

## **FC40. MOTION**

### **Accounts Commission Report**

Council considered the following motion by Councillor Meiklejohn, seconded by Councillor Bird:-

Council welcomes the recent report and comments from the Accounts Commission, following the Best Value Audit. While it emphasises that Falkirk Council provides in the main good quality services, there are areas where we know we need to improve.

It is therefore clear that for the Council to move forward, in order to continue to deliver good quality and affordable services for the people of Falkirk, we need to look to do things differently, innovatively and collaboratively.

There is a clear emphasis in the Commission's Report that elected members need to be driving the change that is needed within Falkirk Council and in order to do that they need to be better informed, able to participate and have an opportunity to influence outcomes while working more collaboratively.

Council agrees:-

- (1) that officers will bring forward an outline action plan with a timeline for implementation by March 2016 to the Statutory meeting to be held as part of the Full Council agenda on 7th October;
- (2) that consideration of incorporation of the following changes would further enable the Council in taking this process forward.
  - (i) the reform of the full Council meeting to provide for proper access to be given to back bench and opposition Councillors. This would include provision for notices of motion and/or dedicated opposition time;
  - (ii) the reform of the Executive, cutting the number of members to three portfolio holders, Leader and Depute Leader of the Administration and three opposition members;
  - (iii) the slimmed down Executive should be the main policy development forum of the Council with regular meetings designed as development stages operating under suspension of standing orders;
  - (iv) the reduction of portfolio holders to three to match the number of service departments not only sets an example, but is consistent with changes which have already been implemented and others which are planned within the workplace;
  - (v) Opposition groups to have the freedom to nominate whoever they wish from within their own ranks to committees;
  - (vi) the opposition will hold one of the places on the Health and Social Care Integrated Joint Board;

- (vii) Audit Scotland clearly stated that the Performance Panel must be held in public. In order to meet this condition the agenda will be merged with the main Scrutiny with adjustments between Scrutiny 1 and Scrutiny 2;
  - (viii) a full review of Standing Orders is carried out, in order to incorporate the principles of fairness and openness and to encourage complete accountability;
  - (ix) the Business Transformation Project needs the benefit of political influence and drive. It is therefore essential to incorporate cross party representation on the Project Board;
  - (x) reflecting on the Accounts Commission report and the need for elected members of all political colours to be more informed and engaged within the budget planning process makes it an essential requirement to set up a cross party budget working group; and
- (3) that all of the above is considered as part of the process of improvement required following publication of the Accounts Commission Report.

As an amendment, Councillor C Martin, seconded by Baillie Paterson, moved that Council continues consideration of the item to allow the Leader of the Council, the Leader of the Opposition and the Provost to work together with the Chief Executive to bring forward achievable action plans to the meeting of Council on 7 October 2015.

Councillor Spears then gave notice of a further amendment.

Following discussion, Councillor Meiklejohn, with the consent of the Provost, and Councillor Bird as her seconder, agreed to adjust the terms of the motion to include the following clause:-

- (4) the Leader of the Council, the Leader of the Opposition and the Provost will work together with the Chief Executive to bring forward action plans to the meeting of Council on 7 October 2015.

In consequence of this, Councillor Martin, with the consent of the Provost and his seconder, withdrew his amendment.

Councillor Spears, seconded by Councillor McCabe, then moved, in substitution for the motion, that:-

Council accepts the recent critical report from the Accounts Commission, following their Best Value Audit. There are clearly areas where improvement is required.

To begin to deliver acceptable services for the constituents of Falkirk, we need to change. Falkirk Council must look to improve by innovation and cooperation. This improvement must be elected member led.

Councillor primacy must be respected to allow the desired change within the Council. Councillors must be better informed, able to participate in debate, and have an opportunity to influence local outcomes. This requisite has been emphasised in the Commission's Report.

Officers will be mandated to bring forward an action plan at the Full Council meeting of 7th October 2015, with a view to implementation by March 2016.

To allow the Council to move forward with this exercise, a Working Group will be established and will contain 8 elected members, based on the politically proportionate table below, and have an Independent Chair.

Labour -	3 members
SNP -	3 members
NAIG -	1 member
Conservative -	1 member

The Chair will be invited from Audit Scotland.

Administration support will be provided by the Chief Executive and the Chief Governance Officer.

It is recommended that all of the above be considered as part of the process of improvement required following publication of the Accounts Commission Report and forms part of the process for the development of an "improvement plan".

Potential areas of discussion could include:

- A reduction in the number of portfolio holders to match the number of service departments. This would set a good example and indicate a willingness to reform.
- Performance Panel meetings to be held in public. This was a core recommendation of the Best Value Report.
- A complete overhaul of Standing Orders.  
The secretive Business Transformation panel be dismantled.
- A cross-party budget planning process be established. This would answer a major Opposition complaint and demonstrate a degree of cooperation from the Administration.

Council accepts the recent Best Value Audit report from the Accounts Commission.

Officers are mandated to bring forward an Action Plan at the next Full Council meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015, with a view to implementation by March 2016.

An independently chaired Working Group of elected members will be established, supported by the Chief Executive and the Chief Governance Officer.

Council then adjourned at 4.15p.m to allow members to consider the terms of the amendment and reconvened at 4.25p.m with members present as per the sederunt.

Councillor Meiklejohn, with the consent of the Provost and Councillor Bird, as her seconder, agreed to adjust clause (4) of the motion as follows:-

- (4) that the Leader of the Council, the Leader of the Opposition, a representative of the Non Aligned Independent Group and the Provost work together with the Chief Executive to bring forward action plans to the meeting of Council on 7 October 2015.

Councillor Spears, with the consent of the Provost and his seconder, then withdrew his amendment.

Councillor Nimmo, seconded by Councillor Dr C R Martin, then moved as an amendment, deletion of the words “a representative of the Non Aligned Independent Group”.

On a division, 12 members voted for the motion and 15 voted for the amendment, with voting as follows:-

For the motion (12): - Councillors Alexander, Balfour, Bird, Carleschi, Chalmers, Coleman, Garner, Hughes, McCabe, Meiklejohn, Oliver and Spears.

For the amendment (15):- Provost Reid; Baillies Buchanan and Paterson; Councillors Black, Blackwood, G Goldie, Gow, MacDonald, Mahoney, Martin, Dr C R Martin, McLuckie, Murray, Nimmo and Patrick.

## **Decision**

### **Council agreed:-**

- (1) that officers will bring forward an outline action plan with a timeline for implementation by March 2016 to the Statutory meeting to be held as part of the Full Council agenda on 7<sup>th</sup> October;**
- (2) that consideration of incorporation of the following changes would further enable the Council in taking this process forward.**
  - (i) the reform of the full Council meeting to provide for proper access to be given to back bench and opposition Councillors. This would include provision for notices of motion and/or dedicated opposition time;**
  - (ii) the reform of the Executive, cutting the number of members to three portfolio holders, Leader and Depute Leader of the Administration and three opposition members;**
  - (iii) the slimmed down Executive should be the main policy development forum of the Council with regular meetings designed as development stages operating under suspension of standing orders;**

- (iv) the reduction of portfolio holders to three to match the number of service departments not only sets an example, but is consistent with changes which have already been implemented and others which are planned within the workplace;
  - (v) Opposition groups to have the freedom to nominate whoever they wish from within their own ranks to committees;
  - (vi) the opposition will hold one of the places on the Health and Social Care Integrated Joint Board;
  - (vii) Audit Scotland clearly stated that the Performance Panel must be held in public. In order to meet this condition the agenda will be merged with the main Scrutiny with adjustments between Scrutiny 1 and Scrutiny 2;
  - (viii) a full review of Standing Orders is carried out, in order to incorporate the principles of fairness and openness and to encourage complete accountability;
  - (ix) the Business Transformation Project needs the benefit of political influence and drive. It is therefore essential to incorporate cross party representation on the Project Board;
  - (x) reflecting on the Accounts Commission report and the need for elected members of all political colours to be more informed and engaged within the budget planning process makes it an essential requirement to set up a cross party budget working group;
- (3) that all of the above is considered as part of the process of improvement required following publication of the Accounts Commission Report; and
- (4) that the Leader of the Council, the Leader of the Opposition and the Provost work together with the Chief Executive to bring forward action plans to the meeting of Council on 7 October 2015.