

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2013 at 9.30 AM.

COUNCILLORS:

Allyson Black
Charles MacDonald
John McLuckie
Baillie Joan Paterson
Provost Pat Reid (Convener)

OFFICERS:

John Angell, Head of Planning and Transportation
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement
Douglas Duff, Head of Economic and Environmental Services
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer
Alan Rodger, Planning and Environment Manager

ALSO ATTENDING:

Joe Andrews, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Jim Cattanach, Divisional Business Assurance Officer, Police Scotland
David Flynn, Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland
Alistair Mitchell, Town Centre Manager
Martin Togneri, Board Member, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Alan Waddell, Chief Inspector, Police Scotland

S29. APOLOGY

An apology was intimated by Baillie Buchanan.

S30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Black declared a non financial interest in item S35 (3) as a Director of Falkirk Town Centre Management Ltd and indicated that she would take no part in the discussion or decision making on this item of business.

Councillor McLuckie declared a non financial interest in item S35 (2) as a Director of Falkirk Environment Trust and indicated that he would take no part in the discussion or decision making on this item of business.

S31. MINUTE

Decision

The minute of the meeting held on 10 October 2013 was approved.

S32. ORDER OF BUSINESS

In terms of Standing Order 4 (i), the convener varied the order of business from that set out on the agenda for the meeting. The following items have been recorded in the order that they were taken at the meeting.

S33. POLICE SCOTLAND - FALKIRK AREA COMMAND - PERFORMANCE REPORT

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting the local performance report by the Local Commander, Police Scotland.

Local Commanders were required, in terms of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, to report performance of the local policing as measured against the Local Policing Plan and to provide information about complaints against the police or in regard to policing.

Chief Superintendent Flynn gave a presentation on the detail of the report together with information on Police Scotland's review of its public counter provision and its current consultation on withdrawing its traffic warden services. He also highlighted actions undertaken as a consequence of comments at the previous meeting on 8 August 2013.

In regard to local performance, the committee sought further detail on the recorded increase in scrap metal thefts, the decrease in violent behaviour and in particular whether the introduction of taxi wardens had contributed this reduction.

The committee discussed the recent announcement by Police Scotland that it intended to close a number of local police offices and rationalise its public counter provision. Although no stations in Falkirk were affected, members questioned the rationale behind the decision and sought further information on the consultations undertaken by Police Scotland, on its proposal.

In response to a question as to whether community officers would continue to attend all community council meetings, Chief Superintendent Flynn, reaffirmed his commitment to community policing and stated that the Forth Valley approach had community policing at its heart. The establishment for the command area had now been agreed by Police Scotland and the deployment of resources, therein was his responsibility.

The committee then discussed the role of the police during the INEOS dispute at Grangemouth and sought clarification on how local priorities would be balanced against national directions.

The committee also discussed the influence of alcohol on unlawful behaviour and the relationship between the police service and the Licensing Board, highlighting the value of the local 'safe base' initiative.

Decision

The committee noted the report.

S34. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE – FALKIRK & WEST LOTHIAN COMMAND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting three reports by the Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service;- (1) Realignment of the Falkirk Area Fire related Quarterly Reporting Cycle; (2) Scottish Fire and Rescue Services Strategic Intent (Properties and Infrastructure), and (3) Joint inspections of Licensed Premises within the Falkirk Council area.

Joe Andrews provided a summary of each report and with Mr Togneri answered questions by the committee.

(1) Re-alignment of the Falkirk Area Fire Related Quarterly Reporting cycle.

The committee had previously agreed a reporting schedule for fire performance reports. However it was now proposed that, in order to allow the submission of verified data, the reporting cycle be altered. It was also proposed that police performance reports would be submitted according to the revised schedule (which had yet to be developed).

Decision

The committee agreed to alter the reporting schedule for fire and police performance reporting and instructed officers to develop an appropriate timetable for 2014.

(2) Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Intent (Properties and Infrastructure)

Details were given of a review by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service of its properties and infrastructure which was intended to allow the service to rationalise its property assets across Scotland. The main proposals of the review were summarised including the establishment of a national headquarters within the boundaries of the Glasgow – Perth – Edinburgh triangle, four strategically located asset resource centres, three service delivery centres and three control rooms.

The implications of the review for the Falkirk area were set out with emphasis on the closure of the former headquarters at Maddiston at the transfer of the administration functions, stores and workshops and control room from this site.

The committee sought detail on the proposals in regard to Maddiston - in particular on the likely timescales, implications for staff and the local economy. Mr Andrews confirmed that staff would be relocated or redeployed and restated that the SFRS was committed to a compulsory redundancy policy.

In regard to the site of SFRS headquarters members questioned whether the Falkirk area had been proposed and asserted that the area was neglected in terms of the national infrastructure. Mr Togneri confirmed that the Falkirk area could be considered and that he would take the committee's comments to the Fire Authority.

The committee, having been advised that the review did include at frontline service delivery, sought confirmation that, in light of the need for the service to meet its financial challenges, frontline services would not be reviewed. Mr Togneri confirmed that any review would be several years away. He also confirmed that, at this time, there were no plans to replace whole time staff with retained staff.

Decision

The committee noted the report.

(3) Joint Inspections of licensed premises within the Falkirk Council area

Details were given of the Fire Service's responsibility to audit compliance by licensed premises holders of their legislative duties. Currently premises are audited after any incidents. Thematic inspections may also be undertaken by the Service, either following trend analysis, notification of non compliance with legislative duties or as part of seasonal campaigns.

The committee discussed the participation of the former Central Scotland Fire and Rescue Service in joint inspections with the Licensing Board as part of the licensing function and questioned the rationale for withdrawing this involvement upon reform.

Decision

The committee requested a report on the inspection of local licensed premises.

S35. FOLLOWING THE PUBLIC POUND (FPP): PROGRESS REPORT

The Council had previously agreed that the scrutiny of those organisations which received full or part funding be undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee.

The committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services presenting individual reports on 3 organisations which receive support from Development Services list. Each report set out the service provided, the agreed outcomes/objectives, performance information and a breakdown of the organisation's funding streams.

In terms of the Following the Public Found Framework a monitoring officer had been appointed by the funding service to each of the external organisations.

John Angell and Alan Rodger (Central Scotland Forest Trust and Falkirk Environment Trust) and Douglas Duff and Peter Reid (Falkirk Town Centre Management Trust Ltd) gave an overview of the role of the organisations, their funding arrangements together with performance and risks. Members also heard a presentation by Alistair Mitchell on the role of Falkirk Town Centre Management Ltd highlighting current challenges and recent initiatives.

(1) Central Scotland Forest Trust

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged the progress made in meeting Council objectives.

In accordance with his declaration of interest Councillor McLuckie left the meeting at this point.

(2) Falkirk Environment Trust

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged the progress made in meeting Council objectives.

Councillor McLuckie rejoined the meeting following consideration of the previous item.

In accordance with her declaration of interest Councillor Black left the meeting at this point.

(3) Falkirk Town Centre Management Ltd

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged the progress made in meeting Council objectives.

Councillor Black rejoined the meeting following consideration of the previous item.

S36. PERFORMANCE PANEL

The committee considered a report by the Chief Governance Officer setting out meeting arrangements for the Performance Panel to January 2015.

The committee had previously agreed to establish a standing performance panel on service performance. The panel would comprise a core of 5 members with meetings open to all members of the Council. Depute Provost Patrick, Baillie Paterson and Councillor Black had been appointed and 2 places remained unfilled. A meeting timetable and reporting schedule was presented for approval.

Decision

The committee agreed the timetable of meetings and reporting schedule for the Performance Panel and that the panel would appoint its convener.

S37. SCRUTINY PLAN - UPDATE

The committee considered a report by the Chief Governance Officer seeking inviting the committee to agree the topic of the next scrutiny panel.

The committee had recommended to Council 3 topics for scrutiny – the appointment of elected members to extend organisations and the process for reporting to Council's the adequacy of consultation with the public and community engagement more generally and a third 'slot' to be determined by the committee. Council had approved these as suitable for scrutiny and committee was now invited to select the order in which they would be undertaken and to appoint members to the first panel.

Decision

The committee agreed:-

- (1) to establish a scrutiny panel, with members to be confirmed to the Chief Governance Officer following the meeting, to scrutinise the appointment of elected members to external organisations and process for reporting the Council and;**
- (2) that the next topic for scrutiny would be the adequacy of consultation with the public and community engagement more generally, following by a third slot to be agreed by committee, with preference given to a subject suggested by members of the opposition (if these members participate in the scrutiny process).**