

FALKIRK COUNCIL

QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

Standing Order 32 enables Councillors to put questions to the Leader of the Council or the relevant portfolio holder on matters transacted at a meeting of the Executive or the Education Executive during the preceding cycle. The table below details the questions asked and answered at the meeting.

ORDER QUESTION TAKEN	COMMITTEE / MINUTE REFERENCE	TITLE OF REPORT AND QUESTION	ANSWER	SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION	ANSWER
1	EXECUTIVE – 8 October 2013 REF EX71	<p>Consultation on Bus Regulation (Scotland) Bill</p> <p>What additional powers does the Administration wish to have in improving bus operation throughout the local area?</p> <p>Question by Councillor Stephen Bird</p>	<p>The portfolio holder for the Environment advised that some powers which could help the Council included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • franchising of profitable and non-profitable routes • the ability to set minimum service levels • the ability to set routes, frequencies and fares, and • the ability to introduce cheaper multi-journey ticketing 	<p>Given that the Leader of the Scottish Labour Party has said that she wants to get away from the “something for nothing culture”, can the portfolio holder guarantee that the free bus pass scheme will remain in place if Labour return to power in the Scottish Parliament.</p>	<p>The portfolio holder said that he couldn’t give that commitment which was a matter for the Scottish Parliament.</p>
2	EXECUTIVE – 8 October 2013 REF EX71	<p>Consultation on Bus Regulation (Scotland) Bill</p> <p>What representations have been made to Prof Arthur Midwinter’s review of the “something for</p>	<p>The portfolio holder for Environment advised that he had been in touch with Professor Midwinter’s office who had advised that he was not involved in such a review.</p>	<p>Councillor Bird referred again to comments by the Leader of the Scottish Labour Party and advised that Professor Midwinter had been asked what</p>	<p>The portfolio holder asked whether the review to which Councillor Bird was referring was the Scottish Public Spending review being led by Professor</p>

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		nothing” culture? Question by Councillor Stephen Bird		“something for nothing” meant for bus services in Scotland in response to which he had stated that he would review everything and that nothing was off the table.	Midwinter. The major aim from this was the Council tax freeze. The main point is that £1 billion of targeted spend has disappeared from budgets.
3	EXECUTIVE – 8 October 2013 REF EX73	Financial Position 2013/14 Council notes that the Authority, as 31 August, is predicting an underspend this year of almost £1.5m. Can the Resources Portfolio Holder advise what the estimated figure is to the end of October 2013? Question by Councillor David Alexander	The portfolio holder for Resources advised that in terms of the Scheme of Delegation this question fell within the remit of the Leader of the Council and that he would answer. The Leader of the Council advised that the projected position remains stable with a £1.5m projected underspend which was approximately 0.5% of the Council budget. A report setting out the most up to date position was scheduled to be reported to the January meeting of the Executive.	With two thirds of the year passed, only 1/2 and 1/3 respectively of the Welfare Fund discretionary housing payments fund has been spent. Why is the Leader of the Council deliberately targeting the most vulnerable in our society for savings which are then put into reserves.	The Leader of the Council advised that the discretionary housing payments fund and the welfare reform fund had an underspend as there is a limit to what these can be spent on. Money was added to these funds by the UK and Scottish Governments. He said this wouldn’t be being discussed if the Scottish Government had properly funded the discretionary payments.
4	EDUCATION EXECUTIVE – 29 October 2013	School/College Partnership The partnership with Forth Valley	The portfolio holder for Education advised that the Council had a close	A few weeks ago the portfolio holder was quoted in the local press attacking	The portfolio holder said that that no formal invitations had not been

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	REF EE23	<p>College has been a long standing and positive part of the Educational process and Vocational Education is a desirable element of a rounded Educational Service.</p> <p>Another important element in the transition to full adulthood is understanding the issues behind next September's Referendum and I would ask what efforts will be made to ensure that young adults who may be eligible to vote in the Referendum do not lose out on school based education because they are on vocational courses.</p> <p>Question by Councillor David Alexander</p>	<p>relationship with Forth Valley College. The SCOTS course is only run at Forth Valley College on a Tuesday afternoon. The other consortium courses are run on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. The remaining time was spent at their own schools where they will be able to take part in all relevant agreed information surrounding the forthcoming referendum.</p>	<p>the Yes Scotland campaign for their presence at the Grangemouth Youth Forum. Inaccurate statements were made concerning invitations to the event, taking photographs without permission etc. Education Services have since apologised for their erroneous statements. Will the portfolio holder make a similar apology?</p>	<p>issued to any political party.</p>
5	<p>EDUCATION EXECUTIVE – 29 October 2013</p> <p>REF EE23</p>	<p>School/College Partnership</p> <p>Falkirk Council Employment and Training Unit testing the core skills in numeracy and literacy of all Scots students:-</p> <p>What skills in relation to Literacies are being tested?</p>	<p>The portfolio holder for Education advised that the testing which had taken place was called the Tribal Skills Gold which, through a set of tests, assesses the literacy skills of the young people at an appropriate SCQF level. This would show the young people involved where their</p>	<p>Once all the testing is complete and looked at over a period of time, trends appear in relation to literacy. Which skills have been highlighted as needing assessment?</p>	<p>The portfolio holder advised that skills would need to be assessed and tested to identify which require to be improved.</p>

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		Question by Councillor Gordon Hughes	<p>reading, interpretation and analysis skills could be improved. It would also produce relevant material to help the young person improve those skills.</p> <p>The young people involved would have those skills reassessed at the end of the year to see where improvements had been made.</p>		
6	<p>EDUCATION EXECUTIVE – 29 October 2013</p> <p>REF EE23</p>	<p>School/College Partnership</p> <p>As potential workers, what benefits are expected by the Training Unit for the learners and employers?</p> <p>Question by Councillor Gordon Hughes</p>	<p>The portfolio holder for Education advised that the Tribal Skills gold assessment process was also used by Forth Valley College and was part of the Local Employability partnership approach to improving consistent and equitable assessment of young people.</p> <p>The Core Skill results were used as part of a wider assessment process by the ETU to help determine where on the “Employability</p>	In relation to benefits for employers, what do employers value most?	The portfolio holder advised that he would respond to Councillor Hughes in writing.

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			<p>Pipeline” the young person would be best suited.</p> <p>For instance, if the results were at SCQF level 4 then this information, along with performance at interview, school academic performance, and SDS referral input where applicable, would allow them to make sure that the vocational training programme was best suited to the young person’s needs and abilities at that point in time, and to serve as a baseline for monitoring improvements over the duration of their training period.</p>		

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7	EDUCATION EXECUTIVE – 29 October 2013 REF EX23	School/College Partnership Has the Falkirk Council Employment and Training Unit developed a Literacy Action Plan appropriate to the needs of the learners? What are the key aspects of this action plan? Question by Councillor Gordon Hughes	<p>The portfolio holder for Education advised that as the young people in question were currently school pupils it continued to be the responsibility of the school, working directly with Forth Valley College Tutors from the SCOTS course, to identify and support literacy needs where applicable, and to monitor progress throughout the delivery period.</p> <p>The aim of the SCOTS course was to encourage continued engagement in Further Education opportunities, in which case any literacy needs would also be supported by Forth Valley College at each stage of the delivery, working jointly with the School contacts in each case.</p> <p>Those pupils who may elect to apply for vocational training opportunities and</p>	What specific measures are put in place to support those pupils whose first language is not English?	The portfolio holder advised that he would respond to Councillor Hughes in writing.

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			<p>were assessed to be at risk of negative destination would be identified through the joint 16+ Transition groups established with in each school.</p> <p>All relevant information relating to Core Skill levels and literacy, numeracy and any other support needs were shared with the partners as part of the decision making in regard to destination groups. As one of those partners, the Employment Training Unit would interview and assess the young person, utilising the background information provided from the 16+ Transition meetings as part of this process. All successful Employment Training Unit recruits would then work to an Individual Training Plan, drawn up by their Employment and Training Co-Ordinator at the start of their training, and this was regularly reviewed and</p>		

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			updated throughout their engagement with the Employment Training Unit.		

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8	EDUCATION EXECUTIVE – 29 October 2013 REF EX23	<p>School/College Partnership</p> <p>In relation to the wider aspect of Literacy within the partnership, new drivers for the development of Adult Literacies are: – Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020: Strategic Guidance and the Literacy Action Plan</p> <p>What strategic approach has the partnership agreed in developing progress in relation to literacy?</p> <p>Has each school through consultation with parents and partners developed a Literacy Strategy.</p> <p>Question by Councillor Gordon Hughes</p>	<p>The portfolio holder for Education advised that the Literacy Strategy was informed by the Scottish Government’s Literacy Action Plan and shared the Scottish Government’s vision of zero tolerance of illiteracy.</p> <p>Consultation has taken place with a variety of stakeholders in relation to Falkirk Council’s Literacy Strategy including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS • Education Scotland • Learning Differences Team • School Librarians <p>The agreed approach is to produce a strategy statement, which is inclusive, developing a culture of literacy from pre-birth to adulthood supported by an on-line literacy strategy tool. This on-line tool offers practitioners and parents practical information relating</p>	<p>In relation to Curriculum for Excellence, which skills are associated with political literacy and having also looked at school literacy action plans which political literacy skills need more resources to address?</p>	<p>The portfolio holder advised that he would respond to Councillor Hughes in writing.</p>

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			to literacy and provides an overview of how services and agencies contribute to literacy.		
9	EDUCATION EXECUTIVE – 29 October 2013 REF EX26	Children & Young People Bill Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare to 600 Hours per Annum Falkirk Council has a policy of co-operation and joint working with the 3 rd sector; can the portfolio holder please advise of what part the 3 rd sector will play in helping to deliver the expansion of early learning and childcare? Question by Councillor Cecil	The portfolio holder for Education advised that the 3 rd Sector would continue to play a part in helping to deliver the additional hours of early learning and childcare. Initial conversations had already taken place with private partner nurseries, as that plan to deliver the increased hours is developed, the nurseries would continue to be involved in the discussions.	In the current economic climate demand for wrap around services has increased. As most of that care is provided by the 3 rd sector, what are the barriers to partnership?	The portfolio holder advised that the consultation of the additional hours nursery provision had ended on 30 November 2013 and that a report would be submitted to the Education Executive in February 2014 so the position should be known then.

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		Meiklejohn			
10	EXECUTIVE – 19 November 2013 REF EX86	Autism Strategy This Council appears to propose to adopt a social work centred approach to providing a service to people with ASD. I would be much obliged if the portfolio holder would provide the rationale underpinning his approach to this matter? Question by Councillor Tom Coleman	The portfolio holder for Health and Social Care advised that this was not a Social Work centred approach. The strategy had been developed in partnership involving Education, Social Work, NHS Forth Valley and the voluntary sector. The report had been strongly influenced by the consultation with families affected by ASD. It was implicit in the strategy that no single service was responsible for providing solutions and that a multi agency approach was needed overseen by a multi-agency improvement team.	Could the portfolio holder provide figures for the number of persons under 18 years of age who have been diagnosed with ASD and are still requiring treatment. Also can information be provided on the number of those who are in the 16 – 18 year old bracket and are receiving post school attention from Social Work Services, the information previously having requested from the service but not provided.	The portfolio holder advised that she was happy to ensure that the information requested by Councillor Coleman was provided to him.