

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Minute of meeting of the EMERGENCY EXECUTIVE held remotely on Thursday
17 September 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: Douglas Duff, Acting Director of Development Services
Jack Frawley, Team Leader - Committee Services
Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive
Colin Moodie, Chief Governance Officer
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services
Stuart Ritchie, Director of Corporate and 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.

EE55. Apologies

There were no apologies.

EE56. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

EE57. Minute

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Emergency Executive held on 3 September 2020 was approved.

EE58. Referral from Audit Committee - Corporate Risk Management Update

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which presented the Corporate Risk Register for approval. At its meeting of 24 August 2020 the Audit Committee agreed to refer the Corporate Risk Management Update to the Emergency Executive.

Decision

The Emergency Executive approved the Corporate Risk Register.

Councillor Nicol joined the meeting during the following item.

EE59. Economic Recovery Plan Update

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Acting Director of Development Services which presented information on the economic impact of the Covid-19 situation and the outcome of a consultation. The report sought agreement on the finalised version of the economic recovery plan.

The draft economic recovery plan had been the subject of consultation and the finalised version of the plan was presented for approval. The plan addressed a number of the factors contained in the economic impact report. It included measures proposed under the main headings:-

- Targeting national level support for recovery
- Developing local partnerships for recovery
- Skills & employment support
- Communities, housing and infrastructure
- Business support
- Town centre action plan update
- Tourism action plan
- Communication

Actions would be progressed over the next 2 years and periodic updates would be provided on progress made.

Business Loans Scotland (BLS) was a consortium of Scotland's Local Authorities, set up to manage loan funds for new and growing small & medium sized businesses across Scotland. Since 2014 the loan scheme match funding was financed by the consortium of Scotland's Local Authorities of which Falkirk Council was one. BLS legal arrangements had recently been amended to allow withdrawal of the local authority committed funds. The Council had a BLS balance of £232,132 and it was recommended that this be withdrawn to support the business support measures identified in the economic recovery plan including a new Covid-19 business restart loan and grant scheme.

Decision

The Emergency Executive:-

- (1) noted the report on the economic impact and outcome of consultation on the Covid-19 situation (Appendix 1), and**
- (2) agreed the finalised version of the Covid-19 economic recovery plan 2020-22 (Appendix 2).**
- (3) agreed that an approach be made to Business Loans Scotland, requesting the withdrawal of £232,132 of funds to support the emergency business support measures noted in the recovery plan with details of these being brought forward to Members for approval, and**
- (4) agreed that the requirement for additional resources to support delivery of the plan be determined by the Council in its consideration of its capital and revenue budget reports at the meeting on 30 September.**

EE60. Procurement Strategy 2020-2023

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided an update on a number of Procurement related matters including the Annual Procurement Report for 2019/20 and sought approval of the Procurement Strategy for 2020 -2023.

The 2019/20 performance showed continuous year on year improvements, across a range of measures. It was expected that this performance would further consolidate the Council's above average performance, when compared to national data.

The Council's Procurement Strategy provided a framework to ensure that procurement activities supported all services to meet national and Council priorities, as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. There were five key procurement areas within the new Procurement Strategy:-

1. Compliance and governance.
2. Value for money and efficiency.
3. Delivery of sustainable procurement.
4. Embracing innovation.
5. Supplier engagement and contract management.

Since the start of the Covid pandemic, the Procurement and Commissioning Unit (PCU) had worked to support services; businesses and providers to sustain critical and essential service provision to communities. Procurement would also play a key role as part of the Council's Economic Recovery Plan going forward. In particular, through the development and expansion of existing engagement channels with local businesses e.g. Falkirk Economic Partnership and Business Gateway.

Decision

The Emergency Executive approved the 2020-2023 Procurement Strategy as contained in appendix 2 to the report.

EE61. Strategic Property Review – Draft Implementation Plan

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Acting Director of Development Services which provided an update on Strategic Property Review (SPR) and recommended further actions to finalise the Implementation Plan together with progressing projects and proposals to meet the Council's objectives as established through Council of the Future (CotF).

It was felt that the options for assets in the Learning and Community Estate required additional consideration and engagement with the community. Feedback from workshops highlighted the importance of a 'one Council' approach to engagement and on the development of options and opportunities brought from implementation of the Community Empowerment Act e.g. participatory budgeting, should be included in the considerations. To address this a key action for the implementation plan was that a new corporate Task Group was established with the objective of aligning key CotF projects to the use of property.

Capital investment would be required to deliver key projects and it was important that any alterations or improvement to the school estate also reflected the SPR ambition to improve community access. A progress report for this would be brought to a future meeting of the Education, Children and Young People's Executive.

A Community Choices (participatory budgeting) initiative would help build relationships with communities, enabling them to consider how money should be spent in their area. Council agreed to allocate £3m to capital projects over the next two years through Community Choices and it would be important to align this work with the proposals arising from the SPR.

The draft implementation plan also set out, at a locality level, a series of actions and implications for associated properties. Timescales for action would be defined through the process of consultation. The purpose of these actions was to develop options for consideration and subsequent development of detailed business cases.

The primary purpose of the office workstream was to review office and related functions, reduce front facing offices and increase colocation of services. This included development of the Locality Hubs and the potential to replace the HQ and create an Arts Centre in the town centre to assist regeneration. The approach to office space was being reviewed to reflect lessons learned and changes as a result of Covid 19. A report on progression of the Council HQ and arts centre project would be considered by Council in September.

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

- (1) the draft Implementation Plan as the basis for further community engagement, subject to amendment to the category of Kinneil House, and in doing so move Kinneil Museum from CAT in work stream 1 to Workstream 2 and have Kinneil House and Museum under transformation;
- (2) the creation of a Task Group as set out in para 5.4 of the report to integrate and align proposals for the Council of the Future Learning and Community Estate with the Enabled Communities project;
- (3) to receive further reports on:-
 - (i) the implementation of measures arising from the work of the Task Group and its workstreams including community engagement, and
 - (ii) proposals for a corporate landlord approach to property asset management
- (4) that a final draft of the Property Strategy and Implementation Plan was brought to a future meeting of the Executive.

As an amendment, Councillor Bissett, seconded by Councillor Nimmo, moved the terms of the motion subject to an alteration to clause 4 to read:-

- (4) that a final draft of the Property Strategy and Implementation Plan was brought to a future meeting of the Council.

Councillor Alexander, with the consent of his seconder Councillor Meiklejohn, altered the motion to incorporate the terms of the amendment. The amendment accordingly fell.

Decision

The Emergency Executive agreed:-

- (1) the draft Implementation Plan as the basis for further community engagement, subject to amendment to the category of Kinneil House, and in doing so move Kinneil Museum from CAT in Workstream 1 to Workstream 2 and have Kinneil House and Museum under transformation;**
- (2) the creation of a Task Group as set out in para 5.4 of the report to integrate and align proposals for the Council of the Future Learning and Community Estate with the Enabled Communities project;**
- (3) to receive further reports on:-**
 - (i) the implementation of measures arising from the work of the Task Group and its workstreams including community engagement, and**
 - (ii) proposals for a corporate landlord approach to property asset management**
- (4) that a final draft of the Property Strategy and Implementation Plan was brought to a future meeting of the Council.**

EE62. Tax Incremental Finance Initiative

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Acting Director of Development Services which provided an update on Falkirk Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) initiative including proposed revisions to the delivery timescale and budget for the infrastructure programme.

The TIF project was a major initiative for the Council and was being pursued to assist in the economic transformation of the area. Given the complexity of the infrastructure projects being undertaken, delivery timescales had been affected by third party land ownership and funding requirements, ground conditions, utility issues and finalising detailed designs. As a consequence, the process for delivery of TIF projects had taken longer than was initially programmed. The adjusted timescales now required an extension to the 11 year infrastructure programme as established in the legal agreement between the Council and Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government had indicated its willingness to accept a one year extension to the TIF to mitigate the effects of the implementation of the Barclay report on repayment of non-domestic rates. It had also agreed that capital works could proceed to the present cap of £67m. It was therefore suggested that the Council should proceed with delivery of the proposed works at the M9 Corridor and continue its discussions on the request to

increase the TIF budget from £67m to £95.7m to meet the increased project costs.

Decision

The Emergency Executive agreed:-

- (1) the revised implementation schedule for TIF projects as outlined in Appendix 1 including the proposed extension to the infrastructure programme period to meet adjusted delivery timescales;**
- (2) to extend the payback period for the Falkirk TIF from 25 years to 26 years to reflect the change in Scottish Government Non Domestic Rates policy;**
- (3) to progress the works relating to the M9 Corridor, including the upgrade of the A904 and Westfield roundabout at a cost of £62.55m, funded from the Falkirk TIF capital budget, and**
- (4) to progress further discussions with Scottish Government/Scottish Futures Trust on the requirement for an increased capital expenditure budget of £95.7m from within the TIF budget meeting the cost of contributions to the A801 and Grangemouth flood protection projects.**

EE63. Digital Falkirk

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which presented the Digital Falkirk strategic plan for the Council and provided information on the resources which would be required to deliver on the ambitions set out in the document.

The previous Digital Strategy was approved by the Executive in May 2019. Since then, significant work had been undertaken to fully capture Council wide ambitions for digital. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic had demonstrated the vital importance of digital technology in maintaining and improving service delivery. The refreshed Digital Falkirk strategic plan set out in more detail digital priorities and specific ambitions that would allow delivery of flexible, responsive, and accessible services to communities.

During lockdown, the crucial importance of digital services had been highlighted. Many services had moved to an online delivery model through necessity, and a significant proportion of employees had been digitally enabled to maintain service delivery by working from home. Prior to the school summer holidays, c.3,200 employees self-reported as working from home. The plan built on the momentum that had gathered and lessons that had been learned to define a vision of what Digital Falkirk would look like in a post pandemic world. A series of capital bids would be submitted in the

Capital Programme report for consideration by Council on 30 September 2020.

Decision

The Emergency Executive:-

- (1) agreed the Digital Falkirk strategic plan set out in appendix one to the report;**
- (2) noted the importance of Digital Falkirk to deliver on Council priorities, and**
- (3) noted that implementation of the Digital Falkirk plan required significant capital investment in digital infrastructure as detailed in section 6.1 of the report, and that this would be presented as part of the Capital Programme submitted to Council on 30 September.**

EE64. Anytime Anywhere Employees Returning to Work: Update

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided an update on the work being done to support the return of employees to their workplace. The report also focused on the longer term office working arrangements to support the Strategic Property Review.

National guidance enabled some workplaces to open subject to safety requirements being met. Some examples were outside spaces, construction sites and schools. Working from home continued as the default throughout all phases of the Scottish Government's recovery roadmap and was encouraged in phase 4.

Prior to the full opening of an office building, a range of building checks must be completed. The Facilities team were managing statutory building checks, and premises managers for each building were also required to undertake a range of other checks. Opening public facing buildings had been prioritised over offices. Consideration had also been given to the Strategic Property Review, with buildings highlighted as 'under review' being delayed to enable others to be assessed in the first instance.

Increased working from home supported the ambitions of the Council's Anytime Anywhere project. The Scottish Government's route map suggested that homeworking would remain in place in Phase 4. Therefore it was important to properly support employees working in this way. Consideration had been given to the equipment employees required to support an effective and safe home working environment. A specification for the appropriate equipment had been developed and employees asked to indicate their individual needs to ensure an effective and safe home workplace.

Decision

The Emergency Executive noted:-

- (1) the work being done to support employees returning to the workplace in line with national guidance, and**
- (2) the future plans for working arrangements for desk based employees who are able to work from home.**

The Emergency Executive adjourned at 1.25pm and reconvened at 1.40pm with all members present as per the sederunt.

EE65. Roads Maintenance Capital Programme 2020-21

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Acting Director of Development Services presented information on what additional investment in roads would achieve. The report provided information on the roads structural maintenance capital works programme for financial year 2020-21.

The Council's budget allocated £3.871m for the structural maintenance of roads in 2020/21. This sum was to be used to improve carriageways, footways and street furniture assets. In addition, Council allocated a further £7.0m for structural maintenance of the carriageway asset. The additional capital funding was being invested in line with the Council's asset management approach which targeted funding toward roads with the highest traffic volumes and greatest need.

Inclement weather could impact upon the Service's ability to deliver the programme of works, as certain operations could only be undertaken in good weather. Resources were redirected as necessary towards tackling severe weather events and their aftermath, as had been experienced in recent weeks. The first 3 months of the financial year had been lost due to Covid restrictions on construction works. Losing those 3 good weather months would likely impact on the ability to spend the full allocation by 31 March 2021, and it was anticipated that some works would require to carry over to 2021/22.

Decision

The Emergency Executive:-

- (1) noted the programme of works for carriageways and footways for 2020-21 identified in appendix 1 to the report, and**
- (2) noted the current level of spend, future commitment and potential carry forward to 2021-22 identified in section 4.1 of the report, and**

considered this in the context of the Capital Programme Report being presented to Council on 30 September.

EE66. Falkirk Community Trust Recovery Plan Update

The Emergency Executive considered a report by the Chief Executive which provided an update on the work of Falkirk Community Trust (the Trust) on recovery planning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and, in particular, the approach to reopening all of the culture and sport facilities managed by the Trust.

The Trust had provided a Recovery Plan Update which was provided as an appendix to the report. Some successful openings had already taken place and work was ongoing to open a number of the facilities covered by the initial reopening plan. Government guidelines allowed for most aspects of culture and sport provision to be available for use by communities. As such, a proposed programme of work to open all remaining Trust operated sites and facilities. Indicative dates were provided but subject to completion of all necessary building checks by the Council.

Decision

The Emergency Executive:-

- (1) endorsed the proposed approach to the reopening of all culture and sport facilities and services managed by the Trust as soon as practicable and as outlined in the update report;**
- (2) noted the further information provided by the Trust in the update report and that further reports will be presented should any decision be required on funding for the Trust, and**
- (3) noted that a letter had been received from the Trust asking for confirmation that the deficit funding would be available and agrees that this should be considered by Council at its meeting on 30 September in the context of the wider Revenue Budget.**