

Council Finance & Resources Committee meeting 17 January 2012

✘ The Green Party are seeking Council support for the UK Uncut campaign at the first 2012 meeting of the Finance & Resources Committee which takes place on 17 January. The Green Party tabled a successful motion at a full council meeting last year asking for council endorsement of the Occupy Edinburgh camp, so there is probably hope that the council will endorse UK Uncut as well. The UK Uncut movement targets businesses who do not pay corporation tax on all their company profits, and are avoiding tax. The Green Party motion mentions *tax avoidance*, which is technically not always illegal, but something which might be recommended by an accountant as a way of minimising tax payments. Avoiding tax by illegal means is more properly called *tax evasion*. The purpose of the motion is to ensure that the council no longer do business with any companies which do not pay full corporation tax on profits.

Councillor Elaine Aitken has tabled a motion demanding some action in Fairmilehead to ensure that BT is persuaded to roll out super fast broadband in that area as well as the seven other exchanges in the city where it proposes to install the service.

The committee proposes to reduce the minimum charge made by the council in relation to Statutory Notices. The current minimum charge is £29.50. The report relating to this item recommends that the charge is reduced to £15 where more than 20 properties are involved, otherwise the council could be recouping more than the actual cost of the work.

Around 40 householders took up the council offer of a one-off rebate in council tax last year if they installed insulation

in their homes under the council scheme. This arrangement is part of an initiative devised to meet the requirements set by the Scottish Government in terms of its Climate Change legislation, and reimburses people who make their homes more energy efficient. It seems from the report that the council do not actually fund the rebate in question, rather that it is given as a discount from the bill which the householder pays to the contractor.

The committee is also being asked to approve the setting aside of £2m to cover the cost of borrowing relating to the trams for the period until the tram starts running. All departments are reporting a break even position, and there is even a projected £2m revenue surplus reported by the Director of Corporate Governance.

The cost of employing agency or temporary staff across several council departments exceeded £10m in the period from April to November 2011, and that sum is expected to increase in the coming year due to new employment regulations relating to agency workers. The report explains how the council will try to contain these costs, for example by restricting the use of agency staff all together or not employing them to do overtime as the rate might be higher than that paid to a council employee.

The premises formerly used as Bonnington Primary School have been vacant since December 2008. There are two reports tabled for discussion about the school, one explaining why the cost of developing the premises as the new Gaelic School have increased so much since the initial estimate, and the other explaining what might be done to safeguard other empty buildings owned by the council.

The Reporter will be attending the meeting at the City Chambers on Tuesday. Any member of the public can also attend almost any council meeting.

The agenda is shown in full below:

[Agenda_17.01.12](#)