

FC70. Five Year General Fund Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2024/25

The Provost advised that a deputation request had been received from John Paterson, Falkirk and District Arts and Civic Council.

Council agreed to hear the deputation.

Provost Buchanan and Councillor Reid each declared a non-financial interest as members of the Falkirk and District Arts and Civic Council but stated that they considered that this did not require them to recuse themselves from consideration of the item having regard to the objective test in the Code of Conduct.

Council considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which presented a draft capital investment plan. The plan included investment of c£265m over five years including the Tax Incremental Financing Scheme. Some projects such as the Grangemouth Flood Prevention Scheme extended beyond the five year timeframe of the plan.

Earlier Council had agreed the use of additional funds gained from an increase in Council Tax, to assist in meeting the demand for capital investment. A 1.84% increase in Council Tax was agreed which would yield c£1.2m which would be sufficient to finance additional capital investment of c£24m.

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

- (1) approves the balanced General Fund Services Capital Programme set out in appendix 2 to the report;
- (2) requests that officers seek to identify external funding to support the HQ/ Arts Centre with a view in particular to reducing the capital cost to the Council to the original provision of £45m;
- (3) notes the additional available resource of £24.4m arising from the inflationary increase in Council Tax and agrees that two additional projects are funded - 'Connected Falkirk (Digital Learning Environment)' - £9.6m and 'CCTV – Analogue to Digital - £0.98m, as set out in appendix 1 to the report, for inclusion in the programme;
- (4) notes that the Programme will be reviewed in the summer when years 2 and 3 of the General Capital Grant is notified and further information is available on potential projects including those arising from the Strategic Property Review and agrees that the allocation of the remaining funding from the inflationary increase in Council Tax is continued to a future meeting of Council at that time, and
- (5) notes the Prudential Indicators.

As an amendment in substitution for the motion Councillor Bissett, seconded by Councillor Coombes, moved that Council:-

- (1) notes the reduction in the Capital Grant from the Scottish Government and that the estimated impact of this over the life of the programme is £8.7m;
- (2) notes that the proposed capital programme includes an additional £9m expenditure on the HQ/Arts Centre project;
- (3) agrees:-
 - (i) that the additional £8.7m expenditure on the HQ Arts Project is not the best use of the Council's resources in the present circumstances and accordingly removes the additional £8.7m from the programme noting that this will reduce the pressure on the revenue budget for future years by approximately £450k with a saving over the lifetime of the loan of £22.5m;
 - (ii) that the particular project considered by the Executive in January will not proceed;
 - (iii) instead instructs the Director of Development Services to bring to the Council as soon as possible options for an HQ/Arts Centre project which are achievable within the existing cost envelope of £45m, adopt a spend to save approach and include decoupling the HQ and Arts Centre;
- (4) agrees the additional projects to make use of the additional £24.5m as set out in appendix 4 to this minute subject to (i) a report to the Education, Children and Young People Executive on the Connected Falkirk Project; and (ii) a report to the Executive on what will be achieved with an additional £7m in roads investment, and
- (5) agrees that the programme will be reviewed at a meeting of Council after the summer when the full extent of capital grant is known and any recommendations from the Executive and Education, Children and Young People Executive are available.

Council adjourned at 3.30pm and reconvened at 4.45pm with all members present as per the sederunt with the exception of Councillor Kerr.

Councillor Bissett, with the consent of the Provost and Councillor Coombes as his seconder, altered clause 3 (iii) of his motion to add:-

“and information on any additional funding”.

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 (13) – Depute Provost Ritchie; and Councillors Alexander, Balfour, Binnie, Bouse, Coleman, Collie, Garner, Hughes, McCue, Meiklejohn, Murtagh and Spears.

For the amendment (16) – Provost Buchanan; and Councillors Aitchison, Bissett, Black, Blackwood, Coombes, Flynn, Goldie, Grant, Harris, McLuckie, Munro, Nicol, Nimmo, Patrick and Reid.

Decision

Council:-

- (1) noted the reduction in the Capital Grant from the Scottish Government and that the estimated impact of this over the life of the programme was £8.7m;**
- (2) noted that the proposed capital programme included an additional £9m expenditure on the HQ/Arts Centre project;**

(3) agreed:-

- (i) that the additional £8.7m expenditure on the HQ Arts Project was not the best use of the Council's resources in the present circumstances and accordingly removed the additional £8.7m from the programme noting that this would reduce the pressure on the revenue budget for future years by approximately £450k with a saving over the lifetime of the loan of £22.5m;**
- (ii) that the particular project considered by the Executive in January would not proceed;**
- (iii) instead instructed the Director of Development Services to bring to the Council as soon as possible options for an HQ/Arts Centre project which were achievable within the existing cost envelope of £45m, adopt a spend to save approach and include decoupling the HQ and Arts Centre and information on any additional funding;**

(4) agreed the additional projects to make use of the additional £24.5m as set out in appendix 4 to this minute subject to (i) a report to the Education, Children and Young People Executive on the Connected Falkirk Project; and (ii) a report to the Executive on what would be achieved with an additional £7m in roads investment, and

(5) agreed that the programme would be reviewed at a meeting of Council after the summer when the full extent of capital grant was known and any recommendations from the Executive and Education, Children and Young People Executive were available.