

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the PERFORMANCE PANEL held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER 2015 at 9.30 AM.

CORE MEMBERS: Stephen Bird
Cecil Meiklejohn (Convener)
Rosie Murray
Baillie Joan Paterson
Depute Provost John Patrick

MEMBERS
ATTENDING: Jim Blackwood
Brian McCabe
Alan Nimmo
Provost Pat Reid

OFFICERS: Alex Black, Quality Improvement Manager
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy and ICT Improvement
Deirdre Cilliers, Head of Social Work Adult Services
Alex Finlay, Business Development Manager
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer
Philip Morgan-Klein, Service Manager
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services
Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive
Stuart Ritchie, Director of Corporate and Housing Services

PP6. MINUTE

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Performance Panel held on 21 May 2015 was approved.

PP7. SERVICE PERFORMANCE PLANS 2015 - 18

(i) Report by the Chief Executive

The panel considered a report by the Chief Executive setting out the Council's planning framework, the structure of the Service Performance Plans and highlighting the key challenges each service needed to address. Following the publication of the Best Value Audit the report also highlighted some areas where performance management arrangements would be developed. Appended to the report were the service performance plans for each service which covered the period September 2015 to March 2018. Mary Pitcaithly provided an overview of the report.

Members welcomed the comprehensive information provided, but raised some concern at the limited time available to fully consider and reflect on performance plans.

Decision

The panel noted the report.

(ii) Corporate and Housing Services – Service Performance Plan 2015 – 2018.

The panel considered the Service Performance Plan for Corporate and Housing Services for 2015 - 2018. Stuart Ritchie provided an overview of the performance plan.

The panel asked how many new builds had been completed since May 2012 and how many properties had been brought back into Council ownership through buy backs. Stuart Ritchie advised that he would provide the new build information after the meeting and that around 70 properties a year were brought into Council ownership through buy backs.

Members asked if in the process of integration to create the new Corporate and Housing Services there had been any duplication of service identified. Stuart Ritchie stated that the terms used to describe teams were a legacy from the previous service structure but that the work of each team was not duplicated by another.

The panel discussed the development of mobile flexible working and the Council's approach provision of IT services. Stuart Ritchie stated that an IT Governance board comprising officers developed the service's capital programme bids. In the previous year £1.8 million had been allocated from the capital programme fund to mobile and flexible working solutions to make necessary improvements to infrastructure. Mary Pitcaithly advised that there were other external influences on IT provision and highlighted the case of a replacement social work services IT system. In that case a system was required which would be compatible with NHS Forth Valley, Stirling Council and Clackmannanshire Council, particularly following the implementation of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. Members then asked if there were plans for the Falkirk Community Trust to develop an online booking system. Fiona Campbell stated that regular meetings were held with the Trust and that IT support was provided to the Trust from the Council. Further, capital programme funding had been allocated to the Trust previously.

Members sought an update on the pathways of the Council's modern apprentices and if they were entering employment after being an apprentice. Stuart Ritchie advised that the detailed information was held by the Employment Training Unit and that information could be provided after the meeting. Mary Pitcaithly stated that in the past nearly all modern apprentices who wanted to stay with the Council were able to be retained and that the Council still worked to assist all modern apprentices into further employment going forward. Rhona Geisler stated that at any one time there were approximately 500 trainees with the Council. She advised that the Council's STAR project would help to create more opportunities for young people as the Council's administration and support staff were being integrated and no new permanent positions would be recruited to.

The panel asked if the Covalent system was used corporately for performance management. Stuart Ritchie stated that Covalent was used on a corporate basis but that it was only one of the Council's performance management tools. He stated that it was also important that the views of Councillors and customers were utilised as that was the quickest method of getting feedback to take learning from.

Members discussed that in uncertain times for the public sector it would be challenging to inspire staff and asked how this would be done. Stuart Ritchie stated that it was important to communicate praise better and to recognise the hard work of staff. It was also important in talking up success to share that with all parts of the service so that different areas could take learning from each other. Further, there would be engagement with staff to ask for their views on improvement. Mary Pitcaithly stated that staff understood the pressures facing the Council but were committed and enthusiastic. Further, she advised that workload pressures would continue to be monitored.

The panel sought further information on best practice sharing across the service. Stuart Ritchie advised that staff were keen to know what their colleagues were doing and wanted to hear about others good practice. People from different staff groups were brought together to discuss practice, this was helpful in both areas of good work and less good work as issues were often not unique and staff could learn from how others had dealt with certain situations. Mary Pitcaithly stated that the strategic leadership team had a responsibility to ensure that good practice was shared. She highlighted the Celebrating Success Awards were appreciated by staff.

Members asked about the financial pressures facing the service and about the role of the third sector in service provision. Stuart Ritchie stated that a lot of funding was provided to the third sector, approximately £5 million. He advised that the future direction of partnership working and levels of funding would be determined by Councillors through the budget process. The service had made third sector organisations aware that reviewing funding to external organisations was part of the budget process and therefore any changes to funding levels would be notified with as much time as possible.

The panel asked about the anticipated increase to the number of properties for rent within the Council area over the period of the plan. Stuart Ritchie advised that around 70 properties a year would be added to the rental stock through buy back. He highlighted that there were constraints in the area of available land and so new builds were most often done in small pockets of 10 to 12 properties. He advised that he would provide more detailed information after the meeting.

Members asked for further information on a timescale regarding Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) for mobile and flexible working. Fiona Campbell stated that mobile and flexible working would allow employees to engage with customers in locations and at times which suited them and then staff could communicate back to central offices. She advised that the service was looking at the specification of the tender for telephones, which would be 'follow me', mobile phones and that voice over the internet was to not be desk bound. She stated that the tender would be compiled in this calendar year.

The panel inquired if work was being carried out to encourage development of community councils where there was not one currently active. Mary Pitcaithly stated that the Council try to encourage community council participation but that there had been a lack of success in some areas. Prior to the next set of community council elections the issue would be looked at to identify if there were ways to promote the role of community councils and encourage participation.

Following a question on local CCTV provision, Stuart Ritchie advised that Enigma monitored the CCTV service and were based at Falkirk Police Station.

The panel discussed sickness absence levels and target setting as the sickness absence for craft employees in the service was over 2% higher than the target. Stuart Ritchie stated that the absence level had been too high and that the target had been ambitious. The service was looking closely at how to improve performance on absence, in particular there was a focus on staff who work outwith an office environment. Members commented that targets need to be achievable and set at particular levels for clear reasons. Stuart Ritchie advised that the figures from the previous two years had showed that the target should be achievable. Mary Pitcaithly advised that targets were being reviewed with Councillors and that improvement groups were focussing on this as well.

Members asked about the process of implementing and reviewing the Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment process across the Council. Stuart Ritchie stated that the work undertaken would be touched on in the budget briefings and would be reported to Councillors in due course.

The panel asked if shadowing was encouraged in the service as a part of staff development. Stuart Ritchie stated that shadowing was not actively promoted but that as part of a package of development it could be a useful tool, used in proportion.

Members asked about the service's priorities for mobile and flexible working. Stuart Ritchie stated that pilots would be run. Previously the capacity to utilise technology was limited by servers and licenses being restricted but capacity would be increased by the end of October. Chief Officers and Councillors were part of the pilot of mobile working and six staff from Building Maintenance had been provided with mobile handheld devices. Following the improvements to the servers the pilot would be rolled out further.

Decision

The panel noted the Service plan.

(iii) Development Services – Service Performance Plan 2015 - 2018

The panel considered the Service Performance Plan for Development Services for 2015 - 2018. Rhona Geisler provided an overview of the performance plan.

Members asked for information on employment opportunities to disabled people. Rhona Geisler advised that there were changes to the EU directive in the definition of supported businesses to, “businesses whose main aim is to socially and

professionally integrate disabled or disadvantaged people". The threshold of workers who must meet that description is being reduced from 50 % to at least 30 % and the scope is broadened beyond disabled people.

The panel commented on the quality of the waste collection service and asked if the level of complaints were as a result of the scale of the service. Rhona Geisler advised that this was likely to be the case and that the service would focus on how complaints of missed bins were measured.

Members requested that all services include the names of officers alongside their titles in all future Management Structure tables.

The panel asked for information on the impact of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. Rhona Geisler stated that the Act introduced the expectation that community benefit clauses would be used when appropriate. Members then asked about the requirement that public bodies comply with new duties including the publication of policies on community benefits. Rhona Geisler advised that this was already practice in Falkirk before having been required by the Act.

Members asked when the planning application for the new Council headquarters would be submitted. Rhona Geisler advised that the application would be submitted within the coming week.

The panel asked about the Development Management Customer Charter. Rhona Geisler stated that the charter would be published by the end of the year and that information had been gathered by an established format in line with a national approach. She stated that she would provide information on the process after the meeting.

Members discussed the value of performance measures which were to 'monitor and review' stating that these should be removed from the performance plan.

The panel discussed the timescales around works on Denny Town Centre. Rhona Geisler provided information on the work of phase one, which would be completed by March 2017.

Members asked about the measurement of responses to freedom of information requests. Mary Pitcaithly advised that there was a corporate approach across all services and that the Council worked to ensure compliance with statutory timescales.

The panel discussed the percentage of upheld complaints, asking if 50% was too high. Rhona Geisler stated that a lot of the complaints were in relation to waste management and the performance of a contractor in collecting small waste caddies. The service had altered the conditions of the contract to ensure improvement.

Members asked about asset management. Rhona Geisler stated that work was being done with the Community Planning Partnership on asset management projects and development of the corporate asset management plan.

The panel asked for further information on the Parks Development Plan. Rhona Geisler stated that each primary park would have a masterplan.

Members sought information on the work undertaken with job seekers with additional support needs. Rhona Geisler advised that the service worked with young people to develop pathways into employment. This was a developing strand of work and lots of useful learning had been taken from the project with Haven PTS.

The panel asked about the timescale for upgrading Falkirk crematorium. Rhona Geisler advised that the project was a phased programme. In 2016/17 the car park, building and cremators upgrades would be completed. Mary Pitcaithly stated that information on the crematorium upgrades had been included in the report to the Executive on Capital Programme Updates considered on 29 September 2015.

Members asked about work on flood prevention across the district. Rhona Geisler stated that mapping work was ongoing and that Grangemouth was the area of highest priority in Scotland.

Decision

The panel noted the Service plan.

(iv) Children's Services – Service Performance Plan 2015 - 2018

The panel considered the Service Performance Plan for Children's Services for 2015 - 2018. Robert Naylor provided an overview of the performance plan.

Members asked about monitoring and tracking arrangements in schools. Robert Naylor advised that testing was carried out in primaries one, three, five and seven and in second year of high school. This allowed the service to track the progress of a pupil and now that there was three years of data comparisons could start to be made. He stated that alongside test data the judgement of class teachers had an important role in tracking. Education Scotland had asked the Council for information on the data it held and found that 27 other councils had a similar system. This was an area of continued focus for the service, particularly on monitoring health and wellbeing indicators.

The panel asked when the looked after children and inclusion review reports would be available. Robert Naylor stated that the looked after children scrutiny panel was due to report in March 2016 and the inclusion review report would be submitted by June 2016.

Members asked about the percentage of children and young people responding that they felt safe and well looked after in school. Robert Naylor stated that he intended to change the measure. He wanted to put a new measure in place which would allow like for like comparisons to be made to track progress.

The panel asked for further information on service spending on looked after children. Robert Naylor stated that the information would be provided to the Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2015.

Members asked if the Children's Service IT system would be designed to interface with that of Social Work Adult Services for the long term. Mary Pitcaithly stated that this was something of a dilemma as the Social Work Adults Service system also needed to be able to link with that of NHS Forth Valley. She advised that NHS Forth Valley were looking at replacing their system in the next few years. Robert Naylor advised that Police Scotland were also looking at developing a new system.

The panel asked about the high level of social work staff absence. Deirdre Cilliers stated that while absence was an issue the trend was improving. The service would utilise additional resources to address the issue. Members discussed that the target level of sickness absence should be 6% in recognition of the challenge in this area.

Decision

The panel noted the Service plan.

(v) Social Work Adult Services – Service Performance Plan 2015 - 2018

The panel considered the Service Performance Plan for Social Work Adult Services for 2015 - 2018. Deirdre Cilliers provided an overview of the performance plan.

Members asked about a review of the Council's approach to charging and if Falkirk's rates were lower than others. Deirdre Cilliers stated that the service was looking at a root and branch review back to the very basic principles. She also stated that the charges in Falkirk were not high compared with national averages. This was important to ensure that the approach fit better with self directed support. She advised that training of self directed support had been rolled out and people were asked about it during their assessments. There was also a dedicated team for more complex cases. The number of service users making use of self directed support was up from 1% in the previous year to 5% in the current year. Members asked about direct payments and if those levels had increased. Deirdre Cilliers stated that the uptake was not very high and had now been subsumed into self directed support. Figures on the options of uptake would be provided after the meeting.

The panel asked about the implementation of a new IT system in social work to enable single shared assessments. Philip Morgan-Klein advised that this area was a priority for the service and that the joint management group had recognised the need to progress the implementation of a replacement system.

Members asked how the service intended to improve its reputation with the public. Deirdre Cilliers stated that there would be a review of services and that practice would be changed to get more service provided more quickly. More technology would be utilised and the service would look to build confidence in communities.

The panel discussed the information on data zones in the most deprived nationally and how this compared with other authorities. Fiona Campbell stated that data zones were very small areas of only approximately two hundred people. The Falkirk area was comprised of hundreds of data zones in total. She advised that Glasgow had significantly the most data zones in the most deprived group nationally and that Ayrshire had more than Falkirk. She highlighted the Council's Poverty Strategy aimed to address issues of deprivation locally.

Members asked about the provision of occupational therapy equipment and occupational therapy assessments. Deirdre Cilliers stated that the issue with provision of equipment was to do with a staffing issue which had had a big impact as the team was quite small. The management of this issue was being looked at and contingency plans at the front line had been put in place. In relation to assessments Deirdre Cilliers stated that a review of the eligibility criteria would help to address the issue. She also advised that the most up to date position was that the figures were 3% down on the previous year.

Decision

The panel noted the Service plan.