

## FC84. REVENUE BUDGET 2013/14

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 13 February 2013 (Paragraph PR94 refers) there was submitted joint Report (circulated) dated 5 February 2013 by the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer providing a draft revenue budget for 2013/14 detailing (a) the overall budget position, including reserves; (b) individual service budgets; (c) service initiatives, and (d) the proposed Council Tax charge per band.

Following the Chief Finance Officer's summary of the report and questions, Council adjourned for lunch and reconvened at 1.00 pm with all members present as per the sederunt.

Councillor C Martin, seconded by Councillor Black moved that Council:-

- (a) accepts the Draft Budget for 2013/14 as set out in the report and as appended to it
- (b) levies a Council Tax for 2013/14 as follows:-
  - (i) A Council Tax to be paid in respect of a chargeable dwelling in Council Tax Valuation Band D of £1,070, representing a nil increase;
  - (ii) A Council Tax to be paid in respect of a chargeable dwelling in each of the other Council Tax Valuations Bands in accordance with Section 74 (1) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as set out in paragraph 10.3 of the report);
- (c) deploys £400k of the earmarked Spend to Save Reserve for “refreshing the profession” in Education as set out in paras 5.7.3 and 6.3 of the report;
- (d) accommodates the funding of the outcome of the Transport review consistent with section 6.3 of the report, and
- (e) instructs Chief Officers to deliver Services within the specific budget allocation for each Service and authorises them to take such actions as may be required to give effect to the service delivery proposals outlined in sections 5 and 6 of the report.

Councillor Meiklejohn, seconded by Councillor Jackson moved the following in substitution for paragraphs (a) and (c) of the motion.

- (a) accepts the draft budget as amended below
- (c) deploys the remaining £1.6m from the Spend to Save fund along with a further £400k of surpluses returned from Police & Fire to a new fund to meet the cost of Prudential Borrowing of up to £25,000,000 with priority going to projects that add value to the local economy, job and training opportunities. These projects will include:-
  - Completion of the Denny Eastern Access Road **£7m**
  - Town Centre Regeneration and the development of a Villages and Smaller Centres Strategy and regeneration programme **£5m**

- Bringing forward of the next phases of the Asset Business Property Portfolio Programme **£2m**
- Construction of a school hall at Blackness Primary School **£500.00**
- Blackness Coastal footpath, on John Muir Coast to Coast **£135,000**
- Key Infrastructure Works – investment in areas of infrastructure including roads projects that aid the local economy **£3m**

With priority also given to quality of life issues that will bring an income as well as improving infrastructure, projects such as:-

- The provision of 3 new 3g sports pitches estimated cost **£3m**, estimated annual income £250k
- Investment in other sports and leisure facilities per the strategic Leisure Plans of the Council, **£2m**, target income from such investment, £95k

Total proposed investment, estimated - **£22,635,000** giving around 10% flexibility.

Officers to bring forward reports on how strategies will be developed to ensure maximum impact for spending proposals from the above with ongoing dialogue between all groups within the council on the processes involved.

Council then adjourned for 15 minutes to allow members of the Administration to consider the terms of the amendment and reconvened at 2.25 pm with all members present as per the sederunt.

Councillor Spears gave notice of a further amendment.

In terms of Standing Order 21.4 (i) a vote was taken by roll call, there being 31 members present, with voting as undernoted:-

For the motion (17) – Provost Reid; Depute Provost Patrick; Councillors Black, Blackwood, Buchanan, D Goldie, G Goldie, Gow, MacDonald, McLuckie, Mahoney, C Martin, Dr C R Martin, Murray, Nicol, Nimmo and Paterson.

For the amendment (14) – Councillors Alexander, Balfour, Carleschi, Chalmers, Coleman, Hughes, Jackson, McCabe, McNally, Meiklejohn, Oliver, Ritchie, Spears and Turner.

The motion was carried. Councillor Spears then moved the following amendment in supplement to the motion.

### **Veterans Liaison Officer**

Falkirk Council have previously recognised & supported the great debt to our armed forces in their deployment throughout the world, historically from conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan back through to the Falklands War.

Council recognise the UK Government's decision to reduce the current level of manpower within our armed services, on top of the reduction of overseas personnel returning from Afghanistan which will place increasing demand on the already overstretched resources of our Social Work and Corporate and Neighbourhood Services. This Council will therefore support the creation of an office and post of

Veterans' Liaison Officer, with an annual stipend of £25,000. This is in addition to the £20,000 recurring figure contained within 7.1 of the Miscellaneous Services budget allocated to the CAB's Armed Service Advice Project.

This additional money will be released from the Council's Reserves.

### **Commercial Rents Reduction**

In light of serious concerns over the extremely alarming rate of retailer decline on our High Streets and retail parks, (since Christmas we have seen the closure of Blockbuster Video; Jessops Photography; Comet; and most recently and locally HMV) measures should be put in place to assist the economic recovery of our partners within all local High Streets of the Falkirk area.

This Council must recognise the alarming rise in retail failure within Scotland. In an effort to show support to this valuable sector of the economic model, Falkirk Council will instruct a 5% reduction to commercial rents across the Council's property portfolio. This equates to a cost of £199,500 to the General Fund.

This money will be released from the Council's Reserves.

Councillor Nicol, having considered the terms of the further amendment, declared a financial interest as the spouse of an owner of a commercial property. The Chief Governance Officer advised Council about the exclusion from declaration in relation to any interests a member may have in a report dealing with setting the Council tax as set out in paragraph 5.18 of the Code of Conduct. Councillor Nicol was mindful of public perception, however, and decided to withdraw from the meeting and take no further part in the discussion or decision making process.

Following discussion in terms of Standing Order 21.4 (i) a vote was taken by roll call, there being 30 members present, with voting as undernoted:-

For the motion (16) – Provost Reid; Depute Provost Patrick; Councillors Black, Blackwood, Buchanan, D Goldie, G Goldie, Gow, MacDonald, McLuckie, Mahoney, C Martin, Dr C R Martin, Murray, Nimmo and Paterson.

For the amendment (14) – Councillors Alexander, Balfour, Carleschi, Chalmers, Coleman, Hughes, Jackson, McCabe, McNally, Meiklejohn, Oliver, Ritchie, Spears and Turner.

Accordingly, **AGREED** the terms of the motion.