

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the EXECUTIVE held within the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on TUESDAY 12 JANUARY 2016 at 9.30 a.m.

COUNCILLORS:

David Alexander	Adrian Mahoney
Jim Blackwood	Craig Martin (Convener)
Tom Coleman	Dr Craig R Martin
Dennis Goldie	Alan Nimmo
Gerry Goldie	Robert Spears
Linda Gow	

OFFICERS:

Robin Baird, Waste Strategy Co-ordinator
Nick Burgess, Service Manager, Children's Services
Arlene Fraser, Committee Services Officer
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Rose Mary Glackin, Chief Governance Officer
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services
Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive
Stuart Ritchie, Director of Corporate and Housing Services
Bryan Smail, Chief Finance Officer

EX77. APOLOGY

An apology was intimated on behalf of Councillor Nicol.

EX78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

EX79. MINUTE

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Executive held on 1 December 2015 was approved.

Councillor G Goldie entered the meeting during consideration of the following item.

EX80. PROCESSING OF BLUE BIN MATERIAL AND CHARTER FOR HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING IN SCOTLAND

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Development Services presenting the current situation regarding the processing of the Council's blue bin material as well as an update on the recommendations of the Policy Development Panel (PDP), which was established to consider the implications of the Charter for Household Recycling in Scotland.

Members had agreed at the Executive meeting on 20 October 2015 (ref EX68), to authorise the Director of Development Services to review all costs associated with the blue bin collection service in order to present options to a future meeting. Since October 2015, various factors have impacted on the cost of processing blue bin material, with costs having reached unsustainable levels.

Two available options have been identified, which are to either remain with the current provider/seek an alternative provider, or to process the material at the Council's current bulking facility.

The report also referred to the Household Recycling Charter for Scotland which was agreed by CoSLA leaders in August 2015. The Charter identified 21 key principles and referred to the development of a Code of Practice for use by local authorities in Scotland in an effort to achieve consistency across waste and recycling services.

The Executive established a policy development panel on 20 October 2016 (ref EX68) to consider the implications of the forthcoming Recycling Charter. The report summarised the work of the panel, which comprised Councillors Dr C R Martin (chair), S Bird, J Blackwood, P Garner and A Nimmo. After completion of the PDP process, members agreed that the principles of the Charter for Household Recycling in Scotland were sound and as such agreed to recommend the signing of the Charter to the Executive.

Decision

The Executive agreed:-

- (1) that the processing of the Council's blue bin material be undertaken at the Council's current bulking facility and authorised the Director of Development Services to take forward the measures required for implementation as set out at Option 2 (paragraphs 2.7-2.9) in the report, and**
- (2) to sign the Charter for Household Recycling in Scotland and to the development of a transition plan for future consideration.**

The Executive wished to convey its thanks to the refuse collection team for the work they carried out during the festive period in what were, at times, extreme weather conditions.

Councillor G Goldie left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

EX81. FALKIRK COMMUNITY JUSTICE DRAFT TRANSITION PLAN

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services detailing the Community Planning Partnership's requirement to produce a Community Justice Plan to the Scottish Government by 31 January 2016, and attaching as an appendix, the Falkirk Community Justice draft Transition Plan for consideration.

At present, the Community Justice Bill is before Parliament and includes the abolition of the role and function of the Community Justice Authority for Fife and Forth Valley. The Bill sets out the responsibilities to be undertaken by the Community Planning process within Council areas from 1 April 2017.

The Community Planning Partnership's draft Transition Plan sets out the proposed governance arrangements for Falkirk Community Justice during the "shadow" year 2016/17.

Decision

The Executive endorsed the draft Transition Plan for submission to the Community Planning Partnership for its approval.

Councillor Gow left the meeting after consideration of the foregoing item of business.

Councillors G Goldie and Gow re-entered the meeting during consideration of the following item of business.

EX82. FINANCIAL POSITION 2015/16

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services advising of the financial position of the Council for 2015/16 and reflecting on the situation as at 31 December 2015. The opportunity was also taken to update Members on the position of the Reserves consistent with the policy approved by the Executive in January 2015.

Net expenditure was currently forecast to be £2.055m (0.6%) below the approved budget, which was a favourable movement of £1.780m from the position reported in October. The report summarised the main deviations from budget.

Spending within the Housing Revenue Account was in line with budget, leading to projected year-end reserves of £5.093m.

The projected year end positions in regard to the Trading Account and General Fund Reserves were also provided, together with details of movement on the Repairs and Renewals Fund. Information was also provided on workforce changes and the progress made by Services to date.

The Executive noted:-

- (1) the Council's projected year-end financial position for 2015/16;**
- (2) the position with reserves.**

EX83. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT BUDGET AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT 2016/17

The Executive considered a joint report by the Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate and Housing Services summarising the implications for local government, following the announcement of the Scottish Government draft Budget and the Local Government Settlement 2016/17.

The 2016/17 draft Scottish Government Budget proposes a 3.5% (£350m) reduction in local government revenue support, whereas Health is to receive a 3.3% increase. Part of the £400m increase in Health is accounted for by the £250m directed to the new Health and Social Care Partnerships. However, it is still to be clarified as to what access the Council will have to this fund and what room for manoeuvre there will be for the Council in considering its budget setting.

The General Capital grant allocation for Falkirk Council for 2016/17 is £10.6m, which is c15% less than the current financial year.

This reduction in the Council's grant resources essentially increases the deficit for 2016/17 from that previously projected by £6m to nearly £25m. The Council's share of the £250m directed to new Health and Social Care Partnerships has been estimated, and would broadly match the extra £6m shortfall.

The Deputy First Minister had written to all Councils on 16 December 2015, setting out the terms of the settlement and package of measures. He requested that any Council not intending to take up the offer and agree the terms of the full package of measures, write to him by 22 January 2016.

Councillor C Martin, seconded by Councillor Dr C R Martin, moved that a response be sent to Mr Swinney advising that, until the position on the £250m, together with penalties for not accepting the proposals in Mr Swinney's letter is clarified, Falkirk Council is not reasonably in a position to accept his offer.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the draft Scottish Government Budget and Local Government Settlement 2016/17, and**
- (2) agreed that a response be sent to Mr Swinney advising that, until the position on the £250m, together with penalties for not accepting the proposals in Mr Swinney's letter, is clarified, Falkirk Council is not reasonably in a position to accept his offer.**

EX84. THE COMMISSION ON LOCAL TAX REFORM

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services summarising the findings from the Commission on Local Tax Reform's (the Commission) report titled "Just Change: A New Approach to Local Taxation".

The Commission was established jointly between the Scottish Government and CoSLA and was tasked with identifying and examining alternatives to the current council tax which would deliver a fairer system of local taxation in order to support the funding of local government services.

It is highlighted in the Commission's report that a new taxation system could not be enacted prior to the local government elections in 2017.

Decision

The Executive noted the contents of the report.