

**A9. Falkirk Council Annual Accounts 2019/20 and Falkirk Temperance Trust Accounts 2019/20**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate & Housing Services presenting the unaudited annual accounts of the Council and Falkirk Temperance Trust for the financial year ended 31 March 2020 for consideration. These had, in accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, been submitted to the auditor by the deadline of 30 June 2019 and published online for inspection.

The committee considered the Annual Accounts, members welcomed the new layout and format, praising in particular the management commentary and annual governance statement as being particularly helpful.

Stephen Reid explained that the external audit team would report on the accounts in September 2019 as part of the audit process.

Following a question on the statistic provided in the management commentary that 23% of children in Falkirk were estimated to live in poverty, the Chief Executive stated that addressing food poverty was a priority for the Council and gave an overview of the work undertaken early in the lockdown to provide food to those who were in need.

The Chief Executive also, following a question in regard to the employment profile of Council employees, said that while the Council followed the required recruitment practises, the Council recognised the need to ensure that school leavers were 'employable' and summarised the range of work with local employers, the college and other stakeholders to best equip young people for employment.

Following a question in regard to teachers pay the Head of Planning and Resources confirmed that the increase between 2018/19 and 2019/20 in the higher brackets of teachers' salaries was due to pay awards.

The Chief Finance Officer undertook to provide a breakdown on the costs of promoting the town centres by town centre.

The convener asked whether the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances could result in the use of reserves to help balance the budgets and therefore reduce the Council's reserves beyond levels set out in the Reserves Strategy.

The Chief Finance Officer stated that the application of reserves was a matter of judgement underpinned by principles of prudence and financial sustainability. The Council would undoubtedly face strong budgetary pressures as a result of reduced government (UK and Scottish Government) funding and the temptation to use reserves should be considered in light of the desire for prudence and the need for financial sustainability.

The Chief Finance Officer, following a question, undertook to investigate the membership criteria to become a Trustee of the Falkirk Temperance Trust.

## **Decision**

**The Committee noted the Unaudited Annual Accounts, noted the public inspection period and that the Unaudited Annual Accounts had been submitted to the Council's External Auditor by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2020.**