

S26. SCRUTINY PANEL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX FALKIRK

Falkirk Council had, at its meeting on 26 June 2013, agreed to establish a pilot scrutiny panel to examine the role of the Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx) within the Falkirk Council area.

Comprising of Provost Reid; Baillie Paterson and Councillor McLuckie, the Panel, had, defined its scope as “How well do CABx work together in order to deliver consistent services across the Falkirk Council area?”

The Panel had taken evidence at public sessions and heard from Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS); the three local CABx and partner agencies.

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services summarising the scrutiny process; chronicling the evidence submitted, and, appending the Report for the Scrutiny Panel which included recommendations for the Committee to consider.

Decision

The Committee agreed the following recommendations for referral to the Executive with a view to officers working with the CABx to incorporate any actions arising from the recommendation in the Strategic Joint Action Plan:

Outreach

- Outreach should be revised and modernised to maximise access to vulnerable groups, particularly for those who would not otherwise access the service;
- The CABx identify further opportunities for targeted outreach, to work alongside other service providers in the Falkirk Council area;
- CABx work with Council Officers to identify rooms within Council buildings across the area, which can regularly be used as interview rooms; and
- CABx ensure that the availability of home visits is publicised.
- A decision to be reached locally as to what CAB office should represent the interests of the residents of Larbert/Stenhousemuir.

Working with other agencies

- In conjunction with other agencies, consider the development of a client signposting and referral tracking system; and
- Provide the opportunity for advice providers to participate in a planning group, which will develop a strategic approach to provision of a consistent pathway of advice across the Falkirk Council area. This could include CABx, Community Advice, Department of Work and Pensions, Homelessness Welfare Advice Team.

Pace of Change

- Joint Action Group continue the excellent work;

- JAG consider the use of the totality of the resource in terms of funding, staff and volunteers to ensure that best value is being achieved; and
- JAG provides Members with a follow-up report in 6 months regarding progress and any further proposed actions.

Communication between CABx and Community Advice Services

- Ensure that communication between agencies is adequate and consistent; and
- Ensure that procedures across agencies in terms of referrals are clear and consistent.

Premises

- Council Officers work with Falkirk CAB to consider alternative premises arrangements for the future.

Councillor Black re-entered the meeting at this stage.