

EX39. Council Headquarters Project

With reference to Standing Order 33, the convener advised that a deputation request had been received on behalf of the Healthy High Street Group to be heard in relation to this item. The convener confirmed that the request had been made in accordance with Standing Orders. The Executive agreed to hear the deputation.

Margaret Foy addressed the Executive, following which members asked questions. The convener thanked the deputation for addressing the Executive.

The Executive considered a report by the Leader of the Council which set out the Administration's position on the Council's headquarters project. In preparation of the report advice from officers had been sought to take cognisance of the status of the headquarters (HQ) project, its implications in terms of the Council's strategic property review, financial position and risk and the progress of work on the regeneration of the town centre.

Since May, the prospects for Falkirk town centre had become more bleak. Announcements had been made on the closure of Marks & Spencer and Falkirk Bus Station. This reinforced the need to revitalise the town centre. This increased the importance of the Council reaching a decision on delivery of its headquarters project. The Administration had made a commitment to town centre regeneration in its manifesto. By locating the replacement headquarters facility in the town centre, regeneration could be stimulated

The Administration's vision for the town centre and the headquarters project was that the development should be taken forward as a partnership venture, combining investment from a range of partners and invigorating the town centre with a new sense of purpose.

A town centre working group had been formed involving the Council, Falkirk BID and other town centre stakeholders. The group had reinforced the need for urgent action and sought clarity on the means to deliver much needed investment in the town centre. The Administration proposed that the group should develop a regeneration action plan including recommendations for delivery of the headquarters facility.

The report detailed requirements for a replacement headquarters facility as:-

- a minimum of 300 workstations.
- a democratic/HQ core office for elected members, senior management team and civic accommodation.
- ancillary accommodation i.e. reception, IT data room, meetings, catering and related welfare facilities etc.
- modern office accommodation to meet 'back' office, agile working needs for up to 1200 staff, to help meet Council of the Future ambitions.
- access to flexible space and capacity for other public, private and third sector partners to work alongside the Council.

The report stated that to replace Falkirk Town Hall a modern Arts Centre facility would be required proposed as a 500 seat facility, with reception, rehearsal and catering facilities. It was highlighted that this project might take place alongside provision of the office and civic headquarters facilities or proceed separately.

Councillor Meiklejohn, seconded by Councillor Garner, moved that the Executive agrees:-

- (1) the vision for Falkirk town centre and new headquarters for the Council including office, civic and arts facilities as set out in para 4.4;
- (2) to progress proposals for delivery of the replacement headquarters facility in the town centre through:
 - (a) the Council's participation in the Falkirk town centre working group to prepare a regeneration action plan with proposals for delivery of the Council headquarters facility and related investment by partners
 - (b) that officers prepare a business case for the proposed replacement headquarters having regard to the Council's financial position
 - (c) an initial specification for a replacement office headquarters facility for a minimum of 300 workstations and associated civic and arts facilities
 - (d) to progress a procurement exercise to seek a preferred site and means of delivering the project
- (3) that a progress report with recommendations for further action be presented to Executive on completion of the above actions to enable a decision to be reached on the headquarters project.

The Executive adjourned at 9.55am to allow consideration of the terms of an amendment intimated by Councillor Goldie and reconvened at 10.05am with all members present as per the sederunt.

Following discussion, Councillor Meiklejohn, with the consent of the convener and Councillor Garner, as her seconder, adjusted the terms of her motion to amend clauses 2(a) and 2(c), in light of the amendment intimated by Councillor Goldie, to read:-

- (a) the Council's participation in the Falkirk town centre working group to prepare a regeneration action plan with proposals for delivery of the Council headquarters facility and related investment by partners, with Council representation on the working group being 8 subject to political balance as follows:-

SNP – 3
Lab – 2
Cons – 2
Ind – 1

- (c) an initial specification for a replacement headquarters office facility with a capacity larger than 300 workstations and associated arts and civic facilities.

The Executive noted that the town centre working group would be chaired by the Leader of the Council. Nominations were sought for the place reserved for an independent member.

Councillor Nicol nominated Provost Buchanan.

Councillor Meiklejohn nominated Councillor Spears.

In terms of Standing Order 22.1, the vote was taken by roll call, there being 12 members present with voting as undernoted:-

For Provost Buchanan (7) – Councillors Bissett, Coombes, Goldie, Harris, Kerr, Nicol and Nimmo.

For Councillor Spears (5) – Councillors Alexander, Bouse, Garner, Hughes and Meiklejohn.

Provost Buchanan was appointed to the town centre working group.

Decision

The Executive agreed:-

- (1) the vision for Falkirk town centre and new headquarters for the Council including office and arts facilities as set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report;**
- (2) to progress proposals for delivery of the replacement headquarters facility in the town centre, through:-**
 - (a) the Council's participation in the Falkirk town centre working group to prepare a regeneration action plan with proposals for delivery of the Council headquarters facility and related investment by partners, with Council representation on the working group being 8 subject to political balance as follows:-**
 - SNP – 3**
 - Lab – 2**
 - Cons – 2**
 - Ind – 1**
 - (b) to appoint Provost Buchanan as the Independent member on the town centre working group with the remaining places being filled by slate to the Chief Governance Officer**

- (c) that officers prepare a business case for the proposed replacement headquarters having regard to the Council's financial position
 - (d) an initial specification for a replacement headquarters office facility with a capacity larger than 300 workstations and associated arts and civic facilities
 - (e) to progress a procurement exercise to seek a preferred site and means of delivering the project
- (3) that a progress report with recommendations for further action be presented to Executive on completion of the above actions to enable a decision to be reached on the headquarters project,