

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the City of Vancouver's coat of arms. The crest is a shield divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant shows a city skyline with a bridge. The top-right quadrant features a stag's head with antlers. The bottom-left quadrant depicts a sailing ship on the water. The bottom-right quadrant shows a grizzly bear standing on its hind legs. Above the shield is a crown with four maple leaves. A banner at the bottom of the shield contains the motto "CITY OF VANCOUVER" in a stylized font.

Agenda Item

4

Minutes

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Thursday 2 February 2017 at 9.30 am.

COUNCILLORS:

Stephen Bird
Allyson Black
Steven Carleschi
Cecil Meiklejohn (Convener)
Joan Paterson
Provost Pat Reid

OFFICERS:

Carl Bullough, Head of Operational Services
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology & Improvement
Jack Frawley, Committee Services Officer
Kathy McCarroll, Head of Social Work
David Mackay, Head of Education
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer
Robyn Wisbey, Headteacher, California Primary School

S27. Apologies

An apology was intimated on behalf of Councillor Chalmers.

S28. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

S29. Minutes

Decision

- (a) The minute of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 17 November 2016 was approved; and
- (b) The minute of the meeting of the Performance Panel held on 15 December 2016 was noted.

S30. Rolling Action Log

A rolling action log detailing the status of actions arising at previous meetings was provided.

Decision

The committee noted the rolling action log.

S31. Education Scotland Inspection Report and Action Plan – California Primary School and Nursery Class

The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services presenting the action plan drawn up by California Primary School in response to Education Scotland's inspection in June 2016. The Inspection Report: California Primary School and Nursery Class – Evaluations, Strengths and Points for Action, and Action Plan were appended to the report. David Mackay and Robyn Wisbey provided an overview of the report.

The committee asked about the timescale for Education Scotland's follow up visit. Robyn Wisbey stated that it should be within a year of the initial inspection and was therefore expected between June and October but was likely to be after the start of the next academic year.

Members discussed that while the action plan was detailed it would have been helpful if it had included information on anticipated outcomes. Robyn Wisbey stated that the action plan format did not include outcome information and that the school had focussed on the three identified areas from the inspection. The improvement work would aim to result in good or very good inspection grading. David Mackay stated that there was a new Service Manager - Curriculum Management in post who would add her own expectations into the plan.

The committee asked when the actions relating to the nursery and outdoor learning would be done. Robyn Wisbey stated that the actions had started already. The nursery had an Adventure Thursday, which was also in place at Shieldhill Primary School, where the children went outside for their learning. The nursery classes from California and Shieldhill occasionally met and had their outdoor learning together.

Members asked about community aspirations. Robyn Wisbey stated that raising aspirations was important. The school used Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data for tracking purposes. 90% of the school's cohort were SIMD 5 or below. There was a positive and supportive parent body around the school with an active parent council.

The committee asked about child self evaluation. Robyn Wisbey stated that this related to the difference between a child being able to state what they were doing in school and explaining why they were learning it and what it meant. Parents could assist in how they question and the parent on the Team

Around the School had a role in sharing that information more widely. Following a question on speech and language, she stated that the speech and language service had worked within the nursery to improve the early years vocabulary.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the report and action plan, and**
- (2) requested that the Director of Children's Services monitors progress towards meeting the areas for improvement.**

S32. Social Work Children & Families Budget Update

The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the social work children & families budget position. For 2016/17 the Service projected an overspend of £0.835m. The projected overspend related to increased numbers of children who required to be looked after away from home. It was not always possible to use the least expensive placements and any placement was made on the basis of a robust multi-agency assessment. The report provided information on the impact of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 which extended continuing care to 21 years old and aftercare support to 26 years old, as well as increasing responsibilities to kinship carers. A number of actions had been taken, or were planned, to manage the budget position. These included increased local provision of contract beds, foster carer recruitment drives and an integrated family support service. Kathy McCarroll provided an overview of the report.

The committee sought an update in relation to unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Kathy McCarroll stated that there were three different groups of children involved. Children affected by the closure of the Calais camp, children the Home Office were looking to place currently resident in Kent, and children trying to trace relatives already resident in the UK. Although Falkirk Council had agreed to place one unaccompanied asylum seeking child it was not possible to ring fence a placement for this purpose. The Service had received one request to take a child but at that time there had been no suitable placement available. Children from the Calais camp had successfully been placed in both Edinburgh and Glasgow. The Scottish Government was due to meet with the Home Office to discuss the meeting of costs in the voluntary transfer scheme. In Scotland placements could extend to 21 and further support to 26. The Scottish Government's advice was that Councils should not currently sign up to the voluntary transfer scheme.

There was further discussion regarding the availability of placements and recruitment of foster carers specifically for asylum seeking children. Kathy McCarroll stated that external providers tended to have difficulty responding to

'crisis placements' and preferred planned placements. In the case of the unaccompanied asylum seeking child the Service had received a phone call to make a placement the same day. The Service had started to look at recruiting specifically for this circumstance but as there was currently only one placement required for one child the action needed to be proportionate. Glasgow and Edinburgh Councils had advertised specifically for carers to take asylum seeking children and were inundated with enquiries. Locally the Service had approach faith groups to see if any of their members could assist. In terms of wider foster carer recruitment the Service was exploring the use of digital marketing which had proved successful in other areas.

Members asked if there were particular challenges to the Service relating to young people who were transitioning to adult services. David Mackay stated that there could be challenges with young people around 15 and 16 years old. There were a number of alternative programmes in schools including the aspiring learning spaces. He highlighted that referrals to the Mariner Service for behaviour issues had remained fairly steady. Kathy McCarroll advised that a lot of work had been carried out on transitions into adult services and that the protocol between children's and adult's social work was being refreshed. The Service was working to identify, by age 14, those young people who would likely need continued support in an adult setting.

The committee requested an age breakdown of the 26 young people in long-term external foster placements who the Council currently held parental rights and responsibilities for in order to see the likely future trend of spend. Kathy McCarroll stated that this would be provided after the meeting.

Decision

The committee noted the:-

- (1) progress to date in reducing the Social Work Children & Families overspend, and**
- (2) development of a 3 year strategy to reduce spend further and generate efficiency savings from 2018/19 onwards.**

S33. Impact of Special Uplifts Charge

The committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services which provided an update on the impact of the special uplifts charge. From 1 April 2015 the Council had agreed to charge £15.00 per household uplift. Previously two free uplifts per year were provided with a charge of £22.00 per uplift thereafter. 26 of 32 local authorities charged for special uplifts with the average charge per uplift being £25.00. Information was provided on the number of special uplift requests, the number of fly-tipping incidents, and the recharge costs relating to contaminated bins. Carl Bullough provided an overview of the report.

Members discussed the statistical information contained in the report and that perception relating to these issues, particularly fly-tipping, varied from person to person. The discussion highlighted that as well as considering the year on year incidences of fly-tipping, the cumulative increase should be recognised as not all incidents from a single year would be dealt with then. Following a question on the number of fly-tipping incidents, Carl Bullough stated that people defined fly-tipping in different ways. As an example he advised that if a mattress was left in a bin-store that would not be classified as a fly-tip in the figures but that people may see such an incident as being one. The committee stated that more education work was required to ensure that people understood how to properly dispose of their waste and that the Service should liaise with colleagues in Housing. Carl Bullough stated that part of the revised role of the Housing Caretakers would be education with tenants.

The committee sought clarification on the financial savings associated with the introduction of the charge for special uplifts in 2015. Carl Bullough stated that for 2016/17 the Service projected to receive £100,000 in income with £127,000 of savings also made.

Members sought information on the highest and lowest charges across the 26 Councils which charged for special uplifts. Carl Bullough advised that the highest cost was £41.10 and that the lowest was £12.66, with the average cost being £25.00 per uplift.

The committee discussed the use of the National Re-use Helpline which was promoted by the Council as an alternative to having a special uplift. Carl Bullough stated that there were limitations on what materials would be accepted for reuse and highlighted the figures appended to the report which showed local levels of National Re-use Line referrals. Discussion highlighted that different charitable organisations have different needs and that some may be willing or able to take materials that the National Re-use Line could not. Fiona Campbell highlighted the increase in freecycling and community swaps, which were particularly prevalent through social media.

Members asked who was responsible for dealing with fly-tipping incidents on private land. Carl Bullough advised that the responsibility sat with the owner of the land. If the Service was asked, and paid, to uplift from private land they would do so.

Following a question on litter waste in town centres, Carl Bullough stated that there was a group looking at the issue. Funding was being sought from Zero Waste Scotland to support a project specifically targeting town centres.

Members discussed fly-tipping in relation to areas which were regularly used for dumping waste and what could be done there. Carl Bullough stated that surveillance could be considered and that more proactive patrols could be put in place. However, he highlighted that due to resource constraints the approach tended to be reactive. Where those responsible for fly-tipping were identified action would be taken and there had been prosecutions locally which the Council could raise awareness about.

The committee asked how robust the statistics provided in the report were, highlighting that in 2014/15 there had been nearly 16,926 special uplift requests with income received of just £1,010. Carl Bullough stated that most people only requested their two free uplifts under the previous charging regime. He advised that the IT system used at the time was not as advanced as the Service would wish and that if there was variance in how the data was input the system could miss where a household had already had two special uplifts. Members expressed concern about the reliability of the reported data and how accurately the Service could analyse the impact of the special uplifts charge. In discussion, members commented that it was not useful to present the figures from 2014/15 and before if the Service could not be confident in their accuracy.

The committee discussed whether the topic required further investigation. Members highlighted that this could include the responsibilities of tenants/residents, best practice from other Councils and the issue of fly-tipping in general. Following a question on the process to recommend the report topic as a scrutiny panel, Colin Moodie stated that if the committee recommended this topic as a panel this would need to be considered by Council. If the topic was agreed by Council then it would form part of the scrutiny plan for the newly formed Council following the Local Government Elections in May 2017.

Decision

The committee agreed to recommend to the next meeting of Council that fly-tipping and associated issues are included in the next scrutiny plan.