

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of meeting of Falkirk Council held remotely on Wednesday 1 March 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

<u>Councillors:</u>	David Aitchison	Stacey Devine	Alan Nimmo
	Margaret Anslow	Jim Flynn	Siobhan Paterson
	Depute Provost David Balfour	Gordon Forrest	Sarah Patrick
	Lorna Binnie	Paul Garner	Jack Redmond
	Provost Robert Bissett	Anne Hannah	Ann Ritchie
	Gary Bouse	Alf Kelly	Jim Robertson
	William Buchanan	James Kerr	Iain Sinclair
	James Bundy	Brian McCabe	Robert Spears
	Fiona Collie	Cecil Meiklejohn	Euan Stainbank
	Bryan Deakin	Laura Murtagh	

Officers: Karen Algie, Director of Transformation, Communities and Corporate Services
Malcolm Bennie, Director of Place Services
Danny Cairney, Senior Service Manager, Corporate Finance
Paul Ferguson, Revenue and Benefits Manager
Jack Frawley, Team Leader - Committee Services
Douglas Gardiner, Head of Environment & Operations
Kenny Gillespie, Head of Housing & Communities
Paul Kettrick, Head of Invest Falkirk
Steven Kirkwood, Chief Finance Officer, Health & Social Care Partnership
Sara Lacey, Head of Social Work Children's Services
Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive
Alison Lindsay, Accountancy Services Manager
Gemma McArthur, Committee Officer
Jacquie McArthur, Economic Development Officer
Colin Moodie, Chief Governance Officer
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager
Amanda Templeman, Chief Finance Officer
Martin Thom, Head of Integration
Gail Woodcock, Head of Integration

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

FC64. Sederunt

The sederunt was taken by way of a roll call. An apology was intimated on behalf of Councillor Brown.

FC65. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

FC66. Revenue Budget 2023/24 and Financial Strategy

Council considered a report from the Chief Executive and the Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services which set out officer views of the Council's budget gap for 2023/24. The options to close that gap and balance the budget were listed in the report. Information included:-

- Service Savings
- Fees and Charges
- Council Tax
- Reserves
- Service Concessions

The Administration had considered the options and had proposed a balanced budget for 2023/24. This was set out in appendix 1 to the report.

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

- (1) agrees a balanced budget for financial year 2023/24 and in doing so rejects the proposal to cease funding for school based police officers;

	£'m
2023/24 Financial Gap	25.9
Add back 3% assumed Council Tax Increase (including growth)	2.8
2023/24 Gap	28.7
Service Savings	(7.9)
Council Tax Increase 7%	(5.5)
Use of Service Concessions	(15.3)
Remaining Gap	-

- (2) agrees a Council Tax rise of 7%;
- (3) agrees to apply reserves for all the purposes and at the values suggested at para 5.13.6 with the exception of the application for Reduced Borrowing Costs;
- (4) agrees to use £3.4m of Covid reserves;

- (5) agrees to the use of Service Concession Arrangements noting that the decision on the prepayment element will be taken in financial year 2023/24 and to the application of Service Concession Arrangements in the sum of £15.3m;
- (6) agrees a payment of £91.4m to the Integration Joint Board but subject to the position on the pay award funding not being a recurring decision beyond 2023/24 without further decision of the Council on consideration of future business cases;
- (7) agrees not to progress with Town Twinning Signage;
- (8) instructs Chief Officers to deliver services within their budget allocation and authorise them to take such actions as may be required within Council policy to implement the service delivery proposals;
- (9) notes the workforce implications and the actions taken to ensure changes can be implemented through voluntary methods as far as possible; and
- (10) notes that Financial Strategy will be updated and presented to Members in September 2022.

Councillor Kerr gave notice of an amendment which was the terms of the motion subject to the following adjustment to clause (3):-

- (3) agrees to apply reserves for all the purposes and at the values suggested at para 5.13.6 of the report with the exception of the application for Reduced Borrowing Costs and in reference to the Regeneration Fund:-
 - (a) asks officers to prioritise the delivery of the report into the future of the Royal Hotel, Slamannan, with officers giving options and recommendations on the future of the building, and
 - (b) asks officers to provide a report into new signs on Falkirk High Street that direct people to the Battle of Falkirk 1298 Monument, understanding that 2023 is the 725th anniversary of this battle;

and allocates £0.500m to fund works to allow 20mph zones to be introduced;

Council adjourned at 10.45am and reconvened at 11.30am with all members present as per the sederunt.

Councillor Meiklejohn, with the consent of the Provost and Councillor Garner, as her seconder, adjusted the terms of the motion to incorporate the amendment notified by Councillor Kerr.

Council adjourned at 12.45pm and reconvened at 1.45pm with all members present as per the sederunt.

The Provost noted that there was not general agreement on the motion. In terms of Standing Order 20.11 the motion would be put to the vote. 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 (16) – Depute Provost Balfour and Councillors Binnie, Bouse, Bundy, Collie, Deakin, Devine, Flynn, Forrest, Garner, Kerr, Meiklejohn, Murtagh, Patrick, Robertson and Sinclair.

Against the motion (12) – Provost Bissett and Councillors Aitchison, Anslow, Buchanan, Hannah, Kelly, McCabe, Nimmo, Paterson, Redmond, Spears and Stainbank.

Abstentions (1) – Councillor Ritchie.

Decision

Council:-

- (1) **agreed a balanced budget for financial year 2023/24 and in doing so rejected the proposal to cease funding for school based police officers;**

	£'m
2023/24 Financial Gap	25.9
Add back 3% assumed Council Tax Increase (including growth)	2.8
2023/24 Gap	28.7
Service Savings	(7.9)
Council Tax Increase 7%	(5.5)
Use of Service Concessions	(15.3)
Remaining Gap	-

- (2) **agreed a Council Tax rise of 7%;**
- (3) **agreed to apply reserves for all the purposes and at the values suggested at para 5.13.6 of the report with the exception of the application for Reduced Borrowing Costs and in reference to the Regeneration Fund:-**
- (a) **asked officers to prioritise the delivery of the report into the future of the Royal Hotel, Slamannan, with officers giving options and recommendations on the future of the building, and**

- (b) asked officers to provide a report into new signs on Falkirk High Street that direct people to the Battle of Falkirk 1298 Monument, understanding that 2023 was the 725th anniversary of this battle;**

and allocates £0.500m to fund works to allow 20mph zones to be introduced;

- (4) agreed to use £3.4m of Covid reserves;**
- (5) agreed to the use of Service Concession Arrangements noting that the decision on the prepayment element will be taken in financial year 2023/24 and to the application of Service Concession Arrangements in the sum of £15.3m;**
- (6) agreed a payment of £91.4m to the Integration Joint Board but subject to the position on the pay award funding not being a recurring decision beyond 2023/24 without further decision of the Council on consideration of future business cases;**
- (7) agreed not to progress with Town Twinning Signage;**
- (8) instructed Chief Officers to deliver services within their budget allocation and authorise them to take such actions as may be required within Council policy to implement the service delivery proposals;**
- (9) noted the workforce implications and the actions taken to ensure changes can be implemented through voluntary methods as far as possible,**
- (10) noted that Financial Strategy would be updated and presented to Members in September 2022.**

FC67. Capital Strategy 2023/24 – 2027/28

Council considered a report from the Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services which provided details of the Council's Capital Strategy for 2023 – 2028. The CIPFA Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code required a Capital Strategy. This provided a framework for the preparation, implementation, and monitoring of the Capital Programmes.

The Capital Strategy considered the balance between demands and resources. The Strategy was clear that the cost of the Council's investment ambition was higher than the resources available. The constraints on both capital and revenue meant that improvements must be made to how investment was targeted. Borrowing was a finite resource and must be targeted towards the delivery of Council priorities.

The Strategy includes horizon scanning for investment demands and potential future resource streams. The Council must do all it could to work in partnership and secure funding, where that funding could help to deliver on Council priorities. 5.4 The Capital Strategy for 2023 to 2028 included the impact of the Housing Investment Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28, which was approved by Council on 23 February 2023. It also reflected the draft General Fund Services Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28.

Decision

Council approved the Capital Strategy for 2023 – 2028.

FC68. Five Year General Fund Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28

Council considered a report from the Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services and the Director of Place Services which set out a draft capital investment plan for Falkirk Council for the next five years. The capital investment plan contained investment of £180.8m from 2023/24 to 2027/28. The draft General Fund Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28 was provided as an appendix to the report.

The report included information on:-

- Resources
- Capital Grant
- Capital Receipts
- Other Funding
- Council Tax
- Prudential Borrowing
- Proposed Investment
- Prudential Indicators.

Decision

Council:-

- (1) approved the General Fund Services Capital Programme as presented in appendix 1 to the report;**
- (2) approved proposals detailed in section 5.4 of the report to re-allocate a total of £3.727m across Champany Junction, Denny Eastern Access Road (DEAR) and Corporate ICT projects;**
- (3) agreed that the Council should remain committed to the development of intermediate care provision, working in partnership with the HSCP;**

- (4) noted the Critical Capital Bid – Digital Investment in Schools in Section 5.4 of the report which was currently under review; and
- (5) noted the Prudential Indicators in appendix 2 to the report.

FC69. Exclusion of Public

Council was resolved in terms of section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude from the meeting the press and public for any part of discussion on the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 8 of Part 1 of schedule 7 to that Act.

Council adjourned at 3.30pm and reconvened at 3.45pm with all members present as per the sederunt with the exception of Councillor McCabe.

FC70. Irrecoverable Debts 2022/23

Council considered a report from the Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services which sought approval for debts in excess of £5,000, which were unlikely to be recoverable, to be written out of the accounts in 2022/23.

Decision

Council approved, subject to further recovery action being taken should the opportunity arise, that the following debts in excess of £5,000 be written out of the accounts in 2022/23:-

- (1) Council Tax debts totalling £51,504.42 as detailed in appendix A to the report;
- (2) rent debts totalling £115,837.53 as detailed in appendix B to the report;
- (3) Housing Benefit Overpayments (HBO) debts totalling £27,356.34 as detailed in appendix C to the report;
- (4) Non-Domestic Rates debts totalling £610,426.84 as detailed in appendix D to the report, with an appropriate adjustment to the Contributable return, to Scottish Government, for 2022/23;
- (5) Sundry Account debts totalling £136,767.07 (inclusive of any VAT) as detailed in appendix E to the report, and
- (6) Temporary Accommodation charges totalling £30,273.24 as detailed in appendix F to the report.