

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on THURSDAY 13 MARCH 2014 at 9.30 AM.

COUNCILLORS:

Baillie William Buchanan
Allyson Black
Provost Pat Reid
John McLuckie
Charles MacDonald

OFFICERS:

Shona Barton, Committee Services Officer
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer

ALSO ATTENDING:

Joe Andrews, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Jim Cattanach, Divisional Business Assurance Officer, Police Scotland
David Flynn, Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland
Gary Laing, Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
David Mitchell, Detective Inspector, Police Scotland
Mandy Patterson, Acting Chief Inspector, Police Scotland

S48. APOLOGIES

An apology was intimated on behalf of Baillie Joan Paterson.

S49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

S50. MINUTE

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 13 February 2014 was approved.

S51. POLICE SCOTLAND – FALKIRK AREA COMMAND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting the local performance report by the Local Commander, Police Scotland. The report also included information on road collisions and the mapping of these incidents along with a paper on the proposed changes to the policing model operated across the Forth Valley division.

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.

Chief Superintendent Flynn gave a presentation on the detail of the report which covered the period from April 2013 to January 2014 and highlighted the performance of local policing across the Falkirk Council area in accordance with the local policing plan. He also provided an update on the ongoing Traffic Warden Review, the work being undertaken in relation to the review of public counter services and the standardisation of hours and confirmed that with regard to the police estate there were no plans to close any police offices.

The committee heard information on the Stop and Search tool used by the Police and how this has contributed to the increase in detection of certain types of crime.

In response to a question relating to multi agency meetings with local Elected Members, Chief Superintendent Flynn and Acting Chief Inspector Paterson advised that they would be happy to arrange for such meetings to take place.

The committee discussed the implications of the closure of the control room in Stirling with particular reference to the contingency arrangements in relation to the Grangemouth petro-chemical site. Chief Superintendent Flynn advised that Police Scotland has a multi-agency command at Grangemouth, but there was a need to ensure that the communications for policing were in place. He advised that the consolidation of the control room function would not have any effect on local policing as it would be the same local police dealing with issues as part of local policing teams.

In response to a question in relation to residential housebreaking, Chief Superintendent Flynn and Acting Chief Inspector Paterson provided some further clarification on the reasons behind these acts and the people who can be responsible for them.

The committee then discussed the attendance of local community officers at community meetings and the lack of police reports which are being provided. Chief Superintendent Flynn gave an undertaking to have a standardised report produced which would be made available for community meetings and that community officers would endeavour where possible to attend such meetings.

The committee also discussed the ongoing Traffic Warden review, and the perception within the area that the Wardens have ceased to operate. Chief Superintendent Flynn advised that although there has been a reduction in the numbers of Wardens due to early retirement and voluntary severance there is still a service being provided. He also advised that police officers still have a role to play with parking issues and can issue tickets when required.

The committee then heard a presentation from Detective Inspector David Mitchell on Serious and Organised Crime. The presentation related to the report which was submitted as part of the police performance report at appendix 4. Detective Inspector Mitchell provided an overview of the operation the Serious Organised Crime Task Force which was created by the Scottish Government and brings together the organisations involved in tackling Serious and Organised Crime. The committee also heard from Acting Chief Inspector Paterson who provided information on the work of an operation in the local area which directly related to a Serious and Organised Crime group.

Decision

The committee noted the report.

S52. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE – FALKIRK & WEST LOTHIAN COMMAND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting two reports by the Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (1) the quarter 3 performance report for the Falkirk Council area, and (2) the fire safety enforcement audit process and auditing of licensed premises.

Gary Laing, Local Senior Officer provided a detailed summary of each report and questions were answered by Mr Laing and Joe Andrews, Group Manager.

(1) Quarter 3 performance report – Falkirk area

Details were provided of the quarter 3 outcomes in relation to accidental dwelling fires, non domestic property fires, deliberate secondary fires, road traffic collisions and unwanted fire signals. Additional information was also provided on special service incidents (which included road traffic collisions), violence to crews, incidents involving alcohol or drugs and smoking related activities. Mr Laing also outlined the work being carried out in terms of preventative activities such as premises audits, community engagement talks and visits and the work of the home safety visit programme.

The committee discussed the causes of accidental dwelling fires and the measures which are put in place following on from a fire fatality.

The committee also discussed the incidence of deliberate fire raising, and the public perception in terms of fires.

In response to a question asked in relation to the retained duty service, Mr Laing advised that it was recognised and accepted that the retained duty system is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. He advised that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is proactive in managing staff and work was ongoing to look at ways to improve and secure the retained duty service. He also advised that there was a commitment to maintain the retained duty system, and that any changes that affect the Falkirk area will be brought to the Scrutiny committee.

A question was also asked on what measures are in place to refer incidents which occur as a result of fuel poverty or homelessness. Mr Laing advised that if such information came to light this would be referred to the appropriate agency, but also noted that current statistics did not show a high number of incidents which were as a result of fuel poverty or homelessness.

Decision

The committee noted the report.

(2) Fire safety enforcement audit process and auditing of licensed premises

This report had been produced following a specific enquiry from the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the inspection of licensed premises. Details were provided around the fire safety enforcement methodology and the reasoning for non-routine auditing of 'licensed' premises.

Decision

The committee noted the report.

The committee then heard a presentation from Joe Andrews which related to the Wester Shieldhill Road. The presentation was as a result of a request from the committee for this road to be considered for gritting during icy weather as due to the nature of the steep gradient on the road there was a perception that there had been a high number of road traffic collisions. Mr Andrews provided a detailed breakdown of the numbers of vehicles that use that road and related this to the reported number of road traffic collisions. From the data provided and due to the category of the road, there was no requirement or need for the road to be considered for gritting during bad weather.

The committee thanked Mr Andrews for his presentation.

S53. FOLLOWING THE PUBLIC POUND (FPP): BO'NESS CHILDREN'S FAIR FESTIVAL EXECUTIVE

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services which provided an update on the progress and performance of the Bo'ness Fair Festival Committee for the period 2012/2013. The report is compliant with Falkirk Council procedure in relation to 'Following the Public Pound'.

The committee discussed the good work of the Fair Committee and the possibility of them obtaining funding from other sources, such as the Lottery Fund. The Head of Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement advised that advice on other funding sources has been given previously to the Fair Committee but it was for them to make any necessary applications.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by Bo'ness Fair Festival Committee in meeting Council priorities.

S54. FORTH VALLEY FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services which provided an update on the work that has been undertaken since last year to ensure the provision of an appropriate and sustainable family support service. At the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 12 September 2013 (paragraph S21 (6) refers), the committee had asked for clarification on the status of the project and in particular in the transition from the pilot project to the full project.

The Forth Valley Family Support Service was piloted from April 2012 until June 2013. Information was provided in the report on the Pilot including details on the service provided, the number of families who used the service and the outcomes achieved by the families across a number of measured areas. The report also outlined the procurement for the service following on from the Pilot and noted that the contract had been awarded to Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the contents of the report, and**
- (2) asked for further updates to be provided on the operation of the Forth Valley Family Support Service.**