

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the EXECUTIVE held within the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on TUESDAY 27 MAY 2014 at 9.30 a.m.

COUNCILLORS:

Jim Blackwood
Gerry Goldie
Linda Gow
Adrian Mahoney
Craig Martin (Convener)
Dr Craig R Martin
Malcolm Nicol
Robert Spears

OFFICERS:

Margaret Anderson, Director of Social Work Services
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Rose Mary Glackin, Chief Governance Officer
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager
Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive
Alan Rodger, Planning and Environment Manager
Bryan Smail, Chief Finance Officer

EX14. APOLOGIES

An apology was intimated on behalf of Councillor Dennis Goldie.

EX15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

EX16. MINUTE

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Executive held on 29 April 2014 was approved.

EX17. REFERRAL FROM THE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE – 22 APRIL 2014 – MANAGING SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY

The Joint Consultative Committee had, on 22 April 2014 (ref JCC5), referred the revised Managing Sickness Absence Policy to the Executive for approval.

The policy, which applies to all employees, had been revised and updated in respect of the return to work process and occupational health referrals.

Decision

The Executive agreed to adopt the revised Managing Sickness Absence Policy with immediate effect.

Councillor Gow joined the meeting during consideration of the foregoing item.

EX18. REFERRAL FROM THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13 MAY 2014 - REVIEW OF EXTERNAL FUNDING TO SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY ABUSE

The Scrutiny Committee had, on 13 May 2014 (ref S13), referred recommendations arising from a review of external funding to services for people who have been affected by abuse to the Executive for consideration.

The Executive considered a report by the Directors of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services and of Social Work Services presenting the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee.

The report set out the background to the review of the services provided by Women's Aid, Relationship Scotland, Central Scotland Rape Crisis and Open Secret. The range of services provided, purpose of each organisation, together with Falkirk Council's contribution to each organisation's funding were set out.

The aim of the review had been to ensure that the most appropriate range and quality of support is provided by the right providers to those most in need within the area.

Overall it was concluded that the Council should, through agreed joint working arrangements, commission specific services to ensure clarity in service provision and expected outcomes. The report set out conclusions in relation to future service delivery and budgeting provision for each organisation.

Councillor Gow, seconded by Councillor Martin, moved that, in light of information about which Council had only recently been made aware, consideration of the report should be deferred to the next meeting of the Executive.

Decision

The Executive agreed the motion.

Councillor G Goldie joined the meeting during consideration of the foregoing item.

EX19. FALKIRK LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE FINALISED DRAFTS

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Development Services presenting four Local Development Plan Supplementary Guidance notes for approval.

The Executive had, on 25 February 2014 (ref EX117), authorised preparation of and consultation on 16 Supplementary Guidance notes to assist in the interpretation of the Council's proposed Local Development Plan. The following four Supplementary Guidance notes have been consulted upon thus far:- SG01 'Development in the Countryside', SG05 'Biodiversity and Development', SG06 'Trees and Development' and SG13 'Open Space and Development'. The report summarised each of the notes and provided detail on the consultation process together with a summary of the responses received. Following consultation the notes had been amended and were attached for approval.

In terms of the Local Development Plan Scheme, it was intended that each of the remaining 12 notes would be consulted upon later in the year.

It was now proposed that four finalised Supplementary Guidance notes be submitted to the Scottish Ministers together with the Local Development Plan and adopted with the plan.

Decision

The Executive agreed:-

- (1) the following Supplementary Guidance notes;- SG01 'Development in the Countryside', SG05 'Biodiversity and Development', SG06 'Trees and Development' and SG13 'Open Space and New Development' including modifications in response to consultations as detailed in appendix 1 to the report;**
- (2) to submit the Supplementary Guidance notes to Scottish Ministers for approval, along with the Falkirk Local Development Plan, and**
- (3) to authorise the Director of Development Services to make minor adjustments to text arising from change of circumstances.**

EX20. TOWARDS A FAIRER FALKIRK – UPDATE REPORT

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services providing an update on work being undertaken to tackle poverty and to mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform.

The report set out the background to Welfare Reform and highlighted key changes to the welfare system as a consequence of the programme. This included the introduction of Universal Credit, the introduction of housing benefit size criteria restrictions and the creation of a single fraud investigation service within the Department for Work and Pensions. The impact of the changes was set out together with actions taken by Falkirk Council to provide support to its citizens. Two sources of funding were available to citizens to mitigate against the impacts of Welfare Reform - the Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). The Scottish Welfare Fund is delivered through local authorities to support those citizens affected by Welfare Reform. DHP is a discretionary scheme administered by the Council on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions, augmented by funding from the Scottish Government, to provide extra money to those who need financial help to meet a shortfall in their rent.

The funding arrangements for both funds were summarised together with details on the allocation of each fund in 2013/14. Clarity was currently being sought from the Department of Work and Pensions and the Scottish Ministers in regard to DHP, to allow the Council to mitigate the impact of size criteria restrictions.

A third fund, the Fairer Falkirk Fund, had been established by Council to support projects aimed at tackling poverty. The report provided an update on the various projects and set out a proposed allocation of funds from the Fairer Falkirk budget for 2014/15.

Decision

The Executive agreed:-

- (1) to note the update provided in the report of what the Council is doing to mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform on people and services;**
- (2) to confirm its continued support with regard to the statement on non-eviction for tenants affected by under occupancy restrictions as described in section 3.3 of the report;**
- (3) the approach suggested at paragraph 6.8 of the report with regard to those affected by the establishment of the Single Fraud Investigation Service;**
- (4) to note the imminent decisions expected from the Scottish Government/ Department of Work and Pensions that are needed to enable the Council to utilise the Discretionary Housing Payment budget and to implement a scheme, as appropriate, for the mitigation of size criteria for 2014/15;**
- (5) the use of the Fairer Falkirk Fund as described in section 7 of the report, and**
- (6) that officers will report back to the Executive later this year following a review of the Council's poverty strategy and its current focus.**

EX21. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL – REVIEW OF THE SCHEME FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS AND SUPPORT – UPDATE

The Executive considered a report by the Chief Governance Officer presenting the conclusions and recommendations of the policy development panel established to review the Council's Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils and the support provided by Falkirk Council to its Community Councils.

The policy development panel, which comprised Councillor C Martin (Chair) and Baillie Paterson, met on 8 occasions between October 2013 and April 2014. As part of its review, the panel engaged with a focus group of former and current community councillors, consulted with the 17 active community councils and met with representatives of community councils in an open forum.

The report set out the issues highlighted at panel meetings in regard to the review of the Scheme and support, and set out its conclusions.

The panel presented 10 recommendations for the Executive's consideration.

Decision

The Executive agreed to:-

- (1) note the review of the Scheme for the establishment of Community Councils and support provided to community councils by Falkirk Council undertaken by the policy development panel;**
- (2) formally review the current Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils and to propose the revised model Scheme as the basis for the consultation;**
- (3) ask the panel to review practices adopted elsewhere within Scotland to enforce the model code of conduct and to report its findings to the Executive on 19 August 2014;**
- (4) request the panel to undertake a review of the Scottish Government's model constitution and standing orders with a view to these being incorporated within the revised Scheme along with the code of conduct and that the panel reports to the Executive on 19 August 2014 together with a timetable for the review of the Scheme and associated documents;**
- (5) note the support that is currently provided by Falkirk Council to its community councils and community councillors;**
- (6) instruct the Community Council Liaison Officer to develop an information pack to be issued to all community councillors which will include detailed information on the funding available to community councils and the application process together with contact information and will incorporate the Scottish Government good practice guidance;**

- (7) instruct the Community Council Liaison Officer to implement a training programme for community councillors to compliment the information pack. This will include training on the role of community councils and community councillors and will also include training on the use of social media to promote community engagement;
- (8) instruct the Community Council Liaison Officer to work with community councils to claim their administrative grant for 2014/15 and to undertake a review in 2015 to determine whether the funding provided is sufficient;
- (9) allocate funding of up to £500 to all community councils following each quadrennial election to purchase a laptop/PC and printer and for the cost of provision in the current year to be met from existing budgets;
- (10) note that Council premises should be available at no cost to community councils; and
- (11) instruct the Community Council Liaison Officer to establish a Community Council forum comprising representatives of all community councils with a view to maximising the sharing of best practice across the community councils.