



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Stornoway on Tuesday, 20
February 2024 at 12.15pm.

PRESENT

Mr Uisdean Robertson (Chair)	Mr Kenneth Macleod
Ms Susan Thomson (Vice-Chair)	Mr Donald F Crichton
Mr Kenneth J Maclean	Mr Calum Maclean
Mr Iain A MacNeil	Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Iain M Macleod	Mr Malcolm K Macdonald
Mr Paul Steele	Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE
Mr Angus Morrison	Mr Gordon Murray
Mr Ranald Fraser	Mr Finlay M Stewart
Mr John Norman Macleod	

APOLOGIES

Mr Paul Finnegan	Mr George Murray
Mr John A Maciver	

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Mustapha Hocine	Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Grant Fulton	Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Robert Mackenzie	Mr Norman Macdonald
Mr Norman Misty Macdonald	

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mrs Anne MacDonald
Mr Calum Iain Maciver	Mr Norman MacDonald
Mr Calum Mackenzie	Mrs Katie Macaskill
Mr David Macleod	Mrs Shona Hadwen
Mr Kenneth Morrison	Mr Derek Mackay
Mrs Elaine Mackenzie	Mrs Fiona Maciver
Mr Sandy Gomez	Mr James Mackinnon
Mr Donald A Macleod	

Declaration of Interest 1 There were no declarations of interest.

FINANCE

The Chairman ruled items 2(a), (b) and (c) as urgent to enable the Comhairle to set a balanced budget for 2024/25.

Budget and Council Tax Setting 2024/25	2(a)	The Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer submitted a Joint Report which sought approval of the Comhairle's budget for 2024/25 and to set the Council Tax for 2024/25. The development of the Budget had been overseen by the Budget and Strategy Board, comprising of Councillors from all Wards and all political groups, with all other Members invited to contribute through participation in Members' Seminars and a Budget Workshop, which provided an opportunity for more detailed discussion on specific elements of the budget.
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The Report stated that the Draft Settlement announced on 21 December 2023 included an increase in funding for the Comhairle of £2.344m, compared with the initial 2023/24 Settlement. However, as the Settlement included funding of £3.811m for prior year pay awards and Government priorities, this equated to a funding reduction of just under £1.5m for core services. The final Settlement also included £1.450m in respect of the Real Living Wage in Health and Social Care establishments, which should be transferred to the IJB, in line with the conditions stipulated in the Settlement. In relation to Capital funding the Comhairle would receive £6.168m, compared to a headline figure of £8.677m in 2023/24. The Report indicated that there remains a number of areas of uncertainty which were the subject of discussion between the Deputy First Minister and COSLA.

The Report further stated that the IJB Budget was still to be finalised, but current indications were that there was a funding gap of around £4m, which would require to be met from savings and the use of IJB Reserves. There remains significant pressure on IJB Budgets, and this represented a material risk for both the Comhairle and NHS Eileanan Siar.

At its meeting on 15 February 2024, the Comhairle authorised the preparation of the Budget, on the basis of the £1.7m of savings proposals identified at Appendix B to the Report.

Mr Donald Crichton, seconded by Mr Finlay Stewart moved the following amendment:

That in relation to the savings proposal in respect of bus operations the Comhairle agree:

- (i) to continue the Broadbay and Westside evening bus services funded from Crown Estate Funding, subject to the approval of the distribution of Crown Estate Revenues for 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27;
- (ii) that the Broadbay and Westside evening bus services be considered as part of the next round of tendering for the School and Public Bus Contracts as a distinct priced item;
- (iii) the Head of Municipal Services consults with passengers and operators to design a peak passenger evening service for Broadbay and Westside and
- (iv) the Head of Municipal Services continues to explore alternative funding sources for the provision of evening bus services.

The amendment was unanimously agreed by the Committee.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests were concerned, that the Comhairle:

- (1) agree to accept the 2024/25 Settlement from the Scottish Government as set out in the Finance Circular in Appendix A to the Report;**
- (2) agree the Budget Strategy for 2024/25 as set out in Sections 5, 6 and 7 of the Report;**
- (3) approve the draft Budgets for 2024/25 at Budget Item B of the Agenda, including;**
 - (a) to continue the Broadbay and Westside evening bus services funded from Crown Estate Funding, subject to the approval of the distribution of Crown Estate Revenues for 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27;**
 - (b) that the Broadbay and Westside evening bus services be considered as part of the next round of tendering for the School and Public Bus Contracts as a distinct priced item;**
 - (c) the Head of Municipal Services consults with passengers and operators to design a peak passenger evening service for Broadbay and Westside; and**

(d) the Head of Municipal Services continues to explore alternative funding sources for the provision of evening bus services.

- (4) agree the delegated Budget for Cùram is Slàinte nan Eilean Siar as detailed in Section 10 of the Report;
- (5) agree to freeze Council Tax at 2023/24 levels (£1,290.75 for Band D properties);
- (6) agree to allocate additional funding to the provision of the Winter Maintenance contract, in the event of any increases to General Revenue Grant;
- (7) note the capital allocation for 2024/25 and that progress with the Capital Programme will continue to be monitored quarterly through the Policy and Resources Committee;
- (8) note the financial risks in Appendix C to the Report and agree to maintain the level of uncommitted reserves at £3.5m;
- (9) agree that the Budget and Strategy Board monitor progress with the implementation of Savings Plans;
- (10) note that the preparation of a medium-term financial plan is in progress; and
- (11) agree that a Budget Strategy update be provided to the June 2024 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.

Draft Budget Book
2024/25

- (b) The Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report seeking approval of the Draft Budget Book for 2024/25. The Report detailed a total budget summary for all Departments. The initial Budget for the current financial year and the proposed Budget for 2024/25 was broken down by the major expenditure headings and a narrative provided on any changes in each service area.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests were concerned, that the Comhairle approve the Draft Budget Book 2024/25.

FEES AND CHARGES 2024/25

Schedule of Rates
and Dues at
Comhairle Piers
and Harbours
2024/25

- (c)(i) The Chief Officer, Assets and Infrastructure submitted a Report seeking approval of the revised harbours Schedule of Rates and Dues for 2024/25. The Report stated that the Schedule of Rates and Dues at Comhairle Harbours was reviewed annually, and the Report proposed a new scale of dues for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agree:

- (a) a flat rate increase of 12.5% across all sections of the Harbours Rates and Dues; and
- (b) to a 6.6% increase to Harbour Dues levied on CalMac Ferries Ltd.

Fees and Charges for Marine Fuel 2024/25 (c)(ii) The Chief Officer, Assets and Infrastructure submitted a Report seeking approval of a revised markup on fuel at fishery piers. The Report stated that the Fuel at Fishery Piers/Marine Fuel system was introduced in the early 2000's primarily to control the unmanaged fuel tanks throughout the network of Comhairle harbours.

The Report further stated that to enable Comhairle budgetary requirements it was proposed to increase the mark up by 2 pence per litre to 11 pence per litre from 1 April 2024.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agree:

- (a) the mark up on the fuel at fishery pier service be increased by 2 pence per litre to 11 pence per litre from 1 April 2024; and**
- (b) the Chief Officer, Assets and infrastructure, retains authorisation, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, to make further future adjustments to the markup as required, providing at all times that it is sustainable and Prudential Borrowing can be adequately supported.**

Municipal Services Fees and Charges 2024/25 (c)(iii) The Head of Municipal Services submitted a Report seeking approval of the revised Municipal Services Fees and Charges for 2024/25. The Report stated the Fees and Charges applied for waste collection and disposal were based on the requirement of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requirements to cover costs of disposal of commercial and industrial wastes. The Report further stated that lair and internment fees at Comhairle burial grounds had been increased by 10%, as approved, to allow full cost recovery to be reached over an extended period.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agree to the Municipal Services Fees and Charges as detailed in Appendix 1.