

FC91. QUESTIONS

In terms of Standing Order 32.1, 6 written questions had been submitted to the Leader of the Council and/or the portfolio holders. All were answered at the meeting. The answers are recorded at Appendix 1.

Provost Reid; Baillie Paterson and Councillors Dennis Goldie, Gow and Nicol each declared a non financial interest in item FC92 as Directors of Falkirk Community Trust, but did not consider that this required them to recuse themselves from consideration of the item, having had regard to the objective test in the Code of Conduct and the relevant specific exclusion contained in the Code.

FALKIRK COUNCIL

QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

Standing Order 32 enables Councillors to put questions to the Leader of the Council or the relevant portfolio holder on matters transacted at a meeting of the Executive or the Education Executive during the preceding cycle. The table below details the questions asked and answered at the meeting.

ORDER QUESTION TAKEN	COMMITTEE / MINUTE REFERENCE	TITLE OF REPORT AND QUESTION	ANSWER	SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION	ANSWER
1	EXECUTIVE – 14 January 2014 REF EX103	Local Government Finance Settlement 2014/15 Why has the portfolio holder not reported back to Council on the changes occurring at COSLA? Councillor Cecil Meiklejohn	The Leader of the Council advised that most of the items discussed at COSLA were in private and therefore he was unable to report back. He was also not aware of any previous Leader reporting back on COSLA matters.	How did Councillor Martin vote at the Leader's meeting on the distribution formula and the freezing of it?	The Leader of the Council advised that at the last meeting in February 2014, a motion was put forward and he had voted in favour of the motion as did 20 other Leaders. He confirmed that he did have the terms of the motion, but required guidance from officers before circulating as this was a private item, as were 90% of COSLA papers.

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					The Chief Executive advised that it would be acceptable to share the terms of the motion with Group Leaders but that it should not be read out at this time.
2	REF EX103	<p>Local Government Finance Settlement 2014/15</p> <p>What is the position that Falkirk Council occupies in the league table of the 29 Scottish mainland local authorities for the 2014/15 settlement figures as a % change from the previous finance year, and how has this influenced the Administration's budget strategy?</p> <p>Councillor Cecil Meiklejohn</p>	<p>The Leader of the Council advised that in terms of movement between 2013/14 and 2014/15, Falkirk Council received the 9th largest movement for mainland Scotland authorities.</p> <p>Given that the final grant settlement for 2014/15 was not known until several weeks ago, the budget strategy had been influenced by the estimated grant settlement as per the Council's medium term financial strategy.</p>	20 Leaders out of 32 voted for the motion. Why did Councillor Martin vote the way he did and disadvantage Falkirk Council by £2.3m?	The Leader of the Council advised that he had voted to enhance Falkirk Council and not to disadvantage it, and that once Councillor Meiklejohn saw the wording of the motion, she would see why.

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			The settlement had been better than anticipated as a result of the decrease in Council Tax Reduction Scheme funding not being as severe as anticipated and this had been incorporated within the final budget proposals presented to Council in February.		
3	REF EX106	<p>Fairer Falkirk Underspend Proposals</p> <p>What Falkirk Council staff, or voluntary groups who work with the Council, have, or will be, contacted by the private contractors who have been, and will be, appointed to carry out the Fairer Falkirk survey at a cost of £35,000?</p> <p>Councillor Cecil Meiklejohn</p>	<p>The Leader of the Council advised that Falkirk Council staff and voluntary groups working with Falkirk Council who would be or had been contacted by those appointed to undertake the survey ranged from the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falkirk Council One Stop Shops • Criminal Justice Services • Learning Disabilities Team • Falkirk Alcohol and Drug 	<p>Why are we spending £35,000 if we are asking our own staff to identify individuals and voluntary organisations, we already have information. Would Councillor Martin not agree that £35,000 would be better spent on frontline services?</p>	<p>The Leader of the Council advised that if the Council was doing as Councillor Meiklejohn suggests, it would be missing those individuals who are not engaging.</p> <p>The Council needed to know who and where these individuals were as they are the most vulnerable in our society.</p>

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			Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signpost Recovery • Citizens Advice Bureaux • Smartliving – Link Living Young Persons Project • Falkirk’s Mental Health Association (FDAMH) • Falkirk Homelessness Project • Barnardos Falkirk Axis Service • Black and Ethnic Minority Advice Services • The Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum • Action in Mind Other organisations may also be involved. <p>The purpose of engaging with these organisations would be to enable the researchers to reach the relevant target audience to participate in the research. This participation would</p>		He stated that he would consider it a success if the process found one person who had not previously participated in welfare reform.

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			involve a mix of in-depth interviews and mini group discussions with individuals who are affected or are likely to be affected by the Welfare Reform changes.		
4	REF EX111	<p>Contract for the Provision of Dry Recyclate Segregation and Resale Service</p> <p>What is the capacity of the current storage facility for dry recyclate?</p> <p>Councillor Stephen Bird</p>	<p>The portfolio holder for Environment advised that as it stands currently, the facility has the capacity to store nearly 1500 tonnes of material as per the existing waste management licence.</p> <p>Based on current volumes going through the site, this would equate to roughly 14 days of storage capacity, but after 7 days the Council would need to explore contingency measures.</p> <p>The tough new measures imposed on ORAN would benefit the people of Grangemouth.</p>	The Roughmute site has been identified as the backup. However, at the Executive it was agreed that Roughmute was not to be used so what is Plan B?	The portfolio holder for Environment responded that a report would be submitted to the April Executive which would list possible Plan Bs.

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5	REF EX111	<p>Contract for the Provision of Dry Recyclate Segregation and Resale Service</p> <p>When will the meetings on contingency measures commence?</p> <p>Councillor Stephen Bird</p>	<p>The portfolio holder for Environment advised that meetings had already taken place and a report would be submitted to the Executive meeting in April.</p>	<p>The fact that meetings have already taken place indicates the seriousness of the issue. Is it possible for quarterly update reports to be submitted to the Executive?</p>	<p>The portfolio holder for Environment responded that he received monthly updates and that ORAN are visited unannounced on a weekly basis. He did not see any reason why all members could not receive these monthly update reports.</p>
6	EXECUTIVE – 14 January 2014 REF EX 120	<p>New Waste Collection System – Implementation</p> <p>What effort has so far been made to engage the communities impacted by phase 1 of this implementation plan?</p> <p>Councillor Stephen Bird</p>	<p>The portfolio holder for Environment advised that there had been no engagement with communities so far, but that there was a list of actions to be undertaken.</p> <p>Having undergone a process with focus groups, Falkirk Council now has the correct message to go out to the</p>	<p>Given that the pilot area includes some of the best and most engaged community councils in the area is an opportunity being missed to engage meaningfully with people who take their community duties seriously? Should we have be having a</p>	<p>The portfolio holder for Environment responded that a number of focus groups had been set up and these had involved a wide spectrum of the local and national community.</p> <p>He acknowledged the</p>

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			<p>public, and would letter every household and knock on every door.</p> <p>The portfolio holder stated that it was also planned to go to the community council meetings and he gave his undertaking that every resident would be made aware of the changes.</p>	<p>conversation with them first showing them they have a wider role to play?</p>	<p>role of community councils and confirmed that there would be an opportunity to engage with them during the process. Feedback would be taken on board and used to further tailor the message as needed.</p> <p>Prior to any correspondence being issued to residents, there would be engagement with all members included in the pilot area. They will also receive a comprehensive information pack containing all the information to be issued to householders.</p> <p>He advised that due to timescales, he didn't</p>

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					<p>think it would be possible to approach community councils prior to materials being issued.</p> <p>The portfolio holder agreed to discuss the potential for engagement with community councils with Councillor Bird outwith the meeting.</p>