

FC87. ECONOMIC DOWNTURN ACTION PLAN

There was submitted Report (circulated) dated 3 December 2008 by Chief Executive summarising the anticipated impacts of the economic downturn, actions underway at a national and local level to bolster the area's economy and detailing an action plan for Council Services.

Councillor C Martin, seconded by Councillor Lemetti moved the recommendations in the Report, namely that Council agrees:-

- (i) the Action Plan for the Economic Downturn as set out in the Report;
- (ii) to allocate £100,000 of revenue funding to be committed over the financial years 2008/09 and 2009/10 to permit the extension of business support services delivered through the Council's Joint Working Agreement with FEAT;
- (iii) to accelerate the allocation of £600,000 capital funds for the 2009/10 budget, earmarked for economic development projects, for investment in business property.

By way of an amendment Councillor A MacDonald, seconded by Councillor Hughes moved that:-

“In addition Council agrees to consider:-

- (1) Giving tenants of Council owned business properties an option of a rent freeze for two financial years or a re-scheduling of rental payments over the course of the lease,
- (2) Accelerating other projects in Falkirk Council's Capital Programme, in addition to £600,000 already earmarked for Economic Development projects,
- (3) Improving tendering and procurement procedures which, within legal constraints, are sympathetic to the needs of the local business community, including full implementation of Falkirk Council's local procurement policy,
- (4) Implementation of a short term loan guarantee programme to assist otherwise sustainable businesses over short to medium term credit and cash flow challenges,
- (5) Discretionary support for non-vat businesses falling below current financial aid thresholds,
- (6) Implementing accelerated invoice payments by Falkirk Council to local businesses,
- (7) Implementing a “Keep Business Local” campaign,
- (8) Facilitating a summit meeting and ongoing dialogue with local banking official to ensure their support for the local business community, and
- (9) to introduce free car parking in Council owned car parks between 15 December 2008 and 11 January 2009”.

There then followed a 15 minute recess to allow Members to consider the terms of the motion and the amendment. The meeting reconvened at 3.45 pm with all Members present as per the sederunt with the exception of Depute Provost Black and Councillor Nicol.

On re-convening, there was discussion around incorporating the terms of the amendment, with some adjustment, into the motion following which there was a further 10 minute recess to allow Members to consider the amended wording. The meeting reconvened at 3pm with all Members present as per the sederunt with the exception of Depute Provost Black and Councillor Nicol when, with the consent of the Provost and Councillor Hughes as seconder in accordance with Standing Order 19.7, Councillor A MacDonald altered his amendment to read:-

“In addition Council agrees to introduce free car parking in Council owned car parks between 15 December 2008 and 11 January 2009 and that a report will be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 13 January 2009 which considers:-

- (1) Giving tenants of Council owned business properties an option of a rent freeze for two financial years or a re-scheduling of rental payments over the course of the lease,
- (2) Accelerating other projects in Falkirk Council’s Capital Programme, in addition to £600,000 already earmarked for Economic Development projects,
- (3) Improving tendering and procurement procedures which, within legal constraints, are sympathetic to the needs of the local business community, including full implementation of Falkirk Council’s local procurement policy,
- (4) Implementation of a short term loan guarantee programme to assist otherwise sustainable businesses over short to medium term credit and cash flow challenges,
- (5) Discretionary support for non-vat businesses falling below current financial aid thresholds,
- (6) Implementing accelerated invoice payments by Falkirk Council to local businesses,
- (7) Implementing a “Keep Business Local” campaign, and
- (8) Facilitating a summit meeting and ongoing dialogue with local banking officials to ensure their support for the local business community”

With the consent of the Provost and Councillor Lemetti, as seconder, in accordance with Standing Order 19(7), Councillor C Martin altered the text of his motion to include the terms of the revised amendment.

Accordingly **AGREED:-**

- (1) the Action Plan for the Economic Downturn as set out in the Report;
- (2) to allocate £100,000 of revenue funding to be committed over the financial years 2008/09 and 2009/10 to permit the extension of business support services delivered through the Council’s Joint Working Agreement with FEAT;
- (3) to accelerate the allocation of £600,000 capital funds for the 2009/10 budget, earmarked for economic development projects, for investment in business property;
- (4) that a report would be submitted to Policy and Resources Committee on 13 January 2009 which would consider:-

- (i) Giving tenants of council owned business properties an option of a rent freeze for two financial years or a re-scheduling of rental payments over the course of the lease;
 - (ii) Accelerating other projects in Falkirk Council's Capital Programme, in addition to £600,000 already earmarked for Economic Development projects;
 - (iii) Improving tendering and procurement procedures which, within legal constraints, are sympathetic to the needs of the local business community, including full implementation of Falkirk Council's local procurement policy;
 - (iv) Implementation of a short term loan guarantee programme to assist otherwise sustainable businesses over short to medium term credit and cash flow challenges;
 - (v) Discretionary support for non-vat businesses falling below current financial aid thresholds
 - (vi) Implementing accelerated invoice payments by Falkirk Council to local businesses
 - (vii) Implementing a "Keep Business Local" campaign
 - (viii) Facilitating a summit meeting and ongoing dialogue with local banking officials to ensure their support for the local business community
- (5) to introduce free car parking in Council owned car parks between 15 December 2008 and 11 January 2009