

## **MORAY COUNCIL**

### **MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2019**

**ROOM 200, ELGIN**

#### **PRESENT**

Councillors G Leadbitter, T Coull, J Allan, J Divers, M Macrae, R McLean

S Wright, (Unison), D Eddie (Unite), Karen Adams (Unite), K Ewen (GMB), A Mair (GMB)

#### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor D Bremner.

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

The Corporate Director (Corporate Services), Frances Garrow Joint Acting Head of Human Resources and ICT and Mrs L Dunlop, HR Admin Team Leader as Clerk to the Meeting.

### **1. DECLARATION OF GROUP DECISIONS AND MEMBERS INTERESTS**

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct Councillor Divers highlighted that he is a member of both Unite and Unison trade unions.

### **2. RESOLUTION**

The meeting resolved that under 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 Item 4 of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information of the class described in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

### **4. WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS OF CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING [PARA 1 AND 11]**

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) inviting the Committee to discuss the workforce implications of the Council's financial circumstances and in particular the proposals that were contained in the budget consultation pack for 2019/20 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the

report.

The Chair made reference to the meeting of the JCC in December 2018 highlighting that it was useful and helped put a human face on the issues they are dealing with. This is important for Councillors in terms of the implications for people and their families.

He noted that there have been a number of developments since the last meeting of the JCC. The Scottish Government proposed budget announced late December 2018 has meant additional financial challenge as the local government settlement was lower than hoped.. There were further pay negotiations at a national level through CoSLA and an increase in the offer. Last week the Scottish Government budget improved the situation slightly by proposing higher grant settlement and increased flexibility in funding including council tax. That combined with extra efforts made to identify savings means the Council is now almost at the point of being able to set a balanced budget by 27 February 2019.

The Chair gave an update on the most recent proposals agreed for consultation at the 23 January 2019 Full Council meeting and invited discussion and feedback on each proposal:

Pools – There has been a phenomenal response to the Use It or Lose It campaign from the public with 200 new sign ups to Fit Life in the first week so it is hoped that the pools won't have to close.

Active Schools – Due to the increase in Fit life memberships the Admin Group are hopeful that Active Schools may also be saved.

Libraries - The European grant funding brings into question some of these savings which are being looked at and the number of people affected is likely to reduce. Frances highlighted that HR have received confirmation from the Library Manager regarding the impact of revised proposals but this has not been communicated to employees yet. It is planned that this will be done today or tomorrow. The Chair advised that the Libraries that will remain open with reduced hours are Fochabers, Lossiemouth, Burghead, Aberlour and Dufftown. The Libraries still proposed to close are Tomintoul and Cullen.

The Chair opened the discussion up for any questions or comments. It was asked if there were any concerns regarding the letters and documents that go with the proposals and the trade unions had no concerns. It was agreed that a phone number is added to the contact details on page 38.

The Chair invited the committee to go through each proposal beginning at page 43:

Sport and Leisure (Page 43) – Unison questioned if the Clerical Admin will be affected by the impact of bringing together Auchernack and Forres House and it was noted that how combining locations impacts staff will be looked at and there will likely be a change management plan.

Libraries (Page 45) – It was noted by the Corporate Director that there will be further equalities consultation based on the revised proposals. The revised information will be issued to the trade unions and consideration given to the staffing impact of the revised proposals.

Essential Skills (Page 47) – There are discussions with Moray College regarding the co-ordination they can take on. Unison questioned if Essential Skills would still be cut even if some Libraries were kept open and it was confirmed that they are two separate savings.

ESOL (Page 49) – It was noted that there are two other Tutors employed by Moray Council that were not initially included in the workforce consultation. There had been an issue in how one of the employees found out about being at risk and it was noted that HR had been made aware of this on Monday and letters have now gone out. It was confirmed that a written apology would be issued to the employee affected.

Educational Psychology (Page 51) – Unison raised concerns that the service is already under pressure with sick leave and staff under duress and queried if there are any thoughts on re-configuring the service. The Chair highlighted that there is funding for school counsellors in the Scottish Government proposed budget and it is hoped that this will release some pressure. It was noted that the Head of Service has advised that the main responsibilities have already been reviewed and a reprioritisation of services has taken place as the saving is a long standing vacant post.

Quality Assurance Team (Page 53) – It was highlighted that this is not a current proposal and should not have been included.

Education Central Admin (Page 55) – Unison raised concerns that the service is under pressure and the staff are struggling with increase in sickness and turnover therefore asked how the workload is going to be managed with a significant reduction in resources. Frances noted that other savings proposals impact on the requirement for admin support and so the requirement and workload for admin will reduce. It was confirmed that this will be kept under review.

Classroom Assistants (Page 57) – It was highlighted that HR have been working with Head Teachers and it looks like the impact will be reduced as there is Devolved School Management (DSM) budget that might be available within schools. The Chair clarified that DSM reduction is at the discretion of the Head Teachers. Unison raised concern that options were not identified before proposals went out as the information should have been available. Denise accepted that it would have been better to have done that and that there were meetings with Primary and Secondary Heads in advance of the savings being proposed to identify how head teachers planned to manage the reduction but that ultimately it was a decision for each school Head. GMB asked if the Classroom Assistants could be moved between schools for replacement hours, although accepted this might not work in rural areas. As a

general principle the Council does try to find an alternatives to make up hours but Frances will check on the specifics and report back to the weekly trade union meeting.

Primary Schools (Page 59) – There were no issues highlighted.

Secondary (Page 61) – Unison questioned how this will impact on the proposals from last year regarding the reduction of Technicians in schools as the support was to come from larger to smaller schools. The Chair highlighted that individual Head Teachers will make the arrangements. Frances highlighted that the Head of Service responded that re-allocation of duties is being considered and information will be fed back at the regular trade union meetings. Unison raised concerns that there won't be savings coming from this therefore there has not been thought to the whole issue and the knock on effects. Denise noted the concern from the unions but highlighted that consultation is about identifying issues and responding to them and while there may be points to be addressed the Council's track record with achieving savings is good.

Sport and Leisure (Page 63) – The Chair highlighted that the changes are as noted earlier in that Lossiemouth and Keith pools are now unlikely to close. Frances highlighted the two proposals, the commercialisation and reduction in staff structure (page 63) and the closure of pools (page 65). Denise highlighted that the council still need to consider the long term plan and the leisure review for longer term.

Active Schools (Page 69) – It was noted this has been discussed already.

Environmental Protection – Janitorial Services (Page 71) – It was noted that this is due to Auchernack closing. No issues were raised.

Environmental Protection – Cleaning Services (Page 73) – No issues were raised.

Environmental Protection - Waste Management (Page 75) – It was noted that this proposal came from the employees as an alternative to the original saving.

Environmental Protection – Public Conveniences (Page 77) – GMB made reference to the Edinburgh tourist tax and highlighted that we can't do this and close the public toilets. Councillor Coull highlighted that the community are taking on the toilets in Cullen. It was noted that at a joint community council meeting last night (also involving the Moray Speyside Tourism) consideration is being given to community involvement in running toilets and how the toilets could be improved. In this regard it was noted that there may be funding available to external bodies that cannot be accessed by the council. There are also comfort schemes being established in various towns and businesses have signed up to this. Councillor Allan noted that Lossiemouth community are now running better toilets and plan to take on another one. There was some discussion on toilet facilities available to employees working out with a

fixed council location and whether the Council could work with other public sector partners to extend facilities available. It was agreed by the Chair that this can be discussed with Community Planning partners. GMB raised that in homecare there are still a number of walkers who in some places don't have somewhere to go for shelter between clients and it was noted that this is a different issue to the closing of public toilets but can be raised through the IJB Chair Councillor Morrison.

Environmental Protection – Street Sweeping (Page 79) – No issues were raised.

Environmental Protection – Waste Management (Page 81) – It was noted that this is a 2020/21 saving.

Environmental Protection – Lands and Parks (Page 83) – It was noted that the proposal is to stop maintaining sites not owned by Moray Council and to reduce the frequency of grass cutting. Consideration is being given to funding from the common good funds. There was discussion on what areas of grass will still be cut and what will be reduced and of possible community involvement so there is the potential for these proposals to change.

Winter Maintenance (Page 85) – The Chair highlighted that some routes will become lower but will be gritted later in the day. Unison raised concerns regarding the effect on employees getting to work and the need to review business continuity plans. The Chair acknowledged these concerns and noted that having compared with neighbouring rural authorities, the Council will not be significantly below others. There is a statutory responsibility to grit roads but the standards required are subjective judgement. Unison questioned if there is any co-ordination between the Council and BEAR Scotland and it was noted that in some areas there is e.g. Keith pavement clearing. There is also co-ordination with Aberdeenshire and Highland on cross boarder routes.

Transportation – School Crossing Patroller (Page 87) – It was noted this isn't a statutory service. There were no issues raised.

Community Safety (Page 89) – It was confirmed that there are 3 Wardens in total and it will be reduced by 1 post. The focus is now on resolving neighbourhood disputes and the Council is working with the Police to look at alternatives.

Development Services Team (Page 91) – Unison highlighted that there seems to be wider proposals and it is difficult to understand so it would be useful to have more information and clarity. The Chair requested that any further information also be sent to the Committee members. Frances noted that work is being done to clarify all the changes and information will be issued to the trade unions and Councillors.

Other issues raised not in papers:

School Janitors – It was raised by the unions that School Janitors in particular are a concern as the budget is held by Education but the staff are managed by Environmental and there are issues getting a firm proposal in place. Frances highlighted that HR are working with the Head of Service and managers to resolve this and there will be a joint meeting with staff and trade unions once a proposal is agreed. Unison raised that this won't meet the 15 February deadline for consultation but it was noted that the saving is in the school year so there is still time to deal with this.

Homecare – Anne Mair raised a suggestion that savings could be made if people were charged for care as sometimes people don't need the care. It was suggested that this should be raised with the MIJB and they may need to be re-assessed.