

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of meeting of Falkirk Council held in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Wednesday 23 January 2019 at 9.45 a.m.

Councillors:

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

Officers:

Jack Frawley, Committee Services Officer
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Kenny Gillespie, Head of Housing
Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive
David McGhee, Head of Procurement & Housing Property
Colin Moodie, Chief Governance Officer
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager
Stuart Ritchie, Director of Corporate & Housing Services
Bryan Smail, Chief Finance Officer

Prior to the consideration of the proposed items of business the Provost moved the suspension of Standing Order 10.4, relating to the audio recording of meetings, as the equipment to do this was not available.

In terms of Standing Order 36.3, Council may suspend any Standing Order (with the exception of Standing Orders 35 and 36) provided that:-

- (1) either due notice had been given, or Council agreed that it was a case of urgency, and
- (2) the motion to suspend a Standing Order was moved, seconded and carried without discussion by at least two thirds of the councillors present and voting at the meeting and an absolute majority of the Council.

In regard to Standing Order 36.3 (1), due notice of the motion had not been given. There was general agreement that the matter was urgent.

In regard to Standing Order 36.3 (2), there was general agreement on the motion to suspend. Accordingly Council agreed to suspend Standing Order 10.4 for the duration of the meeting.

FC69. Sederunt

The sederunt was taken by way of a roll call. Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillors Bissett and Flynn.

FC70. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

FC71. Housing Revenue Account & Council House Rents 2019/20 – 2023/24

Council considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided options relating to council house rent and other rental charges for 2019/20. Information was also provided on indicative rent levels for the years 2020/21 to 2023/24 to align with the Medium Term Financial plan.

Falkirk Council was landlord to over 16,000 tenants. 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 £66.36 per week. Nationally Falkirk Council had:-

- the 6th lowest rent
- the 7th highest level of repairs and improvement expenditure per house
- the 8th lowest supervision and management costs.

A consultation had been carried out with tenants on a range of potential rent increase options for 2019/20. There had been 1,032 responses which represented a 6% response rate. The consultation feedback showed that preferences were as follows:-

	Option 1 2.5%	Option 2 3.5%	Option 3 4.5%
Responses	409 (40%)	240 (23%)	105 (10%)

The report advised that the Administration's position was to raise the rent level by 3.0%.

Decision

Council:-

- (1) agreed a rent increase of 3.0% for financial year 2019/20 together with a 3% increase in the charges set out in appendix 4 to the report for the same financial year;**
- (2) approved the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2019/20 as set out in appendix 2 to the report, and**
- (3) noted the indicative budgets and rent levels for 2020/21 through to 2023/24 as representing the best available information at this time.**

FC72. Housing Investment Programme 2019/20 to 2023/24

Council considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided details of housing investment requirements over the following five years. The programme had been extended from 3 to 4 years to align with the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Council was required to ensure that its housing stock met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS), as at 31 March 2018, 97.4% of properties met the SHQS. The 2.6% 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, as at 31 March 2018 91.1% of the Council's stock was fully ESSH compliant.

In 2010 the Council had participated in the National Housing Trust (NHT) initiative. NHT was a Scottish Government initiative to stimulate the private house building sector during the economic downturn by using public money to stimulate development and provide affordable housing for rent at mid-market levels on otherwise stalled development sites.

The Developer had advised that it wished to exit the agreement by way of disposal of the units to Link Corporate Trustees (UK) Limited. This would result in repayment of a loan of c.£2.3m to the Council.

Decision

Council:-

- (1) agreed the Council Housing Investment Programme set out in appendix 1 to the report and the Housing Investment Programme for 2019/20 to 2023/24, and**

- (2) noted the terms of paragraphs 5.9 to 5.12 of the report and agreed to the sale of the properties by Carrongrove NHT 2011 LLP as set out in section 5.12 of the report.**