

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: ANNUAL SCRUTINY PLAN
Meeting: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date: 12 SEPTEMBER 2013
Author: CHIEF GOVERNANCE OFFICER

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The new decision-making structure adopted by the Council requires that the Scrutiny Committee should agree an annual scrutiny plan for consideration by the Council. This report recaps on the suggestions previously considered by the Committee and invites it to recommend the subject areas for scrutiny to Council for the forthcoming year.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A number of suggested areas for scrutiny were put to members at the Scrutiny Workshop which took place on 31st May, 2013. These were as follows:-

- Use and management of community halls – lets and charging
- Outcomes for looked after children
- Health inequalities
- Support for kinship care
- Business support
- Employability, NEET and youth unemployment
- CABs – advice and support
- Support for gala days and fairs
- Role and support for Community Councils
- Community Safety Wardens – use, deployment etc
- Transport for care and Education
- Welfare Reform

- 2.2 At the workshop, members attending suggested further potential areas for scrutiny. These were:-

1. the process of procurement and contract monitoring;
2. the adequacy of consultation with the public and community engagement more generally; and
3. schools capacities.

More recently, the Executive has decided to establish a Policy Development Panel to consider the role of and support for Community Councils. In discussion with the Convener of the Committee a further suggestion has emerged. This would involve the scrutiny of the Council's appointment of elected members to external organisations.

- 2.3 On 26th June, Council agreed that a pilot Scrutiny Panel should be formed prior to the agreement of the annual plan examining the work of Citizens' Advice Bureau in the Council area. The work of this Scrutiny Panel is underway and has provided useful information on the process of undertaking the in depth scrutiny envisaged in the formation of Scrutiny Panel. In this case, the process has involved:- a scoping meeting, three meetings in public taking evidence and a final meeting to agree recommendations to follow. When preparation and report reading is added, it can be seen that the demands on the time of the members forming the Scrutiny Panel can be extensive.

3. THE SCRUTINY PLAN

- 3.1 The experience of the pilot Scrutiny Panel has given useful information on level of commitment in officer and member time which should help to inform the Committee's decision on the scope of the plan. It should be also be acknowledged that the decision is to be taken against the background of a significant proportion of the members available to serve to Scrutiny Panels not currently being willing to do so.
- 3.2 It is suggested that the plan recommended to Council should contain no more than one Panel operating at any one time but with scope for the Committee itself to add a further Panel or Panels to the maximum of two operating at any one time should the availability of members increase at a later stage. This would allow the Committee flexibility to choose a further topic or topics for in depth scrutiny without the need to revert to Council.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 **Members are invited to consider the potential areas for scrutiny and to recommend these to Council.**

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CHIEF GOVERNANCE OFFICER

Date: 2nd September, 2013
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS Nil