

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the City of Vancouver's coat of arms. The crest is a shield divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant shows a sailing ship on the water. The top-right quadrant shows a stag's head with antlers. The bottom-left quadrant shows a beaver. The bottom-right quadrant shows a grizzly bear. Above the shield is a crown with four maple leaves. A banner at the bottom of the shield contains the motto "A NE FOR A".

Agenda Item 3a

Minute

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Minute of meeting of the EMERGENCY EXECUTIVE held remotely on Thursday
25 June 2020 at 10.00 a.m.**

Councillors: David Alexander
Robert Bissett
Fiona Collie
Joan Coombes
Paul Garner
Nigel Harris
James Kerr
Adanna McCue
Cecil Meiklejohn (Convener)
Malcolm Nicol
Alan Nimmo
Pat Reid

Officers: Patricia Cassidy, Chief Officer – Health & Social Care
Partnership
Jack Frawley, Team Leader - Committee Services
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive
Colin Moodie, Chief Governance Officer
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services
Stuart Ritchie, Director of Corporate & Housing Services
Bryan Smail, Chief Finance Officer

Also

Attending: Maureen Campbell, Chief Executive, Falkirk Community Trust

In accordance with section 43 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Convener had directed that the meeting would be conducted by video conference to allow remote attendance by elected members.

In accordance with section 50A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 the public were excluded from this meeting as it was likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be a real and substantial risk to public health due to infection or contamination with coronavirus.

EE19. Apologies

There were no apologies.

EE20. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

EE21. Minute

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Emergency Executive held on 11 June 2020 was approved.

EE22. Strategic Plans and Vision Framework: Consultation Feedback

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Chief Executive which provided an update on the elected member engagement workshops and sought agreement of the Vision Framework as the basis for progressing the Council's Corporate Plan and Five-Year Business Plan.

Workshops were held with elected members to allow reflection and comment on both short-term priorities in the context of recovery, and longer term priorities important to communities, to provide a basis for the Council's overarching priorities for the Business Plan and Corporate Plan. The workshops were framed around five questions:-

- What is most important to your communities now?
- What are the most significant things we need to deliver for our communities as a Council in the short term?
- From these, what is your view of the broader priorities for the Council?
- What specific comments do you have on the 'straw man'?
- What are the positive lessons we can learn from the Council's response to COVID-19?

The feedback from members identified key issues and actions to be incorporated into the work to be taken forward in the context of recovery and in developing the new Corporate Plan and Business Plan. An updated copy of the 'straw man' Vision Framework was appended to the report. The work on the Corporate and Business Plans would be taken forward over the coming months and report to Council in September. This would:-

- Give elected members a further opportunity to reflect and make sure the strategic deliverables meet the needs of communities
- Provide an opportunity for community engagement and assessment of the impact of the strategic deliverables in relation to poverty and equalities
- Develop more tangible and quantifiable strategic deliverables with timescales
- Align recovery plan actions with the deliverables ensuring these were in line with resources

- Align Council of the Future (COTF) priority projects
- Ensure the skills and capacity of the workforce are aligned to deliver on the key elements of the framework
- Provide a platform for the refresh of the Five-Year Business Plan and Corporate Plan
- Inform the production of the Falkirk Plan with Community Planning Partners later in 2020/21.

Decision

The Emergency Executive agreed the Vision Framework as the basis for progressing the Council's Corporate Plan and Five - Year Business Plan.

EE23. Financial Overview

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided an initial assessment of the impact on the Council's finances of COVID-19. The report also provided some initial considerations for the budget planning process. The focus of the report was on the General Fund Services, further reports would provide updates on the Council's capital programme. The report sought approval of several new savings proposals for the current financial year.

Net expenditure as at 31 March 2020 was £350.6m which was £1.782m (0.5%) above the resources available. This was a marginal increase of £0.406m in comparison with the position that was reported in January. The significant movements were:-

- Children's Services – Increased overspend primarily due to significantly higher residential care costs and higher teaching costs. The increases had been partially offset by a contribution of £0.723m from the Devolved School Management Reserve.
- Development Services – improved position due to lower waste services costs
- Corporate & Housing – lower employee costs across the service and reduced supporting people costs had contributed to the increased underspend
- Integration Joint Board – Due to higher care costs there would be an overspend
- Capital Charges – A planned repayment of historic debt had not been undertaken due to the more pressing need to maintain the Council's reserve balance. This had increased the underspend by c£1.1m from the previous position.

In responding to the crisis the Council had incurred significant additional costs (i.e. costs additional to business as usual). The most significant were social care costs. Additional measures would add to the cost pressures,

particularly with regard to the opening of schools. There were five main financial risks:-

- Government funding not sufficient to cover the loss of income and additional costs
- Planned budget savings not being achieved
- Recharges to Capital
- Funding for the IJB Mobilisation Plan not sufficient
- Rewind of the furlough scheme not aligning with the Trust's ability to operate full revenue generating capacity.

New savings proposals which required approval from the Emergency Executive for 2020/21 were:-

- Closure of Public Toilets - £0.138m
- Closure of canteen facilities at Municipal Buildings and Abbotsford House - £0.030m
- Cessation of Special Uplifts in Waste Services - £300k
- Reintroduction of Flower Bedding in Grounds Maintenance - £100k (currently on hold due to the impact of COVID restrictions)
- Reintroduction of Pest Control in Waste Services - £100k (a separate report on this service would be considered later in the meeting).

The Emergency Executive adjourned at 10.40am and reconvened at 10.50am with all members present as per the sederunt.

Decision

The Emergency Executive:-

- (1) noted Council's year-end financial position subject to Audit for 2019/20;**
- (2) noted the initial assessment of the current financial year and recognised the need for proactive action to manage the situation which may merit a special Members' workshop;**
- (3) noted the need for all Services to exercise effective financial control;**
- (4) noted the initial considerations of the Medium Term Financial Plan and 2021/22 budget process;**
- (5) noted the need to determine a Zero Based Budget type budget process suitable for Falkirk Council;**
- (6) in relation to the proposed savings and in light of the announcement on Tuesday on further financial support for**

Councils and more generally the uncertain financial position, agreed:-

- (i) that the savings should not be taken forward at this time to allow further work to be done on the priorities agreed in the previous item, on recovery plans, and the financial position;**
- (ii) that an important element of this work would be the workshop with members;**
- (iii) that public engagement would be a key strand of the work;**
- (iv) that the outcome should be a set of strategic proposals for addressing the financial issues properly informed by and understanding of the impacts of any proposed changes on our communities, and**
- (iv) that the outcome was reported to Council at its September meeting.**

EE24. Re-establishment of Pest Control Services

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Development Services which provided options on the reestablishment of a pest control service following the decision of Council at its budget meeting on 26 February 2020. The potential residential and commercial charges for 2020/21 were detailed together with three options for a charging regime.

Option 1 – This option applied the full rate of charge to all domestic properties. On a fully chargeable service based on 941 jobs, the budget allocated would result in a net cost of circa £53,000 over a full financial year. This option did not conform sufficiently with the Council's Concessions Policy to merit recommendation to members.

Option 2 - This option considered applying no charge for one treatment of a household where the householder was in receipt of a relevant benefit. For residents not in receipt of such benefits, the full rate of charge would apply. There was uncertainty in relation to the number of free requests for service that may arise, and this may result in the service being unable to cope with demand.

Option 3 – This proposal was that households would pay half of the option 1 charge. On this basis, the service was more likely to manage demand than if option 2 was adopted. If the service was provided at half price it was unclear what the level of service uptake would be. Approximately 20% of households would qualify for the half price concession. The financial and other impacts would sit somewhere between those of option 1 and option 2.

The rate of charge to commercial customers was proposed as £63.00 per callout and treatment, with subsequent visits charged at £31.50 plus a minimum charge of £12.50 for materials used. The Council's ability to service these customers was directly linked to the level of uptake/demand from domestic properties.

Councillor Garner, seconded by Councillor Alexander, moved that the Emergency Executive, in light of the impact of the current coronavirus pandemic and consequent budgetary pressures on the Council at the present time, not establish a pest control service in the current financial year.

As an amendment, Councillor Bissett, seconded by Councillor Nimmo, moved that the Emergency Executive agrees:-

- (1) to stand by the budget decision in February and reintroduce a Pest Control Service noting that this will be mainstreamed in the revenue budget, and
- (2) that Option 3 as set out in the report should be pursued.

The Emergency Executive adjourned at 11.40am and reconvened at 11.55am with all members present as per the sederunt.

Councillor Garner, with the consent of the Convener and Councillor Alexander as his seconder, altered his motion to read as follows:-

The Emergency Executive agrees to continue consideration of a pest control service to Council in September.

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

For the motion (5) – Councillors Alexander, Collie, Garner, McCue and Meiklejohn.

For the amendment (7) – Councillors Bissett, Coombes, Harris, Kerr, Nicol, Nimmo and Reid.

Decision

The Emergency Executive agreed the amendment.

EE25. Children's Services – Local Phased Education Delivery Plan (COVID-19 Recovery)

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an overview of the key plans and strategic aims associated with the Local Phased Education Delivery Plan and details around the current challenges and limiting factors in progressing the plan.

All education establishments were closed from Monday 23 March 2020 and the Government's "route map through and out of the crisis" detailed that schools would be re-opened in Phase 3. The re-opening date for schools was 11 August 2020, although the date for Early Learning Childcare (ELC)

establishments was not confirmed. The Scottish Government had revoked its plans to implement 1140 hours of ELC in light of the challenges faced as a result of the Covid situation.

The Service had been working with Headteachers to consider the options to re-open schools on a phased basis. All options reflected the guidance at the time of writing, in particular the physical distancing specification. Liaison with parental groups, professional associations and trade unions had also taken place. There were a number of significant internal and external factors that would influence the ability to progress delivery of the Local Phased Delivery Plan. Critical areas included: Transport Operators Capacity; digital access at home; absence levels amongst current workforce; physical distancing rules, and increased cleaning regimes.

In an update to Parliament by the Deputy First Minister on plans to reopen schools on Tuesday 23 June it was set out that the Scottish Government sought to prepare for children to be able to return to school full time in August. In light of this announcement, which was made after the publication of the report being considered by the Emergency Executive on a phased return to education, members sought to continue the matter to a future date to be provided with more up to date information.

Decision

The Emergency Executive agreed to adjourn the item and reconvene at a future date once further information was available to the Director of Children's Services to allow for an updated report to be submitted.

The Convener advised of a variation to the order of business in line with Standing Order 14.2. The following items are recorded in the order they were considered at the meeting.

EE26. Falkirk Integration Joint Board Report

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Chief Officer, Health & Social Care Partnership which provided as appendices two reports that were considered by Falkirk Integration Joint Board at its meeting on 19 June 2020. The reports were "Remobilise, Recover, Redesign" and "Covid-19 Update Report – Care Homes".

Decision

The Emergency Executive noted the report.

The Emergency Executive adjourned at 1pm and reconvened at 1.45pm with all members present as per the sederunt.

EE27. Connected Falkirk

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which sought approval of the re-profiling of the capital investment required for Connected Falkirk. Since the approval of year-one funding, negotiations with suppliers through the Scottish Government procurement framework resulted in quotations being offered to the Council.

The negotiations identified an issue in the wi-fi hardware in schools which was now at "end of life", meaning that support could no longer be provided by the manufacturer. This had impacted the profile of the original capital spend on the project. To support Connected Falkirk fully over the 8-year planned project, a new foundation of Cloud-managed wi-fi provision needed to be procured. Whilst that would increase spend in the initial phase of the project, the total cost of ownership over the lifetime of the project would be less. This, along with the recovery plan action to accelerate elements of Connected Falkirk in light of COVID-19 to deliver on the blended learning model now required for schools, had resulted in a requirement to re-profile the full capital award.

Decision

The Emergency Executive:-

- (1) approved the re-profiling of the capital investment in order to accelerate the roll-out of Connected Falkirk, and**
- (2) noted that a future capital submission would be made for further investment required beyond year four of the Connected Falkirk project to ensure longer term sustainability.**

EE28. Falkirk Council Recovery

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Chief Executive which provided an overview of the Council's approach to recovery planning. Services had prepared recovery plans to resume service delivery as appropriate. The plans needed to be considered in the context of the vision and priorities to ensure that: there was alignment with priorities to ensure best use of resources, and that recovery actions reflected the learning from transformational operational practices adopted during lockdown.

The recovery plans were based on the Business Impact Assessment used as part of the Business Continuity Planning. A summary of the recovery plans was provided as an appendix to the report.

At its meeting on 11 June, the Emergency Executive agreed that the Council's recovery planning would form part of the Council's Five-Year Business Plan to link in with the approach to financial planning through the Medium Term Financial Plan, Workforce Plan, Council of the Future Change

Programme and Corporate Plan Actions. The approach was founded in the Council's current strategic plan framework.

Overarching all of this would be the Vision Framework that would provide a direction of travel for recovery planning and set a framework for the Five-Year Business Plan and Corporate Plan, both of which would be reported in September. They would also inform the new Falkirk Plan with Community Planning Partners which would be reported later in 2020/21. Crucially, the approach would help manage the recovery of the Council against the financial backcloth of constrained resources that would require clear decisions to be made on resource allocation.

Decision

The Emergency Executive:-

- (1) endorsed the Council's approach to recovery planning, and**
- (2) noted that updates would be reported at future meetings.**

EE29. Falkirk Community Trust Recovery

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Chief Executive which set out the Trust's approach to recovery planning. The recovery plan was provided as an appendix to the report.

In Phase 2, play areas at the Helix, Callendar Park and Muiravonside would open. The financial viability of opening the Plaza café and Callendar Park Kiosk was being looked at. The toilets would remain closed in line with Government Guidelines. In Phase 3 it was proposed that the majority of facilities could reopen, although there was some uncertainty over the range of provision that was covered by the reference to Gyms, which appeared to cover sports and leisure provision. Given the requirement for social distancing limitations, the focus would be on a health and fitness offer in the first instance with the likelihood of access for athletics training.

It was proposed that prior to opening any facility, a financial modelling exercise was undertaken to assess the likely costs of opening, to ensure compliance with Government guidelines, understand the customer capacity achievable, projected income and the resulting net deficit so that an understanding of the overall position could be agreed and approved as needed.

The following facilities had been selected for re-opening when in Phase 3 of the Government's route map:-

- Callendar House (excluding the Tea Room)
- Libraries (modified service)
- Helix Visitor Centre and Plaza café

- Grangemouth Stadium
- Mariner Leisure Centre's Health & Fitness facility
- Stenhousemuir Gym

However, the opening times for all of these facilities would be reduced to accommodate an ability to provide appropriate levels of staffing to minimise any health and safety risks for customers. Additional operational arrangements would be introduced involving booking systems, customer flow layouts and ancillary facilities.

A significant issue was the loss of income reflecting the reduction in fees and charges for services that were not provided during the lockdown. This included leisure services which may bear a potential loss of customer income of £3.2m for the year. This was a particularly significant risk for the Trust.

Falkirk Community Trust had applied through the UK Government's Job Retention Scheme with c£1.1m claimed for employees furloughed during March, April and May. The Job Retention Scheme was aimed at maintaining the current workforce by placing employees on furlough and then applying for a grant that covered 80% of employees' usual monthly wage costs. The first application had been successful.

Decision

The Emergency Executive:-

- (1) endorsed the proposed approach to reopening culture and sport facilities and services as outlined in appendix1 to the report, and**
- (2) noted the information on the financial implications and that further reports would be presented should any decision be required on funding for the Trust.**

The meeting was then adjourned with the remaining item of business, Children's Services – Local Phased Education Delivery Plan (COVID-19 Recovery), continued to a re-convened meeting to be held at a date to be fixed after the meeting.