

Minute of Special Meeting Council

Date	Time	Venue
Monday, 23 March 2015	09:30	Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

PRESENT

Councillors B Brown, Murrin, Perrie, M Devine, Grady, McEwan, Lawson, Mylet, J Sharkey, M Sharkey, Kelly, K MacLaren, M MacLaren, Williams, E Devine, Glen, Mack, Henry, M Macmillan, McCartin, Caldwell, Hood, McGee, I McMillan, Bibby, Andy Doig, Gilmour, Clark, Audrey Doig, Provost Hall, Councillors Noon, Holmes, J MacLaren, Harte, McQuade, Mullin and Nicolson.

CHAIR

Provost Hall presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

S Black, Chief Executive; P Macleod, Director of Children's Services; S MacDougall, Director of Community Resources; M Crearie, Director of Development & Housing Services; A Russell, Director of Finance & Resources; A Armstrong-Walter, Policy Lead (Tackling Poverty, Welfare Reform and Equalities) (Chief Executive's); R Naylor and G McKinlay, Head of Service (both Children's Services); K Graham, Head of Corporate Governance, M Conaghan, Legal & Democratic Services Manager, L Belshaw, Democratic Services Manager, R McGrath, Welfare Reform Programme Manager and E Currie, Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Resources); and D Leese, Chief Officer (Health & Social Care).

APOLOGIES

Councillors McGurk and M Brown.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

Prior to consideration of item 1 of the agenda, Provost Hall welcomed Doctor Jim McCormick and Professor Sue Ellis, two of the Commissioners from the Tackling Poverty Commission, to the meeting. Doctor McCormick and Professor Ellis presented the Commission's report to the Council and answered questions from members. They then left the meeting.

1 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RENFREWSHIRE TACKLING POVERTY COMMISSION

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to the findings and recommendations of the Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission.

The report intimated that the Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission, the first of its kind to be established in Scotland, was set up by the Council in February 2014 to consider the nature, causes and impact of poverty in Renfrewshire and to make recommendations to mitigate and minimise the impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire. The Commission held its inaugural meeting in April 2014 and throughout the year the Commissioners, individuals and representatives of organisations recognised for their work associated with tackling poverty met regularly to consider poverty as it related to themes linked to the outcomes defined in the Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland.

The Commission drew on evidence from published research, heard from academics and other contributors about interventions that had been shown to make a difference, listened to Renfrewshire people affected by poverty and learned about the significant work already being progressed by the Council and its partners to tackle poverty. The Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission had now concluded its work and had published its report on Friday, 13th March, 2015. The report entitled 'Tackling Poverty in Renfrewshire' formed the appendix to the report and had been submitted to the Council and Community Planning Partners for consideration.

The Chief Executive's report provided members with an overview of the Commission's findings and recommendations and gave members an opportunity to consider the Commission's report in the context of the Council's existing strategies for reducing the causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire. The report requested that consideration be given as to how the Council and its partners could collectively use the Commission's evidence-based approach to build a well-designed, co-ordinated and effective programme of response measures to support sustainable progress in reducing the causes and impact of poverty across Renfrewshire in line with community planning partners. In setting its 2015/16 budget the Council committed £6million of its own resources to support the tackling poverty agenda. Although these resources were non-recurring in nature, it provided an immediate funding source to support the delivery of a partnership response.

Councillor M Macmillan tabled a motion on behalf of the Administration.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting then adjourned at 10.20 am to allow members to consider the motion. The meeting reconvened at 10.25 am.

Councillor M Macmillan, seconded by Councillor Henry, moved:

1. That the Council commends the Commission for what has been widely received as ground breaking work in the fight against child poverty and thanks the Commissioners and the local community for their valuable work in producing the report over the past 12 months.

2. Renfrewshire Council finds it unacceptable that one in five of our local children are currently living in poverty in thousands of households across the area. We consider it intolerable that Renfrewshire residents are faced with the choice of eating or heating their homes; that local children's attainment should be determined by their household income; and employment is no longer a way out of financial hardship with working households now topping the number of families officially living in poverty.

3. It is agreed that a firm commitment will be provided by the Council to drive forward the recommendations of the report which has highlighted that as the face of poverty has changed, so too must the response of all agencies involved in alleviating poverty change. Further, that this work will include vital roles for the UK and Scottish Governments; Renfrewshire Council; key community planning partners; and communities across Renfrewshire.

4. This motion commits this Administration to delivering a programme of sustainable change to address the recommendations outlined in the report with an early investment totalling £6m. The Council agrees to the following actions which will support a raft of preventative and emergency measures totalling £3.23m. The balance of our initial investment to tackle poverty - £2.77m – will be allocated in a full report on the programme in collaboration with our community planning partners to be provided to the Council meeting on the 25th June 2015.

a) Commit £2 million to begin work to close the attainment gap for children living in poverty. This will be a tailored intervention to support improved attainment and educational outcomes for pupils. As part of this effort, the Council will also be looking at the cost of the school day and how it can best support families.

b) Further, agree that the Council Leader be authorised to write to the Scottish Government to ensure that the Council's funding commitment to narrowing the attainment gap, is matched by Holyrood, and that Renfrewshire Council is prioritised in the second tranche of the Attainment Scotland Fund. Match funding from the Scottish Government in this area will also pave the way for the Council to share the findings and learning from this unique programme across the country for the benefit of all children living in poverty in Scotland.

c) Agree that the Council Leader be authorised to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions requesting that the UK Government use Renfrewshire as a pilot area to rethink its benefit sanctions and trial a new approach to work incentives in a partnership initiative which is firmly focused on less punitive approaches.

d) Commit £1 million to provide financial capacity to support the early expansion of the most successful elements of the Council's Families First programme. The programme was launched in September 2013 and includes a wide range of effective approaches such as Families First Clubs during school holidays; a mentoring team for Looked After Children; increasing the number of Early Years teachers; and a pioneering community-based support network.

e) Commit £0.170 million to establish a fuel poverty task team offering crucial one-to-one support for local people and, with it, creating job and training opportunities.

f) Commit £0.060 million to support Renfrewshire Foodbank to safeguard its vital frontline service for all those in need. The Council will fully fund the organisation's key co-ordinator for two years and work with the Foodbank to help them secure a new distribution centre.

g) We will call for additional powers to ensure private tenants are charged a fair price. And further, we will look at our own arrangements in this area by agreeing that the Chief Executive be directed to undertake a review of the Council's registration, regulation and enforcement arrangements of private landlords to drive up the standards of privately rented housing in Renfrewshire.

h) Agree that the Council progresses urgent work with the Scottish Government and health authorities to tackle the levels of health inequalities in Renfrewshire.

i) Agree that the Council work with Police Scotland to look at successful early interventions in diversionary programmes to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

The motion was agreed unanimously.

DECIDED:

(a) That the Council commends the Commission for what has been widely received as ground breaking work in the fight against child poverty and thanks the Commissioners and the local community for their valuable work in producing the report over the past 12 months;

(b) Renfrewshire Council finds it unacceptable that one in five of our local children are currently living in poverty in thousands of households across the area. We consider it intolerable that Renfrewshire residents are faced with the choice of eating or heating their homes; that local children's attainment should be determined by their household income; and employment is no longer a way out of financial hardship with working households now topping the number of families officially living in poverty;

(c) It is agreed that a firm commitment will be provided by the Council to drive forward the recommendations of the report which has highlighted that as the face of poverty has changed, so too must the response of all agencies involved in alleviating poverty change. Further, that this work will include vital roles for the UK and Scottish Governments; Renfrewshire Council; key community planning partners; and communities across Renfrewshire;

(d) This motion commits this Administration to delivering a programme of sustainable change to address the recommendations outlined in the report with an early investment totalling £6m. The Council agrees to the following actions which will support a raft of preventative and emergency measures totalling £3.23m.

The balance of our initial investment to tackle poverty - £2.77m – will be allocated in a full report on the programme in collaboration with our community planning partners to be provided to the Council meeting on the 25th June 2015;

(i) Commit £2 million to begin work to close the attainment gap for children living in poverty. This will be a tailored intervention to support improved attainment and educational outcomes for pupils. As part of this effort, the Council will also be looking at the cost of the school day and how it can best support families.

(ii) Further, agree that the Council Leader be authorised to write to the Scottish Government to ensure that the Council's funding commitment to narrowing the attainment gap, is matched by Holyrood, and that Renfrewshire Council is prioritised in the second tranche of the Attainment Scotland Fund. Match funding from the Scottish Government in this area will also pave the way for the Council to share the findings and learning from this unique programme across the country for the benefit of all children living in poverty in Scotland.

(iii) Agree that the Council Leader be authorised to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions requesting that the UK Government use Renfrewshire as a pilot area to rethink its benefit sanctions and trial a new approach to work incentives in a partnership initiative which is firmly focused on less punitive approaches.

(iv) Commit £1 million to provide financial capacity to support the early expansion of the most successful elements of the Council's Families First programme. The programme was launched in September 2013 and includes a wide range of effective approaches such as Families First Clubs during school holidays; a mentoring team for Looked After Children; increasing the number of Early Years teachers; and a pioneering community based support network.

(v) Commit £0.170 million to establish a fuel poverty task team offering crucial one-to-one support for local people and, with it, creating job and training opportunities.

(vi) Commit £0.060 million to support Renfrewshire Foodbank to safeguard its vital frontline service for all those in need. The Council will fully fund the organisation's key co-ordinator for two years and work with the Foodbank to help them secure a new distribution centre.

(vii) We will call for additional powers to ensure private tenants are charged a fair price. And further, we will look at our own arrangements in this area by agreeing that the Chief Executive be directed to undertake a review of the Council's registration, regulation and enforcement arrangements of private landlords to drive up the standards of privately rented housing in Renfrewshire.

(viii) Agree that the Council progresses urgent work with the Scottish Government and health authorities to tackle the levels of health inequalities in Renfrewshire.

(viii) Agree that the Council work with Police Scotland to look at successful early interventions in diversionary programmes to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

SEDERUNT

Councillor Clark left the meeting during consideration of the previous item of business.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting then adjourned at 11.30 am and reconvened at 11.40 am.

2 JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION RESEARCH REPORT - THE COST OF THE CUTS: THEIR IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POORER COMMUNITIES

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Research Report entitled 'The cost of the cuts: the impact on local government and poorer communities', published in March 2015.

The report intimated that during 2013, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned a research project where Renfrewshire Council, along with three English councils, Newcastle City Council, Coventry City Council and Milton Keynes Council, formed four key local authority case studies. The project, delivered by a group of academic researchers from Glasgow and Heriot Watt Universities, aimed to provide a detailed picture over time of how local authorities in both England and Scotland were managing budget contraction and, in particular, how decisions and strategies were affecting the poorest households and places. The research project analysed nationally available data and undertook detailed and in-depth research at the case study councils in Newcastle, Coventry and Milton Keynes, as well as Renfrewshire to provide a Scottish perspective to their analysis and research.

A key focus of the case study work had been to assess the cumulative impact of cuts across a range of services on particular groups and places. The final report, published on 11th March, 2015, a copy of which formed the appendix to the report, aimed to present a picture of how local government had tackled austerity. The report detailed the key messages and observations emerging from the research.

Councillor Holmes, seconded by Councillor M Macmillan, moved that the report be noted.

Councillor Nicolson, seconded by Councillor Andy Doig, moved as an amendment that the recommendation be replaced with:

"Council notes the report, and the recognition that the actions of the SNP Scottish Government and the previous SNP led administration has minimised the impact of the cuts imposed by the Westminster Government in comparison to English local authorities. These actions have contributed significantly to Renfrewshire Council's ability to carry out the preventative work noted in the report.

Council condemns the British political alliance between Labour and the Tories on financing a new generation of nuclear weapons at the expense of eradicating poverty, supports the economics of prosperity against austerity. Council will welcome the election of a strong bloc of SNP MP's at the forthcoming general election, as part of a progressive alliance in the House of Commons, as the most effective route to alleviating poverty in Renfrewshire."

On the roll being called, the following members voted for the amendment: Councillors Perrie, McEwan, Lawson, Mylet, K MacLaren, M MacLaren, Mack, McGee, Andy Doig, Audrey Doig, Noon, McQuade and Nicolson.

The following members voted for the motion: Councillors B Brown, Murrin, M Devine, Grady, J Sharkey, M Sharkey, Kelly, Williams, E Devine, Glen, Henry, M Macmillan, McCartin, Caldwell, Hood, I McMillan, Bibby, Gilmour, Provost Hall, Councillors Holmes, J MacLaren, Harte and Mullin.

13 members having voted for the amendment and 23 members having voted for the motion, the motion was accordingly declared carried.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

3 **SCOTTISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive seeking approval to the Council becoming a member of the Scottish Local Government Partnership, the organisation being set up by those local authorities whose membership of CoSLA would terminate with effect from 1st April, 2015.

The report intimated that at its budget meeting on 13th February, 2014 the Council agreed to advise CoSLA that it would terminate its membership on 31st March, 2015. The report proposed a new partnership, the Scottish Local Government Partnership, to deliver representation for its members at a national level with stakeholders on priority issues; a proactive agenda for communication, lobbying and engagement with all levels of government on policy and financial matters; advice and support to members on a range of policy issues; engagement with other stakeholders on priority issues; and collective bargaining on behalf of its members' employees in respect of pay and terms and conditions. The terms of reference for the Partnership formed the appendix to the report. The other founding members of the Partnership were Glasgow City, Aberdeen City and South Lanarkshire Councils and membership would be open to all local authorities in Scotland.

The report proposed that the Leader of the Council be the Council's representative on the Partnership with the Depute Leader as his substitute. The Council's respective lead roles in the Partnership would be confirmed at its inaugural meeting along with its operating model and standing orders.

In preparation for the establishment of the Partnership, Leaders of the respective Councils had engaged with the First Minister, CoSLA, Trade Unions and the Secretary for State for Scotland to outline the role of the Partnership and to agree recognition and representation in consultations and national discussions. The relevant officers would identify professional associations and national bodies on which the Partnership or individual councils should be represented. The aim would be that there was strategic, effective and robust ongoing engagement with government and all national agencies.

It was intended that the Partnership would be a lean organisation and would not acquire property or employ its own staff. It would operate a virtual support team drawn from member Councils as and when required and the model would be based on lead officers drawn from each member Council to support the Leaders of the Partnership; administrative support and clerking provided by member councils on a rotating or otherwise agreed basis; a virtual team of policy advisers and experts drawn from member councils to advise the Partnership; and accommodation for Partnership meetings from member council estates.

The current CoSLA levy of £103,499 (2014/15) would be available to support the work of the Partnership and the Council would ensure that this funding delivered best value for the Council and the Partnership and would be reviewed annually.

Councillor M Macmillan, seconded by Councillor Holmes moved

(a) That it be noted that the Council's membership of CoSLA would terminate with effect from 1st April, 2015;

(b) That the arrangements being made by officers in light of the Council no longer being a member of CoSLA be noted;

(c) That it be agreed that the Council join the Scottish Local Government Partnership to advance the interests of the Council and local government in Scotland and play an active role in its development;

(d) That the Terms of Reference for the Partnership, as set out in the appendix to the report, be approved;

(e) That the Leader of the Council be appointed as the Council's representative at meetings of the partnership and that the Depute Leader of the Council be appointed as his substitute; and

(f) That it be agreed that further reports be submitted to the Leadership Board as necessary.

Councillor Lawson, seconded by Councillor Perrie, moved as an amendment that the recommendations be replaced with

2.1 replace the following;

a) Council renews its membership with CoSLA at the earliest opportunity.

b) Delete

c) Council declines membership of the Scottish Local Government Partnership on the following grounds;

Membership will cause reputational damage to Renfrewshire Council with regards to working in partnership with local government and with the Scottish Government on a wide range of issues.

Membership of the SLGP will place at risk national pay bargaining, in particular with regard to teachers pay. Council also rejects the move by Labour controlled Councils to break up national pay bargaining and placing our employees at risk.

d) Delete

e) Membership of CoSLA and subsequent representation will reflect the political balance of Renfrewshire Council.

f) That further reports be brought back to the Leadership Board regarding the negotiations with renewing membership of CoSLA.

On the roll being called, the following members voted for the amendment: Councillors Perrie, McEwan, Lawson, Mylet, K MacLaren, M MacLaren, McCartin, McGee, Andy Doig, Audrey Doig, Noon, J MacLaren, McQuade and Nicolson.

The following members voted for the motion: Councillors B Brown, Murrin, M Devine, Grady, J Sharkey, M Sharkey, Kelly, Williams, E Devine, Glen, Henry, M Macmillan, Caldwell, Hood, I McMillan, Bibby, Gilmour, Provost Hall, Councillors Holmes, Harte and Mullin.

14 members having voted for the amendment and 21 members having voted for the motion, the motion was accordingly declared carried.

DECIDED:

(a) That it be noted that the Council's membership of CoSLA would terminate with effect from 1st April, 2015;

(b) That the arrangements being made by officers in light of the Council no longer being a member of CoSLA be noted;

(c) That it be agreed that the Council join the Scottish Local Government Partnership to advance the interests of the Council and local government in Scotland and play an active role in its development;

(d) That the Terms of Reference for the Partnership, as set out in the appendix to the report, be approved;

(e) That the Leader of the Council be appointed as the Council's representative at meetings of the partnership and that the Depute Leader of the Council be appointed as his substitute; and

(f) That it be agreed that further reports be submitted to the Leadership Board as necessary.

SEDERUNT

Councillor Mack left the meeting during consideration of the previous item of business.

4 MEMBERSHIP OF BOARDS

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the election of members to Renfrewshire Licensing Board and in relation to proposed changes to the remit and membership of the Appointment Board for Heads of Service and membership of the Appointment Board for Directors.

The report intimated that at the statutory meeting of the Council held on 17th May, 2012 the Council agreed that the Licensing Board would have nine members comprising five members from the Administration group and four members of the main opposition group. There were currently two vacancies on the Licensing Board and the Council was asked to elect two councillors to fill those vacancies.

At the meeting of the Leadership Board held on 18th February, 2015 revised Council management structures were agreed which included the post of Assistant Director – Schools and the report proposed that the remit of the Appointment Board for Heads of Service be amended to include the appointment of this post.

Also at the statutory meeting of the Council held on 17th May, 2012 the composition of the Appointment Boards was agreed and these were as detailed in the report. The report proposed that the composition of these Boards be amended to retain the Leader and Depute Leader as Convener and Depute Convener respectively, to include the relevant Convener, and that the remaining members be drawn from a pool of all members on the basis of the current composition, being nine members for the Appointment Board for Directors, on the basis of five members of the Administration, three members from the main opposition group and one member from the remaining opposition, and seven members for the Appointment Board for Heads of Service and Assistant Director – Schools, on the basis of four members of the Administration, two members from the main opposition group and one member from the remaining opposition.

DECIDED:

(a) That having considered the election of two councillors to the Renfrewshire Licensing Board, the membership of the Licensing Board be reduced by the number of vacancies, to seven members;

(b) That the remit of the Appointment Board for Heads of Service be changed to include the appointment to the position of Assistant Director – Schools;

(c) That the composition of the Appointment Boards for Directors and Heads of Service – Assistant Director – Schools be amended as follows:

(i) The Leader and Depute Leader remain as Convener and Depute Convener respectively;

(ii) The relevant Convener be included, and that the remaining members be drawn from a pool of all members on the basis of the current composition, being nine members for the Appointment Board for Directors, on the basis of five members of the Administration, three members from the main opposition group and one member from the remaining opposition, and seven members for the Appointment Board for Heads of Service and Assistant Director – Schools, on the basis of four members of the Administration, two members from the main opposition group and one member from the remaining opposition; and

(iii) That it be delegated to the Head of Corporate Governance, in discussion with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the main opposition group to appoint the remaining members as appropriate to the Appointment Boards as required.

5 TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to changes to the timetable of meetings to take account of the UK Parliamentary Election being held on 7th May, 2015.

The report intimated that there were meetings of the Social Work, Health & Well-being Policy Board and the Regulatory Functions Board scheduled for 1.00 pm on Tuesday, 5th May, 2015 and 10.00 am on Wednesday, 6th May, 2015 respectively. In terms of these meetings' proximity to the General Election, the report proposed that they be rescheduled as follows (a) Regulatory Functions to 10.00 am on Thursday, 23rd April, 2015; and (b) Social Work, Health & Well-being Policy Board to 12 noon on Tuesday, 19th May, 2015.

DECIDED:

(a) That the meeting of the Social Work, Health & Well-being Policy Board scheduled to be held at 1.00 pm on Tuesday, 5th May, 2015 be rescheduled to 12 noon on Tuesday, 19th May, 2015; and

(b) That the meeting of the Regulatory Functions Board scheduled to be held at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 6th May, 2015 be rescheduled to 10.00 am on Thursday, 23rd April, 2015.