

## **FC32. Motions**

Four motions had been submitted. The Chief Governance Officer advised that prior to the meeting Councillor Meiklejohn had withdrawn her motion (agenda item 17 (c)).

Agenda items 17(a) and (b) referred to matters reserved to Council. Agenda item 17(d) referred to matters within the remit of the Executive. The Provost advised that in accordance with Standing Order 31.1 he determined that item 17(d) was suitable for debate at Council.

- (a) Council considered the following motion by Councillor Reid, seconded by Councillor Black, that:-

In the interest of increasing community engagement, Council asks Officers to investigate the possibilities, advantages and any other issues in connection with:

1. forming a Petitions Committee, drawing on the examples of Borders, Inverclyde and Midlothian Councils, and
2. forming Area Committees based on identified communities on a scale smaller than that of locality areas but enhancing that arrangement.

Having heard from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Reid, as the mover of the motion, with the consent of his seconder, Councillor Black, and the Provost altered the terms of his motion to incorporate the following:-

Council recognises that in setting up committees of this nature, in order to be meaningful will have to be integrated into the Council's decision making structure, support our work with partners within localities and have appropriate governance back to Council.

Council agrees that the best way of exploring the options proposed would be through a Policy Development Panel and therefore agrees that a report should be brought to the August Executive to expand the remit of the existing Panel on Community Councils to include consideration of a Petitions Committee and Area Committees within the context of the Local Governance Review.

### **Decision**

**Council agreed the adjusted motion.**

- (b) Council considered the following motion by Councillor Bissett, seconded by Councillor Nimmo, that:-

Falkirk Council welcomes the joint commitment from COSLA and the Scottish Government to a national minimum clothing grant and the additional funding to support the commitment. Falkirk Council seeks to minimise the impact of poverty through the anti-poverty strategy and the additional £201,000 funding should be directed to this aim.

Council agrees to increase the level of grant for primary and secondary pupils above the £100 minimum to £120. This requires extra recurring funding over and above the £201k grant of £76,290 and includes £8,000 that will be held in reserve to offset any increase in the uptake of the clothing grant during the 2018/19 financial year.

Level of Grant	Total Cost (based on 2017/18 uptake)	Falkirk Council Contribution (based on 2017/18 uptake)	Additional Grant Funding	Additional Funding Required ensure £120 grant plus £8000 in reserve
£	£	£	£	£
£120	£461,640*	£192,350	£201,000	£76,290

\*2017/18 uptake of 3847 primary pupils and secondary pupils

As an amendment, Councillor McCue, seconded by Councillor Bouse, moved that:-

Council welcomes the SNP Scottish Government's recent decision to provide additional funding of £50 per child for School Clothing Grant to families who are also in receipt of free school meals. This represents for Falkirk a 100% increase in grant.

It is recognised that Falkirk Council have a more generous criteria, which includes families that are in receipt of tax credit but do not fit the criteria for free school meals. Last year this equated to 750 families receiving School Clothing Grant and would propose that we continue to provide the same level of funding as those on free school meals for this year with any short fall being covered from within the service existing resources.

Falkirk Council currently award 3,847 grants, however it is anticipated as a result of the increased level of grant and the awareness campaign there is likely to be an increase in up take. It

would therefore be prudent to review the impact of the current changes before making any further increase in grant as this will have a recurring revenue cost.

It is also recognised that there are a number of other targeted funds, such as the summer food project that support low income families leaving them with more disposable income at this critical time.

Council therefore agrees

- (1) the School Clothing Grant be raised to £100 from August 18;
- (2) the take up of the grant be monitored in order to inform the budget planning assumptions for future years;
- (3) a benchmarking exercise be carried out against what other councils funding is for School clothing grants and what the impact in take up has been following the additional funding from Government, and
- (4) the outcome of the review as above to be reported to the Budget Working Group to inform service budget planning assumptions.

In terms of Standing Order 22.1, the vote was taken by roll call, there being 30 members present with voting as undernoted:-

For the motion (17) – Provost Buchanan; and Councillors Aitchison, Bissett, Black, Blackwood, Coombes, Flynn, Goldie, Grant, Harris, Kerr, McLuckie, Munro, Nicol, Nimmo, Patrick and Reid.

For the amendment (12) – Depute Provost Ritchie; and Councillors Alexander, Balfour, Binnie, Bouse, Collie, Garner, Hughes, McCue, Meiklejohn, Murtagh and Spears.

Abstention (1) – Councillor Coleman.

## **Decision**

### **Council agreed the motion.**

Prior to consideration of the following item Councillor Patrick left the meeting.

- (d) Council considered the following motion by Councillor Goldie, seconded by Councillor Blackwood, that:-

The current choice based allocations system was introduced in 2010 and has been reviewed favourably by external agencies since its introduction.

The allocations system used to be renewed annually, with the overall consensus that it was one of the best in Scotland.

That said however, the Labour Group consider it is necessary for the system to be reviewed again. This would enable the current members of the council, and our tenants and residents groups, and partner agencies a further opportunity to comment on the efficiency of the system to address the complex needs of our housing applicants today and in the future.

One of the more obvious examples of this is how the allocations system could resolve difficulties in areas where there is low or no demand. Members of the council may have been approached as I have by residents living in or in close proximity to these areas who consider that the allocations process itself is a contributing factor to increases in anti social behaviour/criminal behaviour where significant low/no demand exists. There is also evidence of increased maintenance costs in these areas as well. In some cases the council has taken the decision to demolish properties or sell them off to other housing providers.

Another perceived concern is the reluctance the elderly and parents/ single parents, and single female applicants in particular applying for properties suitable for their housing need and which they would bid for if they were void in other areas, and the inability of the council to address these issues. Members of the council and public also share a perception of medical professionals, local GPs, District Nurses, local Police officers, and Neighbourhood Officers Tenancy Services having their workload increased significantly due to nature of the particular client groups who seem to choose to reside in these areas, and who may have significant medical conditions.

Council accordingly instructs the Director of Corporate and Housing Services to conduct an immediate review of the Allocations Policy in consultation with a three member cross party working group and to make recommendations to the Executive on any changes to the policy that would address the problems outlined in this motion, for consultation with tenants and tenant's organisations.

As an amendment, Councillor Hughes, seconded by Councillor Bouse, moved that:-

Council acknowledges that at the full Council meeting of December 2017 the agreed Scrutiny Plan for the coming year would comprise the following three topics:-

- Fly Tipping
- Housing Allocations
- Anti-social Behaviour

As the content of the motion refers to Housing Allocations and Anti-social Behaviour these matters should be referred to the Scrutiny Panels.

In terms of Standing Order 22.1, the vote was taken by roll call, there being 29 members present with voting as undernoted:-

For the motion (16) – Provost Buchanan; and Councillors Aitchison, Bissett, Black, Blackwood, Coombes, Flynn, Goldie, Grant, Harris, Kerr, McLuckie, Munro, Nicol, Nimmo and Reid.

For the amendment (13) – Depute Provost Ritchie; and Councillors Alexander, Balfour, Binnie, Bouse, Coleman, Collie, Garner, Hughes, McCue, Meiklejohn, Murtagh and Spears.

### **Decision**

**Council agreed the motion.**