

Special Meeting of North Ayrshire Council: 18 January 2023

Amendments Received in terms of Standing Order 15.2

Amendment 1

Submitted by Councillor McLean and seconded by Councillor Billings

“North Ayrshire Council expresses its extreme disappointment with the budget settlement for local government and with its presentation which Conservative Group elected members believe is both unethical and dishonest and is in no way consistent with a partnership approach.

Council notes that most of the supposed £550m additional funding is for existing commitments and that the £71m of uncommitted funding goes no way towards meeting the identified budget gap in council funding of £612m due to inflation, energy prices and demand pressures, and the requirement for more than £400m potentially needed for pay settlements in the coming year to address recruitment and retention issues and avoid industrial action by trade unions.

This budget settlement means another massive real terms cut in councils’ core funding, after more than 10 years of real terms cuts, and will lead to a reduction in local services and the loss of jobs within local authorities and potentially to local companies that rely on councils for their employment.

Council further notes the additional burden on council finances from revaluation of non-domestic properties and condemns the threat by the Scottish Government to cut grant funding if councils were to be successful in appealing against redeterminations.

For North Ayrshire Council, the initial assessment of the local government settlement by the Council’s finance team estimates a budget gap of over £10million in 2023/24.

Council therefore agrees:

1. That the Council should make a robust public response to the budget statement, challenging in the strongest possible terms the presentation of the supposed £550 additional funding and highlighting the massive real terms cut in funding for vital local services;
2. That the Chief Executive writes on behalf of North Ayrshire Council to the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister to state that:
 - the Council does not accept that the 2023/24 Scottish local authority budget settlement by the Scottish government is fair or reasonable and that it will result in significant reductions in critical local services that will have detrimental impacts on services provided to the most vulnerable within our communities.

- the Council supports COSLA's response from December 16th 2022 which registered Council Leaders' extreme disappointment at the budget settlement and the Scottish Government's failure to respond to COSLA's SOS campaign call. North Ayrshire Council endorses calls made by COSLA for a better budget settlement in order to defend local services.
3. The Council agrees that as part of the North Ayrshire Council budgeting process impact assessments on any proposals will be undertaken to ensure that Elected Members are aware of the impacts of any possible decision. Further, once the 2023/34 North Ayrshire Council budget has been set, Council will work collaboratively to try to mitigate any negative impacts."

Amendment 2:

Submitted by Councillor Gurney and seconded by Councillor Johnson

"Council is deeply concerned about the impacts of the settlement that Scottish Government has proposed for Local Government as part of this year's Scottish Budget.

The budget settlement as it stands means another real terms cut to Councils' core funding, at a time when many in our communities are struggling with the impact of rocketing prices across fuel, food and other bills, and facing unprecedented levels of poverty. This budget settlement will have a detrimental impact on vital local services, on our ability to focus the necessary resources and supports to our communities and on those who are already impacted by this cost-of-living crisis.

In addition, Council opposes the prospect of the Scottish Government cutting grant funding if Councils were to be successful in appealing against redeterminations, as it negates any purpose to the appeal and removes much needed resources within Local Government.

Council acknowledges the impact of inflation and global economic factors that are continuing to weigh heavily on the Scottish Government's budgets and spending plans. In addressing this, we believe that a partnership approach with Local Government would be more likely to succeed in achieving better outcomes for those who need our support the most.

Council therefore instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Deputy First Minister in support of COSLA's request for a special meeting of Leaders to hear our concerns first-hand and to work collaboratively in identifying a way forward."