

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of SPECIAL MEETING of FALKIRK COUNCIL held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on WEDNESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2009 at 10.00 AM.

PRESENT: Provost Reid; Depute Provost Black; Councillors Alexander, Blackwood, Buchanan, Carleschi, Coleman, J Constable Goldie, Gow, Hughes, Jackson, Kenna, Lemetti, A MacDonald, C MacDonald, Mahoney, C Martin, C R Martin, McLuckie, McNally, McNeill, Meiklejohn, Nicol, Nimmo, Oliver, Patrick, Spears, Thomson and Waddell.

CONVENER: Provost Reid

APOLOGIES: Councillors H Constable and Fry.

ATTENDING: Chief Executive; Directors of Community Services, of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services; of Development Services, of Education Services, Finance Services, and of Social Work Services; Acting Director of Law and Administration Services; Heads of Accountancy, of Facilities Management and of Treasury & Investment; Service Manager (D Dunder); Accountancy Services Manager, Accounting Managers (J Flannigan and B Heron) and Democratic Services Manager.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST:

Councillor Blackwood declared a non-financial interest in Item 2 as secretary of BHL Leisure Limited in relation to the proposed capital investment in Bankier Community Centre but did not consider that this required him to recuse himself from consideration of the item, standing the terms of the Code of Conduct.

FC98. MINUTE

There was submitted (tabled) and **NOTED** Minute of Special Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee held on 11 February 2009.

FC99. REVENUE BUDGET 2009/10 – 2010/11

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 11 February (Paragraph PR105 refers), there was submitted joint Report (circulated) dated 3 February by the Chief Executive and Director of Finance (a) providing details of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for the financial year 2009/10, and (b) detailing draft Service Revenue Budgets for 2009/10, proposed Council Tax levels for 2009/10 and summarising Falkirk Council's position in relation to Band D Council Tax levels throughout Scotland.

Councillor Gow seconded by Councillor Patrick moved the recommendations in the report.

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

“ The SNP Group believe that the financial starting point of the budget process is flawed based on the experience of the last five years.

Council therefore resolves to use £1.04m of reserves from the anticipated improvement in the council’s situation as we approach the end of the financial year. This is based on the formula of using 33% of the average difference between the position notified to members at the time of the budget to the actual end of year figures.

With these additional resources the SNP proposes to:-

1. Freeze all School, Nursery Meal and Child Care charges at existing levels to promote the council’s healthy affordable option and employment policies. Cost £340,000
2. Abolish Meals on Wheels, Lunch Club and Day Care & Housing with care meal charges. Cost £90,000
3. Freeze charges for Older People’s Homes and short breaks. Cost £40,000
4. Provide the communities served by Bo’ness Academy and Graeme High with the same opportunities to use their PFI school as those in the Braes and Larbert High catchment areas thus meeting our equal opportunities responsibilities, cost £290,000
5. Provide additional support to local businesses at this time of unprecedented financial downturn and recession. Cost £100,000
6. Additional resources for Community Services to be targeted at the regeneration of smaller settlements centres in light of the SNP Government’s £60m town centre regeneration fund. Officers are asked to bring forward Development Plans for each of these centres of population not covered by the District Centres Initiative for wider community consultation. Cost £100,000
7. Fees for sports centre activities to be frozen (£40k) and a lower fee set for the use of Burial and Cremation (40k value) charges where applicants opt for a “green funeral”. Cost £80,000”

In terms of Standing Order 21.4(i), a vote was taken by way of a roll call, there being 30 Members present with Members voting as undernoted:-

For the Motion (17) – Provost Reid; Depute Provost Black; Councillors Blackwood, Buchanan, Goldie, Gow, Lemetti, C MacDonald, Mahoney, C Martin, CR Martin, McLuckie, McNeill, Nicol, Nimmo, Patrick and Waddell.

For the Amendment (13) – Councillors Alexander, Carleschi, Coleman, J Constable, Hughes, Jackson, Kenna, A MacDonald, McNally, Meiklejohn, Oliver, Spears and Thomson.

Accordingly, **AGREED:-**

- (1) that Council accepts the Draft 2009/10 Budget as detailed in the Report;
- (2) that estimated Expenditure for the financial year 2009/10 be set at £347.279m, before ring-fenced Grants of £17.081m, leaving net expenditure of £330.198m;
- (3) that Council levies the following Council Tax for the year 2009/10;
 - (a) A Council Tax to be paid in respect of a chargeable dwelling in Band D of £1,070, representing a nil increase in Council Tax;
 - (b) A Council Tax to be paid in respect of a chargeable dwelling in each of the other valuation bands in accordance with Section 74 (1) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as set out in Paragraph 9.2 of the Report)
- (4) that Council accepts the Indicative Council Tax levels for the financial year 2010/11 at Band D of £1,070 a nil increase as detailed in the Report, representing the best information available at this time, and
- (5) that Chief Officers be instructed to deliver Services within the Revenue Budget allocated to each Service.

Council then adjourned for 45 minutes for lunch and reconvened at 1.15 pm with all Members present per the sederunt with the exception of Councillor C Martin.

FC100. THREE YEAR GENERAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009/10 – 2011/12

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 11 February 2009 (Paragraph PR106 refers), there was submitted Report (circulated) dated 3 February 2009 by the Director of Finance setting out the Council's proposed capital investment plans for the next 3 financial years on all areas of service delivery, with the exception of Council Housing which was reported separately to this meeting of Council.

Councillor Gow seconded by Councillor Patrick moved the recommendations contained in the report.

By way of an amendment Councillor J Constable, seconded by Councillor Coleman moved the recommendations in the report subject to the following amendments to the proposed Service Investment Plans.

1. £50,000 to be taken from the Education Investment heading "School Capacity – Demographic and Class sizes" and allocated to the provision of a new school hall at Blackness Primary School.
2. £10,000 to be taken from the Flooding and Environmental Investment heading "Flood Prevention and Minor Projects" and allocated for the provision of sea defences at Blackness, and

3. £350,000 to be taken from the Flooding and Environment Investment heading “Flood Prevention Scheme –Chapel Burn/RSNH” and from the Roads and Transport Investment heading “River Avon Gorge” and allocated to the Education Services budget for the provision of a new dining facility at Antonine Primary School.

Councillor Spears intimated notice of a further amendment and detailed the terms thereof. Following discussion and with the consent of the Provost, Councillor Constable, with the approval of Councillor Coleman as his seconder, in accordance with Standing Order 19.7, altered his amendment to include the matter raised by Councillor Spears namely:-

4. a further £150,000 to be taken from the Education Investment heading “School Capacity – Demographic and Class sizes” and allocated for the provision of a nursery class at Beancross Primary School.

In terms of Standing Order 21.4(i), a vote was taken by way of a roll call, there being 29 Members present with Members voting as undernoted:-

For the Motion (16) – Provost Reid; Depute Provost Black; Councillors Blackwood, Buchanan, Goldie, Gow, Lemetti, C MacDonald, Mahoney, CR Martin, McLuckie, McNeill, Nicol, Nimmo, Patrick and Waddell.

For the Amendment (13) – Councillors Alexander, Carleschi, Coleman, J Constable, Hughes, Jackson, Kenna, A MacDonald, McNally, Meiklejohn, Oliver, Spears and Thomson.

Accordingly, **AGREED** to approve the General Services Capital programme for 2009/10 to 2010/11 and the Prudential Indicators as appended to the Report.

Councillor J Constable withdrew from the meeting following the conclusion of the foregoing item of business

FC101. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT & COUNCIL HOUSE RENTS 2009/10 – 2011/12

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 11 February 2009 (Paragraph PR107 refers), there was submitted joint Report (circulated) dated 3 February 2009 by the Directors of Finance and of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services (a) presenting a draft Housing Revenue Account for the financial year 2009/2010; (b) making recommendations on the level of council house and garage rents for 2009/10, and (c) showing indicative rent levels for the years 202011 to 2011/2012.

AGREED:-

- (1) that an average house rent increase of £74.88 per annum be applied from 1 April, 2009 (equivalent to £1.44 per week or £3.12 per fortnightly rent charge period). The new average fortnightly charge, based on the 24 fortnightly periods with no

rent being charged during the fortnightly periods commencing 29 June 2009 and 14 December 2009 would therefore be £107.83;

- (2) that no tenant face an increase of more than £119.52 per annum (equivalent to £2.30 per week or £4.98 per fortnightly rent period);
- (3) to utilise £1.4m from the Housing Revenue Account reserves;
- (4) that lock-up garage rentals be increased by an average of 12 pence per week with effect from 1 April 2009;
- (5) that garage site rentals be increased by £1 to £41 per annum with effect from 1 April 2009;
- (6) that Castings Hostel rentals be increased to a charge of £128.29 per room per week;
- (7) that Homeless property rentals be increased to an average of £148.72 per week; and
- (8) that the indicative Budgets and Rent Increases for 2010/11 and 2011/12 as outlined in the Report be noted, as representing the best information available at this time.

FC102. HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2009 TO 2012

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 11 February 2009 (Paragraph PR108 refers), there was submitted Report (circulated) dated 29 January 2009 by Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services outlining expenditure proposals for the 2009 to 2012 HRA Investment programme.

AGREED to approve the expenditure proposals outlined in the report as the HRA Investment programme for 2009/10 to 2011/12.

Councillor J Constable rejoined the meeting during the foregoing item of business.

Councillor Buchanan withdrew from the meeting during the foregoing item of business.