

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of SPECIAL MEETING of FALKIRK COUNCIL held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on WEDNESDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2012 at 10.00AM.

PRESENT: Provost Reid; Depute Provost Black; Councillors Alexander, Blackwood, Buchanan, Carleschi, Coleman, Fry, Goldie, Gow, Hughes, Jackson, Kenna, Lemetti (Items FC86 to FC89), A MacDonald (Item FC86 to FC88), C MacDonald, Mahoney, C Martin, C R Martin, McLuckie, McNally, McNeill, Meiklejohn, Nicol, Nimmo, Oliver, Ritchie, Spears, Thomson, Turner and Waddell.

CONVENER: Provost Reid.

APOLOGY: Councillor Patrick.

ATTENDING: Chief Executive; Directors of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services, of Development Services, of Education Services, and of Social Work Services; Chief Finance Officer; Depute Chief Finance Officer (Corporate Finance); Chief Governance Officer; Depute Chief Governance Officer; Heads of Economic Development and Environmental Services, of Housing, of Human Resources and Customer First, and of Policy, Technology and Improvement; Building Design Manager (R Millar); Accountancy Service Managers (D Cairney and B Heron); Legal Services Manager (I Henderson) and Democratic Services Manager.

ALSO

ATTENDING: Chief Executive, Falkirk Community Trust.

**DECLARATIONS
OF INTEREST:**

Provost Reid and Councillors Gow, Nicol, Mahoney and Waddell declared non financial interests in items FC 87 and 88 as Directors of the Falkirk Community Trust, but did not consider that this required them to recuse themselves from consideration of the items having had regard to the objective test in the Code of Conduct and the relevant specific exemption contained in the Code.

FC86. MINUTE

There was submitted (tabled) and **NOTED** Minute of Special Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 February 2012.

FC87. FALKIRK COMMUNITY TRUST – BUSINESS PLAN

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 February 2012 (Paragraph PR87 refers) there was submitted joint Report (circulated) dated 1 February by the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer (a) presenting the Falkirk Community Trust Business Plan for 2012/13; (b) detailing the Trust's proposed Revenue budget and Capital programme for 2012/13, and (c) recommending that Council approves a service payment of £11.970m to the Trust.

AGREED to approve:-

- (1) the Falkirk Community Trust Business Plan for 2012/13;
- (2) a Service payment of £11.970 m to Falkirk Community Trust for 2012/13, and
- (3) the capital expenditure proposals for 2012/13 as detailed in the 2012/13 Plan.

Councillor Gow entered the meeting during consideration of the foregoing item of business.

FC88. REVENUE BUDGET 2012/13 – 2014/15

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 February 2012 (Paragraph PR87 refers) there was submitted Joint Report (circulated) dated 1 February 2012 by the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer providing a draft revenue budget for 2012/13 to 2014/15.

Councillor C Martin, seconded by Councillor Mahoney, moved that Council:-

- “(1) accepts the draft budget for 2012/13 as set out in the report;
- (2) levies a council tax for 2012/13 as follows:
- a council tax to be paid in respect of a chargeable dwelling in council tax valuation band D of £1,070 representing a nil increase;
 - a council tax to be paid in respect of a chargeable dwelling in each of the other council tax valuation bands in accordance with section 74(1) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as set out in paragraph 8.2 of the report)
- (3) instructs Chief Officers to deliver services within the specific budget allocation for each Service and authorises them to take such actions as may be required to give effect to the service delivery proposals outlined in parts 5 and 6 of the report, and
- (4) notes the progress in respect of the current negotiations with Trade Unions and agrees to set aside £230K to allow officers to continue negotiations within the confines of the original package, as outlined in section 5.3 of the report, including an extension to the period of no compulsory redundancies until 31 March 2013.”

By way of an Amendment, Councillor Alexander, seconded by Councillor Coleman, moved the alterations to the draft revenue budget:-

- (1) “increase the starting point in income terms before charging for Social Works Services commences to benefit rate plus 30% buffer thus assisting the lowest income groups and individuals most
Cost £200,000
 - (2) village and other centres of population below District Centre status such as Bainsford, Bonnybridge, Camelon, Charlotte Dundas Centre and Slamannan require regeneration. The proposal is to pump prime this process with additional resources to Economic Development.
Cost £150,000
 - (3) additional spend on the Parks Strategy
Cost £160,000
 - (4) Blackness Flood Defences – to tackle the outstanding Western Terrace flood defences
Cost £100,000
 - (5) Sports Initiatives for Young People – to bring forward schemes that make it easier for young people to participate in sport activities
Cost £150,000
 - (6) Develop partnerships with the voluntary sector for the development of Social Enterprises
Cost £75,000
 - (7) Maintain the SRPS grant at its 2011/12 level
Cost £5,000
 - (8) Restore free school meals to the pupils of Carrongrange who do not have the option of going home for lunch
Cost £20,000
 - (9) A feasibility study into a joint venture with NHS Forth Valley on the development of a shared health/social work campus in Bonnybridge in light of the closure of Bonnybridge hospital
Cost £20,000
- Total Spend £880,000**

The foregoing to be funded from additional income as follows :-

- (1) set target for Council Tax collection at 2010/11 performance levels
Income Generated £300,000
 - (2) over the last five years the average difference between the end of year financial predications and the end of the year actual position is plus £2,133.000. Allocate a modest 25% rounded down slightly, of this figure to projections
Income Generated £580,000
- Total Income £880,000**

In addition the sum of £230k is to be allocated for the implementation of the living wage with effect from 1 April 2012 with funding coming from reserves on the understanding that the Trade Unions will have agreed to replace the current car allowance scheme with the HMRC Scheme thereby saving £270k”.

Council then adjourned for 80 minutes to allow members to consider the terms of the Motion and Amendment. Council reconvened at 1pm with all members present as per the sederunt.

Councillor Martin, with the consent of the Provost, and of Councillor Mahoney, as his seconder, adjusted the terms of his Motion to incorporate the following items from the Amendment (with the additional costs to be met from Reserves):-

- additional spend on Parks strategy - £160,000
- sports initiatives for young people – to bring forward schemes that make it easier for young people to participate in sports activities - £150,000
- restore free school meals to the pupils of Carrongrange School - £20,000, with the additional instruction that officers consider extending the provision to other specialist units and report back with equality and poverty impact assessments

Council then adjourned for lunch for 45 minutes and reconvened at 2.00pm with all members present as per the sederunt with the exception of Councillor Fry.

Councillor Spears gave notice of a further Amendment.

Following discussion, and in terms of Standing Order 2.4 (1), a vote was taken, there being 30 members present with voting (Councillor A MacDonald having then left the meeting) as undernoted:-

For the adjusted Motion (17) – Provost Reid; Depute Provost Black; Councillors Blackwood, Buchanan, Fry, Goldie, Gow, Lemetti, C MacDonald, Mahoney, C Martin, CR Martin, McLuckie, McNeill, Nicol, Nimmo and Waddell.

For the Amendment (13) – Councillors Alexander, Carleschi, Coleman, Hughes, Jackson, Kenna, McNally, Meiklejohn, Oliver, Ritchie, Spears, Thomson and Turner.

Accordingly, **AGREED** to:-

- (1) accept the Draft Budget 2012/13 as set out in the report and appendices, subject to the following additions to be funded from reserves:-

- additional spend on the parks strategy (£160,000)
- sports initiatives for young people (£150,00)
- restore free school meals to the pupils of Carrongrange (£20,000),

- (2) levy a Council Tax for 2012/13 as follows:-

- (i) a Council Tax to be paid in respect of a chargeable dwelling in Council Tax Valuation Band D of £1,070, representing a nil increase;
- (ii) a Council Tax to be paid in respect of a chargeable dwelling in each of the other Council Tax Valuations Bands in accordance with Section 74 (1) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as set out in paragraph 8.2 of the Report)

- (3) instruct Chief Officers to deliver Services within the specific budget allocation for each Service and authorise them to take such actions as may be required to give effect to the service delivery proposals outlined in parts 5 and 6 of the report;
- (4) note the progress in respect of the current negotiations with Trade Unions and to set aside £230K to allow officers to continue negotiations within the confines of the original package, as outlined in section 5.3 of the report, including an extension to the period of no compulsory redundancies until 31 March 2013, and
- (5) ask Officers to prepare a report, including an equalities and poverty impact assessment, on the provision of free school meals at each of the Council's specialist units.

In terms of Standing Order 19.6 the Motion became the substantive Motion upon which the further Amendment could be moved.

Councillor Spears, seconded by Councillor Nicol, moved the terms of the substantive Motion but with the allocation of:-

- £50,000 per annum, to be met from reserves in 2012/13, for the formation of a veterans office to be situated in a central location in Falkirk, accessible to veterans.

(Councillor C Martin then gave notice of a further Amendment.)

Following discussion, and in terms of Standing Order 2.4 (1), a vote was taken, there being 30 members present with voting as undernoted:-

For the Motion (16) – Provost Reid; Depute Provost Black; Councillors Blackwood, Buchanan, Fry, Goldie, Gow, Lemetti, C MacDonald, Mahoney, C Martin, CR Martin, McLuckie, McNeill, Nimmo and Waddell.

For the Amendment (14) – Councillors Alexander, Carleschi, Coleman, Hughes, Jackson, Kenna, McNally, Meiklejohn, Nicol, Oliver, Ritchie, Spears, Thomson and Turner.

Accordingly, **AGREED** the terms of the substantive Motion.

By way of further Amendment, Councillor C Martin, seconded by Councillor Gow, moved the terms of the substantive Motion, subject to the inclusion of the following:-

“Council agrees with the Veterans Champion that £50k be allocated to the budget from reserves to improve service to local veterans and therefore instructs Officers to discuss with the various ex-servicemen's organisations to ensure that the money is spent in the best interest of the veterans.

Council instructs Officers to report back to the relevant Committee.”

The further amendment was approved by Council without a vote.

Accordingly, **AGREED**, to:-

- (1) approve the Draft Budget 2012/13 as set out in the report and appendices, subject to the following additions to be funded from reserves:-
 - additional spend on the parks strategy (£160,000)
 - sports initiatives for young people (£150,000)
 - restore free school meals to the pupils of Carrongrange (£20,000)
 - Veterans Support (£50,000)
- (2) set a Council Tax for 2012/13 as follows:-
 - (i) a Council Tax to be paid in respect of a chargeable dwelling in Council Tax Valuation Band D of £1,070, representing a nil increase;
 - (ii) a Council Tax to be paid in respect of a chargeable dwelling in each of the other Council Tax Valuations Bands in accordance with Section 74 (1) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as set out in paragraph 8.2 above)
- (3) instruct Chief Officers to deliver Services within the specific budget allocation for each Service and authorise them to take such actions as may be required to give effect to the service delivery proposals outlined in parts 5 and 6 of the report;
- (4) notes the progress in respect of the current negotiations with Trade Unions and agrees to set aside £230K to allow officers to continue negotiations within the confines of the original package, as outlined in section 5.3 of the Report, including an extension to the period of no compulsory redundancies until 31 March 2013;
- (5) ask Officers to prepare a full report, including equalities and poverty impact assessments, on the provision of free school meals at each of the Council's specialist units, and
- (6) ask officers to discuss with the various ex-servicemen's organisations to ensure that the £50k included in the budget for veterans support, is spent in the best interests of the veterans and to report to the outcome to the relevant Committee.

FC89. THREE YEAR GENERAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012/13 – 2014/15

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 February 2012 (Paragraph PR87 refers), there was submitted Report (circulated) dated 26 January 2012 by the Chief Finance Officer setting out the proposed capital investment plans of Falkirk Council for the next three financial years 2012/13 to 2014/15.

AGREED to approve the General Services Capital Programme and the Prudential Indicators as detailed in Appendix 2 to the Report.

Councillor Lemetti left the meeting during consideration of the foregoing item of business.

FC90. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT & COUNCIL HOUSE RENTS 2012/13 – 2014/15

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 February 2012 (Paragraph PR87 refers), there was submitted joint Report (circulated) dated 1 February 2012 by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services and the Chief Finance Officer (a) presenting a draft Housing Revenue Account for the financial year 2012/13; (b) making recommendations on the level of council house and garage rents for 2012/13, and (c) proposing indicative rent levels for the years 2013/14 and 2014/15.

AGREED to approve the Draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2012/13, and the following:-

- (1) no rent increase to be applied from 1 April 2012. The average fortnightly charge, based on the 24 fortnightly periods with no rent being charged during the fortnightly periods commencing 25 June 2012 and 23 December 2012, would therefore remain at £115.76;
- (2) utilisation of c£2.6m from the Housing Revenue Account reserves;
- (3) lock-up garage rentals to remain at an average of £5.33 per week;
- (4) garage site rentals to remain at £75 per annum;
- (5) Castings Hostel rentals remain at £137.69 per room per week (excluding fuel charges);
- (6) homeless property rentals remain at an average of £159.62 per week, and

NOTED the indicative budgets and rent increases for 2013/14 and 2014/15 as representing the best information available at this time.

FC91. HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2012/13 – 2014/15

With reference to Minute of Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 February 2012 (Paragraph PR87 refers), there was submitted Report (circulated) dated 25 January 2012 by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services setting out the 3 year forward planning assumptions for the HRA Investment Programme for the years 2012/13 to 2014/15.

AGREED the expenditure proposals outlined in the 2012/13 to 2014/15 Housing Investment programme as set out in Appendix 1 to the Report.