

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 diagonal beam of light. The top-right quadrant depicts a stag's head with antlers. The bottom-left quadrant shows a three-masted sailing ship on wavy water. The bottom-right quadrant features a grizzly bear standing on a rocky outcrop. Above the shield is a crown with four maple leaves. A banner at the bottom of the shield contains the motto "A NE FOR A".

# **Agenda Item 3**

## **Minute**

Draft

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (External) held in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Thursday 16 August 2018 at 9.30 a.m.**

**Councillors:**

David Aitchison  
David Balfour  
Jim Blackwood  
David Grant  
John McLuckie  
Lynn Munro  
Depute Provost Ann Ritchie (Convener)

**Officers:**

Sally Buchanan, Fairer Falkirk Manager  
David George, Welfare Benefits Officer  
Mark Meechan, Community Learning & Development Manager  
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services  
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager  
Andrew Wilson

**SE8. Apologies**

An apology was intimated on behalf of Councillor Coleman.

**SE9. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Blackwood declared a non financial interest in item SE13 due to his attendance at meetings of the Denny Citizen Advice Bureau board, but considered that this did not require him to recuse himself from consideration of the item.

There were no further declarations at this point.

**SE10. Minute**

**Decision**

**The minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (External) held on 17 May 2018 was approved.**

### **SE11. Rolling Action Log**

A rolling action log detailing decisions not yet implemented following the previous meeting on 17 May 2018 was provided.

#### **Decision**

**The committee noted the rolling action log.**

### **SE12. Following the Public Pound – Community Development**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services presenting reporting statements for organisations funded under the Following the Public Pound (FPP) arrangements for the period 1 April 2017 to 30 June 2018 for community development.

Funding was provided, by Children's Services to 4 external organisations to provide services which could not readily be provided by the Council. As part of the Following the Public Pound arrangements, reporting statements are prepared by the relevant monitoring officer for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee (External).

The four organisations were:-

Organisation	Monitoring Service	Annual Funding (£)
Dennyloanhead Community Hall Ltd	Children's Services	11,330
Denny Community Support Project	Children's Services	23,620
Workers Education Association	Children's Services	22,280
Dobbie Hall	Children's Services	14,360

The Director of Children's Services provided an overview of the services provided by the respective organisations and provided context in regard to the funding allocation to each organisation.

Members discussed the role of the Community Learning and Development (CLD) unit which provided support to the organisations and which monitored their performance against agreed outcomes.

In response to a question on the promotion of CLD services and specifically on the information available through the Council's website. Mark Meehan explained that the current CLD action plan, which was developed in partnership with key stakeholders, had been reviewed and would be presented to the Education Executive in September for approval. Once agreed the plan, which was more user friendly, would be available online. The action plan set out explicitly what services would be provided. Members

highlighted the information set out on West Lothian Council's website as an example and suggested that the Council's online information was not as accessible.

Following a question in regard to Dennyloanhead Community Hall Ltd, Mr Meechan advised that the hall provided an extensive range of services aimed, in particular, at addressing inequalities in particular food poverty, citing examples of the projects provided.

At this point Councillor McLuckie declared the financial interest of family members in CLD and withdrew from the meeting.

Members then sought clarification in regard to the funding of community halls in the area, citing the West Lothian Council model in which halls were constituted and which operated for the benefit of the community could apply for funding from an enterprise fund scheme, as an example. Mr Meechan explained that in addition to FTPP funding, community halls could apply for funding from a variety of sources, such as the Community Grants Scheme. CLD and CVS provided support on sources of funding and on the application process.

The committee asked whether the Council had benchmarked its CLD services against those of other local authorities. Mr Meechan explained that the CLD action plan had been developed in consultation with the CLD services in the Forth Valley area. The committee asked that the Director of Children's Services undertake a benchmarking review of the CLD service and report back.

Members highlighted the digital skills support provided by the Workers Education Association and asked for more detail. Mr Meechan explained that this was aimed at the 50+ age group and focussed on using "apps". Previously the work had focussed on packages such as Excel and Powerpoint but the offer had been repurposed to devices which people use daily. He explained that CLD provided support to "volunteer buddies" who assist the learners, thereby demonstrating the role of CLD in capacity building.

In response to a question on the rationale for providing funding to the Workers Education Association, Mr Meechan explained that it provided particular expertise that the Council did not have, in particular in relation to workplace literacy.

Funding for the Denny Community Support Project had decreased over recent years. Members asked what the impact of this had been on the services provided. Mr Meechan confirmed that the funding had reduced. Falkirk Council met 'core costs', however the project had been successful in attracting funding from other sources for programme costs. He confirmed however that the provision had reduced.

## Decision

**The committee noted the report and requested that the Director of Children's Services undertake a benchmarking review of Community Learning and Development service and report to a future meeting.**

Councillor McLuckie rejoined the meeting following consideration of the previous item

### **SE13. Following the Public Pound – Poverty and Equalities**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services presenting reporting statements for organisations funded under the Following the Public Pound (FPP) arrangements for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 for the Council's priorities regarding poverty and equalities.

Six organisations had received funding from Falkirk Council to provide services which could not be readily provided by the Council. As part of the Following the Public Pound arrangements, reporting statements, prepared by the relevant monitoring officer were submitted to the Scrutiny Committee (External) for consideration. The organisations were:-

Organisation	Monitoring Service	Annual Funding
LGBT Youth Scotland	Children's Services	£30,000
Falkirk CAB	Corporate and Housing Services	£168,490
Grangemouth & Bo'ness CAB	Corporate and Housing Services	£98,360
Denny & Dunipace CAB	Corporate and Housing Services	£92,810
Armed Forces Project Denny CAB	Corporate and Housing Services	£18,000
MacMillan Money Matters	Corporate and Housing Services	£38,000

Sally Buchanan provided an overview of the services provided by the organisation and provided context in regard to the funding allocated to each organisation.

The committee considered each organisation in turn.

Members asked for further detail on the services provided by LGBT Youth Scotland, in particular the work undertaken in secondary schools. Mark Meechan explained that the organisations provided a range of CLD activities to LGBT young people in the Falkirk area for example providing youth groups, promoting volunteering and providing a community meeting place

and local information point. The organisation had supported two schools, Braes High and Denny High to achieve the LGBT Charter of Rights award and aimed to support all secondary schools to gain the award. Demand of the organisation's services had increased year on year. Mr Meechan accepted, following comments from members, that young people could need support for other issues and indicated that CLD and partners sought to provide support for young people who require support. Nevertheless the work by LGBT Youth Scotland made a significant contribution to the delivery of community development support to LGBT young people. He confirmed that the funding provided by Falkirk Council supported Falkirk focused support.

The committee highlighted that the reporting statement did not set out measurable outcome targets and as such it was difficult to determine whether the organisation was contributing to the Council's goal. Mr Meechan concurred and confirmed that reporting would be outcome focussed in future. Indicators such as the number of referrals to the organisation could be quantified but other outcomes needed to be measured and then quantified.

He explained that work was ongoing in Slamannan and Limerigg to develop a more 'scientific' approach to measuring performance and that he expected the group to report by November with proposals.

The committee then considered the reports on the Citizens Advice Bureaux. In regard to questions on the services provided by the 3 CABx, Sally Buchanan stated that the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit wouldn't be felt yet in terms of the number of people seeking support. She noted however that the complexity of cases had increased since its introduction. A steering group had been established to prepare for the impact of Universal Credit.

Work is ongoing with the three CABs to look at a new partnership model of service delivery with the Council procuring services which would be measured against set milestones. She confirmed that the models for funding CABx varied across Scotland. Highland Council had moved to a single funding model from previously funding 6 separate CABx. The Council would continue to work with the 3 CABx to develop a model for service delivery which ensured the best advice was available to citizens but which also provides security to the CABx.

Following a question in regard to the services provided by the CABx, Sally Buchanan confirmed that the majority of contacts were in regard to welfare advice, in particular money advice. The Council and CABx were working to ensure that face to face interactions were as valuable as possible citing as an example an online entitlement calculator which can be used by frontline staff to do income maximisation checks, freeing up welfare benefits advisors to provide specialist support. The Council had changed the way it delivered advice services. The hub model arrangement allowed multi skilled front line

advisors to offer general advice which allowed the Welfare Benefits team to offer expert advice.

Members sought assurance in regard to the services provided by each of the CABx. Sally Buchanan responded that while the performance statement provided was for the CABx as a whole, the Council received monitoring reports for each CAB individually and these are reviewed before quarterly funding is released.

In regard to a question as to whether the findings of satisfaction surveys are reported to the monitoring service, Sally Buchanan advised that she did not have these. Members suggested that it was important for the Council to determine whether the CABx were meeting their objectives.

The committee heard an example of proactive work undertaken by Community Advice Services staff to contact people who were likely to be evicted from Council housing. However members also cited examples where members of the public were reluctant to reach out for help. Sally Buchanan acknowledged both examples as correct and stated that the hub model is designed to ensure that when someone asks for advice or help they receive it then and there.

The committee then discussed the reporting statement on Veteran's Scotland, which was hosted by Denny Citizen's Advice Bureau.

In response to a question Andrew Wilson stated that a veteran was defined as anyone who had served in one of the armed forces. He concurred with a statement that isolation is a fundamental issue facing veterans, many of whom are single men. Work was ongoing to organise an event to bring various charities together to expose them to the issues facing veterans such as unemployment. He highlighted the work of several charities which focussed on routes to employment and which actively promote the employment of veterans. He cited the work of organisations, such as CABx, which support or act as signposts to other services.

In regard to Macmillan Money Matters project, the committee sought an explanation of the service provided and clarification of how this differed from other advice services offered by Macmillan centres, for example that based in Forth Valley Hospital. David George explained that the project provides income maximisation and debt advice to patients with cancer. The service is based at the Forum and offered a specialist service. Patients could be referred to the projects advisers who could give advice or refer these to specialist services.

## **Decision**

**The committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by the external organisations in meeting Council priorities.**