

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, 25 March 2009 at 11am

PRESENT: Judy Moorhouse (Chair), Sarah Bowie, (Vice-Chair), John Adams, Lesley Ansari, Andrew Baxter, Paul Bird, Naz Bokhari, Philip Cole, Andy Connell, Chris Cook, Clare Craig, Sam Crooks, Eric Gledhill, Robert Gordon, Christine Green, Barbara Hibbert, Gloria Hyatt, Max Hyde, Derek Johns, Aaron King, Caroline Kolek, Mick Lyons, Pete McAleer, Andy McKinnon, Robert Millea, Kirit Modi, Gail Mortimer, Tony Neal, Alex Parker, Annette Pateman, Sarah Reed, Alice Robinson, Oona Stannard, Tom Trust, David Whitewright, Anthony Wilkes and Nicola Wilson.

Apologies for absence were received from Gussie Andersen, Flora Barton, Janis Butler, Peter Butler, Liz Carter, Peter Cooper, Lisa Copeland, Fergus Crow, Janet Draper, Anne Garner, Jill Hill, Tony Lewis, David Lowe, Anne Madden, Rajinder Mann, Elizabeth Purnell, John Rimmer, Muriel Robinson, Jean Scott, Gill Stainthorpe, Angela Stones, Colin Surrey, Ralph Ullmann, Stephen Viner and Geoff Whitty.

1. Welcome

The Chair of Council welcomed Members to the Special Council meeting. The Council placed on record its congratulations to Alice Robinson on her election as Vice President of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers. Council was pleased to welcome back Robert Millea to this meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

None at this meeting.

3. Council to formally agree to move into Private Session

The Council agreed to move into private session due to the potential need to discuss sensitive staffing and commercial contractual matters within the budget papers.

4. Revised Budget 2009/10 (Ref 13/08-09)

Council had before it a paper seeking its approval to a revised budget for 2009/10 as recommended by the Executive Committee. The budget had been revised in response to the reduction of the registration fee from £37 to £33.

The Chair of Council introduced the paper and referred to her letter to the Secretary of State, drawing Council's attention to the recommendations set out within the paper. The Chief Executive highlighted the key areas of the paper with reference to the external environment, particularly the remit review on which he updated Members. The Chief Executive then summarised the budget strategy considered by the Executive Committee, the set of principles and the series of criteria applied by the Committee in revising the original budget and the broader implications of this budget going forward.

A Member sought clarification in respect of joint development activities with the DCSF or other public bodies and questioned whether any consideration had been given regarding existing joint activities which the Council currently undertakes. The Chief Executive, in response gave examples within the registration service area where investment had been made

by the DCSF in terms of wider registration whilst the Registrar drew Council's attention to a new joint development in respect of the Independent Safeguarding Authority implementation which could involve new expenditure in the future.

Turning to the proposed budget reductions the Head of Finance and Workforce Development explained the process undertaken by the Leadership Team and the Executive Committee and made reference to the effect of reduced interest income. In response to a Member question she summarised the high level breakdown of the £4 fee reduction. A Member sought clarification regarding planned ICT replacement and the Director of Corporate Services stated that it related to the renegotiation of a major contract within twelve months, rather than computer hardware and that the planned reductions were manageable with phasing being undertaken. Further questions in respect of the planned budget reductions related to the election expenditure, timescales for the 2012 projects and the reductions in staff costs.

The Chief Executive responded to the various points raised by highlighting that the position regarding the elections related to future years' expenditure and in any case would be part of the future consideration of the Council's Governance structures. In respect of the staff cost reductions, the Head of Finance explained that this related in part to an assumption of a higher vacancy rate which reflected the actual experience in the past couple of years, the decision of the Leadership Team to review vacant posts where some vacancies were frozen for all or part of the year (in accordance with the agreed principles for budget reductions), strict business case justifications being required for recruitment to other vacancies, the control of temporary staff costs and very careful planning across the organisation which would ensure the process could be managed successfully.

In response to a Member question the Director of Corporate Services explained the rationale for the additional expenditure on information assurance and the Director and the Registrar clarified developments in information assurance controls which were the subject of report to the Audit Committee. The Council noted problems regarding the data exchange with local authorities which would be exacerbated by having to deal with individual schools and was proving to be a very difficult process. A Member questioned the implications for Members in respect of casework documentation and the Director stated that advice would be given to Members around this and other areas of information assurance.

The Council discussed the rationale for the proposed reduction in regulatory training upon which the Registrar provided clarification, as it related to the re-profiling of the costs of Member observations over two years. There was also regard to the projected volume of casework and work around the processes of the Investigating Committee.

The Chair of Policy and Research Committee drew Members' attention to possible risks in the reduction to TLA marketing expenditure and informed Council of the very positive NFER evaluation report which would be available for Members immediately after the meeting.

Further discussion covered issues relating to possible National Insurance increases upon which the Head of Finance undertook to provide some clarification outside of the meeting to the Member, implications of the STRB response which was expected very shortly in terms of the teacher pay award and reductions to the teaching and learning budget which were focused mainly around a small amount of contracting reduction.

In response to a Member question regarding projected fee levels for the following two years the Head of Finance explained that the paper before Council represented a one year budget

and the projected figures set out in section 4.4.6 of the paper represented some early thinking which could be subject to change.

Members in support of the budget congratulated the Chief Executive and the Leadership Team on a very sensible response and proposals recognising that as this was not a three year plan, a revised Corporate Plan would need to be revisited in twelve months time. The Council was keen to stress the impression that significant reductions that could be assimilated easily needed to be argued against and that the reductions were at a price. In addition there was a risk around this practical response in terms of discussions with Government and Departmental Officials as well as the perceptions of teachers. In response the Chief Executive stated that he had discussed the various principles underpinning the budget with Officials and that they fully understood the risk. As a separate point the Registrar stated that issues of possible demographic changes to the teaching profession would need to be factored in and worked up over the next couple of years.

In response to a Member suggestion that the Council should in the circumstances set a budget for the next four months only and review it at the July meeting the Chief Executive stated that as Accounting Officer he had to ensure the Council set a budget by March 31st for a full year but that the Council could review the budget at any meeting. The impact of the Remit Review may or may not be significant but any effects it may have on the budget would need to be considered at a later date. He confirmed that Council Members would be informed as soon as the results were known on the outcome of the Remit Review. The Chief Executive suggested a further recommendation to the paper which is set out in (iv) below and was agreed.

The Chair of Council put the recommendations in the budget papers plus the additional recommendation to the vote. There were carried by a substantial majority.

Council

agreed the budget strategy as proposed in section 4.3 of the paper;

discussed and confirmed the principles and criteria;

approved the revised budget for 2009-10;

requested the Chief Executive ensure that Council Members are apprised of any developments regarding the Council's remit and the fee.

5. Any Other Urgent Business

None at this meeting.

6. Date of Next Meeting 1st July 2009 – in Birmingham.

The meeting ended at 12.30pm.

Judy Moorhouse
CHAIR