

## **SE15. Following the Public Pound: Falkirk Community Trust**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided an update on the performance of Falkirk Community Trust (the Trust), in line with Following the Public Pound and Council procedures. The report covered the performance of the Trust for the periods 01 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and 01 April 2016 to 30 June 2016. Fiona Campbell provided an overview of the report.

The committee asked about the approach to determining which indicators were included in the report, highlighting that information relating to Polmont ski slope was not included. Neil Brown advised that the report presented the key income generation or participation indicators. Not all sites were included as a matter of scale and proportionality.

Members discussed the role of the Trust in lifelong learning. Neil Brown stated that this was not just about education and that the Trust took a holistic view of a person's development. Activities included active schools, libraries, museums, local heritage work, and physical and mental wellbeing. The Trust's ten year strategy in this area was 'Inspiring Active Lives'.

The committee asked about the links between the Trust and Community Learning & Development (CLD). Neil Brown stated that when the Trust was established the Council took the decision not to include CLD. Both parties worked closely together but did not duplicate the work of the other. The Trust carried out activities like art clubs while CLD focussed more on local community facilities.

Members sought an update on the use of Denny Football Centre. Neil Brown stated that the facility had been in a poor state of repair two years ago. However, after storm damage to the facility the Trust replaced the old wooden floor with an indoor artificial surface which had resulted in an increase to the performance statistics. Following a question regarding future security of facilities, it was stated that the long term position in relation to any facility could not be confirmed at this time as the business plan would be submitted to the Council as part of its budget setting process.

There was discussion on the Hallglen sports centre which had seen an increase in lets. Neil Brown stated that the usage trend at Hallglen was upwards and that the previous intention for withdrawal was due to the overall condition of the asset where significant upgrades were required. This included an ongoing issue with the heating of the building.

The committee sought an update on the work undertaken by the Trust in relation to health and fitness clubs. Neil Brown stated that the Trust had invested in health and fitness centres as a method of income generation. In 2012 the Mariner centre had had its gym extended while a further £1m had been invested in the Stenhousemuir gym. In its first year the Stenhousemuir facility had gained 800 members. The intention was to continue to refresh facilities, equipment and staff skills. This was however a competitive area with a number of independent sector providers operating locally. Therefore

the Trust had looked at what its unique selling points were and these were highlighted in advertising media.

Members then discussed car parking provision at the Helix. Neil Brown stated that the Trust sought to resolve the issues with problem parking and highlighted that there was an overflow car park available at Inchyra which could be better utilised. The Helix car park had been designed for a smaller number of visitors than the levels which had been realised since opening. There had been meetings with Police Scotland and elected members to find a solution to the issue of indiscriminate parking. Falkirk Football Stadium's car park was also used by visitors to the Helix when there were no events on at the stadium. There was close liaison with Falkirk Football Stadium management to avoid clashes of events with the football club and Helix but sometimes this could not be avoided where matches are rescheduled at short notice.

The committee asked about the downward trend in relation to library usage. Neil Brown stated that this trend was seen nationally but that there was concern with the decrease in memberships. New mothers were automatically enrolled to get a library card to help children make a positive start. The Trust arranged games in the libraries and librarians conducted readings of childrens' books to encourage attendance. The Trust's Library Development Plan had been approved at the September meeting of the Executive. There had been upgrades to the wi-fi provision at libraries which gave the public the option to use their own devices onsite. The Trust also provided support to HMYO Polmont through a four day a week library service.

## **Decision**

**The committee noted the progress made by Falkirk Community Trust in meeting Council priorities.**