

FC7. ASSET RATIONALISATION: COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS AND REPLACEMENT TOWN HALL PROJECT

Council considered a report by the Director of Development Services providing an update on the Council headquarters project together with information on the proposal to create an Arts Centre to replace Falkirk Town Hall.

At its meeting on 16 December 2015, Council had sought further information on the impact of ESA 10 (the European System of Accounts 2010) and emerging VAT complications with regard to the proposed civic arts centre in addition to a detailed analysis of the costs and timeline for the project and a review of alternative options.

The report (a) summarised the history of the project and gave an update on its current status; (b) outlined the business case for the proposed new arts centre and analysed the VAT and funding options; (c) confirmed that, as it was now proposed to fund the arts centre through straightforward capital procurement, ESA 10 no longer impacted on it; (d) identified the risks attaching to the project and the alternative options including cancellation and maintaining the status quo, and (e) set out the financial implications.

The Director of Development Services advised that Forth Valley College had confirmed that Friday 13 May 2016 was the deadline for submitting the bid of the Scottish Government and consequently for the Council was being asked to confirm its position in regard to the Arts Centre project by that date.

Council adjourned at 11.10a.m. to allow members to consider the information referred to by the Director of Development Services in her summary, and reconvened at 11.40a.m. with members present as per the sederunt.

Councillor C Martin, seconded by Baillie Paterson, moved that Council agrees:-

- (1) *to continue consideration of the proposal for a new Council headquarters, as part of the asset rationalisation programme, to await clarification of future local government funding and clarification of the implications arising from the recent announcement of a review of Scottish local government structures;*
- (2) *that Falkirk requires a modern Arts Centre;*
- (3) *that, with such a tight timescale and the questions surrounding the possibility of external funding the proposal to site this centre of Forth Valley College does not proceed, and that a more detailed investigation of other options in Falkirk Town Centre, including the existing site is conducted; and*
- (4) *to instruct officers to withdraw the planning application.*

As an amendment, Councillor Meiklejohn, seconded by Councillor Jackson, moved in substitution for the motion, that Council agrees:-

- (1) *to note the current progress on the office headquarters project and content of the business case for the replacement Town Hall/ Arts Centre;*
- (2) *to note the outcome of the updated review of the earlier options appraisal exercise and accept that all options have still not been fully explored and the need to take cognisance of public opinion;*

- (3) *to instruct officers to cancel current office headquarters project and prepare a project plan and costs for refurbishing the existing Municipal Buildings over the next 5 years including the relocation of other services within the Municipal Buildings thus reducing the reliance on leased property;*
- (4) *not to take forward the relocation of the Town Hall to the site of the new Forth Valley College as it does not meet best value;*
- (5) *that, recognising the value of the diverse range of Arts groups that use the existing facility, officers are instructed to establish a user based task force to inform on a design and specification and officers to develop associated costs for the refurbishment of the existing Town Hall Facility, and*
- (6) *to request that a progress report is submitted to the September meeting of Council.*

On a division, 16 members voted for the motion, 15 voted for the amendment and 1 abstained, with voting as follows:-

For the motion (16) – Provost Reid; Depute Provost Patrick; Baillies Buchanan and Paterson; and Councillors Blackwood, D Goldie, G Goldie, Gow, MacDonald, McLuckie, Mahoney, C Martin, Dr C R Martin, Murray, Nicol and Nimmo.

For the amendment (15) – Councillors Alexander, Balfour, Bird, Carleschi, Chalmers, Coleman, Garner, Hughes, Jackson, McCabe, Meiklejohn, Oliver, Ritchie, Spears and Turner.

Abstain (1) – Councillor Black.

Decision

Council agreed the motion.