

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Minute of special meeting of Falkirk Council held in the Municipal Buildings,
Falkirk on Monday 15 January 2018 at 9.30 a.m.**

<u>Councillors:</u>	David Aitchison	Joan Coombes	Cecil Meiklejohn
	David Alexander	Jim Flynn	Lynn Munro
	David Balfour	Paul Garner	Laura Murtagh
	Lorna Binnie	Dennis Goldie	Malcolm Nicol
	Robert Bissett	David Grant	Alan Nimmo
	Allyson Black	Nigel Harris	John Patrick
	Jim Blackwood	Gordon Hughes	Pat Reid
	Gary Bouse	James Kerr	Depute Provost Ann
	William Buchanan	Adanna McCue	Ritchie
	Fiona Collie	John McLuckie	Robert Spears

Officers: Karen Algie, Head of HR & Business Transformation
Sally Buchanan,
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology & Improvement
Jack Frawley, Committee Services Officer
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Kenny Gillespie, Head of Housing
Gary Greenhorn, Head of Planning & Resources
Sara Lacey, Head of Social Work Children's Services
Colin Moodie, Chief Governance Officer
Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive
Stuart Ritchie, Director of Corporate and Housing Services
Bryan Smail, Chief Finance Officer

FC70. Sederunt

The sederunt was taken by way of roll call.

FC71. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

FC72. Election of Provost

Council considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which sought to fill the casual vacancy arising from the untimely death of Provost Coleman on 30 November 2017.

Section 4(6) of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 requires the Council to hold an election to fill the vacancy of the office of Provost as soon as is practicable at a meeting of the Council.

Councillor Meiklejohn nominated Councillor Hughes.

Councillor Nicol nominated Councillor Patrick.

Councillor Blackwood nominated Councillor Buchanan.

In terms of Standing Order 23 where only one vacancy requires to be filled and two or more persons are nominated, a vote shall be taken between all the candidates, each councillor being entitled to one vote only.

In terms of Standing Order 22.1, the vote was taken by roll call, there being 29 members present with voting as undernoted:-

For Councillor Hughes (12) – Depute Provost Ritchie, and Councillors Alexander, Balfour, Binnie, Bouse, Collie, Garner, Hughes, McCue, Meiklejohn, Murtagh and Spears.

For Councillor Patrick (7) – Councillors Flynn, Grant, Harris, Kerr, Munro, Nicol and Patrick.

For Councillor Buchanan (9) – Councillors Aitchison, Bissett, Black, Blackwood, Buchanan, Coombes, Goldie, McLuckie and Nimmo.

Abstention (1) – Councillor Reid.

With no candidate obtaining an absolute majority, Councillor Patrick, having obtained the least number of votes, was struck out and a new vote taken of the remaining candidates.

For Councillor Hughes (12) – Depute Provost Ritchie, and Councillors Alexander, Balfour, Binnie, Bouse, Collie, Garner, Hughes, McCue, Meiklejohn, Murtagh and Spears.

For Councillor Buchanan (16) – Councillors Aitchison, Bissett, Black, Blackwood, Buchanan, Coombes, Flynn, Goldie, Grant, Harris, Kerr, McLuckie, Munro, Nicol, Nimmo and Patrick.

Abstention (1) – Councillor Reid.

Councillor Buchanan was elected Provost of Falkirk Council.
Provost Buchanan assumed the chair.

Decision

Council appointed Councillor William Buchanan as Provost.

FC73. Scottish Government Budget and Local Government Settlement 2018/19

Council considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services providing an update on the key matters from the Scottish Government's draft Budget for 2018/19 together with details of the Local Government Financial Settlement.

The Local Government Financial Settlement was anticipated to be a one year Settlement which was not conducive to medium term planning. The Budget would be agreed by the Scottish Parliament on 21 February 2018. Therefore it was proposed that the Council's budget meeting be put back from 21 February to 28 February.

The Cabinet Secretary had advised that the Settlement had to be viewed as a package with Councils required to agree to deliver all of the measures contained within. If a Council chose not to accept the full package a revised and less favourable offer would be made.

Councillor Meiklejohn, seconded by Councillor Garner, moved that Council:-

- (1) notes the Draft Scottish Government Budget and Local Government Settlement 2018/19;
- (2) agrees to respond to the Cabinet Secretary's letter in terms of paragraph 4.2.3 of the report indicating its acceptance of the full package set out in the letter;
- (3) agrees a revised date of 28th February for the Council meeting to approve the Revenue Budget, fix the Council Tax for 2018/19 and agree the General Services Capital Programme for 2018/19 – 2020/21, and
- (4) notes the Accounts Commission publication "Local Government in Scotland – Financial Overview 2016/17".

As an amendment, Councillor Goldie, seconded by Councillor Nimmo, moved in substitution for clause 2 of the motion that Council:-

- (2) agrees to respond to the Cabinet Secretary's letter indicating it would not accept the offer at this stage until the final settlement terms are known".

In terms of Standing Order 22.1, the vote was taken by roll call, there being 29 members present with voting as undernoted:-

For the motion (19) – Depute Provost Ritchie; and Councillors Alexander, Balfour, Binnie, Bouse, Collie, Flynn, Garner, Grant, Harris, Hughes, Kerr, McCue, Meiklejohn, Munro, Murtagh, Nicol, Patrick and Spears.

For the amendment (10) –Provost Buchanan; and Councillors Aitchison, Bissett, Black, Blackwood, Coombes, Goldie, McLuckie, Nimmo and Reid.

Decision

Council agreed the motion.

FC74. Housing Revenue Account and Council House Rents 2018/19 – 2020/21

Council considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services providing options relating to council house rent and other rental charges for 2018/19.

Falkirk Council was landlord to over 16,000 tenants and the cost of providing council housing had to be self-financing from rents and other income. There was a statutory duty to review the level of council house rents annually. The average rent was £64.06 per week, with 72% of that income directed to repaying borrowing costs and paying for day to day maintenance and improvements. Nationally Falkirk Council had:-

- the 5th lowest rent
- the 4th highest level of repairs and improvement expenditure per house
- the 7th lowest supervision and management costs.

A consultation had been carried out with tenants on a range of potential rent increase options for 2018/19. There were 1,011 responses which represented a 6% response rate. The consultation feedback showed that preferences were as follows:-

	Option 1 1.9%	Option 2 2.9%	Option 3 3.6%	Option 4 3.9%
Responses	338 (39%)	191 (22%)	130 (15%)	201 (23%)

The report advised that the Administration's position was to raise the rent level in line with option 3 at 3.6%.

Decision

Council:-

- (1) agreed to an increase of 3.6% in average council house rents for 2018/19 with a similar increase in the other rental charges as set out in Appendix 4 to the report;**
- (2) approved the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2018/19 as set out in Appendix 2, subject to any necessary adjustments, and**
- (3) noted the indicative budgets and rent levels for 2019/20 and 2020/21 as representing the best available information at this time.**

FC75. Housing Investment Programme 2018/19 to 2020/21

Council considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services providing details of the housing investment requirements over the next three years.

The Council was required to ensure that its housing stock met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). As at 31 March 2017, 93.1% of properties met the SHQS. The 6.9% of properties which did not meet the standard related to either abeyances or exemptions. Further to the requirement for housing stock to meet the SHQS the Scottish Government had introduced a new Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH). This standard aimed to reduce carbon emissions and eradicate fuel poverty. The target date to achieve the first ESSH milestones was 31 December 2020, 86.2% of the Council's stock was fully ESSH compliant.

Decision

Council agreed the Housing Investment Programme for 2018/19 to 2020/21 as set out in the report, recognising the resultant impact on Council House rents.

FC76. Universal Credit

Council considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided an update on the next stage of the roll out of Universal Credit, the expected impact of this roll out and mitigation actions being taken by the Council and partners.

The introduction of Universal Credit as a benefit replaced the following benefits:-

- Child tax credit
- Housing benefit
- Income support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related employment and support allowance
- Working tax credit

The report advised that at the current point in time only new single working age claimants in the Falkirk area could apply for Universal Credit. This position was known as Live Service and had operated since May 2015. From March 2018 Universal Credit would be available to all new working age claimants known as Full Service.

Decision

Council:-

- (1) noted the actions that are being taken in preparation for further roll out from Live Service to Full Service Universal Credit in the Falkirk area;**
- (2) requested a Member's briefing on Universal Credit, and**
- (3) requested that regular updates on the impact of Welfare Reform were provided to future meetings.**

FC77. Appointment Process for the Post of Chief Executive

Council considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which sought that authority be given to the Appointments Committee to make a permanent appointment to the post of Chief Executive.

Falkirk Council's Chief Executive, Mary Pitcaithly, had advised of her retirement from the Council with effect from 28 June 2018. The post of Chief Executive is the most senior post within the Council and has authority over all other officers. The Chief Executive is responsible for the effective management of the Council and for providing advice and guidance on strategic policy matters.

Decision

Council agreed:-

- (1) to delegate powers to the Appointments Committee to make an appointment to the post of Chief Executive on a permanent basis;**

- (2) that the post should be advertised externally, and**
- (3) that the post be advertised using the three point pay scale with the Appointments Committee to determine whether progression through the scale should be performance related or by normal annual progression.**