

**MINUTE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
HELD ON 12th FEBRUARY, 2015**

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, McGurk, Cameron, Henry, M Macmillan, McCartin, Caldwell, Hood, McGee, I McMillan, Bibby, Andy Doig, Gilmour, Clark, Audrey Doig, Provost Hall, Councillors Noon, M Brown, Holmes, J MacLaren, Harte, McQuade, Mullin and Nicolson.

Provost Hall presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

S Black, Chief Executive; S MacDougall, Director of Community Resources; M Crearie, Director of Development & Housing Services; R Naylor, Director of Education & Leisure; A Russell, Director of Finance & Resources; P MacLeod, Director of Social Work; D Walls, Head of Resources, (Community Resources); J Lynch, Head of Property Services (Development & Housing Services); G McKinlay, Head of Service and M Dewar, Acting Head of Service (both Education & Leisure); K Graham, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, A MacArthur, Acting Head of Corporate Finance, M Conaghan, Legal & Democratic Services Manager, L Belshaw, Democratic Services Manager, and D Low, Senior Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Resources); and A McMillan, Head of Resources (Social Work).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

The Provost drew Members' attention to (a) the provisions of Section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 which restricted the voting rights of Members on certain issues if they were in arrears with Community Charge payments or Council Tax payments. If at the time of the meeting a Member had any Community Charge (Poll Tax) arrears, or was two months or more in arrears in payment of the Council Tax, the Member would be restricted in voting on matters which related to setting or adjusting the rate of Council Tax; matters relating to the administration, enforcement and collection of the Community Charge (Poll Tax) or the Water Community Charge (Poll Tax); or matters relating to the administration, enforcement and collection of the Council Tax or Council Water Tax; and (b) the Council's obligation to comply with the public sector equality duty set out in the Equality Act 2010 when making decisions in relation to its spending priorities.

SEDERUNT

Councillor M Brown entered the meeting during consideration of the following item.

1. REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2015/16

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources, together with an addendum, relative to the Revenue Budget and Council Tax for 2015/16 together with the relevant budget papers. The report provided members with an overview of the Council's projected financial position for the year ahead and set out the information required for the Council to set its budget and Council Tax for 2015/16.

The report referred to the financial settlement for local government covering the period 2015/16 which had been announced in December 2014 and indicated that the grant funding for Renfrewshire amounted to £300.079 million. Of this allocated grant figure, £2.254 million represented a pass-through grant from the Scottish Government to COSLA for the Business Gateway. Adjusting for this provided a grant available to fund Council services of £297.825 million. The settlement figure also included a number of planned adjustments by the Scottish Government and which predominantly related to new statutory responsibilities arising from the Children and Young People Act, extension of free school meal provision to all Primary 1 to 3 pupils and the Scottish Welfare Fund. These adjustments to the grant settlement were linked to associated budgeted adjustments that were included in Table 2.

The report advised that after adjusting for these areas, the provisional grant level for the Council was in line with the 2015/16 planning figures originally released by the Scottish Government in July 2014 and reflected the assumptions incorporated into the Council's financial planning for 2015/16. The Council's 2015/16 grant figure was on a like-for-like basis increased by £0.2 million (0.07%) from 2014/15, with the Council's share of the overall local government revenue funding settlement remaining effectively static at 3.14%.

The figures in the grant settlement did not include funding releases for the contribution from the Scottish Government for the continuation of the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme in 2014/15 and a number of other commitments detailed in the report. The report indicated that if the Council did not agree to this specified set of commitments as part of agreeing the 2015/16 budget and formally confirmed this position to the Scottish Government by 20th February, 2015 the grant reduction would be increased by approximately £2.327 million.

The addendum to the report effectively withdrew the previously offered terms of the Local Government finance settlement and introduced new terms, the most significant change relating to the introduction of additional conditions associated with the grant offer and increased financial penalties for failing to meet the conditions. The revised grant offer decoupled, from the Council Tax freeze commitment, the commitment in relation to securing places for all probationers who required one under the teacher induction scheme. This commitment remained in place, and in addition, the following commitments had also been added: the maintenance, as a minimum, of the total number of teachers employed by individual local authorities at the 2014-15 level; and the maintenance, as a maximum, of pupil teacher ratio within their authority at the 2014/15 levels. In respect to these teacher number and pupil teacher ratio requirements, the meeting of the commitment would be confirmed in the publication of the annual Pupil Teacher Census statistics published in December 2015.

If a council did not meet this requirement, the Cabinet Secretary had confirmed the intention to remove from the grant settlement figure, the individual council's share of £41 million of resources included in the grant figures associated with supporting resources for teachers. For Renfrewshire Council, the associated share of this £41 million represented £1.281 million which was included in the £297.825 million government grant figure for the Council referred to above. In addition, if in December 2015, the published annual statistics confirm that the commitment had not been met, the Scottish Government intended to clawback grant resources distributed during the course of 2015/16. Conversely, if the published statistics in December confirmed that the conditions had been met, the Scottish Government would distribute a share of an additional £10 million. At present there was no detail in respect to how this distribution would be applied. However, if it were distributed on the same basis as the £41 million, Renfrewshire Council's share was estimated at £0.310 million.

Councillor Holmes tabled the motion on behalf of the Administration.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting then adjourned at 9.35 am to allow members to consider the motion. The meeting reconvened at 9.50 a.m.

Councillor Holmes, seconded by Councillor Grady, moved:

- “1. That this Administration’s third budget will build further on its commitments to invest in economic regeneration, local communities and support the most vulnerable in Renfrewshire through further new resources directed to tackling poverty and inequalities.
2. On Regeneration this budget commits a further £5.833 million to the Council’s economic regeneration plans which includes ambitious investment in Paisley’s heritage assets. This will be further boosted by £1.281 million which will be earmarked within balances for regeneration pending final clarification of the Council’s grant position for 2015/16, as recommended by the Director of Finance and Resources. Subject to this clarification, this new commitment brings the total revenue and capital resources available to support this strategic investment priority to approximately £22 million. These resources are already funding work to progress and promote Renfrewshire and Paisley as a destination town and deliver the regeneration of the historically significant Russell Institute. This further funding commitment represents a serious statement of intent to put in place the necessary funding arrangements to support the delivery of this Administration’s ambitious vision to regenerate Paisley town centre.
3. On tackling poverty, this budget commits a further £3 million, to double to £6 million the resources available from the Council to support a coordinated response to the recommendations arising from the Tackling Poverty Commission which is expected to report imminently. This pro-active commitment, in addition to the significant resources that have already been directed to support the development of Credit Unions and the i-save initiative for all 1st year pupils in Renfrewshire, to tackle the worst impacts arising on Renfrewshire’s communities from the UK Government’s welfare reform agenda, to support employability through the Invest in Renfrewshire strategy and to support families through the Family First and Early Years initiatives, further enhances this Administration’s commitment to tackling poverty, reduce inequality and support families across Renfrewshire.
4. This budget commits a further £0.5 million to investment in the roads and footpath network, in addition to the £3.262 million already detailed in the Capital Investment Programme report at Agenda item 2, bringing the total capital investment programme for 2015/16 to £3.762 million.
5. This budget commits £0.100 million to provide full mainline funding support to the highly successful StreetStuff initiative and a further £0.026 million to allow the Council to provide a matching contribution, of up to £500 per school, to pupils charity fund raising activities within all Primary and Additional Support Need schools (52 schools in total).
6. To protect services to the most vulnerable in Renfrewshire, and following consultation with the Director of Children’s Services, to agree to invest £2.952 million of additional resources in the Social Work budget to deal with demographic pressures and to continue the shift to prevention and early intervention. Also, to agree that the Director continues to take action, as previously agreed by Council, to ensure demand pressures are contained within the additional resources being made available to his budget.
7. To agree the base budget assessment for all services for 2015/16 as recommended by the Director of Finance and Resources, and subject to agreement of item 6 above, agree a 2015/16 base budget of £363.402 million.
8. To agree to make provision of £3.102 million in 2015/16 for pay inflation and make no provision for general non-pay inflation, as recommended by the Director of Finance and Resources.

9. Subject to paragraph 14 below, agree to a 2.5% increase on charges for 2015/16, with the following specific exceptions where the Council has previously agreed to freeze charges at the 2014/15 level, to generate additional income of £0.390 million,
- Sports Pitches
 - Community Halls
10. To agree the resource allocations for 2015/16 for all services, as amended by these proposals.
11. To agree the detailed Revenue Estimates for all services be amended to reflect these proposals and the necessary allocation of central support costs, central repairs costs, capital charges, specific grants and loan charges provision with Directors authorised to take any action necessary to implement these decisions.
12. Subject to agreement of the above, to agree that the council tax for 2015/16 be set at £1,164.69 for Band D subjects, representing a freeze on the 2014/15 levels, and for all bandings to be set at:

Band	Council Tax 2015/16 (£)
A	776.46
B	905.87
C	1,035.28
D	1,164.69
E	1,423.51
F	1,682.33
G	1,941.15
H	2,329.38

13. Subject to agreement of the above, to agree to authorise the Leader of the Council to confirm to the Scottish Government, by 20 February 2015, that the Council's budget makes adequate provision to meet the specified commitments in the package of conditions linked to the Council's grant settlement to ensure the Council accesses its full grant entitlement. Additionally, that following publication of the Annual Pupil Teacher Census statistics in December and once the Council subsequently accesses a share of the £10 million of additional grant resources that are being withheld by the Scottish Government, that the Council directs the estimated £0.310 million of resources to further supporting Education and teacher numbers within Renfrewshire.
14. To agree to increase charges for services by 2.5% (as detailed in paragraph 9 above) or where appropriate by the rate set in national regulations or guidance, or where charges are based on full cost recovery by the appropriate increase to maintain this position, subject to Directors being authorised to round the charge up or down to a figure deemed by them appropriate, and to note the requirement of financial code 14a that Directors review the amounts their departments charge for goods or services and if they think any charge needs to be increase they will make specific recommendations in this regard to the appropriate Board. The Council therefore agrees that when a Director carries out such a review and believes a charge for goods or services should be levied greater than the agreed increase of 2.5% or the rate set in national guidance, he or she will be entitled to make such recommendations to the appropriate Board for approval, notwithstanding the increase detailed in paragraph 9."

Councillor Nicolson tabled an amendment.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting then adjourned at 9.50 am to allow members to consider the amendment. The meeting reconvened at 10.00 a.m.

Councillor Nicolson, seconded by Councillor Cameron, moved as an amendment that:

“Note the base budget and report from the Director of Finances subject to amendments.

Note the provisions in item Section 5 5.1 with regard to the risk to pay inflation and the continuing risk of national level negotiations.

Agree that the unknown additional element of risk regarding the pull-out from COSLA with regards to national pay bargaining and negotiations with the Scottish Government has not been addressed and to instruct the Director Finance and Resources to bring forward a report on the financial risk this may present to a further meeting of the Council before the end of the financial year.

Note that in page 12 3.5 that the full force of the austerity cuts is driven from Westminster and ‘this would inevitably have implications for the Scottish Government’s budget’ and also notes that 28 Scottish Labour MP’s signed up to the ‘Fiscal Charter’ to deliver £30 billion worth of cuts.

Note that the SNP opposition will challenge ‘on a line by line, issue by issue’ basis every cut proposed by this Labour administration’s vehicle ‘Better Council Change Programme’ to deliver Westminster’s cuts to the people of Renfrewshire.

To reject the recommended £2.5% increase in charges and limit this to 1.25%. To generate additional income of £0.195 million to keep charges in line with anticipated levels of inflation.

Agree all conditions attached to the Grant settlement from the Scottish government subject to conclusion of negotiations, note and welcome that the Council Tax will be frozen for the eighth successive year and fully funded by the SNP Government and the securing of places for probationary teachers.

Agree to the terms and conditions of the Finance Secretary letter dated 5th February regarding the retention and commitment to maintain teacher numbers at 2014/15 levels and the maintenance of the teacher / pupil ratio. Noted is the opinion of the Director of Children’s Services that resources exist to meet the measure of maintaining teacher numbers.

Agree and approve the council tax banding levels A – H inclusive to apply for 2015/16 (see below)

Note the detailed revenue estimates for all services for 2015/16 subject to adjustment for the allocation of central support costs, central repairs costs, capital charges, specific grants, inflationary allowances and any proposals for service changes approved by the council subject to the following amendments.

Utilising unallocated resources and Prudential Borrowing.

Welfare and Social Reform.

Direct £3.2 million to be used over three years to support the Council’s procurement service in delivering the living wage. The main area of priority is Social Care Contracts over which this authority has direct influence over and to assist with contract negotiations to deliver the living wage in this area.

Social Work.

Older peoples Services.

Direct an additional £1.5 million to manage and mitigate the pressures indicated in the report at 4.2. Regarding the significant pressures on the Social Work Budget.

Physical Disability Budget. Direct an additional £100,000 to be utilised over two years to speed up assessments and implementation of adaptations.

Environment.

Local Green Networks Green Renfrewshire.

Direct a one off spend of £250,000 towards providing support to our Green Network activity and to secure leverage funding, environmental improvements and expansion of community engagement. In particular, support and development of allotments and the creation/preservation of community woodlands.

Community Engagement.

Direct a one off Investment of £200,000 to the provision, maintenance and support to increase and maintain community engagement in the cleanliness of our communities. To provide additional dog/litter waste receptacles, grit bins, equipment, street furniture and signage where appropriate in support of these aims.

Play Parks and Leisure.

Direct a one off investment of £500,000 to support community groups in their efforts to improve, create and develop outside play facilities and recreation for their local areas. This will encourage outdoor play, interaction between age profiles, stimulate community engagement and increase investment in our communities.

Education and Leisure.

Direct a one off uplift to devolved school budgets of £500,000. To support our schools in delivering the educational outcomes and increase attainment.

Direct £105,000 (£35,000 p.a.) towards providing free swimming lessons for all P6 pupils.

Parks and Cemeteries.

Direct £6000 (£2,000 p.a.) for three years to waive all charges with regard to the internment of children in recognition of the special circumstances surrounding the death of a child under the age of 16.

Economic Development.

Direct an additional £250,000 towards the Retail Improvement fund. To support local businesses, invest in our towns and provide and provide an improved and enhanced street scene environment.

Roads and Transport.

Direct a one off £400,000 to a Bus Route Development Fund with a specific reference to addressing connectivity issues between Renfrewshire's rural areas our towns and leisure and recreational facilities.

Direct £4 million (£0.5 million of which would be funded through prudential borrowing) to our roads and footway programme as a '**spend to save**' measure. A 'stand still position' with regards to existing low levels of investment will ensure we lose the investment built up over the last 6 years.

Maintain Reserves at the level recommended by the Director of Finance and Resources.

Direct the Head of Finance and Resources to make adjustments in all detailed revenue estimates for all services to be amended to reflect these proposals and the necessary allocation of central support costs, central repair costs, capital charges, specific grants and loan charges provision with Directors authorised to take any action necessary to implement these decisions;

Agree that the council's budget makes adequate provision to meet the specified commitments in the package of conditions linked to the council's grant settlement to ensure the council accesses its full grant entitlement.

Council Tax Bands

To agree that the council tax for 2015/16 be set at £1,164.69 for band D subjects, representing a freeze on the 2014/15 levels and for all bandings to be set at:

A 776.46

B 905.87

C 1,035.28

D 1,164.69

E 1,423.51

F 1,682.33

G 1,941.15

H 2,329.38

Total spend - £11.206 million

Unallocated Resources £9.646 Recurring (-£34,000) £9.612 million

Strategic Asset Management Fund £1.09 million

Prudential Borrowing £0.500 million

Equality & Human Rights - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

On the roll being called, the following members voted for the amendment: Councillors Perrie, McEwan, Lawson, Mylet, K MacLaren, M MacLaren, Mack, McGurk, Cameron, McGee, Andy Doig, Audrey Doig, Noon, M Brown, 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, Clark, Provost Hall, Councillors Holmes, Harte and Mullin.

The following member abstained: Councillor McCartin.

17 members having voted for the amendment, 22 members having voted for the motion and 1 member having abstained, the motion was accordingly declared carried.

DECIDED:

- (a) That this Administration's third budget will build further on its commitments to invest in economic regeneration, local communities and support the most vulnerable in Renfrewshire through further new resources directed to tackling poverty and inequalities;
- (b) On Regeneration this budget commits a further £5.833 million to the Council's economic regeneration plans which includes ambitious investment in Paisley's heritage assets. This will be further boosted by £1.281 million which will be earmarked within balances for regeneration pending final clarification of the Council's grant position for 2015/16, as recommended by the Director of Finance and Resources. Subject to this clarification, this new commitment brings the total revenue and capital resources available to support this strategic investment priority to approximately £22 million. These resources are already funding work to progress and promote Renfrewshire and Paisley as a destination town and deliver the regeneration of the historically significant Russell Institute. This further funding commitment represents a serious statement of intent to put in place the necessary funding arrangements to support the delivery of this Administration's ambitious vision to regenerate Paisley town centre;
- (c) On tackling poverty, this budget commits a further £3 million, to double to £6 million the resources available from the Council to support a coordinated response to the recommendations arising from the Tackling Poverty Commission which is expected to report imminently. This pro-active commitment, in addition to the significant resources that have already been directed to support the development of Credit Unions and the i-save initiative for all 1st year pupils in Renfrewshire, to tackle the worst impacts arising on Renfrewshire's communities from the UK Government's welfare reform agenda, to support employability through the Invest in Renfrewshire strategy and to support families through the Family First and Early Years initiatives, further enhances this Administration's commitment to tackling poverty, reduce inequality and support families across Renfrewshire;
- (d) This budget commits a further £0.5 million to investment in the roads and footpath network, in addition to the £3.262 million already detailed in the Capital Investment Programme report at Agenda item 2, bringing the total capital investment programme for 2015/16 to £3.762 million;
- (e) This budget commits £0.100 million to provide full mainline funding support to the highly successful StreetStuff initiative and a further £0.026 million to allow the Council to provide a matching contribution, of up to £500 per school, to pupils charity fund raising activities within all Primary and Additional Support Need schools (52 schools in total);
- (f) To protect services to the most vulnerable in Renfrewshire, and following consultation with the Director of Children's Services, that it be agreed to invest £2.952 million of additional resources in the Social Work budget to deal with demographic pressures and to continue the shift to prevention and early intervention. Also, that it be agreed that the Director continues to take action, as previously agreed by Council, to ensure demand pressures are contained within the additional resources being made available to his budget;

- (g) That it be agreed that the base budget assessment for all services for 2015/16 as recommended by the Director of Finance and Resources, and subject to agreement of item 6 above, agree a 2015/16 base budget of £363.402 million;
- (h) That it be agreed to make provision of £3.102 million in 2015/16 for pay inflation and make no provision for general non-pay inflation, as recommended by the Director of Finance and Resources;
- (i) Subject to paragraph 14 below, that a 2.5% increase be agreed on charges for 2015/16, with the following specific exceptions where the Council has previously agreed to freeze charges at the 2014/15 level, to generate additional income of £0.390 million,
- Sports Pitches
 - Community Halls;
- (j) That the resource allocations for 2015/16 for all services, as amended by these proposals be agreed;
- (k) That the detailed Revenue Estimates for all services be amended to reflect these proposals and the necessary allocation of central support costs, central repairs costs, capital charges, specific grants and loan charges provision be agreed with Directors authorised to take any action necessary to implement these decisions;
- (l) That the council tax for 2015/16 be set at £1,164.69 for Band D subjects, representing a freeze on the 2014/15 levels, and for all bandings to be set at:

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A	776.46
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D	1,164.69
E	1,423.51
F	1,682.33
G	1,941.15
H	2,329.38

- (m) That it be agreed that the Leader of the Council be authorised to confirm to the Scottish Government, by 20 February 2015, that the Council's budget makes adequate provision to meet the specified commitments in the package of conditions linked to the Council's grant settlement to ensure the Council accesses its full grant entitlement. Additionally, that following publication of the Annual Pupil Teacher Census statistics in December and once the Council subsequently accesses a share of the £10 million of additional grant resources that are being withheld by the Scottish Government, that the Council directs the estimated £0.310 million of resources to further supporting Education and teacher numbers within Renfrewshire; and

- (n) That it be agreed to increase charges for services by 2.5% (as detailed in paragraph i above) or where appropriate by the rate set in national regulations or guidance, or where charges are based on full cost recovery by the appropriate increase to maintain this position, subject to Directors being authorised to round the charge up or down to a figure deemed by them appropriate, and to note the requirement of financial code 14a that Directors review the amounts their departments charge for goods or services and if they think any charge needs to be increase they will make specific recommendations in this regard to the appropriate Board. The Council therefore agrees that when a Director carries out such a review and believes a charge for goods or services should be levied greater than the agreed increase of 2.5% or the rate set in national guidance, he or she will be entitled to make such recommendations to the appropriate Board for approval, notwithstanding the increase detailed in paragraph i.

2. CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2015/16 - 2016/17

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Council's Capital Plan for non-housing services for the period 2014/15 - 2015/16 in respect of education, social work, leisure, community resources, planning, roads and a range of corporate services. The report indicated that the resources available to support investment included prudential borrowing and capital grants as well as contributions from revenue, partners and external funding bodies.

The report indicated that the Scottish Government had published its draft budget for 2015/16 and budget planning figures for 2015/16 in October 2014. Details of the capital funding allocations for 2015/16 had been issued to councils on 11th December, 2014 and were due to be debated in the Scottish Parliament in February 2015. The confirmed total capital grant to the Council in 2015/16 was £19.448 million of which £0.262 million was specific grant relating to cycling and walking safer streets. This revised grant award for 2015/16 included £2.083 million to provide support for investment requirements associated with new statutory responsibilities arising from the Children and Young People Act and early year requirements.

The report intimated that, at present, there was no Scottish Government budget figures published beyond 2015/16 and that they were unlikely to become available until autumn of 2015 for the 2016/17 financial year. This would mean that the confirmed results for individual councils were likely to emerge in December 2015, approximately two months before the 2016/17 budget would normally be set. The report therefore proposed that the Council restrict making any further new capital investment commitments funded by capital grant beyond 2015/16. The capital investment programme extended beyond this timeframe reflecting approved programmes already in place which had other associated funding arrangements, such as prudential borrowing. In addition, this approach did not preclude any new investment decisions being taken by the Council as part of the budget considerations where separate funding arrangements outwith capital grant were being established.

Councillor Holmes, seconded by Councillor Grady, moved:

1. To agree the investment programme totalling £96.601 million covering the period up to 2017/18, including the recommendations contained in the report for the allocation of resources to support the delivery of lifecycle maintenance programmes over the period.
2. To endorse the decisions taken by Council in consideration of item 1, to direct the £1.094 million of resources available in the Strategic Asset Management, as follows:
 - £0.5 million additional investment in the roads and footpath network to lift the total capital investment to £3.762 million for 2015/16.
 - Direct the balance of £0.594 million as part of the investment in Regeneration bringing the total revenue and capital resources available to support this strategic investment priority to approximately £22 million.

3. To delegate to the Head of Property Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance & Resources, authority to adjust, where appropriate, resources across individual components of the proposed property lifecycle maintenance programme detailed in Appendix 4 to the report.
4. Agree to the suite of prudential indicators, treasury management indicators and treasury strategy set out in Appendix 6 of the report, subject to required adjustments arising from decisions outlined in points 1-3 above and in relation to any other decisions taken by members at this Council meeting.

This was agreed unanimously.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the investment programme totalling £96.601 million covering the period up to 2017/18, including the recommendations contained in the report for the allocation of resources to support the delivery of lifecycle maintenance programmes over the period be agreed;
- (b) That the decisions taken by Council in consideration of item 1, to direct the £1.094 million of resources available in the Strategic Asset Management, be endorsed as follows:
 - £0.5 million additional investment in the roads and footpath network to lift the total capital investment to £3.762 million for 2015/16.
 - Direct the balance of £0.594 million as part of the investment in Regeneration bringing the total revenue and capital resources available to support this strategic investment priority to approximately £22 million;
- (c) That authority be delegated to the Head of Property Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance & Resources, to adjust, where appropriate, resources across individual components of the proposed property lifecycle maintenance programme detailed in Appendix 4 to the report; and
- (d) That the suite of prudential indicators, treasury management indicators and treasury strategy set out in Appendix 6 of the report, be agreed subject to required adjustments arising from decisions outlined in points (a)–(c) above and in relation to any other decisions taken by members at this Council meeting.

3. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND RENT LEVELS 2015/16 AND HOUSING CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN 2015/16 TO 2017/18

There was submitted a joint report by the Directors of Development & Housing Services and Finance & Resources relative to the Housing Revenue Account and Rent Levels for 2015/16 and the Housing Capital Investment Plan for 2015/16 - 2017/18.

The report outlined the Council's obligation to bring all of its housing stock up to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015. The Standard Delivery Plan, which outlined the work and investment required to ensure that the housing stock met the SHQS and how this would be funded, had been approved by the Council at its meeting held on 21st May 2009. The Plan required rental increases of 4.5% per annum during the period 2010/11 - 2014/15 to generate sufficient rental income to fund the SHQS capital investment.

The report intimated that this was the final year of the SHQS programme and that the Council was on track to meet the standard, within the allowable exemptions by this deadline. Following completion of the SHQS programme, the Capital Plan would enter a period of Lifecycle Maintenance and reinvestment to maintain the Standard on an ongoing basis.

The report advised that the UK Government's Welfare Reform policy changes had created additional financial stress on families, pressure on Council services and had introduced a significant financial risk to the HRA. This included increasing risks associated with bad debt levels, significant costs associated with rent collection and the costs associated with advice and support for tenants.

The Council had made a clear commitment to support its tenants by setting aside HRA balances of £5m for measures to mitigate the impact of welfare reform over the medium term. This included additional staffing to deal with the increased contact needed with tenants, support for the development of initiatives for unemployed Council tenants and the establishment of a Council Tenant Assistance Fund (CTAF). Changes to the funding arrangements associated with Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) arrangements in 2014/15 had removed the need for the CTAF in financial year 2014/15.

The HRA Business Plan was regularly reviewed to take account of changes in key assumptions, which informed the annual budget setting process and allowed consideration of the planned rent increase for 2015/16.

The report detailed the proposed Housing Revenue Account budget for 2015/16 subject to the rent increase for 2015/16 being considered by the Council and detailed the proposed Housing Capital Investment Plan for the three-year period 2015/16 to 2017/18.

Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor M Devine, moved:

1. To agree to an average weekly rent increase of 3.5% for 2015/16.
2. To note the outcome of the tenant consultation process as detailed in paragraph 5.3 of the report.
3. To note this Council's continued commitment to mitigate the impacts of welfare reform on Council tenants through the earmarking of HRA balances over the period to 2017/18 to deliver a programme of measures intended to support tenants to manage the negative impacts of welfare reform.
4. To approve the HRA budget for Financial Year 2015/16 as proposed in the report.
5. To approve the Housing Capital Investment Plan 2015/16 to 2017/18 as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report, including the investment of £45 million over the three year period.
6. To note that this Council is on track to meet the SHQS, with the allowable abeyances, by March 2015, having delivered the £138m investment programme on time and within budget.
7. To note the impact of this administration's investment in additional resources for tenant liaison and quality management which has resulted in a significant improvement in tenant's experience of this programme with satisfaction rates sustained at 95% or above since April 2013.
8. To note that the Capital Investment Plan includes provision for a further 224 new build Council properties at Seedhill, Paisley, Bishopton and Johnstone Castle, following the successful delivery of new homes at Barrhead Road, Paisley.

Councillor Nicolson, seconded by Councillor Cameron, moved as an amendment:

- (a) Council agrees that the weekly rents increase be set at 0% for 2015/16 and that £1,568,800 be utilised from unallocated resources leaving a balance of £5,231,200 and amends Appendix 1 accordingly;
- (b) Notes the findings of the recent tenant consultation exercise where out of 12,000 tenants we received a less than 0.5% response rate and only 9 agreed with the proposed rent rise of 3.5% and 45 disagreed;
- (c) Approves the Housing revenue account budget for financial year 2015/16 as detailed in Appendix 2 and adjusts accordingly to reflect the amendments above;
- (d) Notes the sum of £4.4 million pounds which are sitting idle and unused while the impact of Westminster austerity cuts are biting deep into Renfrewshire communities and instructs the Director of Development & Housing Services to bring forward proposals for a pro-active plan for timely use of these funds;
- (e) Approves the housing capital Investment Plan 2015/16 – 2017/18 as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report; and
- (f) Notes that unallocated balances stand at £5,231,200 after adjustment.

On the roll being called, the following members voted for the amendment: Councillors Perrie, McEwan, Lawson, Mylet, K MacLaren, M MacLaren, McGurk, Cameron, McGee, Andy Doig, Audrey Doig, Noon, M Brown, 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, Clark, Provost Hall, Councillors Holmes, Harte and Mullin.

The following members abstained: Councillors Mack, McCartin and J MacLaren.

15 members having voted for the amendment, 22 members having voted for the motion and 3 members having abstained, the motion was accordingly declared carried.

DECIDED:

- (a) That an average weekly rent increase of 3.5% for 2015/16 be agreed;
- (b) That the outcome of the tenant consultation process as detailed in paragraph 5.3 of the report be noted;
- (c) That this Council's continued commitment to mitigate the impacts of welfare reform on Council tenants through the earmarking of HRA balances over the period to 2017/18 to deliver a programme of measures intended to support tenants to manage the negative impacts of welfare reform be noted;
- (d) That the HRA budget for Financial Year 2015/16 as proposed in the report be noted;
- (e) That the Housing Capital Investment Plan 2015/16 to 2017/18 as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report, including the investment of £45 million over the three year period be approved;
- (f) That it be noted that this Council was on track to meet the SHQS, with the allowable abeyances, by March 2015, having delivered the £138m investment programme on time and within budget;

- (g) That the impact of this administration's investment in additional resources for tenant liaison and quality management which had resulted in a significant improvement in tenant's experience of this programme with satisfaction rates sustained at 95% or above since April 2013 be noted; and
- (h) That it be noted that the Capital Investment Plan included provision for a further 224 new build Council properties at Seedhill, Paisley, Bishopton and Johnstone Castle, following the successful delivery of new homes at Barrhead Road, Paisley.