

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the EXECUTIVE held within the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2013 at 9.30 a.m.

COUNCILLORS: Jim Blackwood
Dennis Goldie
Gerry Goldie
Linda Gow
Adrian Mahoney
Malcolm Nicol
Alan Nimmo
Dr Craig R Martin
Craig Martin (Convener)

OFFICERS: Margaret Anderson, Director of Social Work Services
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement
Arlene Fraser, Committee Services Officer
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Tracey Gillespie, Human Resources Manager
Rose Mary Glackin, Chief Governance Officer
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager
Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive
Pete Reid, Manager (Strategic Projects), Development Services
Bryan Smail, Chief Finance Officer
Vivien Thomson, Service Manager, Social Work Services

EX82. APOLOGY

An apology was intimated on behalf of Councillor Robert Spears.

EX83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Blackwood and Mahoney each declared a non-financial interest in item EX85 as Falkirk Council's appointed representatives on Denny & Dunipace CAB and Grangemouth & Bo'ness CAB respectively, and indicated that they would take no part in the discussion or decision making on this item of business.

Councillor Gow declared a non-financial interest in item EX84 as a volunteer adviser on Falkirk CAB but did not consider that this required her to rescue herself from consideration of this item, having regard to the objective test in the Code of Conduct.

Councillor Gow declared a financial interest in item EX90 as her spouse is a council employee and stated that she would take no part in the discussion or decision making on this item of business.

EX84. MINUTE

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Executive held on 8 October 2013 was approved.

In accordance with their declarations of interest, Councillors Blackwood and Mahoney left the meeting at this point.

EX85. SCRUTINY PANEL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: FALKIRK CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting the Scrutiny Panel's conclusions and recommendations on its review of the role of Citizens Advice Bureaux in the Falkirk Council area.

Details were given on the establishment of the pilot Scrutiny Panel to review the role of Citizens Advice Bureaux in the Falkirk area, the scrutiny process undertaken and the evidence gathered through various presentations, meetings and discussions with a range of stakeholders. The report and recommendations by the Panel, which had been accepted by the Scrutiny Committee, was presented for approval.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the process undertaken and the comments from the Citizens Advice Bureaux, and**
- (2) agreed the recommendations at paragraphs 6.1-6.6 in the report from the Scrutiny Panel.**

Councillors Blackwood and Mahoney re-entered the meeting following consideration of this item of business.

EX86. AUTISM STRATEGY

The Executive considered a joint report by the Director of Social Work Services and the Joint Acting Directors of Education presenting the Scottish Strategy for Autism and seeking approval of the Falkirk Autism Strategy which would take forward the recommendations of the national document, at local level.

The Scottish Strategy for Autism states that autism is a national priority. The strategy was the result of extensive consultation at national level on the way to ensure that progress was made across Scotland in the delivery of quality services for those affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The Falkirk Autism Strategy had been developed by the Community Planning Partnership and had been revised following a number of consultation exercises with partners and stakeholders.

The Falkirk Autism Strategy set out Falkirk's vision of ensuring that every individual with autism in the Falkirk area would have access to services and supports which provide them with the opportunities necessary to fulfil their potential.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the recommendations of the Scottish Strategy for Autism;**
- (2) agreed the Falkirk Autism Strategy for submission to the Scottish Government, and**
- (3) requested the Director of Social Work Services to provide an update on progress on the Falkirk Autism Strategy as appropriate.**

EX87. COMMUNITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2013 UPDATE

The Executive considered a report by the Chief Executive on the outcome of the extended nomination period for community council elections.

The Executive had previously agreed to extend the nomination period to 30 October 2013 for those community councils where nominations for fewer than two thirds of the vacancies had been received.

Detailed information was given on the outcome of the extended nomination period, detailing the implications for each of the Community Councils.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the formation of Polmont community council;**
- (2) agreed to permit the following 3 community councils to form with the remaining vacancies being filled by co-option – Blackness; Bonnybridge; and Langlees, Bainsford & New Carron;**
- (3) agreed to accept the late nominations received in respect of Lower Braes community council and to permit the community council to form with the remaining vacancies being filled by co-option;**

- (4) agreed that the following 6 community councils remain unformed on the basis that insufficient interest in them had been shown: Camelon, Bantaskine & Tamfourhill; Carron & Carronshore; Falkirk Central; Grangemouth; Slamannan & Limerigg, and Whitecross, and
- (5) noted that it remains available for elections to be held at any time if an application is made from 20 electors within a community council area.

EX88. FALKIRK TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE (THI) UPDATE REPORT

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Development Services on the outcome of the Council's Round 2 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for funding to establish a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) in Falkirk Town Centre, and the programme for delivering the THI going forward.

The Executive had previously approved the Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative Round 2 bid and the bid was subsequently submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) by the deadline of May 2013. In September, HLF Trustees approved the detailed Round 2 bid and confirmed an award of £1.949m. .

This funding was in addition to the £1.6m already awarded by Historic Scotland as part of its Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme. As a result of this, and funding from other partners, over £5m would be invested in the Falkirk Town Centre Conservation Area over the next five years.

The Council would be required to make a contribution of £1.304m. Of this, £600k had been allocated from revenue and capital budgets, leaving a funding gap of £704k, to be met from revenue budgets over the 5 years of the THI.

Details were given on the Falkirk THI delivery programme, the Falkirk Town Centre Conservation Area management plan and additional implications.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the successful outcome of the Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative Round 2 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund;
- (2) agreed to progress the Townscape Heritage Initiative to the delivery stage as described in the report, and
- (3) agreed to receive further annual reports on the delivery of the THI and any additional implications for the Council.

EX89. TREASURY MANAGEMENT – INTERIM REVIEW 2013/14

The Executive considered a report by the Chief Finance Officer presenting, as part of the Treasury Management Code of Practice requirements, a mid-year review of the Treasury Management function of the Council.

In March 2013, Council had approved the Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14. It had highlighted that the UK economic outlook remained uncertain, with a key reason being the Eurozone difficulties. Indicators are now suggesting that the economy is recovering but the UK still remains a long way from sustainable strong growth.

The progress and current position in relation to the Council's borrowing strategy, investment strategy and treasury management prudential indicators were summarised.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the progress of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14, and**
- (2) agreed to refer the report to Council for consideration.**

In accordance with her declaration of interest, Councillor Gow left the meeting at this point.

EX90. NATIONAL PAY AWARD FOR SJC EMPLOYEES

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services setting out the current position in respect of the national pay negotiations for Scottish Joint Council (SJC) employees and proposing a pay award and living wage rate.

Negotiations had been on-going between the employer's side and the trade unions with the aim of reaching agreement for a 2 year pay offer for the period from 1 April 2013.

At the end of negotiations the unions had been divided over the pay award with GMB and Unite in favour and Unison against. Cosla agreed in October 2013 to implement the proposed pay deal, namely a 1% increase for 2013/14 and 2014/15 effective from 1 April each year.

The report also set out a proposal for the pay uplift to be accompanied by the introduction of the Scottish Government Living Wage of £7.50 per hour for 2013/14 and £7.58 per hour for 2014/15. Unless the Living Wage Foundation rate is higher in which case the latter will be applied.

The Human Resources Manager also updated members on the most recent position in regard to the proposals and, in particular, on the Living Wage Foundation hourly rate which is currently £7.45 but is due to increase to £7.65 with effect from 1 April 2014. She further advised that chief officers had accepted the offer but that the craft unions were unlikely to agree.

Decision

Consistent with the recommendation from COSLA, the Executive:-

- (1) agreed to implement a 1% increase in pay for all employees in each of the years 2013/14 and 2014/15;**
- (2) agreed to implement the Scottish Local Government Living Wage which is set at £7.50 per hour for 2013/14 and to implement the higher Living Wage Foundation hourly rate of £7.65 from April 2014, and**
- (3) noted the acceptance of the Chief Officer pay award of 1% for both 2013/14 and 2014/15.**

Councillor Gow re-entered the meeting following consideration of this item of business.

EX91. GSX/PSN COMPLIANCE

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting the background to GSX/PSN, the requirements regarding compliance, the Council's immediate response to this and the future actions which require to be taken to ensure continued compliance.

The Council is currently accredited to use the Cabinet Office's secure network called GSX/PSN to access various systems such as DWP benefit information, registration of births, deaths etc. and to communicate with organisations via the secure email system.

The Cabinet Office had undertaken a review of its security arrangements which had resulted in all users of its network having to adhere to stringent revised security arrangements or otherwise to run the risk of being disconnected.

Officers had carried out substantial work to address issues and to ensure that the Council's accreditation application reflects a genuine desire to ensure compliance with the Code of Connection and give the Cabinet Office the assurance required to re-accredit the Council.

In order that compliance is maintained, the Council requires to install permanent solutions in a number of areas, which may result in significant costs. Due to the timescales involved for the implementation of these solutions, it is proposed that the purchase of the necessary software, hardware and equipment are met from existing budgets.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the details of the report;**
- (2) authorised officers to work with existing budgets to procure robust solutions for Mobile Device Management, GSX mail, separation of teachers and classrooms from the Council's network and undertake any other remedial work required to ensure compliance with the Code of Connection, and**
- (3) asked officers to continue to provide updates to services and Members and, in addition, to submit an update report to the Executive in January 2014.**

EX92. POLICE SCOTLAND PROPOSALS TO WITHDRAW THE TRAFFIC WARDENS SERVICE AND DECRIMINALISATION OF PARKING ENFORCEMENT

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Development Services advising of a review by Police Scotland of its traffic warden service provision together with the level of public service at police offices.

Police Scotland propose to withdraw the duties carried out by the traffic wardens across its divisions including Falkirk. Details were given of the consultation exercise and the likely timescale for the withdrawal of the service, together with the implications for Falkirk Council in terms of parking enforcement.

Currently 11 Scottish Councils operate a Decriminalised Parking Enforcement Scheme (DPE), with the effect that responsibility for enforcement of parking offences lies with the authority and not the police. The process for establishing a DPE scheme was described together with the legal, personnel and financial impact.

Correspondence between the Chief Executive and the Local Commander on the proposal were circulated with the report.

Concern was expressed at the manner in which the consultation had been carried out and how meaningful it was in addition to the short timescale in which to identify any alternative provision.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) endorsed the terms of the letter dated 7 November 2013 to Chief Superintendent Flynn as the Council's position on the proposals including forwarding a copy to COSLA, and**

- (2) instructed the Director of Development Services to begin early preparation of a business case to support any application to the Scottish Government for decriminalisation of parking enforcement pending a decision by Police Scotland, and report back in due course.

EX93. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

The Executive agreed, in terms of s50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business on the ground that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the said Act.

EX94. CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF DRY RECYCLATE SEGREGATION AND RESALE SERVICE

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Development Services setting out the current position in relation to the Council's contract for the processing of dry recyclate material.

The Director of Development Services updated members on developments since the report was issued.

Decision

The Executive agreed to continue the matter to a future meeting.