

AGENDA ITEM NO 3(ii)

APPENDIX I to the minute of meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee of 2 May 2023 (Article x (x)refers)

MINUTE of MEETING of the **CENTRAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE** held in the Board Room, Angus House, Forfar on Thursday 2 March 2023 at 9.15 am.

Present:

Council

Representatives: Councillors BETH WHITESIDE, KENNY BRAES, LYNNE DEVINE, ROSS GREIG, LOUISE NICOL AND MARTIN SHEPHERD.

Teacher Association

Representatives: MIKE CALLAGHAN (EIS)

Trade Union

Representatives: CHRIS BOYLE (UNISON), GLEN ANDERSON (UNISON), MAUREEN DICKSON (UNISON) and GEORGE RAMSAY (UNITE).

Councillor WHITESIDE, in the Chair.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies intimated.

2. COUNCIL PLAN, FINANCE & CHANGE PLAN AND WORKFORCE PLAN

There was submitted Report No 40/23 by the Chief Executive presenting a new five year Council Plan outlining the Council's strategic direction, vision, priorities and actions for 2023-2028, alongside the Finance and Change Plan for the three year period from 2023- 2026, and the Workforce Plan for the period 2023-2028.

The Chief Executive highlighted the unprecedented financial challenges in local government and stressed that the budget presented had been the most difficult and challenging budget to be taken forward with difficult decisions being taken in order to work towards a balanced budget position. She indicated that the Council had already saved £78.1m from its core budget over the last 10 year period and that an estimated £70m over the next five-year period would have to be saved over the lifetime of the Council Plan.

Representatives from UNISON, Unite and the teacher association representative intimated that they were not supportive of the proposed plan.

The Director of Finance gave an overview of the Council's legal duty and statutory responsibilities and also the use of reserves to mitigate savings and cuts to services. He emphasised the requirement that the Council determine a final position on Council Tax and use of reserves to achieve a fully balanced budget, at today's Special Meeting of Angus Council.

3. PROVISIONAL REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2023/2024

(a) Background Report and Setting of the 2023/24 Council Tax

There was submitted Report No 54/23 by the Director of Finance detailing the background to setting the Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2023/24; the summary position of the 2023/24 Provisional Revenue Budget and the 2022/2027 Capital Plan. The Report also set out the steps required with regard to the setting of the Council Tax for 2023/24.

(b) Proposed Budgets for each Service Area

There was submitted Report Nos 41/23 to 50/23 by the Service Directors and Director of Finance setting out the proposed revenue and capital budgets for each service area covering the 2023/24 provisional revenue and capital budgets, budget savings from the Council's Finance and Change Plan budgets for each service area.

Proposed budget savings for financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 were included in Reports on an indicative basis only. Final decisions on these savings would be made as part of the budget setting process for those financial years.

(c) Update on the General Fund Reserve and the Proposed Budget Strategy for the use of the Reserve Balance over the period 2023/24-2027/28

There was submitted Report No 57/23 by the Director of Finance detailing the General Fund Reserve position post the position reported in the Council's 2021/22 Audited Annual Accounts; also set out the proposed budget strategy for the use of General Fund Reserve over the 5 year period from 2023/24 to 2027/28.

(d) Provisional 3 Year Revenue Budget Position for 2023/24 and Indicative Revenue Budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26

There was submitted Report No 58/23 by the Director of Finance detailing the 3 year revenue budget position for the Council starting with the 2023/24 provisional revenue budget position plus indicative revenue budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

The opportunity was then given for Trade Union and Teacher Association Representatives to make comment on the Reports.

Chris Boyle, UNISON, reflected on the 2020 to 2022 year period and reiterated the key messages and areas of concerns that had been brought forward to members attention previously.

Having considered the Reports presented, UNISON highlighted the £60 million in cuts for the next three year period and the impact that these proposals would have on staff over a variety of service areas.

UNISON acknowledged that Angus Council were under extreme pressure like never before and raised that the approach from Central and Scottish Governments towards local government in Scotland, inspired little confidence.

UNISON highlighted that COSLA had regularly warned of job losses and implications for service delivery and in noting the proposed budget savings contained within the Workforce Plan of £2m in relation to workforce related reductions, raised concerns around what this meant in terms of job losses for Angus Council employees.

UNISON also referred to the significant impact and risk to the Council in relation to the creation of the National Care Service highlighting that the proposals as they stood would spell the end of "in house" local authority run social care and social work services.

UNISON referred to the Council Plan for 2023-2028 that indicated radical, wide ranging, innovative ways would require to be taken forward to address the rising costs and reduced budgets. UNISON emphasised that local authorities should challenge National and Scottish Governments in relation to the funding provided to local government.

Other keys points and concerns raised were:-

The move to increased digitalisation of services and potential impact on the community;

Impact of Cost of Living Crisis on Council staff;

Pay that has consistently failed to keep up with inflation for over 12 years; and the use of and impact on staff of temporary employment contracts.

UNISON acknowledged the open and constructive channels of communication between the Council and Trade Unions.

UNISON stated it continued to support the principle of legal “no cuts budgets” whereby authorities utilise underspends, exercise prudential borrowing, reserves and other financial options available to them.

Other trade union representatives present, supported the statement provided by UNISON.

Following questions and discussion, the Reports were noted.