

**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
**EMPLOYEES' JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**  
**WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 14 MARCH, 2016**

- Present:** Councillors R Christie, R Cowling, A Evison, J N Gifford, A Hendry (substitute for Councillor Kitts-Hayes), F C P Hood, S W Pratt, E A Robertson (substitute for Councillor K L Clark), W A C Shand (substitute for Councillor Cox) and J Webster (substitute for Councillor N J Smith).
- UNISON Representatives:** Mr W Edwards, Ms K Ramsden and Ms I Teece.
- LNCT Representatives:** Mr K Madill and Mr D Smith.
- GMB Representative:** Mr J Black.
- Unite Representatives:** Mr D Lawson and Mr T McGivern.
- Apologies** Councillors K L Clark, J B Cox, M C Kitts-Hayes and N J Smith.
- Officers:** Director of Education, Learning and Leisure, Head of Finance, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Head of Planning and Building Standards, HR Manager (Mr Matthews) and Principal Committee Officer.

**APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

In the absence of Councillor Kitts-Hayes, the Committee **agreed** that Councillor Evison would chair the meeting.

**1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

The Chair asked members if they had any interests to declare in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. Councillor Christie declared an interest as a member of UNISON. Councillor Evison declared an interest as a member of Unite.

**2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY**

In taking decisions on the undernoted items of business, the Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
  - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
  - (b) advance equality and opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
  - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
- (2) to consider, where an equality impact assessment has been provided, its contents and to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

### 3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF 5 MARCH, 2014

The Committee **noted** and **approved** the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 5 March, 2014.

### 4. BUDGET UPDATE

The Head of Finance gave an update on the Revenue Budget for 2016/17 which had been agreed by the Council on 11 February, 2016, with £533 million for revenue, £100 million for capital programmes and £60 million for housing. The budget included a programme of savings identified totalling £28 million for 2016/17. There would be continued pressure on budgets in future years, with the budget being £50 million out of balance in the following four years and £15 million of savings required in 2017/18, but there was a plan to address the issue (the Medium Term Financial Strategy), and the Council would work in partnership with the Trade Unions and employees to achieve the savings and try to minimise the impact on staff wherever possible through overtime and vacancy management, reskilling and redeployment, as well as tackling absence and work performance. A budget engagement process with all stakeholders would be carried out which would expand on the previous year's exercise, and a report would be submitted to the Council in November 2016 with budget proposals. For 2015/16 the forecast was to be within budget by approximately £6 million.

Concerns were raised during discussion about vacancy management relating to the impact of holding vacant posts on the remaining members of staff who had to cover the work.

Thereafter, the Committee **noted** the update.

### 5. POLITICAL PRIORITIES

The Chair commented on the political priorities of the Council's administration including investment in active travel, building more affordable homes, the Aberdeen City Region Deal, climate change, estate rationalisation, regeneration, educational attainment, a new community campus at Peterhead, Area Top-Up budgets and carbon budgets. She then invited officers to comment on the actions being taken to implement these priorities.

The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that officers were currently looking at the issue of a new community campus in Peterhead, taking into account proposals for Catto Park and involvement with Peterhead Football Club. This was currently a desktop exercise looking at where such a campus might be sited and what facilities would be included on it. The current building was in a very central location but there were other options. It was intended to arrange a fact-finding visit for some members of the Area Committee and the Education, Learning and Leisure Committee to other new school developments in Scotland.

Matters raised during discussion were that it was important to involve young people in this process, there was potential to have other services co-located on the campus to form a community hub, and the redevelopment of the existing site would be logistically challenging.

The Head of Planning and Building Standards commented on what was being done in relation to active travel and how to develop sustainable mixed communities which were less reliant on car usage. Regeneration focused on the four north towns of Banff, Macduff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead which would each have their own governance group. The Aberdeen City Region Deal had received funding for innovation, affordable housing, rail improvements and the Laurencekirk flyover. Climate change work would take account of the fact that a lot of the energy used by the Council was on heating.

Matters raised during discussion were that for some communities people did need to travel and there was no viable option but to use the car, whether the Council worked with local bus companies to encourage them to provide services in light of a view expressed that services had declined in some smaller villages, whether the results of any staff survey could be reported to the Area Bus Forums, whether parking fees could be dropped or removed in towns to encourage people to use them, the need for more social housing to address the numbers on the Council's waiting list, and the fact that in some schools it was not possible for staff to manually control the heating.

The Head of Finance spoke on the Council's proposals for estate rationalisation which focused on five key outputs of concluding the review of the office estate, consideration of a new headquarters facility, place based settlement reviews, concluding the depot programme and the Worksmart reduction in the number of desks. He also referred to the ongoing future governance work at both officer and elected member level to review the Council's structure and constitutional documents.

Matters raised during discussion were that there needed to be more communication between people working on the depot programme, there was a lack of consultation with staff about the Worksmart reduction in desks, the Council's carbon footprint might be reduced by having more staff working from home, but this would be cancelled out by increased carbon footprints for those working at home, and there was no mention on this agenda of the changes caused by integration of health and social care.

Thereafter, the Committee **noted** the updates.

## **6. TEACHER RECRUITMENT**

The Director of Education and Children's Services gave an update on what was being done in Aberdeenshire Council to address teacher recruitment difficulties. This was a continuing challenge but officers were working hard to anticipate requirements. The annual staffing review was under way for 2016/17 and there was advertising nationally as well as using social networks and other means. This was emphasising the quality of life in Aberdeenshire as a great place to live and work. Probationer teachers were being given an abridged application form and some were being matched to posts in their current schools.

Matters raised during discussion were whether probationers would be able to wait long enough to find out if they would have a job, whether supporting staff who wished to train to become teachers would continue in future years, and how many of the teachers recruited from Ireland and Canada still remained in Aberdeenshire. The Committee also heard from the Joint Secretaries that they did not think the Council could have done much more than it had to improve teacher recruitment and it deserved credit for that.

Thereafter, the Committee **noted** the update

## **7. MANAGEMENT/WORKFORCE INFORMATION**

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development gave a presentation on management and workforce data. Aberdeenshire Council had the sixth largest workforce in Scottish local government and a number of staff had more than one job. In relation to staff costs, overtime had reduced considerably in the last four years. She also referred to enhancements for weekend and night working and relief hours. Use of agency staff had also reduced significantly. Sickness absence had gone up across Scotland and accident and incident reports were made to service Joint Consultative Committees regularly. Use of pool cars was saving the Council approximately £250,000 a year. She also commented on the range of employee benefits and the uptake of online training courses on ALDO.

Matters raised during discussion were whether consideration had been given to making other Council vehicles available for pool use, how the Council worked out its CO<sub>2</sub> savings and the fact that many staff worked unpaid hours and Bodet did not record this information. The Joint Secretaries would be concerned if staff felt pressurised or obliged to work unpaid hours.

Thereafter, the Committee **noted** the presentation.