



Agenda Item 3

Minute

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Minute of meeting of the EMERGENCY EXECUTIVE held remotely on Thursday
14 May 2020 at 11.00 a.m.**

Councillors: David Alexander
Robert Bissett
Fiona Collie
Joan Coombes
Paul Garner
Nigel Harris
Adanna McCue
Cecil Meiklejohn (Convener)
Lynn Munro
Malcolm Nicol
Alan Nimmo
Pat Reid

Officers: Patricia Cassidy, Chief Officer, Health & Social Care
Partnership
Jack Frawley, Team Leader - Committee Services
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive
Colin Moodie, Chief Governance Officer
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services
Stuart Ritchie, Director of Corporate and Housing Services
Bryan Smail, Chief Finance Officer

Also

Attending: Councillor Gary Bouse, Resources Portfolio Holder for item
EE6.

In accordance with section 43 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Convener had directed that the meeting would be conducted by video conference to allow remote attendance by elected members.

In accordance with section 50A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 the public were excluded from this meeting as it was likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be a real and substantial risk to public health due to infection or contamination with coronavirus.

EE1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

EE2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

EE3. Coronavirus Update

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Chief Executive which provided an update on the Coronavirus pandemic. In the Forth Valley area there had been 802 confirmed cases and 156 deaths. The Council had contributed support in a number of key areas, including:-

- care for people
- transport
- death management
- testing
- business support
- PPE
- recovery
- communications

The report also provided detail on the actions which had been taken by each of the Council's Services, the Health and Social Care Partnership and the Falkirk Community Trust.

In terms of next steps the report advised that work would continue on specific response activities. Continued support for those in communities who had been made vulnerable, or more vulnerable, by the outbreak would be critical to support their wellbeing and, as far as possible, keep them safe from the virus. The voluntary sector contribution, together with that flowing from community activation generally was described as little short of phenomenal. Strong existing partnerships allowed the response category to be effectively organised and activated early in the intervention programme. The Council, along with other Category 1 responders, required frequently to report into the MACC to ensure that a national overview was maintained and mutual aid requirements identified and met. New response areas of activity would emerge and be absorbed into the existing structures. Two ongoing areas related to testing and mass vaccination.

Decision

The Emergency Executive, in addition to noting the contents of the report, requested that reports covering the issues outlined below were presented to the Emergency Executive or, if unavailable until after the Summer recess, the Executive or Council as soon as the relevant information was available in particular guidance from Scottish Government to allow the reports to be prepared:-

- 1. Vision**
the vision and aspirations of the Council as an organisation and for our communities in order that we can establish clear priorities in the work on recovery and renewal and should be set in the context of existing Council commitments to tackling poverty and wider inequalities and supporting economic development;
- 2. Economic Development**
the work planned by the Council and partners to support economic recovery and renewal;
- 3. Empowered Communities**
how the work of the Support for People team could be captured, embedded and sustained in communities and more broadly how our communities could be engaged with and supported by the Council and third sector partners;
- 4. Finance**
on the implications of the situation on the Council's financial position, the implications for agreed budget savings and a refreshed medium term financial plan;
- 5. Employees**
the new ways of working that could be carried forward beyond the end of the lockdown period, measures to ensure a safe working environment with social distancing for all our employee groups, and support for staff wellbeing particularly in the transition period where staff were returning to workplaces;
- 6. Strategic Property Review**
consideration of SPR to take account of new models of service delivery that may emerge;
- 7. Service Recovery plans**
a recovery plan for each service with, in particular:-
 - (a)** a scheme for schools to return to operation and a recovery plan for education, and
 - (b)** at a later stage, lessons learned within the Health and Social Care Partnership on where integration worked well and how integration could be further developed;
- 8. Falkirk Community Trust**
a recovery plan for the Trust and any implications for the future.

The Emergency Executive also noted that these reports would in turn feed into the refreshed Falkirk Plan, Corporate Plan and Business Plan which would be considered by the full Council later in the year.

EE4. Council of the Future Project Report: Connected Falkirk

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an overview of Connected Falkirk, a Council of the Future transformation project to deliver a sector leading, modern & digital learning environment across our schools.

To deliver the overall project a total investment of c.£16m was required. A £9.6m capital investment was conditionally approved in the budget for the first five years of the project, subject to a follow-up report providing more details of the aims and ambitions of the project. A further investment of c.£6.4m was required beyond year five, to ensure longer term sustainability of the project and ensure that the equipment and infrastructure was kept updated and refreshed.

Connected Falkirk was an investment in our young people and school estate infrastructure. It aimed to ensure every young person being educated in the Falkirk Council area had the confidence, skills and knowledge needed to thrive in an ever-changing, fast-paced digital world. It was a response to the national strategy, published in 2016, for enhancing learning and teaching through the use of digital technology.

Decision

The Emergency Executive:-

- (1) noted the provisional capital award of £9.6m within the recently approved Capital Programme Budget at the Council Meeting on 26 February 2020;**
- (2) noted that this funding covers the initial five years of the Connected Falkirk Project which aims to complete the procurement process for infrastructure, devices, training and ultimately deliver on our digital learning ambitions across all our schools;**
- (3) noted that a future capital submission will be made for investment required beyond year five of the Connected Falkirk project in order to ensure longer term sustainability, and**
- (4) agreed that the project should proceed and that the Director of Children's Services is authorised to spend the capital expenditure for financial year 2020/21 set out in paragraph 4.3.**

EE5. Outcome of Consultation on School Term Dates

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided a summary of the results from the consultation exercise undertaken by Falkirk Council on amending the school term dates.

Information was also provided on the consultation exercises carried out by both Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils along with proposals on how to progress the outcomes of the consultation exercises.

The proposal which would amend term dates from academic year 2022/2023 had received a favourable response in the consultation. The proposal was that the new school year would commence on the second full week in August rather than the third. The October holiday would start on the Monday of the first full week in October and would last for two weeks.

Term dates were normally published at least 16 months in advance i.e. the term dates for the school session starting August 2022 would be published by Easter 2021. The exact term dates were worked out by officers across the three authorities before being agreed by management and teaching unions at the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers.

Decision

The Emergency Executive:-

- (1) noted the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken within the Falkirk area;**
- (2) noted the update provided on the consultation exercises undertaken by both Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils; and**
- (3) agreed that the Director of Children's Services can proceed with the proposal to amend term dates, as outlined in Section 3.1 with effect from August 2022 once confirmation has been received that both other Councils have also agreed to do this.**

EE6. Contract Standing Orders – Quick Quotes

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which proposed a change to Contract Standing Orders to amend the contract value up to which Public Contract Scotland's Quick Quote facility may be used for works contracts.

The Council's Contract Standing Orders permitted Quick Quote to be used for contracts (goods, services and works) with an estimated value of up to £50,000. The limit originated from the £50,000 regulated contract threshold for procurement of goods and services set by the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. The corresponding threshold in the 2014 Act for works contracts was, however, considerably higher at £2,000,000. Above these thresholds of £50,000 for goods and services and £2,000,000 for works, procurement exercises should be openly advertised.

Scottish Government guidance stated that Quick Quote was a suitable procurement route for goods and services contracts under £50,000 and works contracts of less than £500,000. It was not proposed to increase the limit for use of Quick Quote for works contracts up to £500,000. However, an increase to £250,000 would allow a substantial number of works contracts between the values of £50,000 and £250,000 to be progressed in a more efficient and timely manner than was currently the case. This was considered beneficial as it would minimise the burden on both suppliers' and the Council's resources to quickly issue and return works tenders. It would be particularly important for time critical projects such as school related improvement works during holiday periods. The change would also ensure that works projects are ready for implementation as soon as construction restrictions are relaxed during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Decision

The Emergency Executive agreed to the amendment of Contract Standing Orders to allow Public Contract Scotland's Quick Quote facility to be used for works contracts with an estimated value of up to £250,000.