

FC72. REVENUE BUDGET 2011/12

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 9 February (Paragraph PR82 refers) there was submitted Joint Report (circulated) dated 1 February 2011 by the Chief Executive and Director of Finance providing a draft revenue budget for 2011/12 and attaching as appendices, a copy of the joint letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth and the President of Cosla setting out the terms of an agreement recommended to Councils; details of the Local Government Finance Settlement 2011/12; proposed funding for external organisations and a summary of the proposed revenue budget for 2011/12.

Councillor C Martin, seconded by Councillor Nimmo, moved the recommendations as detailed in the Report and in addition that:-

“this Council recognises that there is a saving to be achieved in this budget from reducing library opening hours, but would call on officers to bring forward a report on how this can be achieved without necessarily closing all libraries on a Saturday afternoon”.

By way of an Amendment Councillor Alexander, seconded by Councillor Coleman moved that:-

- (a) “Council approves the Revenue Budget with the following amendments to bring about fairness and equality as well as tackling poverty.

Savings

- Savings from the non publication of Speak Easy and other Council internal publications - **£15,000**
- Reduction in the number of Falkirk Council News editions to two per year - **£25,000**
- Replacement of coffee, tea and biscuits in members’ lounge to a pay service - **£12,500**
- Increased use of unbudgeted for reserves due to recent decision by Central Scotland Fire Board on pensions (£750,000) and additional grant from Scottish Government of £318,000 for winter maintenance - **£1,068,000**
- Recurring part of £1.5m, the projected under spend for the current year, estimated to be - **£600,000**
- Reduction in advertising based on updated information on 2010/11 figures - **£25,000**
- Projected improvement in the Council’s position between January and end of year position based on past trends, a conservative estimate of **£400,000** saving.
- Council Tax collection rates average 98% over recent years whereas the budgeted figure is 97.5%. Revise collection target up by 0.5% to match actual performance and increase budget figures by **£360,000**

Total savings identified £2,505,500

To be allocated as follows in the expenditure sections,

Spending Proposal

- Income estimates for Social Work charges are plummeting while collection costs are spiralling. Add in **£1,060,000** to the budget and cancel the charges being levied (estimated income £1,300,000 – estimated costs of collection £240,000 new amount £1,060.000).
- Abolish charges for the renewal of Blue Badge scheme, to protect the interests of disabled people, **cost £50,000**
- Abolish charges for Residential Pest Control as these charges are unfair and penalise those with least most, **cost, £30,000**
- Reinstate and upgrade allowances paid to Day Centre clients, **cost £26,500**
- Reinstate current year budgets to all Voluntary Sector with a modest increase of £1,408 for CAB in recognition for the role they play in tackling poverty and disadvantage, **cost £200,000**
- Retain the existing opening hours in public libraries and Play Schemes in recognition of the role libraries play in dealing with inequality and providing educational opportunities, **cost £196,000**
- Support in principle and begin the implementation of the Living Wage policy promoted by the STUC, **cost £165,000**
- Freeze School Meal charges at current rate – **cost £120,000**
- Restore free school meals to Carrongrange pupils, **cost £20,000**
- Retain dedicated head teachers in all schools thus maintaining equality of educational opportunities in all schools, **cost £68,000**
- Allocate £300,000 from the Fairer Scotland fund topped up by an additional £200,000 from the Revenue Budget to form a Jobs and Training Fund, **cost £200,000**
- Fund for the regeneration of town, village and community centres **cost £200,000**
- Freeze sports centre and other leisure charges to encourage greater take up following the 15% rise in charges in the current year, **cost £120,000**
- Additional revenue for the Parks Strategy specifically targeted at Zetland Park, **cost £50,000**
- Allocate the relevant proportion of the additional £592,000 allocated by the Scottish Government specifically for flooding projects towards the development of a Sea Defence Strategy for Blackness, **cost neutral**

Total - £2,505,500

- (b) Council levy the Council tax for 2011/12 as follows:-
- 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,
 - a Council Tax to be paid in respect of a chargeable dwelling in each of the other Council Tax Valuation Bands in accordance with Section 74(1) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as set out in paragraph 9.2 above);
- (c) Chief Officers be instructed to deliver Services within the specific budget allocation for each Service and authorised to take such actions as may be required to give effect to the service delivery proposals outlined in part 7 of the report.
- (d) Falkirk Council's scrutiny processes are undertaken by all 32 Councillors, as per Audit Scotland guidance. Council therefore agrees that in paragraph 5.1 officers

will recognise the need to achieve Best Value and will undertake to act within the guidance of the council's committee structures.”

Council then adjourned for 20 minutes to allow members to consider the terms of the Amendment and reconvened at 11.45 am with all members present as per the sederunt.

Following discussion on the terms of the Motion and Amendment and in accordance with Standing Order 31.1 Provost Reid, seconded by Depute Provost Black, moved that the meeting continue beyond the 3 hour limit to complete the business on the agenda, said motion attracting no dissent.

Council then adjourned for lunch at 1.10 pm and reconvened at 2.00 pm with all members present as per the sederunt.

In terms of Standing Order 21.4(i), a vote was taken by way of a roll call, there being 32 Members present with Members voting as undernoted:-

For the Motion (18) – Provost Reid, Depute Provost Black, Councillors Blackwood, Buchanan, Fry, Goldie, Gow, Lemetti, C MacDonald, Mahoney, C Martin, C R Martin, McLuckie, McNeil, Nicol, Nimmo, Patrick and Waddell.

For the Amendment (14) – Councillors Alexander, Carleschi, Coleman, Constable, Hughes, Jackson, Kenna, A MacDonald, McNally, Meiklejohn, Oliver, Ritchie, Spears and Thomson.

Accordingly, **AGREED**:-

- (1) to approve the draft Revenue Budget for 2011/12 as set out in the Report and Appendix; subject to a recognition that, while there is a saving to be achieved in this budget from reducing library opening hours, but would call on Officers to bring forward a report on how this can be achieved without necessarily closing all libraries on a Saturday afternoon.
- (2) to levy the Council tax for 2011/12 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 Valuation Bands in accordance with Section 74(1) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as set out in paragraph 9.2 of the Report);
- (3) to instruct Chief Officers to deliver Services within the specific budget allocation for each Service and authorise them to take such actions as may be required to give effect to the service delivery proposals outlined in part 7 of the Report; and
- (4) to the methods of implementing changes which will allow savings in employee related costs as detailed at paragraph 5.1 of the Report.