The local community, including the Friends of Craigellachie Bridge, have expressed concern over the condition of the bridge and how future maintenance of this historic site can be assured.

Friends of Craigellachie Bridge commissioned an inspection report in 2022, which identified structural repairs that required to be carried out over the coming years. The Friends of Craigellachie Bridge have been established for ten years and have been involved in fundraising, awareness raising, and seeking to establish ownership of the bridge in order to identify a means of maintaining and preserving the bridge for current and future generations to enjoy. There is a pressing need to have a full condition assessment carried out on the bridge.

As a historic monument, future ownership and management of the bridge by charitable organisations, such as a Community Development Trust, a Community Benefit Company or an organisation such as Historic Scotland could provide a possible alternative route to funding major preservation and interpretation works relating to the bridge.

Actions

Council notes the historical significance of the Telford Bridge, Craigellachie and the aspirations of the community with regard to its future preservation.

Council instructs officers to bring forward a report to Council covering the following matters:

- The known condition of the bridge

- What further inspection work may be required to ascertain fully the maintenance requirements and associated costs
- Current ownership and maintenance responsibilities for the bridge including whether a CPO may be required to define clear ownership
- Other future ownership/leasing options that could be considered

Financial Implications

A report would require officer time but could also generate options that would reduce future council involvement whilst securing the long-term future of the bridge as a major historical asset to Moray Speyside.

Councillor Gatt added that it is difficult to disagree with the Notice of Motion, however, given the Council's financial situation, he proposed, seconded by Councillor Bloomfield to move against the motion. He further added that the Bridge does not belong to the Council and is not a priority and along with the multi million pound budget gap it would be difficult to afford even the Officer time to come back with a further report when decisions on closing or cutting other services still need to be taken.

In response, the Head of Commercial and Environmental Services confirmed that a principal survey was carried out on the bridge in 2014 and a general inspection was carried out in 2023 which identified low to medium works and therefore the condition is known. If a detailed condition assessment was to be carried out, it would cost in the region of £30k. She further added that the ownership of the bridge is unknown but a route to determining ownership could be achieved by the Council exercising its Compulsory Purchase Powers, however this could only be undertaken on a full cost recovery basis and this has been discussed with the Friends of Craigellachie Bridge on a number of occasions.

The Chief Executive further added that any expenditure on time or money by the Council needs to be covered by the community and the Friends of Craigellachie Bridge have been directed towards potential funding models which have been successful in other parts of the country. He further added that funding for a community body is more readily available than to the Council and this is the route that Officers are trying to take are keen for the Council to endorse to allow this to progress.

Adjournment of the Meeting

The Chair proposed a short adjournment to allow the proposers of the motion and amendment to have a short discussion with Officers.

Resumption of the Meeting

Following a short adjournment Councillor Harris summed up her motion by stating that there had been a long discussion and both herself and Councillor Ross had provided a good argument for a short report to be brought back to a future meeting of the Council and urged members to support the motion.

In response, Councillor Gatt agreed to withdraw his amendment based on information received during the adjournment and commended the proposer and seconder for bringing the Notice of Motion to the meeting. Councillor Bloomfield agreed to withdraw his seconding of the amendment.

Therefore the meeting agreed the notice of motion as stated.

9. Short to Medium Term Financial Plan

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) which asked the Council to consider the revised budget for 2023/24 and consequent revisions to the estimated budget position for 2024/25 and 2025/26. The report also asked Council to approve a Short to Medium Term Financial Strategy aimed at closing the estimated budget gap by 2025/26.

Councillor Mustard proposed amending recommendation (iv) to read:

iv)	the risk factors set out in section 6 of this report as well as the highlighting the recommendations identified by the Internal Auditor on financial maximisation and improved financial processes.
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Councillor Mustard also suggested amending recommendation 2.2 to read:

2.2	approve the Short to Medium Term Financial Strategy set out in Appendix 2 including a 3 year approach in principle to income strategy.
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In response, the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that a 3 year approach with regards to charging is already contained within the Strategy and will be included in a report on charges later in the year and the report would include revisions to the charging policy looking at extending it over a 3 year period and therefore felt that any amendment at this stage was not required.

In terms of Councillor Mustard's first point the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that she was happy to include more text around the recommendations identified by the Internal Auditor on financial maximisation and improved financial processes within the Strategy document.

In response, Councillor Mustard confirmed she was happy with the responses from the Chief Financial Officer.

Following further consideration the Council unanimously agreed to:

- i) note the revised budget for 2023/24 and, based on current estimates, consequent anticipated small improvement in financial position for 2024/25;
- ii) note the timeline for future revisions of the budget gap;
- iii) note that there is still considerable uncertainty around key budget assumptions in 2023/24 which will further alter the budget gap;
- iv) note the risk factors set out in section 6 of this report ;
- v) note that notwithstanding the small improvement in budget position from that reported in June, the structural deficit remains and given ongoing uncertainties, the Council still requires to make very significant levels of savings in a short time frame; and
- vi) approves the Short to Medium Term Financial Strategy set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

10. Treasury Management Performance Indicators 2022-23

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) providing Council with the annual outturn report on Treasury Management and details of the Council's Prudential Indicators for Treasury Management and Capital Investment for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Following consideration the Council unanimously agreed to note the Treasury Management Performance and the Council's Treasury Management and Capital Investment Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 2.

11. Finance Policy Reviews

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) inviting the Council to approve changes to the Council's Financial Regulations, Authorisation Policy, Grant Funding Procedures and Anti-Money Laundering Policy.

Councillor McLennan stated that he had requested at the last meeting for reference be made to the Whistleblowing Policy be added to the Financial Regulations and Anti Money Laundering Policy but noted this was not included in the updated documents.

The Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance confirmed that he had spoken to the Chief Financial Officer prior to the meeting regarding Councillor McLennan's request and clarified that reference would be made in both documents.

Following consideration the Council unanimously agreed to approve:

- i) the revised Financial Regulations set out in Appendix 1;
- ii) the revised Authorisation Policy set out in Appendix 2;
- iii) the Grant Funding Procedures set out in Appendix 3; and
- iv) the Anti Money Laundering Policy set out in Appendix 4.

12. Elgin Parking Review

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informing the Council of the recommendations following feedback from stakeholder engagement held on 12 April 2023 and the subsequent review of Elgin parking charges.

The Chair moved the recommendations as printed. This was seconded by Councillor Gatt.

Councillor Divers, seconded by Councillor Keith proposed to approve the revised parking charges in high and medium turnover car parks as set out in Section 6 of the report to Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee but to make no change to low turnover car park charges.

On the division there voted:

For the Motion (15)	Councillors Robertson, Gatt, Cameron, Colyer, Coull, Gordon, Harris, Lawrence, Macrae, McBain, Morrison, Mustard, Ross, Stuart and Warren
For the Amendment (7)	Councillors Divers, Keith, Dunbar, Fernandes, Leadbitter, Van Der Horn and Williams.
Abstention (2)	Councillors Bloomfield and McLennan

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

- i) note the recommendation from Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee on 5 September 2023 as set out in para 3.5 below;
- ii) note that the wider parking policy recommendations have been approved by Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee; and
- iii) approve the revised parking charges as set out in para 6.12 of the report for implementation from 1 January 2024.

13. Local Visitor Levy Report

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informing the Council of the introduction of the Visitor Levy (Scotland) bill in the Scottish Parliament and sought approval for the recommendations.

Councillor Dunbar moved to agree recommendations (i) to (iv) and to not agree the principle of the Local Visitor Levy. This was seconded by Councillor McBain.

Councillor Leadbitter, seconded by Councillor Keith proposed the recommendations as printed in the report.

Councillor McLennan raised a point of order in terms of Standing Order 43 on the order of the motion and the amendment.

Councillor Robertson clarified that the motion was with Councillor Dunbar seconded by Councillor McBain to agree recommendations (i) - (iv) and to not support the principle of the Local Visitor Levy and the amendment was with Councillor Leadbitter seconded by Councillor Keith to agree the recommendations as printed in the report.

The Head of Governance Strategy and Performance further added that it was custom and practice of the Council that the first person who speaks is always the motion regardless of whether they are in favour of the recommendations in the report or not.

On the division there voted:

For the Motion (9)	Councillors Dunbar, McBain, Bloomfield, Colyer, Gatt, Gordon, Macrae, Mustard and Robertson

For the Amendment (15)	Councillors Leadbitter, Keith, Cameron, Coull, Divers, Fernandes, Harris, Lawrence, McLennan, Morrison, Ross, Stuart, Van Der Horn, Warren and Williams
Abstention (0)	

Accordingly the amendment became the finding of the meeting and Council agreed:

- i) to note the details of the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill and the proposed timetable through Parliament;
- ii) to note that an expert advisory group, facilitated by Visit Scotland will be formed to offer opportunities for consultation on the Bill;
- iii) to note the requirement to conduct consultation and assess impacts on the area before a final decision to implement a visitor levy can be made;
- iv) to note that the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership has agreed to look at a consistent approach to consultation and implementation of a visitor levy across the region; and
- v) to support in principle the concept of raising funds through a Local Visitor Levy (LVL).

14. Community Asset Transfer - Grant Park Forres

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) inviting the Council to consider options in relation to an asset transfer request made in respect of Trust Land within Grant Park, Forres.

Councillor Lawrence stated that there is recognition within the Community based on the consultations carried out to date that a skate park is needed in the area. He further added that the paper highlights a number of areas which would need to be considered in determining a way forward and added that with the progression of the new Forres Academy, although currently there are a lot of unknowns, one thing that is known is that the current Forres Academy site will no longer have a school on it and the area could be re-landscaped to provide a multi-sport, outdoor facility which could include the skate park.

In considering the above, Councillor Lawrence moved to amend option 2 in the recommendations to agree the principle of the request and instruct officers to evaluate the viability of an outdoor, multi-sport facility within the Forres Area, consulting Forres Skate Park Initiative and other relevant community groups. Council asks that this work is done following the Forres Learning Estate Review, and any findings be reported to the relevant committee. This was seconded by Councillor McBain.

The Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance expressed caution in regards to the motion to agree the request in principle, as the request refers to a specific site, so if the Council were minded they would note the request from the group for the space but wider consideration of other spaces were being considered.

Councillor Divers sought agreement from Councillor Lawrence to remove the words 'to agree in principle' from his motion so it read:

to instruct Officers to evaluate the viability of an outdoor, multi-sport facility within the Forres Area, consulting Forres Skate Park Initiative and other relevant community groups. Council asks that this work is done following the Forres Learning Estate Review, and any findings be reported to the relevant committee.

Councillor Lawrence confirmed he was happy with this change.

Following consideration Council agreed to:

- i) instruct Officers to evaluate the viability of an outdoor, multi-sport facility within the Forres Area, consulting Forres Skate Park Initiative and other relevant community groups. Council asks that this work is done following the Forres Learning Estate Review, and any findings be reported to the relevant committee; and
- ii) note that any future transfer would be subject to planning permission for the proposed use being achieved.

15. Information Reports - if called in

The Council noted that no information reports had been called in.

16. Question Time

CCTV

Under reference to paragraph 12 of the minute of the meeting of 23 August 2023, Councillor Warren sought a further update on the CCTV installations in all towns and whether there would be more than 2 cameras installed in Buckie and Keith.

In response, the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) confirmed that there was 1 outstanding camera to be made fully operational and a contractor was en-route to replace the faulty piece of equipment. In regards to the increase in the number of cameras already installed she was unaware of any increase as the current number were as per the original specification for the project.

Points of Accuracy

Councillor McLennan sought to identify points of accuracy with the minute. Councillor Robertson confirmed that points of accuracy should be dealt with at the point the previous minute is considered on the agenda, as the minute had already been agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. She further added that on this occasion she would allow Councillor McLennan to raise his points but in future to bring them to the Chair's attention at the correct point in the agenda.

Councillor McLennan stated that at the last meeting he sought clarification on whether the Council had a whistleblowing policy and asked for it to be linked to the Financial Policies Review which was accepted by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) at the time and requested that this be recorded in the minute.

The second point related to the review of 2nd tier governance documents and Councillor McLennan had sought clarification on the question marks in the table and the Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance had stated that this was a working document and would be updated as work on the 2nd tier governance documents progressed.

In response to the second point the Chief Executive confirmed that the document was a working document and the answer given at the previous meeting still stood. The Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance confirmed that as the updated documents were presented to Council for agreement the document would be updated.

Councillor McLennan sought agreement that the fact it is a working document be minuted.

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that the discussion around the question marks in the appendix was part of the general consideration of the report and would not form part of the minute.

The Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance confirmed that it is not within his powers to change a minute once it has been agreed. The only mechanism for amending a minute is by Committee/Council approval.

With regards to the question around the Whistleblowing Policy the Democratic Services Manager confirmed that a number of Councillors had raised comments on the Financial Policies which were not minuted, as part of the recommendations, it was agreed that Councillors would provide comments to the Chief Financial Officer by 15 September 2023.

Gender Pay Gap

Under reference to paragraph 8 of the minute of the meeting of 23 August 2023 Councillor Macrae sought an update on any work to address the gender pay gap within Moray.

In response, the Chair confirmed that she had emailed Councillor Morrison and was confident a response would be available imminently.

The Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance urged members of the public to complete the consultation currently ongoing which relates to the Council's budget and also the Corporate Plan priorities. This is an opportunity to have input into the Council's priorities and the consultation is open until 2 October 2023.

Notice of Motion - Lift the Ban

Councillor Fernandes sought agreement to consider the Notice of Motion - Lift the Ban at the meeting of Moray Council on 4 October 2023.

In response, the Chair confirmed that as the meeting was a special meeting, there is no provision in Standing Orders for notices of motion on the agenda.

Independent Inquiry into Alleged Abuse

Councillor McLennan stated that Russell Findley MSP called on the Scottish Government to launch an independent inquiry into the alleged abuse of young people at Celtic Boys Club and sought agreement from the Chair that there should be an independent inquiry into unresolved allegations for child abuse, child safeguarding mishandling and children's rights issues.

In response, the Chair confirmed that this was not a subject she was aware of and would not be prepared to make a comment at this stage.

17. Resumption of Meeting

PRESENT

Councillor Peter Bloomfield, Councillor Neil Cameron, Councillor Tracy Colyer, Councillor Theresa Coull, 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 Neil McLennan, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor Bridget Mustard, Councillor Kathleen Robertson, Councillor Derek Ross, Councillor John Stuart, Councillor Draeyk Van Der Horn, Councillor Sonya Warren, Councillor Ben Williams

APOLOGIES

Councillor James Allan and Councillor John Cowe

IN ATTENDANCE

Chief Executive, Head of Governance Strategy and Performance, Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Chief Financial Officer, Head of Human Resources, ICT and Organisational Development, Acting Head of Education Resources and Communities, Project Manager Education, Democratic Services Manager and Caroline O'Connor, Committee Services Officer.

18. Re-alignment of Services

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) seeking agreement from the Council for the re-alignment of the Education and Social Care Training Team (Social Work Training Team) (with the exception of 1 FTE post) from Education, Communities and Organisational Development to Moray Integration Joint Board with effect from 1 February 2024.

Following consideration the Council agreed to:

- i) note the current position, the drivers for change and the proposals for the future of the Education and Social Care Training Team/Social Work Training Team as outlined in the report;
- ii) approve the proposal to re-align the Education and Social Care Training Team/Social Work Training Team (with the exception of 1 FTE Training Facilitator post) from ECOD to MIJB with effect from 1 February 2024, with the management responsibility transferring from the Head of HR, ICT and Organisational Development to the Head of Service/Chief Social Work Officer (MIJB); and reporting to the Council through the Chief Social Work Officer annual report and agreed governance and accountability arrangements;

- iii) approve the proposal to re-align the 1 FTE Training Facilitator post from the HR, ICT and OD service to the ASN service at a future date, remaining within the Organisational Development team until such date; and
- iv) note that if the proposals are supported, implementation will be taken forward in accordance with the Council's agreed Change Management Policy and Procedures and subject to the appropriate workforce and trade union consultation.

19. Learning Estate Programme - Elgin High School Capacity Expansion Project Update [Para 8 and 9]

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) informing the Council on the current status of the Elgin High School capacity expansion and sought an investment decision by Council to progress to full business case.

Following lengthy consideration the Council agreed to :

- i) approve the outline business case and acknowledge the estimated capital cost growth, to provide additional capacity at Elgin High School which accounts for developer growth across both Elgin Academy and Elgin High School Associated Support Groups;
- ii) the increase to the capital funding allocation for the project; and
- iii) note the estimated funding for the next phase of the project.

20. Business Administration Support for Early Learning and Childcare and Primary Schools Update [Para 1]

The meeting had before it a covering report by the Chief Executive informing the Council on the progress and status of the Business Administration Review for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) considered by the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on 19 September 2023 and the outcomes from those discussions (Appendix 1).

Members were in agreement with the need to modernise the provision however all felt that there should be no detriment to staff.

The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the projected saving from the project had been carried forward for a number of years. She further added that as Section 95 Officer she would give caution to agreeing no detriment to this group of staff as it may lead to detriment for other groups of staff during other budget discussions which have yet to take place.

The Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance further advised the Council that it will need to take difficult decisions in the next few months and raised concern about dealing with this group of staff differently as the decision taken by the Council at this meeting could be inconsistent with the decisions yet to be made.

The Chief Executive confirmed that estimated savings would not be realised this year however Members could be assured that a service review would be carried out but he could not guarantee there would be no detriment to staff.

Councillor Gatt sought clarification on whether there was an opportunity to re-engage the consultation to try and increase the response rate.

The Acting Head of Education Resources and Communities confirmed that this could be undertaken.

Following lengthy consideration the Chair moved the recommendations as follows and there being no one otherwise minded the Council agreed:

- i) the next stage of the project should be a Service Review taking account of the findings of the Change Management Plan consultation process;
- ii) Administration staff, Head Teachers and Parent Council representatives be involved in any Service Review Working Group;
- iii) a new Integrated Impact Assessment be undertaken that addresses all equality issues including any parent/carer impacts; and
- iv) an update report on the review is presented to the next meeting of the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on 28 November 2023.