



Agenda Item 3

Minute

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Minute of meeting of the EMERGENCY EXECUTIVE held remotely on Thursday
11 June 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: Jack Frawley, Team Leader - Committee Services
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Kenny Gillespie, Head of Housing
Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive
Colin Moodie, Chief Governance Officer
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services
Stuart Ritchie, Director of Corporate & Housing Services
Bryan Smail, Chief Finance Officer

Also

Attending: Councillor Gordon Hughes, Housing Portfolio Holder for item
EE18

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.

EE12. Apologies

There were no apologies.

EE13. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

EE14. Minute

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Emergency Executive held on 28 May 2020 was approved.

EE15. Falkirk Council Strategic Plans and Vision Framework

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Chief Executive which outlined the way forward for the Council's key strategic plans and set out a proposal for consultation with Elected Members on the Council's Vision Framework.

There was a need to bring together council plans with an overarching vision to ensure there was a clear, shared reference point for decision-making. Clear priorities would assist the Council in a very constrained and challenging financial environment. The vision would also shape the financial and workforce planning and transformation priorities, all of which were part of the Council's Five-Year Business Plan. The vision would continue to be underpinned by the Council of the Future values of Responsive, Innovative, Trusted and Ambitious. A 'straw man' vision framework had been developed which would be the basis for consultation with Elected Members.

The short to medium term business of the Council would focus on recovery. It was proposed that the recovery plan become a key component of the Council's Five-Business Plans which would incorporate the following:-

- Medium Term Financial Plan
- Workforce Plan
- Council for the Future Change Programme
- Corporate Plan Actions

By adding the recovery plan the Council would capitalise on the synergies across all these plans and programmes with each component part of the business plan and manage the delivery of these through existing governance processes.

The refresh of the Council's Corporate Plan would complement the business plan. The direction of travel for both plans would be informed by establishment of a Vision framework which would be subject to Elected Member consultation. Elected Members would be consulted on the 'straw man' to establish a vision and set clear priorities for the Council. Three short workshops would be held, grouping Elected Members in localities, to

evaluate and input to the model. Findings from the workshops would be reported to the Emergency Executive on 25 June.

Decision

The Emergency Executive agreed:-

- (1) the structure of the Council's Five-Year Business Plan and Corporate Plan, incorporating the recovery plan arrangements, and**
- (2) the proposal for Elected Member consultation set out in the report.**

EE16. Covid-19 Economic Recovery Plan

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Development Services which outlined the steps proposed for development of an Economic Recovery Plan in relation to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The plan would be developed in partnership with organisations involved in the Falkirk Economic Partnership, other businesses and other stakeholders.

The Covid-19 pandemic was anticipated to have a significant impact on the economy. Work was proceeding at national and local level to enable a response to mitigate this as businesses prepare for recovery. The Falkirk Economic Partnership helped to steer the approach to economic development in the Falkirk area. It developed the area's Economic Strategy *Growth: Investment: Inclusion* and was leading on the development of an Investment Zone. Through the support of partner agencies in the Economic Partnership work had been undertaken to draft a recovery plan to address the effects of the pandemic on the local economy.

The Scottish Government's Chief Economist had suggested that Scotland's GDP could reduce by 33% during the period of social distancing. Longer term impacts, while uncertain, were anticipated to be significant. Covid-19 was acknowledged to have had a major impact on businesses and workforces in the Falkirk area already with 2,200 businesses seeking support from the Council and a substantial increase in unemployment.

To enable a local response members of the Falkirk Economic Partnership had collaborated to prepare the draft recovery plan. The plan set out a series of actions to help take forward measures to address four "Rs":-

- Respond - Immediate provision of information and support to businesses;
- Reset - Support, planning and preparation for restart;
- Restart - Support and guidance for safe re-opening, and

- Recover - Guidance and support for operating in the post COVID-19 environment.

Decision

The Emergency Executive agreed:-

- (1) to progress the development of an economic recovery plan in relation to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic;**
- (2) that a programme of consultation with stakeholders be initiated to finalise the plan for agreement by Executive in August 2020, and**
- (3) that Council services and partners be invited to contribute any further actions proposed for inclusion in the finalised recovery plan.**

EE17. Recovery Arrangements for Employees Returning to Work

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided an update on the plans to support employees in their return to work over the different phases of the lifting of the lockdown.

During the Covid-19 lockdown a number of essential services had continued to operate, some being delivered in very different ways. A number of employees in nonessential services had continued to work from home and some had provided support to essential services. There were c.3,200 employees who were self-reporting to be working from home to varying degrees. While c.720 employees reported that they were fit to work but unable to do so for a variety of reasons e.g. caring for a dependent, workplace closure, pregnant/have an underlying health condition or unable to carry out their job at home.

Given the recent announcements by the Scottish Government on the phased lifting of the lockdown, plans were being developed to support a return of employees to the workplace in line with Service recovery plans. It was recognised that delivery of services may require to evolve to ensure all national guidance was taken into account.

Risk assessments would be prepared for all workplaces in advance of them opening to ensure the requirements were met. For phases 1 to 3, working from home was to remain in place as the default position for those who were able to do so and it would still be encouraged in phase 4. A group had been established, chaired by the Head of People, Technology & Transformation, to support services as they implemented their recovery plan. The group had cross-Service representation and would report to Corporate Management Team. The Service Recovery Plans were due to be reported to a future

meeting of the Emergency Executive. An update report on employees returning to the workplace would also be prepared following the summer recess.

Throughout the period of the lockdown, a Trade Union liaison group had operated to ensure continued dialogue over key issues. Initially the group met 2 or 3 times per week and now continues to meet on a weekly basis. This group had worked very effectively, ensuring good collaborative working in the development of the wide range of support and frequently asked questions that were available on the Council's website.

Decision

The Emergency Executive noted the work being done to support employees returning to work in line with Service Recovery Plans and that a further update would be provided following the summer recess.

EE18. Housing Allocations Review Public Consultation

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which presented the outcome of a public consultation on proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Policy. The allocations policy required amendment to allow realisation of the objectives to move the rapid rehousing plans forward within the specified timescales.

At its meeting of 14 November 2019 the Executive agreed to consult on changes to the Housing Allocations Policy. The consultation was carried out for six weeks online. Paper versions of the online survey were also available to ensure that as many people could participate as possible. Additionally a programme of focus groups targeting specific areas and accessible road shows for members of the public were undertaken in each of the localities to discuss current and future issues and contacted people occupying temporary homeless accommodation.

315 consultation responses were completed. 1,769 individual comments were made to both individual questions and as general additional comments.

- 72% of respondents agreed that housing need should be prioritised over aspiration;
- 82% believed that the policy should be flexible to allow the Council to meet unforeseeable needs;
- 58% of respondents did not think that the current Allocations policy was equal and fair, and
- 34% did not believe the Policy was easy to understand, 31% did and 35% were neutral.

Decision

The Emergency Executive agreed:-

(1) the following changes to the Allocations Policy in light of the public consultation:-

- (i) Local Letting Initiative High Flats - reduce the age restriction to 50 years old;**
- (ii) Local Letting Initiative New Builds - all categories could apply in line with the quota systems;**
- (iii) Under Occupancy - align the application of Band 1 priority for under-occupation with overcrowding;**

In addition once an applicant had been allocated a house they could not apply for a move within 12 months unless there was a significant change of circumstance;

- (iv) Time limiting Priority (Band 1 Applicants) - to limit applicants with Band 1 and 2 priorities in Home Mover and Home Starter categories to 3 months of non-bidding and then reduce to a Band 4;**

Furthermore that applicants on Band 3 or 4 would have their application cancelled after 12 months of no bidding activity;

- (v) Home Seeker Category Offers - reduce the number of offers to Home Seekers from two to one;**
- (vi) Housing Debt and Allocations – continue with a three month payment plan for a suspension to be uplifted;**
- (vii) Letting Quotas – increase the quota to Home Seekers from 33% to 45%, and**

(2) that the Executive review the outcomes from the changes when the annual Local Housing Strategy report was presented to Members. This was expected to be in autumn 2021.