

Minutes

Finance and Resources Committee

10.00am, Thursday 14 July 2022

Present

Councillor Watt (Convener), Councillor Arthur (substituting for Councillor Griffiths), Councillor Biagi, Councillor Campbell (substituting for Councillor Hyslop), Councillor Doggart, Councillor Macinnes (substituting for Councillor Nicolson), Councillor Mumford, Councillor Neil Ross, Councillor Staniforth, Councillor Whyte (substituting for Councillor Bruce) and Councillor Younie.

1. Cost of Living Crisis: cost implications of motion approved by Council, 30 June

In response to a motion by Councillor Biagi in relation to the current cost of living crisis, details were provided of the cost implications of measures which could be taken including potential further payments to households with children in receipt of free school meals, top up to the school clothing grant and cancellation of school meal related debt.

Motion

- 1) To note the estimated cost implications of the approved motion by Councillor Biagi.
 - 2) To note, in view of wider pressures and commitments affecting 2022/23 and subsequent years of the budget framework, the officer recommendation that no further discretionary expenditure be incurred at this time.
 - 3) To redouble efforts to highlight to the Scottish Government, through COSLA, the significant and increasing inflationary impacts of the current Cost of Living Crisis upon both the Council and the communities it serves.
- moved by Councillor Doggart, seconded by Councillor Whyte

Amendment 1

- 1) To note that the estimated cost implications of the approved motion by Councillor Biagi exceeds the amount available by circa £341,000.
- 2) To note that the uptake of free school meals could be higher than forecast due to the current economic circumstances and to the Ukrainian families arriving in Edinburgh.
- 3) To agree to use the £1,212,000 set out in the report to Council on 30th June 2022 to:
 - 3.1) clear the school meal related debt of £64,000;
 - 3.2) create a provision of £128,000 for school meal hardship in the coming school year;

- 3.3) make the £100 payments for the 8,832 children whose families currently qualify; and
 - 3.4) use the remaining £136,800 (subject to audit) for making £100 payments to the families of children who are newly registered as eligible at the start of the August school term.
- 4) To note that the Council Leader has called a special meeting of key members of the Edinburgh Partnership to consider the above proposal and for their input to be noted in a report when Council considers the decision of the Finance and Resources Committee in relation to reserve spending.
- moved by Councillor Watt, seconded by Councillor Arthur

Amendment 2

- 1) To note the estimated cost implications of the approved motion by Councillor Biagi.
 - 2) To agree to use the available level of funding from the unallocated element of the 2021/22 underspend to:
 - 2.1) clear all school meal related debt;
 - 2.2) to make an additional payment of £100 for every child within a low-income household, identified with reference to the free school meals qualification.
 - 2.3) subject to working with the Edinburgh Partnership to develop a strategy which could more comprehensively support a broader range of citizens to fully access recurring welfare payments they are entitled to and appropriate measures that might provide relief from the cost of living crisis, such as food vouchers, as this would benefit more individuals.
 - 2.4) request a report from the Edinburgh Partnership with an outline of appropriate proposals for the full council in August.
 - 3) To note, in view of wider pressures and commitments affecting 2022/23 and subsequent years of the budget framework, the officer recommendation that no further discretionary expenditure be incurred at this time.
 - 4) To request that the Council Leader writes to both the Scottish and UK Governments to:
 - 4.1) urge them to increase recurring welfare payments to those in need, who are most directly affected by the cost of living crisis; and also
 - 4.2) intensify efforts to increase the uptake of welfare benefits, as many people are missing out on payments to which they are entitled.
 - 5) To agree to redouble efforts to highlight to the Scottish Government, through COSLA, the significant and increasing inflationary impacts of the current Cost of Living Crisis upon both the Council and the communities it serves.
- moved by Councillor Neil Ross, seconded by Councillor Younie

In terms of Standing Order 22.12, Councillor Watt accepted paragraph 4 of Amendment 2 as an addendum to Amendment 1.

Voting

For the motion	-	2 votes
For amendment 1	-	7 votes
For amendment 2	-	2 votes

(For the motion – Councillors Doggart and Whyte.

For Amendment 1 – Councillors Arthur, Biagi, Campbell, Macinnes, Mumford, Staniforth and Watt.

For Amendment 2 – Councillors Neil Ross and Younie.)

Decision

To approve Amendment 1 by Councillor Watt, as adjusted, as follows:

- 1) To note that the estimated cost implications of the approved motion by Councillor Biagi exceeds the amount available by circa £341,000.
- 2) To note that the uptake of free school meals could be higher than forecast due to the current economic circumstances and to the Ukrainian families arriving in Edinburgh.
- 3) To agree to use the £1,212,000 set out in the report to Council on 30th June 2022 to:
 - 3.1) clear the school meal related debt of £64,000;
 - 3.2) create a provision of £128,000 for school meal hardship in the coming school year;
 - 3.3) make the £100 payments for the 8,832 children whose families currently qualify; and
 - 3.4) use the remaining £136,800 (subject to audit) for making £100 payments to the families of children who are newly registered as eligible at the start of the August school term.
- 4) To note that the Council Leader has called a special meeting of key members of the Edinburgh Partnership to consider the above proposal and for their input to be noted in a report when Council considers the decision of the Finance and Resources Committee in relation to reserve spending.
- 5) To request that the Council Leader writes to both the Scottish and UK Governments to:
 - 5.1) urge them to increase recurring welfare payments to those in need, who are most directly affected by the cost of living crisis; and also
 - 5.2) intensify efforts to increase the uptake of welfare benefits, as many people are missing out on payments to which they are entitled.

(References – Act of Council No. 22 of 30 June 2022; report by the Interim Executive Director of Corporate Services, submitted.)