

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Town House,
ABERDEEN, 27 March 2023

MINUTE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Sederunt:

Lord Provost David Cameron, Chairperson;
Depute Provost Steve Delaney; and

COUNCILLORS

GILLIAN AL-SAMARAI
NURUL HOQUE ALI
CHRISTIAN ALLARD
ALISON ALPHONSE
KATE BLAKE
JENNIFER BONSELL
MARIE BOULTON
DESMOND BOUSE
RICHARD BROOKS
HAZEL CAMERON
DONNA CLARK
JOHN COOKE
NEIL COPLAND
WILLIAM CORMIE
BARNEY CROCKETT
SARAH CROSS
DEREK DAVIDSON
LEE FAIRFULL
EMMA FARQUHAR
GORDON GRAHAM
ROSS GRANT
MARTIN GREIG

DELL HENRICKSON
RYAN HOUGHTON
MICHAEL HUTCHISON
MICHAEL KUSZNIR
GRAEME LAWRENCE
SANDRA MACDONALD
NEIL MacGREGOR
ALEXANDER McLELLAN
KEN McLEOD
CIARAN McRAE
M. TAUQEER MALIK
DUNCAN MASSEY
JESSICA MENNIE
ALEX NICOLL
MIRANDA RADLEY
MRS JENNIFER STEWART
KAIRIN VAN SWEEDEN
LYNN THOMSON
DEENA TISSERA
SIMON WATSON
and
IAN YUILL

Lord Provost David Cameron, in the Chair.

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be found at [here](#).

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

Council Meeting, Monday, 27 March 2023

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

1. Councillor Cooke advised that he had a connection in relation to agenda item 4.2 by reason of being a Council appointed observer to the Board of Sport Aberdeen, however having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

At this juncture, the Lord Provost advised that it was his intention to take the two written requests together as one item and this was accepted

WRITTEN REQUESTS FOR SPECIAL MEETING

2. (A) The Council had before it the wording of the first written request for a special Council meeting which had been signed by 17 members in accordance with Standing Order 8.2.2:-

“The business proposed to be transacted relates to the decision taken to withdraw funding from Sistema Big Noise Torry at the Council’s recent budget meeting.”

(B) The Council also had before it the wording of the second written request for a special Council meeting which had been signed by 12 members in accordance with Standing Order 8.2.2:-

“The business proposed to be transacted relates to the impact on residents and communities of library closures, Bucksburn Swimming Pool being closed and cuts to vital public services.”

Councillor Malik moved as a procedural motion, seconded by Councillor Watson:-
That the Council suspend Standing Order 14.3 in order to hear deputations.

On a division, there voted:-

For the procedural motion (19) - Councillors Ali, Blake, Bonsell, Boulton, Brooks, Crockett, Cross, Farquhar, Graham, Grant, Kuszniir, Lawrence, Macdonald, McLeod, Malik, Massey, Thomson, Tissera and Watson.

Against the procedural motion (24) - Lord Provost; Depute Provost; and Councillors Al-Samarai, Allard, Alphonse, Bouse, Hazel Cameron, Clark, Cooke, Copland, Cormie, Davidson, Fairfull, Greig, Henrickson, Hutchison, MacGregor, McLellan, McRae, Mennie, Nicoll, Radley, van Sweeden and Yuill.

Absent from the division (2) - Councillors Houghton and Mrs Stewart.

The Council resolved:-
to reject the procedural motion.

Council Meeting, 27 March 2023

During the course of questions to officers, Councillor Yuill advised that he had a connection by reason of his relationship with the Great Western Community Trust which had been referred to, however having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Greig also advised that he had a connection by reason of his position as a Trustee of the Great Western Community Trust, however having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Councillor Nicoll moved, seconded by Councillor Greig:-

That the Council -

- (i) note that in setting its 2023/24 Revenue Budget, the Council had to bridge a £46.6million funding gap and that the Partnership revenue budget proposal was the only alternative presented to the Council on 1 March 2023 which delivered a balanced budget without cutting millions of pounds from education spending and borrowing millions of pounds to pay for day-to-day spending;

Cost of Living Support

- (ii) note the 23/24 budget is providing £500,000 to support food banks in Aberdeen to support citizens through this ongoing cost of living crisis;
- (iii) note the 23/24 budget is providing a £400,000 top up to the Scottish Welfare Fund to support citizens during this ongoing cost of living crisis;
- (iv) note the 23/24 budget is providing £190,000 investment in money advice services to support citizens through this ongoing cost of living crisis;

Education

- (v) note the 23/24 budget is providing £178million for the provision of Education across Aberdeen;
- (vi) condemn the proposal by both Aberdeen Labour and Scottish Conservative Groups for cutting 3% from the 2023/24 Devolved School Management budgets (headteachers' budgets) in order to save £3.7million. To understand that this option would have seen a reduction in excess of 100 teachers across the city, with some schools, such as Aberdeen Grammar, Bucksburn Academy and Lochside Academy, facing a reduction of up to 3 teachers;
- (vii) further condemn the proposal by Aberdeen Labour to reduce the delivery of the Music Service by £757,000, which would see children within our most deprived communities missing out on free music tuition, and further reduction in staffing within schools;

Sistema Scotland

- (viii) understand that within the savings, Council agreed to remove funding for Sistema Scotland (EI-01) to deliver the Big Noise Torry programme based on the evidence published on 24 March 2023;
- (ix) agree that Aberdeen City Council would support the transition of Sistema to the Scottish Government to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people in Torry;

Libraries Service

- (x) note that the 23/24 budget allocated £3.6million for the provision of 11 libraries across Aberdeen;

Council Meeting, 27 March 2023

- (xi) note the Council instruction, 1 March 2023, to bring options to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee for the design of a 21st Century library provision that was sustainable into the future;

Bucksburn Swimming Pool

- (xii) note that the 23/24 budget allocated £4.515million to Sport Aberdeen for the provision of health and leisure;
- (xiii) note that Sport Aberdeen is a private company limited by guarantee and a registered charity with directors/trustees who have responsibility for day-to-day management of the organisation;
- (xiv) express complete confidence in the independence of the Board of Sport Aberdeen to make decisions as it sees fit without political interference to maximise Sport Aberdeen's strategic aims as determined by Aberdeen City Council;
- (xv) acknowledge the public petition to retain Bucksburn Swimming Pool;
- (xvi) agree that Sport Aberdeen's Board has complete autonomy around the decision making to keep Bucksburn Swimming Pool open;
- (xvii) note with regret that Sport Aberdeen announced, on 2 March 2023, that they planned to close Bucksburn Swimming Pool for commercial reasons; and

Other

- (xviii) to thank the public for their community spirit and their thoughtful actions to save public facilities.

Councillor Kuszniir moved as an amendment, seconded by Councillor Ali:-

That the Council -

1. regrets the decision of Full Council, at the Budget meeting on 1 March 2023, to remove all funding from Sistema Scotland and to terminate the City Council's partnership with Sistema Scotland to deliver Big Noise Torry;
2. recognises that this shameful decision has been widely criticised by members of the Torry community and elected representatives from all parties;
3. acknowledges the funding announced by Neil Gray, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development to be provided to Sistema Scotland by the Scottish Government, which should obviate the risk of closure for Big Noise Torry but without the unequivocal long-term commitment provided by the partnership with Aberdeen City Council;
4. notes the comments by the Convener of Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee on 1 March 2023 that Big Noise Torry has had "*no impact*" in tackling poverty in Torry and then on 4 March 2023 that it was "*great news*" that Big Noise Torry was to continue;
5. instructs the Chief Officer - Early Intervention and Community Empowerment and the Chief Officer - Education to provide a report to the next meeting of Full Council setting out:
 - a. all correspondence from May 2022 to date between the Director of Customer and any Administration Councillor relating to the removal of funding for Sistema Scotland and Big Noise Torry, where the relevant individuals' consent to such disclosure of that correspondence is provided in terms of the Member-Officer Relations Protocol;
 - b. the consequential impact and relevant impact assessment(s);
 - c. the evidence used to justify such removal;

Council Meeting, 27 March 2023

- d. all internal performance assessments of the partnership with Sistema Scotland from May 2022 to date; and
- e. the potential (i) legal and (ii) financial consequences for Aberdeen City Council of the early termination of the partnership with Sistema Scotland to deliver Big Noise Torry;
6. notes the approved 2023/24 Aberdeen City Council Budget;
7. notes that many residents and organisations are campaigning to keep 6 Aberdeen Libraries and Bucksburn Swimming Pool from closure;
8. notes that the SNP led Administration budget included taking the £80,000 cut to close Bucksburn Pool and the £280,000 cut to close the 6 Libraries;
9. notes that the Aberdeen Labour budget did not include taking the £80,000 cut to close Bucksburn pool nor the £280,000 cut to close the 6 Libraries;
10. notes that by not taking the option to cut £80,000 funding for Bucksburn Pool the expectation was that the pool would remain open;
11. notes on Wednesday 15 March 2023, the UK Government announced increased funding for swimming pools in England and as a consequence along with other measures that over £320 million will be apportioned to the Scottish Government as a result of the Barnett Formula which continues to benefit Scotland;
12. agrees that the public have made clear their desire to keep the 6 Libraries and Bucksburn Pool facilities to remain open and agrees whilst decisions have been made in good faith, it is incumbent upon Council to work cross party to retain these facilities, therefore agrees to:-
 - (1) in light of 11 above that the Scottish Government should allocate an amount of £480,000 for the funding and maintenance of Bucksburn Swimming Pool and therefore, instructs the Director of Resources to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy to request £480,000 financial support be allocated to Aberdeen City Council to support the reopening of the pool;
 - (2) if the Scottish Government fails to support Aberdeen City Council's request for funding, agree to suspend Standing Order 42.1 and instruct the Chief Officer - Finance to use delegated powers to vire the necessary £360,000 (£280,000 Libraries, £80,000 Bucksburn Pool) - or less depending on Scottish government support - from contingencies of £4m to ensure these facilities remain open; and
 - (3) requests Sport Aberdeen obtain £400,000 to upgrade the capital works at Bucksburn Pool noting that the Council acts as guarantor for £5m worth of Sport Aberdeen debt;
13. instructs the Chief Officer - Finance to bring forward a report to Full Council with options as to how the Council can make the substantial savings required for future years without the closure of these 6 libraries and Bucksburn Swimming Pool by December 2023; and
14. thanks the public for their community spirit and their thoughtful actions to save public facilities.

During the course of debate, Councillor Yuill advised that he had a connection by reason of being appointed by the Council to the Board of NHS Grampian, however having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

Council Meeting, 27 March 2023

Councillor Thomson advised that she had a connection by reason of being appointed by the Council to the Board of Aberdeen Care and Repair, however having applied the objective test, she did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

At this juncture, the Council agreed to suspend Standing Order 40.2 to enable the meeting to continue beyond 6 hours.

The Council also agreed to suspend Standing Order 42.1 for the purposes of part 12(2) of the amendment.

On a division, there voted:-

For the motion (24) - Lord Provost; Depute Provost; and Councillors Al-Samarai, Allard, Alphonse, Bouse, Hazel Cameron, Clark, Cooke, Copland, Cormie, Davidson, Fairfull, Greig, Henrickson, Hutchison, MacGregor, McLellan, McRae, Mennie, Nicoll, Radley, van Sweeden and Yuill.

For the amendment (21) - Councillors Ali, Blake, Bonsell, Boulton, Brooks, Crockett, Cross, Farquhar, Graham, Grant, Houghton, Kuszniir, Lawrence, Macdonald, McLeod, Malik, Massey, Mrs Stewart, Thomson, Tissera and Watson.

The Council resolved:-

- (i) to adopt the motion;
- (ii) to note that the Interim Director of Education and Children's Services would liaise with the Council's Passenger Transport Unit Team Leader with regard to the Council's obligations in terms of school transport with regard to set distances and respond to Councillor Massey accordingly; and
- (iii) to note that the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord would prepare a briefing note on the six library sites for circulation to all members.

- DAVID CAMERON, Lord Provost.