



Our Moray

Moray Conservative's budget
amendments 2019/20





Foreword

Councillor Tim Eagle - Leader of the Moray Conservative Group

The last few months have not been easy as yet again Moray Council struggles to bridge a significant financial gap. The Moray Conservative Group recognises that the Council has a legal obligation to deliver a balanced budget and that all councillors need to be financially responsible. We want the best for Moray. A Moray which provides high quality education, cherished public services, quality health care and a high quality of living. Sadly, we believe we have been let down by the Scottish Government who continue to underfund local authorities across Scotland despite increasing pressures being placed on services.

If, as seems to be the case, Nicola Sturgeon, is simply not going to help Moray, then the Council has to transform the way it delivers services. Sadly, this will not be easy and will require open, transparent and honest communication with all our communities to ensure we change and build what we need for the future. We should not pass on today's problems to future generations.

The Scottish Government and Moray MSP Richard Lochhead have failed the communities of Moray and the piecemeal approach to this year's budget by the SNP administration has left communities and staff unsure of what is going on and how the decisions will affect their daily lives. Many people have contacted us with significant concerns and we are grateful to all who took the time to share their stories.

The Conservative group have been represented in leaders' meetings throughout the budget period. We have listened to the proposals being put forward, asked questions and sought out alternatives. Sadly, we cannot find alternatives to some of the horrendous budget lines being put forward but, following discussions, the Conservative group today put forward the amendments as described below. This looks to protect some of those services which our communities are most worried about and have contacted us about throughout the last few months.

A slash and burn approach to savings is not good for anyone or any service. We have always argued that there needs to be a more strategic approach to financial planning. We continue to support the modernisation and improvement programme, and we will stress to officers and councillors that rapid progress must be made on this during the next financial year. With a fundamental belief in strategic planning, we will also propose five core strands that must be adopted and progressed during the next financial year.

My team and I are always here to help, do please get in touch if there is anything we can do.

Tim

Moray Conservative Group Budget Amendment

Budget 2019/20

Budget Amendments –

The Conservative group propose that the following services are saved from this year's budget cuts –

- Keith and Lossiemouth Swimming Pools – We cannot thank the public enough for showing their overwhelming support for local swimming pools and our leisure estate. Their response has been amazing and with the sale of hundreds of Fit-life cards these vital swimming pools will not be closed.
- Active Schools Programme – From the start we said this was a ridiculous saving to consider, especially as we are supported by Sports Scotland to deliver this service and reducing child obesity is a government priority. The public have contacted us in great numbers to contest this saving and their support and voice has helped provide a way to overturn this cut.
- Musical Instruction Service – With music so important we were ashamed to see this on the list of savings with a proposed 85% rise in fees. This ill thought-out proposal would have destroyed this service and the future for young musicians in Moray. The tragedy is that our much loved instrumental instruction manager John Mustard resigned in frustration over this issue, done without the Administration even consulting him. His show of strength against these cuts has provided the opportunity to save this service. We have argued for a 10% increase maximum and a wide advertising campaign so everyone can realise the value of this service and we can get many more young people taking up a musical instrument in Moray.
- Gollachy Recycling Centre – This is an important recycling centre for Buckie. We will ask for the decision on Gollachy to be reversed and consideration is given over the next year to other options such as reducing the number of days open.
- Leisure Harbour Fees – We believe our harbours are a vital part of Moray's heritage and can understand the frustrations of leisure harbour users who have seen significant increases in their fees over the years despite little improvements in harbour facilities. Moray Council already consulted on a 3% rise in fees this year and we have argued that this should be capped at 5% and not 10%. This is not an ideal position but we believed it important to try and reduce this as much as we could.
- Save Tomintoul library – Tomintoul is one of our most remote communities, and its library is a wonderful place and an asset to Moray. Residents have contacted us to say that this is a well-used and much loved facility in the area, providing internet access and staff who offer a range of advice and support on many issues. We will argue that given the rurality of the village and the lack of council-run services, this must be saved.
- Public Toilets – We were deeply concerned about the shutting of the remaining public toilet in each town. Toilets are vital to many community members and are important for local tourism. We continue to look at options to save these facilities but are delighted to hear that there may be interest from local communities to take them on. We are still looking at options to keep the toilets open for the summer at least but we will warmly support any plan to take on the toilets and will encourage the council to recognise and support any future proposals.



- Commercial Manager – In administration we argued that a commercial manager should be appointed who could focus on income maximisation and bring significant additional revenue to the council. This is currently within our modernisation and improvement programme with no date set against it. We will argue that this post should be recruited within 3 months and that at the very least £11,500 could be included in the budget as an income. We would fully expect this to be more in the first year.

Costs associated with these proposals are shown below.

Item	Cuts to be removed	
	Notes	Savings 19/20
Amended Decisions from 23/1/19		
<i>Remove closure of Lossiemouth and Keith Swimming Pool</i>		£0.00
<i>Remove closure of Active Schools Programme and amend as below</i>		£83,000.00
<i>Remove changes to Musical Instruction Service and amend as below</i>		£100,000.00
<i>Remove Closure of Gollachy Recycling Centre</i>	Review possibility of less opening days over next year	
<i>Remove proposed increase of Leisure Harbour Fees and amend as below</i>		£10,000.00
<i>Remove proposal to close Tomintoul Library</i>		£6,500.00
Total Proposed Budget Amendments		£199,500.00

Amended Savings Proposed	Notes	Saving 19/20
Musical Instruction Alternative Savings Plan - 10% fee rise max		£98,400.00
Active Schools Alternative Savings Plan		£45,500.00
Amend leisure Harbour proposed fee increase to just 5%		£5,000.00
Recognise that council welcome and fully support any proposal by communities to take on public toilets		£0.00
Set as a high priority the employment of a commercial/advertising manager (with expected income in 19/20 budget)	Expect to be more but income set at reasonable level	£11,500.00
Total Proposed Budget Amendments		£160,400.00

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Core Strategic Strands –

We do not feel Moray Council or any of its officers should be put through another year of uncertainty and pain. Budgets should not be made in such a slash and burn way. With this in mind we will also propose five core strategic strands at the budget which should be taken forward as a matter of urgency. On top of this we will insist that every avenue of communication between Moray Council, The Scottish Government and COSLA should be explored to call for fairer funding next year.

1. Senior Management Review –

- i. Delivering a core management team, which is motivated, lean, efficient, well led, and resourced to deliver the corporate and operational responsibilities of a modern Scottish local authority. To do this we propose to ask that as a high priority there is a review of senior management, which will deliver a cost-efficient team where corporate and operational responsibilities are correctly identified and delegated for best delivery. The needs for this has been widely identified in several documents not least the Local Government Association's *Outside the Box: the council workforce of tomorrow*, which says that councils should implement clear workforce strategies that prioritise increasing autonomy and reducing hierarchy.

2. Leisure Service Changes –

- i. In a society where obesity, diabetes and mental health issues are all increasing, we believe that a higher emphasis needs to be placed upon individual and group recognition of health and wellbeing. Whilst not the cure-all, it is well documented that being active and engaging in sport helps to combat and prevent some of these health concerns. We strongly oppose the budget lines, which would deplete our leisure service. Instead, we want to ensure the council reforms our leisure estate to enable it to become one of the best in Scotland. Despite 10 years of the leisure review board, the service has yet to significantly move forward. Our vision is that, with the correct packaging, our leisure estate would be attractive to a well-resourced and experienced external operator which could tender to run it. We will urge the council to adopt that vision.

3. Education & Children's Social Care Outcomes Review –

- i. The Conservative group believes one of our biggest responsibilities is to provide a well-run, resourced and effective education system. We want to ensure our young people can aspire to be whatever they choose and we can work with them to deliver that dream. We recognise that the education department has faced multiple challenges over the past 10 years and there is a need to transform the way we operate in order to provide the best possible chances for every child. Doing that will not be easy and will require open, honest and transparent communications with our communities. We believe there is a need to increase capacity within the education service and its link with children's health and social care. Recognising the gravity of the financial situation still to come we urge the chief executive together with a dedicated member of staff to explore options of support, perhaps through Education Scotland to review and identify short, medium and long term options for change.

4. Understanding our core strategic priorities –

- i. As an administration we brought together core strategic priorities with the independent councillors, that we felt were important and should be driving the council forward. We wish to ask all councillors if these core priorities are still supported and, if not, to convene a cross-party discussion on the important strategic priorities that we can all embrace to move Moray forward

5. Member forum for shared services

- i. The Scottish Government have suggested on several occasions that shared services between authorities should be considered. We do not feel enough has been done to partner with our neighbouring authorities at present. We will suggest that full council ask the council leader to write to those authorities which form the current Northern Alliance asking if they would be prepared to support an elected member's forum where, on a political level at first, ideas could be shared on potential areas for combined services. Where that might provide financial savings or increased benefits to local communities.

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