

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 wavy lines representing 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 3**

### **Minute**

Draft

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Minute of meeting of the EXECUTIVE held remotely on Tuesday 17 November 2020 at 10.00 a.m.**

**Councillors:** David Alexander  
Robert Bissett  
Gary Bouse  
Joan Coombes  
Paul Garner  
Nigel Harris  
Gordon Hughes  
James Kerr  
Cecil Meiklejohn (Convener)  
Lynn Munro  
Alan Nimmo  
Pat Reid

**Officers:** Karen Algie, Head of People, Technology & Transformation  
Karen Chambers, Committee Services Officer  
Douglas Duff, Acting Director of Development Services  
Kenny Gillespie, Head of Housing & Communities  
Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive  
Colin Moodie, Chief Governance Officer  
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services  
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager  
Bryan Smail, Chief Finance Officer

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

**EX8. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**EX9. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **EX10. Minute**

Minute of Meeting of the Executive held on 13 October 2020.

##### **Decision**

**The minute of the meeting of the Executive held on 13 October 2020 was approved.**

#### **EX11. Rolling Action Log**

A rolling action log detailing decisions not yet implemented following the previous meeting on 13 October 2020 was provided. Items 524 – Advice and Support Hubs, and 533 – CCTV/Digital Alarms Hub – Update, appeared as items on the agenda for the meeting and consequently fell from the action log.

##### **Decision**

**The Executive noted the rolling action log.**

#### **EX12. Economic Recovery Plan 20/21 Action Plan – Update Report**

The Executive considered a report by the Acting Director of Development Services which provided an update in relation to proposed support for the area's economy during 20/21 as part of delivery of the Council's three year Covid-19 Economic Recovery Plan.

The following economic recovery measures, identified in the agreed recovery plan were proposed to be delivered; for the remaining financial year utilising:-

- additional £300k revenue allocation for 2020-21;
- return of funds from Business Loans Scotland, and
- the additional allocation of £711k from the Town Centres Fund.

Information was provided on the support for preparation of Heads of Terms for the Investment Zone with the Scottish and UK Governments.

In terms of employment support there would be work in partnership with the Falkirk Local Employability Partnership to support the delivery of both Scottish and UK unemployment initiatives, provide PACE support to assist growing numbers facing unemployment and develop further employer recruitment incentives to support job creation initiatives with local employers. The Employment Training Unit would appoint two additional Employment and Training Co-ordinators to support an additional 80 participants annually.

There was additional revenue for Falkirk Towns Ltd to support business resilience, community well-being and environmental improvement activities to contribute to the strength, vitality and performance of town centres. There would be promotion of a Gift Card to lock in local spend. Identified expenditure during 20/2021 would target Falkirk and other district centres:-

- Recruitment of 2 assistant town centre managers and a handyman - £35k
- Town Centre Maintenance Fund – to ensure recent town centre capital investment was fully maintained to ensure attractiveness of town centre environment - £35k
- Town Centre Trader Digital Business Support Grant - £15k

It was proposed that a new short term parking tariff of £0.50 for the first 30 minutes was introduced at all short term town centre parking locations (both on and off street) where an anticipated reduction of car parking income to the Council would be monitored and supported through the additional recovery support revenue.

Financial support for business was funded from the reallocation of the Council's £232k balance held in the Business Loans Scotland fund. There was also an opportunity to extend these funds by seeking match funding to secure additional ERDF income for Falkirk of £140k. The proposal was to create a Falkirk Council 'Coronavirus Business Support Fund', with a package of interest free loans and grants to provide immediate help to businesses affected by the pandemic.

The town centre fund additional capital allocation would support costs associated with Bo'ness library accessibility conversion works; acquisition of vacant longstanding town centre properties and match funding to support expansion of the e-bike network.

## **Decision**

**The Executive agreed the allocation of funds for economic recovery purposes as set out in section 4 of the report.**

### **EX13. Corporate Plan and Business Plan Performance Indicators**

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which set out performance indicators in relation to the key priorities of the Council's Corporate and Business Plans. The new corporate priorities were:-

- Communities: Everyone had an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and build sustainable communities;
- Enterprise: Help businesses to thrive and make Falkirk more prosperous, and

- Innovation: Be an innovative & entrepreneurial Council that was forward-thinking and unafraid of change.

It was essential to monitor the progress made as a Council against the priorities. This would be done in several interrelated ways including discussions and feedback from communities. The Executive would receive reports on financial management, Council of the Future progress and a range of operational developments within Services which linked to the priorities. Transformational developments would be monitored by the Council of the Future Board with updates provided to the Executive. Reports to Scrutiny Committee on actions to deliver on the priorities would also continue to be submitted.

Reports to the Scrutiny Committee would track performance against a range of indicators which linked to the priorities. A suite of suggested indicators for each of our priorities was set out in an appendix to the report, the Executive was asked to approve these.

The indicators would continue to be developed and enhanced as required, to ensure capture of the most important information to enable monitoring against the priorities. In particular there would be development of local customer satisfaction indicators. These would be included in future reports to as they were developed, and information was collected.

### **Decision**

**The Executive agreed the performance indicators set out in appendix 1 to the report for use in monitoring those areas of performance which were aligned to the Council's agreed priorities.**

## **EX14. Local Housing Strategy 2017/2022 Annual Review**

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided information on progress with the actions detailed in the Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022 (LHS). The update presented information for year 2 (2018/19) and sought approval to submit the LHS update to Scottish Government.

This report highlighted that despite the challenges of the Covid pandemic progress continued to be made toward achieving the objectives set out in the strategy and the Service would continue to review and adapt as necessary. LHS actions and further updates would continue to be provided annually. The update report for submission to the Scottish Government was provided as an appendix to the report.

The LHS contained six priorities, which were:-

- Priority 1 - The supply of housing is increased
- Priority 2 - Creating sustainable communities

- Priority 3 - Improve access to housing
- Priority 4 - Housing and Support for Vulnerable Groups
- Priority 5 - Sustainable housing: fuel poverty and climate change
- Priority 6 - Improving housing conditions.

Information was provided on the status of actions in the second review:-

- Ongoing 26
- Complete 9
- Revised 7
- Delayed 1

## **Decision**

### **The Executive:-**

- (1) noted the progress in delivering the Local Housing Strategy 2017 – 2022, and**
- (2) approved the Local Housing Strategy Update (appendix 1 to the report) for submission to the Scottish Government.**

## **EX15. Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2021/22 – 2025/26**

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided information on the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2021/22 to 2025/26 and sought approval for submission to the Scottish Government.

The SHIP set out strategic investment priorities for affordable housing over a 5-year period to achieve the targets specified in the Local Housing Strategy (LHS). The target was 491 units per year, including 368 private and 123 affordable homes.

During 2019/20 two Council new build projects were completed at Harvey Gardens in Grangemouth and Phase 1 of Blinkbonny Road in Falkirk to provide an additional 23 properties. The reconfiguration of flats at Garry Place was also completed to provide 9 supported accommodation units for young people leaving care. The Council bought back 80 properties and Paragon Housing Association bought back 5 properties.

The SHIP adapted each year as projects were removed and new projects were added. The Covid pandemic had delayed projects by an average of 6 months. The Council's new build projects within the SHIP could deliver 1,027 additional properties consisting of 627 Council new build and reconfiguration of properties along with 400 Council buy backs. The programme included some larger strategic sites, as well as continuing to develop some smaller infill development sites to meet specific housing needs.

Due to the current challenges within the construction industry and the overall impact of the coronavirus pandemic focus was on both new build and alternative approaches to meeting targets. This included extending the buyback scheme, maximising current housing stock and the re-design and configuration of current housing stock.

Since the introduction of the buyback scheme in 2013/14, property prices had increased. In the year 2020/21 the average cost of a buyback property was £80,253. This compares to an average cost of £56,935 when buybacks were introduced in 2013/14. The criteria applied was that former Council properties could be purchased where they were advertised for sale with an up to date Home Report and at a price no higher than the District Valuer recommended price point. However, housing market data showed there were fewer large properties advertised for sale and that former Council properties generally sold for between 5-10% above the Home Report value and that the properties sold very quickly.

To improve the Council's ability to purchase, it was proposed that in specific circumstances, properties may be purchased at a cost of up to 10% over the Home Report value and/or DV price point whichever was higher. The specific circumstances were:-

- Houses of four or more bedrooms;
- Property types which had been adapted or had the potential to be adapted for a disabled person. The specific property types would be ground floor flats, bungalows or houses which had the potential to have a bedroom, shower and or bath and toilet on the ground floor;
- Such properties would also be identified as meeting identified housing need and be in high demand for let.

## **Decision**

### **The Executive:-**

- (1) agreed the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) - 2021/22 to 2025/26 (appendix 1 to the report) for submission to the Scottish Government;**
- (2) agreed the changes to the Buy Backs process as set out in section 3.13 of the report, and**
- (3) noted that the SHIP would be adapted in line with available resources in order to maximise the supply of affordable housing locally and that updates would be provided to the Executive on any changes.**

## **EX16. CCTV - Mobile Cameras**

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provide an update in relation to mobile CCTV cameras. The Executive had agreed at its meeting on 13 October 2020 to request a report to the next meeting setting out the number of units that would be required in Falkirk, whether and to what extent the funding agreed by Council already would allow for mobile units to be procured and setting out any alternative sources of funding.

The next step for the CCTV project was the development and procurement of the final specification for the CCTV monitoring and management system. The work was in progress and was expected to be in place by the end of the financial year. As it was important that any new cameras were compatible with the new system it would not be prudent to purchase any cameras until the new system was selected and the technical detail known.

The following additional activities were taking place throughout October/November:-

- An audit of all existing cameras to assess each camera's state of repair, current connectivity and potential for upgrading to digital for integration with the new system.
- A review of the suitability/appropriateness of current camera location in order to identify which cameras were no longer required in their current location due to other/duplicate provision.
- Identification of areas/locations where there was no camera provision and cameras were to be added.
- Discussions with Housing Services and the Police to identify anti-social behaviour hot-spot areas where mobile cameras might be utilised.

Until the new monitoring and management system was selected and the activities listed above complete it was not known how many mobile units would be required, the specification of these units and the budget required. Indications were that the cost of upgrading/replacing the existing cameras may be less than £632k and any remaining budget could be allocated to the purchase of mobile cameras. Discussions would also take place with relevant partners when budget implications to deliver the required mobile cameras were known.

### **Decision**

**The Executive agreed to request that a further report be submitted in early 2021 setting out the approach to mobile cameras and any funding streams required beyond the current capital programme allocations.**



## **EX17. Assets Surplus to Operational Requirements – Council HQ & Arts Centre Project**

The Executive considered a report by the Acting Director of Development Services which sought approval to declare several properties, being replaced in the council headquarters & arts centre (HQ & AC) project, as surplus to operational requirements. It was proposed that arrangements for the phased rundown of the properties commenced following agreement.

It was anticipated that there would be no continuing operational requirement to retain the following properties once the replacement facilities were available:-

- Sealock House
- Denny Town House
- Falkirk Burgh Buildings
- Abbotsford House
- Kilns House
- Rossvail

The disposal would generate capital receipts and revenue savings which in the case of Sealock House, Abbotsford House and Rossvail would support the HQ & AC Business Case, as part of the Council's General Services Capital Programme. The other three properties were Common Good and their receipts would be transferred into the respective Falkirk & Denny Common Good Accounts.

The HQ & AC project would deliver three new and refurbished office premises to replace the existing back office and HQ accommodation. The rundown of existing office buildings was aligned to the fit out and occupation of the new premises.

It was intended to commence a phased programme of marketing for the sites. For disposals of a value higher than that delegated to officers (up to a maximum value of £350k) and for the Common Good properties, reports would be supplied to Executive for final approval.

### **Decision**

**The Executive agreed to:-**

**(1) declare the following properties as surplus to operational requirements:-**

- (i) Sealock House, Grangemouth**
- (ii) Denny Town House**
- (iii) Kilns House, Falkirk**
- (iv) Falkirk Burgh Buildings**
- (v) Abbotsford House, Bainsford**
- (vi) Rossvail, Camelon, and**

- (2) authorise the Acting Director of Development Services to progress a programme of phased rundown and disposal of the properties to align with the occupation of the facilities being provided as part of the Council headquarters and arts centre project at Block 4 Central Park Larbert, Falkirk Community Stadium and the new build facility.**

#### **EX18. Central Advice and Support Hub – Update and Interim Solution**

The Executive considered a joint report by the Acting Director of Development Services and the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which presented an option for the Central Hub interim replacement and asked that further work be undertaken.

The service provision would include:-

- digital and telephone assistance (continuation of existing service)
- an 'appointment base' to control face to face appointments in a safe/designed location
- a smaller face to face 'just present' facility, no longer be taking cash payments
- increased outreach at the places the most vulnerable people used e.g. community centres, foodbanks, Salvation Army, High Flats, Forth Valley College, supermarkets, etc. (expanding the existing model).

The Council had not occupied Callendar Square since the start of the COVID-19 lockdown in March, but continued to pay the rent and ongoing property costs as per the lease arrangement. The lease was previously extended for 2 years, until July 2021, to allow the Council to reach a decision on the Interim Hub solution and to carry out any fit out works to any interim premises. Within the current lease, it was important that the Council made its position clear to the landlord, giving 6 months' notice of its intention to terminate

By adopting the revised approach to Hub services outlined above the Council could establish an interim solution until the new HQ & Arts Centre was constructed and became operational. The interim facility would be required until circa 2024. The Council already had two properties within the Town Centre – Falkirk Library and the Burgh Buildings. The interim Hub arrangements proposed were only likely to be required for a period of 3-4 years and therefore the minimum necessary adaptations would take place at both buildings to ensure value for money, while ensuring they functioned safely for staff and customers.

The Executive adjourned at 12.30 p.m. to allow members of the Conservative group to consider their position in regard to the recommendations, and reconvened at 12.40 p.m. with all members present.

## **Decision**

### **The Executive agreed:-**

- (1) the termination of the leases at Callendar Square, One Stop Shop, with immediate effect, and**
- (2) that an interim solution to front facing services for the Council's Central Hub proceeds by utilising space at the Burgh Buildings, Falkirk and accommodation at Falkirk library, supplemented by outreach services as outlined in section 4 of the report.**

## **EX19. Treasury Management - Interim Review 2020/21**

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided a summary of the factors affecting treasury management along with a position statement on the Council's treasury management activities at the half year point.

The report set out information on:-

- the economic and interest rate outlook;
- the borrowing strategy;
- the investment strategy;
- the prudential indicators;
- the treasury management advisers;
- member training, and
- benchmarking.

There remained a significant amount of uncertainty in the economy and that impacted on prevailing interest rates. In terms of borrowing, the short term interest rates continued to remain low relative to the long term PWLB rates. For investments, it was highly unlikely that significant yields would be achieved and as always, security of funds remained the driving principal.

Given the borrowing requirement the Council required to remain vigilant to the factors affecting the movement in rates and work closely with the treasury advisers to ensure that any borrowing was undertaken at the most advantageous rate possible.

## **Decision**

### **The Executive:-**

- (1) noted the progress of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21, and**
- (2) noted the reduction in the long term borrowing requirement for 2020/21,**

- (3) agreed the increase in the limits for investments with counterparties as set out in section 4.3.7 of the report, and**
- (4) agreed to refer the report to Council for consideration.**