

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: THE DENNIS CANAVAN SCHOLARSHIP
Meeting: FALKIRK COUNCIL
Date: 5 DECEMBER 2007
Author: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 To mark the commitment to public service given over the years by Dennis Canavan, former Councillor, MP and MSP, a cross-Party Member/Officer working group was established to consider recognising Mr Canavan in the Falkirk Council area.
- 1.2 Dennis Canavan had a 33 year political career, commencing with a brief period in early 1974 as a Councillor with Stirling District Council, then becoming MP for West Stirlingshire from October 1974 and subsequently for Falkirk West from 1983 until 2000. Mr Canavan stood for the first elections to the Scottish Parliament in 1999 and won with the highest majority of any MSP in the 1999 elections. He subsequently resigned his Westminster seat in 2000 and retained his Scottish Parliament seat in 2003, finally retiring in 2007.
- 1.3 A number of significant events feature amongst Dennis Canavan's achievements throughout this period, reflecting his commitment and dedication to the Falkirk Council area and its citizens, both young and old. Mr Canavan played a leading part in the NHS campaign to maintain and improve services at Falkirk Royal Infirmary, including the Intensive Care Unit and Dermatology Treatment Centre which have officially opened and working tirelessly to ensure an adequate number of NHS beds for the elderly. Dennis Canavan was a key player in the successful campaign for the Millennium Link to re-unite the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals, a project which created approximately 5,000 jobs in the area as well as improving the local environment and leisure amenities. In addition, Mr Canavan worked hard to address local employment crises following the closure of the Wrangler factory and redundancies at BP.
- 1.4 Dennis Canavan was committed to supporting young people. This dedication to assisting young people in all levels of education continued with his move to Holyrood, where he worked hard to see lifelong learning become a reality and to ensure an increase in pre-school places, smaller classes at primary and secondary schools and more opportunities for adult learning. This aspect of Mr Canavan's commitment to young people and improving the opportunities for learning at all ages provided a starting point for the Member/Officer Working Group's discussions.
- 1.5 The Working Group having met twice and consultation having taken place with Mr Canavan to discuss a number of options, the Group is now in a position to share its proposals with Council and proceed as appropriate.

- 1.6 The purpose of this report is to outline the terms of the Working Group's proposals and to seek Members' approval thereon.

2. BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS

- 2.1 A meeting of the Working Group was held in June 2007 at which preliminary proposals were discussed, including the suggestion of a scholarship or student sponsorship at secondary school or college.
- 2.2 Having considered a number of options, consultation then took place with Mr Canavan, an exercise which showed him to be in favour of a scholarship being established in his name. The relevant Officers pursued this option in general terms, investigating the financial and legal aspects. Mr Canavan has since given his support for the project, thereby enabling the Group to consider the proposals in further detail.
- 2.3 The Working Group's proposals are summarised as undernoted:-
- (1) An annual award to be given to a pupil whose main place of residence is in the Falkirk Council area or who attends school in the area, for the purpose of pursuing a full-time course in further or higher education;
 - (2) The award to be given to the pupil who, in the opinion of an agreed panel of judges, has given the most outstanding service to others, eg through voluntary work, charity sponsorship, sports coaching, caring for others, contributing to international development etc;
 - (3) The panel of judges to be chaired by the Provost of Falkirk Council and to comprise the Chief Executive and Director of Education Services, the Editor or representative of the Falkirk Herald and Mr Canavan or a nominee of the Canavan family;
 - (4) The award to be £500 per annum, subject to review depending on the income from investment; and
 - (5) The award to be named The Dennis Canavan Scholarship.
- 2.4 Further discussion is required to determine the most appropriate means of publicising the award in such a way that all local youngsters meeting the criteria outlined in (1) and (2) above are included. It is intended that schools, churches and youth organisations etc will be invited to submit nominations for this award, although it should be noted that, while their main place of residence may be in the Falkirk Council area, not all young people attend local schools, nor do they necessarily attend local churches or youth organisations. It is suggested, therefore, that a sufficient level of publicity be given to the award and its eligibility criteria and a mechanism be established whereby individual nominations will be invited, thus including youngsters meeting the identified criteria but not affiliated to a particular local organisation.
- 2.5 In addition, the Working Group proposes that the launch of the Scholarship be marked with a civic event, such as a lunch in Callendar House, to which Mr Canavan and his

guests would be invited, together with an appropriate guest list drawn up in consultation with the Provost and Mr Canavan.

3. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Director of Finance recommends that a sum of £10,000 be invested initially in a high interest account which would stand to yield c£500 per annum in interest. On the recommendation of the Director of Finance, it is proposed that the funding will be met from the Miscellaneous Services budget. The initial investment would be a one-off payment and work is ongoing to determine the best investment option, whether internal or external to the Council.
- 3.2 In addition, the Director of Finance is investigating the pros and cons of registering the Scholarship Fund as a charity. If this is the preferred option, the Acting Director of Law and Administration Services will oversee the drawing up of an appropriate Trust deed, specifying Trustees, for this purpose.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Members are requested to:-

- (1) approve in principle the proposals drafted by the Member/Officer Working Group to recognise publicly the service given by former MP and MSP, Dennis Canavan, in the Falkirk Council area;**
- (2) approve the financial and legal aspects of the proposals, as outlined within the body of the report; and**
- (3) delegate authority to relevant Officers to proceed with establishing The Dennis Canavan Scholarship Fund, applying financial and legal procedures as required.**

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Chief Executive

Date: 27 November 2007

Contact Officer: Dale Robb, Business and Members' Services Manager (tel 01324 506111)

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None