



Agenda Item 4

Minutes

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Thursday 5 April 2018 at 9.30 am.

Councillors: David Balfour
Lorna Binnie
Allyson Black (Convener)
Lynn Munro
Pat Reid
Depute Provost Ann Ritchie

Officers: Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Sara Lacey, Head of Social Work Children's Services
Stuart Murray, Graduate Trainee, Committee Services
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager
David Wilkinson, Senior Accountant

S1. Apologies

No apologies were intimated.

S2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

S3. Minutes

Decision

(a) The minute of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 1 February 2018 was approved; and

In response to a question, the Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement confirmed that preparatory work had been undertaken for a members' workshop on Customer First and that a date would be found for the session shortly. She also gave an update on the preparatory work which had been undertaken ahead of the first meeting of the scrutiny panel on fly tipping and for the anti-social behaviour scrutiny panel which would begin later in the year.

(b) The minute of the meeting of the Performance Panel held on 16 February 2018 was approved.

The convener reminded members of the committee that the minutes of meetings of the Performance Panel were submitted in order that the committee can consider issues raised by the panel and call, if required, further reports. She encouraged the committee to review each set of minutes and highlight areas for further review at meetings of the Scrutiny Committee.

S4. Rolling Action Log

A rolling action log detailing the status of actions from the meeting held on 1 February 2018 which had yet to be completed was presented for consideration.

Decision

The committee noted the Rolling Action Log.

S5. Local Government Benchmarking Framework Indicator: Cost Per Planning Application- Update Report

The committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services providing further detail on the Local Government Benchmarking Framework indicator ECON2 on the cost per planning application which had been requested by the committee at its meeting on 1 February 2018 (ref S29).

Having considered a report by the Director of Development Services on 1 February 2018, the committee had asked for a further report which set out:-

- (1) detail on the component costs which make up the indicator;
- (2) comparative information for all Scottish Local Authorities;
- (3) contextual information and information to show recent costs and the trend;
- (4) detailed explanation of the planning process (including timescales) and why the costs appear comparatively high; and
- (5) overview of Audit Scotland (AS) audit of major planning applications together with the AS report.

The Director of Development Services summarised the report, drawing particular attention to the draft Planning Bill which was currently being consulted on. One aim of the Bill would be to ensure consistency in how the cost of planning is calculated. The Bill makes provision for the appointment of a national co-ordinator who will make recommendations and provide advice to Planning Authorities. Additionally, Falkirk Council will take part in an exercise led by CIPFA and the Improvement Service, involving the Heads of Planning Scotland on the cost of planning. This will provide an evidence

base for planning costs and the outcomes of the review will contribute to the development of new legislation and guidance. The Director of Development Services proposed that the outcome of this exercise would be reported to committee as part of its scrutiny of the cost of planning.

The members of the committee thanked the Director of Development Services for her report and summary. Members reiterated that the methodology for compiling the cost of planning data was inconsistent which led to unreliable comparisons. The committee was content to accept that the Local Government Benchmarking Framework data would be unreliable until such time as national guidance was developed and consistently applied. Members indicated that they would be content to await the outcome of the exercise described by the Director of Development Services and the publication of the relevant legislation and guidance.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the content of the report;**
- (2) noted the feedback from Scottish Government on the Council's Planning Performance Framework submission 2016-17;**
- (3) noted that the Council is participating in an exercise on the cost of planning being conducted by Scottish Government, and**
- (4) agreed that, on completion of this national exercise, a follow-up report be issued to the committee.**

S6. Food Law Enforcement Services Audit

The committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services providing an update on the Food Standards Scotland: Capacity and Capability audit of Falkirk Council's food law enforcement service.

An audit of the Council's food law enforcement services had been undertaken by Food Standards Scotland (FSS) in October 2016 and reported to the committee on 30 November 2017 (ref S20). A follow up inspection had been carried out in November 2017 to review the implementation of the action plan. The follow up review found that all action points had been addressed and the service was now fully compliant with the standards set by FSS.

The committee welcomed the findings of the follow up inspection and congratulated the team on the work undertaken to address the findings of the initial audit.

In response to a question, the Director of Development Services confirmed that reports on inspections of external facilities were published on the Council's website. The Director of Development Services also confirmed that the service was fully staffed.

Decision

The Committee noted the report.