

FC112. WELFARE REFORM - UPDATE

With reference to Minute of Meeting of Falkirk Council held on 6 March 2013 (Paragraph FC100 refers), there was submitted report (circulated) by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services to the said meeting (a) providing an update on the impact of Welfare Reform on workstreams across the Council; (b) highlighting measures to mitigate the impact of reform on the citizens of the area such as the implementation of the Scottish Welfare Fund; (c) presenting a draft revised Discretionary Housing Payment scheme which would allow officers to better target those affected by current and planned changes in benefits, and (d) detailing proposals to utilise the Fairer Falkirk Fund to target those most in need.

Provost Reid confirmed that it was now 10.00pm and indicated that the meeting would close at 10.45pm with outstanding business to be determined at a special meeting to be held before 2 April 2013.

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

- (1) note the progress made to support the implementation and impact of Welfare Reform;
- (2) note in particular the approach to support the delivery of the Scottish Welfare Fund;
- (3) note the update provided in regard to the workstreams;
- (4) note Council's decision of 6 March 2013 to allocate £35,000k from the Fairer Falkirk Fund to increase the budget provision for Discretionary Housing Payments for 2012/13;
- (5) the proposed criteria/policy intentions for 2013/14 as detailed in appendix 2 to the report, in particular the definition of "significant adaptation" as set out in paragraph 5.2 of appendix 2, and
- (6) the proposed Fairer Falkirk Fund budget allocation for 2013/14 as set out in appendix 3 and the proposals to utilise £110,000 of the Falkirk Fairer Fund in 2013/14 to support Welfare Reform financial inclusion and capability services as detailed in paras 4.4 and 4.5 of the report.

By way of an amendment, Councillor Meiklejohn, seconded by Councillor Jackson, moved that Council agrees to:-

- (1) note the progress made in the report to support the implementation and impact of Welfare Reform;

- (2) note in particular the approach outlined to support the delivery of the Scottish Welfare Fund;
- (3) note the previous decision to allocate £35k from the Fairer Falkirk Fund to increase the budget provision for DHP for 2012/13 and agree the proposed criteria/policy intentions in Appendix III for 2013/14 where any one of the adaptations detailed at para 5.2 would meet the definition of significantly adapted criteria;
- (4) review how the Welfare Reform impacts on both the Housing Allocations Policy and Housing Finance Policy to ensure that any one affected by the housing benefit size criteria under occupancy is not further disadvantaged;
- (5) note the update on the work streams and agree to provide a progress report to members in 3 months, and
- (6) the proposals set out in Appendix 3 and para 4.4 of the report for utilising the Fairer Falkirk Fund to support Welfare Reform.

Councillor Spears gave notice of a further amendment.

On a division, 13 members voted for the amendment and 17 voted for the motion.

The motion was accordingly carried. Councillor Spears, seconded by Councillor McCabe, moved the following in supplement to the motion.

- (7) to allocate £20k from Council reserves to increase the budget provision for each of the 3 CAB's for 2013-14. (3x£20k = £60k), to be identified as payment to permit each of the CAB's to provide an increase in support services for the imminent specialist welfare benefits advice demands.

On a division, 13 members voted for the amendment and 17 for the motion.

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