

Item: 15

General Meeting of the Council: 1 May 2018.

Notice of Motion.

Joint Report by Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the implications of the Notice of Motion, lodged by Councillor Stephen G Clackson, and countersigned by six other members, as detailed on the agenda for this meeting.

2. Recommendations

The Council is invited to note:

2.1.

That the Chief Executive has received a Notice of Motion requesting that the Council reconsider its decision, made at the Special General Meeting held on 22 February 2018, in relation to the setting of the Budget and Council Tax Level for 2018 to 2019, specifically, that Efficiency Saving EDELH05, relating to savings of £65,000 within the Education Service, be removed from the efficiency savings proposed for this Budget, with the resultant cost being met from the General Fund contingency.

2.2.

The educational impact, should the Notice of Motion be approved, as outlined in section 6 of this report.

2.3.

The financial impact, should the Notice of Motion be approved, as outlined in section 8 of this report.

It is recommended:

2.4.

That the Council determines whether or not to consider the Notice of Motion as detailed on the agenda for this meeting.

2.5.

That, should the Notice of Motion be approved by the Council, Efficiency Saving EDELH05, relating to savings of £65,000 within the Education Service, be removed from the efficiency savings for the 2018 to 2019 revenue budget, with the resultant cost being met from the General Fund contingency as a current year virement.

3. Policy Aspects

3.1.

This report arises from a Notice of Motion made under Standing Order 97 and does not relate specifically to progressing the Council's declared priorities.

3.2.

The Council has undertaken a lengthy process to arrive at the approved budget for 2018 to 2019, with opportunities for discussion on the proposed savings at budget seminars, at which all Services were represented, and for debate at the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 13 February 2018 and thereafter at the Special General Meeting of the Council on 22 February 2018. The Notice of Motion seeks to overturn, in part, the budget that was agreed by the full Council on 22 February 2018.

3.3.

For any council, setting an agreed budget represents a significant and increasing challenge in the context of growing pressures on public expenditure. Beyond the setting of the budget, delivery of the consequent savings also brings substantial challenges, often involving sensitive, complex and time consuming human resource, operational and legal considerations.

3.4

It is possible that reconsideration of the budget, once set, will give rise to an uncertainty which may exacerbate the difficulties faced by the Council in meeting future financial targets.

4. Introduction

4.1.

On 13 February 2018, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended the revenue budget and Council Tax levels for 2018 to 2019, which included Efficiency Saving EDELH05, relating to savings of £65,000 within the Education Service.

4.2.

On 22 February 2018, when considering the recommendations from the Policy and Resources Committee, the Council approved the revenue budget and Council Tax levels for 2018 to 2019, which included Efficiency Saving EDELH05.

5. Notice of Motion

5.1.

The Notice of Motion, detailed on the agenda for this meeting, lodged on 10 April 2018 in accordance with Standing Order 94.1, seeks the removal of an efficiency saving from the revenue budget for 2018 to 2019, with the resultant cost met from the General Fund contingency.

5.2.

Standing Order 68.1 states that a Notice of Motion shall be accompanied by a report from the relevant Executive Director on the implications of any suggested course of action.

6. Educational Impact

6.1.

The educational support budget has 3 principal component parts:

- School-based teaching staff.
- School-based Support for Learning Assistants.
- Centrally deployed specialist team, which includes educational psychology, a language and communication specialist teacher and an autism specialist teacher.

6.2.

Children and young people rely on the combined efforts of these three teams and, when necessary, successful collaboration with colleagues from Orkney Health and Care, in order to meet their needs.

6.3.

The approved budget for 2018 to 2019 in respect of educational support, totalling £2,482,000, comprises the following:

School-based teaching staff	£1,162,000
School-based Support for Learning Assistants	£759,000
Centrally deployed specialist team	£561,000

6.4.

Additional Support Needs Transport is not included in the above budgets, being more closely aligned with 'school transport' and the school bus routes.

6.5.

The school-based Support for Learning Assistant budget figure of £759,000 has been adjusted to include the approved budget reduction of £65,000. If the budget lines had not been adjusted to make that saving, the baseline budget would have been £824,000.

6.6.

The Education Service has been conscious for several years that spending on educational support, and Support for Learning Assistants in particular, has been out of line with budgetary provision. To this end, service pressure growth bids have been submitted through the budget process over several years; however, with constrained levels of funding, it has not been possible to put in place the budgetary provision to balance the spending.

6.7.

In order to meet the levels of spending being incurred, the Education Service has re-provisioned resources from other budget areas, such as funding for probationer teachers, Getting It Right For Every Child and Continuing Professional Development. This re-provisioning has had a negative impact on staff training and the placement of probationer teachers.

6.8.

In 2017, the service commenced a root and branch process to review the overall level of educational support with the intention of bringing the service expenditure into line with budget and to ensure that young people, who require additional support, receive the right help, at the right time and in the right way.

6.9.

Until now the resource has been used more widely in some schools through custom and practice and the review of support for learning is designed to reclaim the core purpose of support for learning which will result in better and more flexible practice and provision to those young people who need it. Work with headteachers on the best approach for deploying these hours (Support for Learning Assistant formula approach) has been underway since May 2017. Revised hours will commence in August 2018.

6.10.

The cost of providing the school-based Support for Learning Assistant resource over the last two years, against a baseline budget of £824,000, has been:

- 2016 to 2017 – £1,202,000.
- 2017 to 2018 – £1,142,000.

6.11.

The figure for 2017 to 2018 is based on actual expenditure as at 31 March 2018 plus an estimate of the Payroll Accrual.

6.12.

The overspend against budget over the past two financial years has therefore been £378,000 in 2016 to 2017 and £318,000 in 2017 to 2018. The savings required to bring the historical spending into line with budget provision and make £65,000 of savings is therefore upwards of £380,000.

6.13.

The impact on the service of not making the £65,000 saving will not mean that there is no impact on the provision of Support for Learning Assistants as there remains an imperative to bring expenditure into line with agreed budget provision. A number of staff have expressed interest in voluntary severance or early retirement and, provided they accept final offers made to them, officers are optimistic that the workforce reduction required to bring the budget into line can be achieved through voluntary means. If the Education Service has to find the saving from an alternative area of the service budget, the impact may be on another high or very high risk area.

7. Equalities Impact

Equality Impact Assessments, setting out the implications of the savings proposals, were circulated in advance of the Council making a determination on the revenue budget for 2018 to 2019.

8. Financial Implications

8.1.

The financial implications of the Notice of Motion being accepted by the Council would be that the agreed savings of £65,000 would be reinstated to the Education Service budget and the General Fund contingency reduced by a corresponding amount.

8.2.

The General Fund contingency provision for 2018 to 2019 was set at £1,758,000. This contingency however must cover any of the balance of deferred service pressure bids, which amounted to £5,864,000, together with any other service pressures that materialise during the year, as well as any Council Plan aspirations that are not currently funded in the revenue budget for 2018 to 2019.

8.3.

With the expectation that the contingency balance will come under significant pressure during the year, an alternative to meeting the £65,000 from contingency would be to require the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee to identify an alternative saving of £65,000.

9. Legal Aspects

Any Motion to remove Efficiency Saving EDELH05 from the budget would be contradictory of the decision made by the Council at its Special General Meeting on 22 February 2018. Accordingly, in the absence of a material change of circumstances, in terms of Standing Orders 130 to 134, any such Motion shall not be competent unless Standing Order 130 (which precludes Motions that are contradictory of previous Council decisions made within the last 12 months) is suspended by agreement of two-thirds of the Members present.

10. Contact Officers

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