

North Ayrshire Council  
21 September 2022

At a Special Meeting of North Ayrshire Council at 6.00 p.m. involving a combination of participation by remote electronic means and physical attendance within the Council Chambers, Irvine

**Present (Physical Participation)**

John Bell, Timothy Billings (to Agenda item 3(1)), Marie Burns, Eleanor Collier, Joe Cullinane, Scott Davidson, Anthea Dickson, Stewart Ferguson, Todd Ferguson, Robert Foster, Tony Gurney, Alan Hill, Cameron Inglis, Margaret Johnson, Amanda Kerr, Christina Larsen, Shaun Macaulay, Tom Marshall, Nairn McDonald, Matthew McLean, Louise McPhater, Davina McTiernan, Jim Montgomerie, Donald Reid, Chloé Robertson, Ronnie Stalker and John Sweeney.

**Present (Remote Electronic Participation)**

Timothy Billings (from Agenda item 3(1)), Ian Murdoch and Donald L. Reid.

**In Attendance**

C. Hatton, Chief Executive; C. Cameron, Director (Health and Social Care Partnership); A. Sutton, Executive Director (Communities and Education); K. Yeomans, Director (Growth and Investment); T. Reaney, Head of Service (Commercial) (Place); M. Boyd, Head of Finance; and R. Lynch, Senior Manager (Legal Services), M. McColm, Senior Manager (Communications), L. Taylor, Team Manager (Legal Services), M. Anderson, Senior Manager (Committee and Member Services) and A. Little and C. Stewart, Committee Services Officers (Democratic Services)

**Chair**

Provost Dickson in the Chair.

**Apologies**

Scott Gallacher, John Glover, Jean McClung and Angela Stephen.

**1. Provost's Remarks**

The Provost welcomed those present to the Special Meeting of the Council, which had been called following a requisition in terms of Standing Order 3.4.

Thereafter, the Provost dealt with preliminary matters, including intimation that the meeting, which was taking place on a hybrid basis, would be live streamed to the internet.

## **2. Apologies**

The Provost invited intimation of apologies for absence, which were recorded.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest in terms of Standing Order 11 and Section 5 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

There were no declarations of the Party Whip.

## **4. Motions**

The Provost introduced this item of business, reminding Members that a period of 45 minutes was allocated for dealing with each motion, in terms of Standing Order 15.6.

In terms of Standing Order 3.4, a written requisition, signed by nine Members of the Council, had been submitted calling for consideration of the undernoted motions:

- (1) a motion proposed by Councillor Foster and seconded by Councillor Bell in the following terms:

"Council recognises the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our residents and therefore agrees to use £60,000 of unearmarked reserves to scrap all school meal debt in North Ayrshire."

As an amendment, Councillor Marshall, seconded by Councillor T. Ferguson, moved as follows:

"That Council, whilst agreeing that some residents are experiencing cost of living difficulties and noting that a Budget meeting is scheduled for 6 October 2022, determines that no decision is made to use unearmarked reserves until a report on the total cost, desirability, and the implications of using such, is submitted to the next full Council."

As a further amendment, Councillor Larsen, seconded by Councillor Burns, moved the direct negative of the motion.

There followed debate and summing up.

Councillor Billing left the Council Chambers during debate and summing up, re-joining the meeting remotely immediately prior to the vote, in which he took no part.

In terms of Standing Order 19.2, as there were two amendments, one of which implied negation, Members were first invited to determine whether to "proceed" or "not proceed".

On a division and a roll call vote, there voted to “proceed”, Councillors Bell, Cullinane, Foster, Kerr, McDonald, McPhater, Montgomerie, Donald Reid and Sweeney (9) and “not proceed”, Councillors Burns, Collier, Davidson, Dickson, S. Ferguson, T. Ferguson, Gurney, Hill, Inglis, Johnson, Larsen, Macaulay, McLean, McTiernan, Murdoch, Donald L. Reid, Robertson and Stalker (18), Councillor Billings abstaining, and the decision not to proceed was declared carried.

Accordingly, in terms of Standing Order 19.2, the decision not to proceed having been carried by a majority of votes, the motion and remaining amendment fell.

(2) a motion proposed by Councillor McDonald, seconded by Councillor McPhater, in the following terms:

"Council recognises the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our residents.

Council acknowledges that people on low incomes are the most likely to use pre-payment meters and therefore pay higher energy tariffs than those on direct debits.

Council notes that twenty clients of the Better Off North Ayrshire service, currently being piloted in the Three Towns, had self-disconnected their pre-payment meters as they could not afford a top-up and further notes the concerns of charities such as Citizens Advice Scotland that self-disconnections will increase significantly this winter.

Council therefore agrees to use £150,000 of unearmarked reserves to establish a pre-payment meter support fund to support residents who would otherwise face self-disconnection this winter due to rising costs."

As an amendment, Councillor Larsen, seconded by Councillor Johnson, moved as follows:

"Council recognises the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our residents.

Council acknowledges that people on low incomes are the most likely to use pre-payment meters and therefore pay higher energy tariffs than those on direct debits.

Council notes that twenty clients of the Better Off North Ayrshire service, currently being piloted in the Three Towns, had self-disconnected their pre-payment meters as they could not afford a top-up and further notes the concerns of charities such as Citizens Advice Scotland that self-disconnections will increase significantly this winter.

Council recognises the £450,000 allocated to energy crisis support by Cabinet at its meeting on 23 August 2022, offers support to residents, including those on pre-payment meters, who would otherwise face self-disconnection this winter due to rising costs. Council agrees it would, therefore, be imprudent to draw funds from the Councils unearmarked reserves at this time when an Energy Support package, 3 times the value, is already in progress to be rolled out across the Authority".

As a further amendment, Councillor T. Ferguson, seconded by Councillor Marshall, moved as follows:

"That Council, recognises that some residents are experiencing challenges due to cost-of-living difficulties; notes that there is a Budget meeting scheduled for 6 October 2022; further determines that no decision is made to use unearmarked reserves until a report on the total cost, desirability, and the implications of using such is submitted to the next full Council."

Members asked questions of clarification of the motion and amendments.

There followed debate and summing up.

On a division and a roll call vote, there voted for the amendment by Councillor Larsen, seconded by Councillor Johnson, Councillors Billings, Burns, Collier, Davidson, Dickson, S. Ferguson, T. Ferguson, Gurney, Hill, Inglis, Johnson, Larsen, Macaulay, Marshall, McLean, McTiernan, Murdoch, Donald L. Reid, Robertson and Stalker (20) and for the motion, Councillors Bell, Cullinane, Foster, Kerr, McDonald, McPhater, Montgomerie, Donald Reid and Sweeney (9), and the amendment became the substantive motion.

Councillor Murdoch left the meeting at this point.

On a further division and a roll call vote, there voted for the amendment by Councillor T. Ferguson, seconded by Councillor Marshall, Councillors Billings, S. Ferguson, T. Ferguson, Inglis, Marshall, McLean and Stalker (7) and for the substantive motion, Councillors Burns, Collier, Davidson, Dickson, Gurney, Hill, Johnson, Larsen, Macaulay, McTiernan, Donald L. Reid and Robertson (12), Councillors Bell, Cullinane, Foster, Kerr, McDonald, McPhater, Montgomerie, Donald Reid and Sweeney abstaining, and the substantive motion was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Council agreed as follows:

- (a) to recognise the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our residents;
- (b) to acknowledge that people on low incomes are the most likely to use pre-payment meters and therefore pay higher energy tariffs than those on direct debits;
- (c) to note (i) that twenty clients of the Better Off North Ayrshire service, currently being piloted in the Three Towns, had self-disconnected their pre-payment meters as they could not afford a top-up and (ii) the concerns of charities such as Citizens Advice Scotland that self-disconnections would increase significantly this winter;

- (d) to recognise the £450,000 allocated to energy crisis support by Cabinet at its meeting on 23 August 2022, offered support to residents, including those on pre-payment meters, who would otherwise face self-disconnection this winter due to rising costs; and
- (e) that it would, therefore, be imprudent to draw funds from the Council's unearmarked reserves at this time when an Energy Support package, 3 times the value, was already in progress to be rolled out across the Authority.

## **5. Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

## **6. Provost's Closing Remarks**

The Provost closed the meeting by thanking Members for their participation in what had been a long meeting.

The meeting ended at 6.55 p.m.