

AGENDA ITEM NO 3(i)

APPENDIX 1 to the minute of meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee of 30 April 2024 (Article x(x) refers)

MINUTE of HYBRID MEETING of the **CENTRAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Thursday 29 February 2024 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), GEORGE RAMSAY (UNITE), SEAN ROBERTSON (GMB), KATE GRAY (UNISON) AND JANETTE HENDERSON (UNISON).

Councillor WHITESIDE, in the Chair.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Dougie Maguire (Unite the Union).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/STATEMENTS OF TRANSPARENCY

There were no declarations of interest or statements of transparency made.

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

There was submitted Report No 49/24 by the Chief Executive presenting an update to the five-year Council Plan outlining the Council's strategic direction, vision, priorities and actions for 2023 – 2028, alongside this was the Finance & Change Plan for the three-year period from 2024 – 2027, and an update to the Workforce Plan for the period 2023 – 2028.

The Report indicated that the updated Council Plan also included a new section setting out Service Plan information, providing strategic level action that the Council were taking to support the priorities, and a range of actions which sat below the strategic actions relating to the operational activities.

The Finance & Change Plan demonstrated how the resources that Angus Council had available were being targeted towards delivering priority areas of work and set out the scope of the proposals for change as part of the Council's Change Plan and Change Programme. It also provided an overview of the revenue and capital funds (General Fund and Housing), outlining where the Council were investing resources and transforming the organisation towards a sustainable future.

The updated Workforce Plan set out how the Council would attract, retain, develop and support their employees in order to meet current and future workforce requirements. In this way they would be able to meet the changing needs of their customers and communities delivering the range of services set out in the Council Plan, and the Community Plan.

The Chief Executive introduced the Report and advised that collectively these plans set out the Council's vision priority and strategic policy framework for the coming period and that the Council's priorities continued to focus on the Angus economy its people and its places.

She highlighted the unprecedented financial challenges in local government and indicated that the Council had already saved £91m from its core budget over the last 11 year period and that an estimated £39m over the next three years would require to be saved.

The Director of Finance gave an overview of the Council's legal duty and statutory responsibilities and 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.

4. PROVISIONAL REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2024/2025 AND BEYOND

(a) 2024/25 Revenue Budget – Summary Financial Context and Financial Sustainability Challenges

There was submitted Joint Report No 50/24 by the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance summarising the overall financial context in which the Council needed to set its 2024/25 Revenue Budget and why this presented significant challenges for the Council's future financial sustainability and service provision. The Finance & Change Plan (Report 49/24 refers) included proposals for savings and cuts which officers were recommending be implemented. It was acknowledged that overall many of these were not proposals that would improve outcomes for the people of Angus but in the context of the Council's financial situation they were options that were open to members to enable them to agree a balanced budget for 2024/25. It was important for elected members, Angus taxpayers and the Council's staff to know that many of the proposals and options for budget savings presented by officers were being put forward solely out of financial necessity and not because officers would in different financial circumstances choose to propose them.

(b) Background Report and Setting of the 2024/25 Council Tax

There was submitted Report No 63/24 by the Director of Finance detailing the background to setting the Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2024/25; the summary position of the 2024/25 Provisional Revenue Budget and the 2023/2028 Capital Plan. The Report also set out the further steps required with regard to the setting of the Council Tax for 2024/25.

(c) Proposed Budgets for each Service Area

There was submitted Report Nos 51/24 to 59/24 by the Chief Executive, Service Directors and Director of Finance setting out the proposed revenue and capital budgets for each service area covering the 2024/25 provisional revenue and capital budgets, budget savings from the Council's Finance and Change Plan; review of charges proposals; and budget issues proposed to be included in the budget. Equalities impact assessments for these proposals were also provided.

Proposed budget savings for financial years 2025/26 and 2026/27 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.

(d) Update on the General Fund Reserve and the Proposed Budget Strategy for the use of the Reserve Balance over the period 2024/25 - 2027/28

There was submitted Report No 65/24 by the Director of Finance detailing the General Fund Reserve position post the position reported in the Council's 2022/23 Audited Annual Accounts and which also set out the proposed budget strategy for the use of General Fund Reserve over the 4 year period from 2024/25 to 2027/28.

(e) Provisional 3 Year Revenue Budget Position for 2024/25 and Indicative Revenue Budgets for 2025/26 and 2026/27

There was submitted Report No 66/24 by the Director of Finance detailing the 3 year revenue budget position for the Council starting with the 2024/25 provisional revenue

budget position plus indicative revenue budgets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 for members to note.

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

Chris Boyle, UNISON presented a detailed statement to the Committee which reiterated key messages and areas of concerns that had been previously brought forward to members' attention over many years of budget cuts since 2013/14.

UNISON highlighted the Councillors' power and position to influence change with regards to funding of local government at both UK and Scottish Governments stating that radical change was needed and that cutting budgets would not achieve this.

UNISON reiterated that continuous organisational change placed a huge pressure on the workforce who were concerned about their futures and such uncertainty was detrimental to their wellbeing.

UNISON stated that the council's workforce was passionate about the services that they provided but they were tired and exhausted, and they needed to be properly rewarded. A 3% pay rise did not achieve that and he stated that pay had consistently failed to keep up with inflation. He also highlighted concerns about the use of and impact on staff of temporary employment contracts.

Chris advised that UNISON fundamentally opposed the council tax freeze and outlined the reasons behind this position.

Specific budget options were highlighted as areas of concern and UNISON presented that these would be detrimental to communities and citizens.

These included: -

- Cuts to the budget for Angus Health and Social Care Partnership and Angus Alive
- Visiting specialists in schools
- Community Enforcement team
- The move to increased digitalisation of services

Unite and GMB representatives supported the statement provided by UNISON and highlighted their opposition to cuts and the need for a different focus on how to fund public services, following which the Reports were noted.