

AC8. Falkirk Council Annual Accounts 2016/17 and Falkirk Temperance Trust Accounts 2016/17

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services presenting the unaudited annual accounts of the Council and Falkirk Temperance Trust for the financial year ended 31 March 2017 for approval. These had, in accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, been submitted to the auditor by the deadline of 30 June 2017 and published online for inspection.

The Committee discussed the Cof project at length, highlighting the timescales to complete the project, in response to a question on the timescales the Chief Executive explained that the 5 year timescale was challenging. In order to deliver significant change in both function and culture, time would be required to see the benefits. Mrs Pitcaithly explained the governance arrangements for the project and the role of the Leadership Board in particular. Members questioned the Chief Executive on the potential for slippage and sought clarification of the role of elected members in the oversight arrangements. In response to a comment, the Chief Executive concurred that delivery of proposed changes was a formidable target, stating that while additional resources had been utilised the project required support from all staff.

Following discussion members of the committee asked that an overview of the project plan is included as a standing item on future agendas.

The Committee then discussed the impact of year on year budget savings on service delivery. The Chief Executive stated that, as staff numbers decrease, the pressure to deliver services increases. In such times it is important to ensure that services to the public, in particular vulnerable groups, are protected, and to renew how services are delivered, mitigating against risks on service provision changes. Following a question on the impact of pay awards on the budget the Chief Executive said that higher than budgeted awards would have a significant impact on the budget.

The Committee then asked questions on the Council's stakeholder engagement during the budget setting process. Mrs Pitcaithly provided examples of the engagement on projects including the review of community halls and on the impact of the Community Empowerment Act. She also provided a summary of the Scottish Government's proposed Public Sector Reforms, noting that a Bill may emerge by October 2017.

Decision

The committee:

- (1) approved the Annual Governance Statement contained in the Annual Accounts; and**
- (2) noted that the Unaudited Annual Accounts and the Falkirk Temperance trust Accounts had been passed to the Auditor by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2017.**