

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on THURSDAY 8 AUGUST 2013 at 9.30 AM.

COUNCILLORS:

Allyson Black
Charles MacDonald
John McLuckie
Baillie Joan Paterson
Provost Pat Reid (Convener)

OFFICERS:

Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager
Andrew Wilson, Community Planning Manager

ALSO ATTENDING:

Chief Superintendent David Flynn, Police Scotland
Chief Inspector Alan Waddell, Police Scotland
Jim Cattanach, Divisional Business Assurance Officer,
Police Scotland

Gary Laing, Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and
Rescue Service
Joe Andrews, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue
Service
Martin Togneri, Board Member, Scottish Fire and Rescue
Service

S11. APOLOGY

An apology was intimated on behalf of Baillie Buchanan.

S12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

S13. MINUTE

Decision

The minute of the meeting held on 13 June 2013 was approved.

S14. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE – FALKIRK PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting the first local performance report by the local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Local Senior officers were now required, in terms of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, to report on performance as measured against the Local Fire and Rescue Plan 2013.

A performance report for 1 April to 30 June (Quarter 1) was presented with performance against 5 key objectives highlighted.

Mr Lang gave a presentation on the detail of the performance report and indicated that he intended to provide greater context including benchmarking data and analysis of national trends as the report format developed. It was also intended that the information would, in due course, be provided at the local ward level.

Committee then questioned Mr Laing on his report and presentation.

In regard to the Service proactive approach to reducing accidental fires, members sought clarification on the extent to which the Service engaged with landlords and in particular when vulnerable people were involved.

Members sought information on:

- whether training was provided to new businesses within Grangemouth in light of the very particular risks in the area
- the trend in smoking related house fires
- whether there were any links between those fires which had been started deliberately and whether the day summer had been a factor in the increase from 4-12 compared to 2012

The committee questioned Mr Laing on the impact of the requirement to achieve, nationally, efficiency savings, on local service provision and, in particular, the committee sought clarification on the future use of the facilities at Maddiston, front line services and initiatives such as school visits.

Members then asked further questions on:

- the number of unwanted fire alarm signals in several, 274, and the proportion of these which are false alarms
- the methodology for setting the annual targets and whether in some examples these were too ambitious for example reducing road traffic collisions.
- the extent to which the service engages with the licensing board on site visits

In response to a question on local service provision and to the valued role of retained fire fighters within area, Martin Tognelli expressed support for the local arrangements but indicated that the system was less effective in other areas. The retained fire fighter services was an issue which the Board would look at nationally although he indicated that his preference would be to build on the evident strengths of the system in areas such as Falkirk. The Board would need to look at the issue in due course and look to build on the evident strengths of the system.

Decision

The Committee noted the performance of the service in regard to the local Fire and Rescue Plan.

The Committee requested that the Local Senior Officer:-

- (1) provides a trend analysis for smoking related incidents;**
- (2) includes benchmarking information in future reports when available, and**
- (3) keeps Committee advised of any proposals in regard to Maddiston Fire Station.**

S15. POLICE SCOTLAND – FALKIRK PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting the first local performance report by the Local Commander, Police Scotland.

Local Commanders were required, in terms of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, to report performance of the local policing as measured against the Local Policing Plan and to provide information about complaints against the police or in regard to policing.

Mr Flynn gave a presentation on the detail of the performance report and provided an overview of incidents within the area which necessitated the use of national resources. Mr Flynn indicated that he intended to provide greater contextual, such as benchmarking information, within future reports, together with national trend analysis where relevant.

Committee then questioned Mr Flynn on his report and presentation.

The Committee sought clarification from Mr Flynn on the local policing arrangements, in particular the role of the local community officers and stressed the importance of having offices embedded within the local community for a number of years. This included having accessible police officers. Members also questioned Mr Flynn on communication between local officers and members.

Members sought information on:

- the causes of the overall fall in recorded crime in the Falkirk Council area
- the rationale for the introduction of the non emergency number 101 and whether it had been a success
- the steps taken to prevent metal thefts and whether the partnership approach had been successful
- the diversity within police staff and how local recruitment was now managed following the merge into a national service

The Committee then questioned Mr Flynn on the impact of national efficiency targets locally and in particular on the estate and on civilian staff numbers in particular.

Decision

The Committee noted the performance of the service in regard to the Local Policing Plan.

The Committee requested that the Local Commander:-

- (1) include benchmarking information in future reports when available;**
- (2) provides members with details of local police offices and of officers' contact details;**
- (3) looks into the practical implementation of the policy in regard to engaging with local members, and**
- (4) looks into the practical implementation of partnership working arrangements.**

S16. SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE – CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services on the review of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Council had agreed to establish a scrutiny panel to examine the role of citizens advice bureaux in the Falkirk area. The panel met on 23 July 2013 to determine the scope of the review and agree a timeline.

Additionally guidance for panels had been developed which, it was expected, that this would evolve through use and experience.

The Provost confirmed that Councillor Murray, who had been appointed to the panel, would no longer be able to serve on the panel. Committee was invited to appoint a replacement.

Decision

The Committee agreed to appoint Baillie Paterson in place of Councillor Murray on the pilot scrutiny panel.

S17. ESTABLISHMENT OF A STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL ON PERFORMANCE

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Governance Officer on proposal to establish a Performance Panel.

There had been a general consensus, both at the scrutiny workshop (held in May) and at the Committee meeting held on 13 June that there would be value in preserving elements of the Best Value Forum when scrutinising service performance and that the scrutiny should be undertaken by a standing scrutiny panel. Council held in June, also shared this position. Proposals to establish a standing scrutiny panel, to be known as the Performance Panel were set out. Council in June had also agreed to establish a standing scrutiny panel for that purpose. The committee was invited to establish a Performance Panel, comprising of a core up to five members but which be open for all members to attend. Committee was also invited to appoint the convener of the panel.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:-

- (1) establish a standing 5 member Scrutiny Panel on performance to be known as the Performance Panel;**
- (2) appoint Councillor Black to the Panel and to receive two further nominations from the Administration in due course;**
- (3) to seek nominations for the two remaining places from the Opposition, and**
- (4) that the Panel would appoint it's convener at it's first meeting.**