



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

BUDGET AND STRATEGY BOARD

Minute of Meeting held through MS Teams on
Thursday, 19 December 2024 at 2.30pm.

PRESENT

Mr Paul F Steele (Chair)	Mr Kenneth Macleod
Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE	Mr Donald Crichton
Mr Iain A MacNeil	Mr Iain M Macaulay
Ms Susan Thomson	Dr. Frances Murray
Mr Uisdean Robertson	Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Paul Finnegan	Mr Norrie Macdonald
Mr Angus Morrison	
Mr Ranald Fraser	

APOLOGIES

Mr Calum Maclean

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mr Calum Mackenzie
Mr Norman MacDonald	Mr Colm Fraser
Mrs Emma MacSween	Mr Sandy Gomez
Mr Nick Fayers	Mr Calum Mackenzie
Mrs Anne Murray	Mrs Shona Hadwen
Mrs Fiona Maciver	

MINUTE

Minute of Meeting of 24 October 2024 1

The Minute of Meeting of 24 October 2024 was **approved**.

FINANCE

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the Comhairle) would be disclosed.

The Chair ruled the following item as urgent to allow the matter to be considered prior to the next meeting of the Board.

Budget Strategy Update 2025/26 2

The Chief Executive and the Chief Financial Officer submitted a joint Report providing an update as to the anticipated financial position in respect of the 2025/26 Budget following issue of the draft Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26 and seeking approval of the next phases of budget consultation and preparation. The Report stated that it was agreed by the Comhairle on 4 December 2024 that a programme of public engagement and consultation would take place in early 2025, recognising that the Scottish Government Budget would not be announced until 4 December 2024, with the detail of the Local Government Settlement as regards the Comhairle's budgets not being known until later in December. In order that consultation be meaningful, the Comhairle

authorised the Budget and Strategy Board to determine the content of options for public engagement and consultation.

The Report further stated that the draft Local Government Finance Settlement 2025/26 was issued by Scottish Government's Directorate for Local Government on 12 December 2024, and initial analysis of the letter and provisional total funding allocations indicated a small increase in the revenue budget available to the Comhairle. Full details were set out in the Presentation from the Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer.

The presentation set out the context of the draft Local Government Finance Settlement 2025/26 and what this meant for the Comhairle.

The figures showed a revised deficit of £7,249m and highlighted the options to address the deficit, these included:

- Use of reserves - £2m maximum
- Council Tax Increase of 10% - £1,3m
- Use of Crown Estate Funding - £800k
- Use of additional uncommitted funding in the Settlement - £1,3m
- Service Savings - £2m

The presentation included a number of provisional recommendations in order to meet the deficit.

Members agreed that it was important to carry public engagement on the Comhairle's financial situation and to highlight areas where service savings could be made.

It was noted that the previous public engagement sessions held in each ward were very beneficial, there was a level of understanding out in the communities of the challenges faced by the Comhairle. Councillor representation at Community Council and Community Forum meetings would enhance this understanding further.

Following feedback from member consultation a set of slides would be produced to go out for online public engagement and awareness online.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the projected financial position set out in the draft Local Government Finance Settlement 2025/26 and the Presentation by the Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer of the financial implications for the Comhairle;**
- (2) notes that the Leader and Chief Executive will advise the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government of the implications of the draft Scottish Budget and draft Local Government Finance Settlement as regards the Comhairle, taking into account members comments at this meeting of the Budget and Strategy Board;**
- (3) agree that the Leader work in conjunction with the Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer to create a list of service priorities to be distributed to all elected members for them to rank the service priorities and return to the Leader by the first week in January 2025, following which the Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer, in consultation with the Leader and Depute Leader, would determine the form and content of public engagement and consultation to take place during January 2025.**