

## **S11. FOLLOWING THE PUBLIC POUND (FPP): ADVICE SERVICES**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services which provided an update on the work of the external organisations which receive funding who provide debt and money advice services, and who fall within the 'Following the Public Pound' (FPP) reporting and monitoring arrangements.

The report provided (a) an overview of the impacts resulting in demand as a result of welfare reform, (b) information on the strategic context behind the provision of advice services, (c) an overview of the funded organisations providing advice services, and (d) an assessment of each individual organisations performance.

An individual report was attached for the 5 organisations which received funding. Each report set out the service provided, the agreed outcomes/objectives and performance information.

Fiona Campbell provided an overview of the report and highlighted the new reporting format, noting that it would be helpful if feedback could be provided on this new format.

In response to a question raised regarding the bedroom tax and the decision made by the UK Government to devolve responsibility for setting the limit on discretionary housing payment to the Scottish Government, Fiona Campbell advised that it was still not clear on the anticipated timescales for any change, but noted that there would be a report to the next Executive on the broader aspects of welfare reform which would provide further clarification.

The committee discussed the increase in the numbers of people who are facing sanctions from the DWP, noting that this included vulnerable people with mental health issues and women who have been the victim of domestic abuse. Fiona Campbell outlined some of the work that has been undertaken by Falkirk Council as part of the Fairer Scotland Fund to support those with low level mental health issues through the welfare changes. It was also highlighted that it was difficult to obtain accurate figures from DWP on the numbers of vulnerable persons who are affected by the welfare changes.

The committee then heard from officers in relation to the individual reports.

### Forth Valley Macmillan Money Matters Project

Linda Scott provided an overview of the report, advising that the project had supported 926 people from the Falkirk area generating £963,340 in additional benefit income.

### **Decision**

**The committee approved the report and acknowledged the progress made by the Forth Valley Macmillan Money Matters Project in meeting Council priorities.**

### Falkirk and District Credit Union

Linda Scott provided an overview of the report including a summary of the organisations key achievements.

Discussion took place on the areas which were covered by the Credit Union and the options which were being considered for further collection points across the Council area. Information was also provided on the funding which was received from the Council to fund the new IT system.

### **Decision**

**The committee approved the report and acknowledged the progress made by the Falkirk and District Credit Union in meeting Council priorities.**

#### Falkirk Armed Services Advice Project – Denny CAB

Lesley MacArthur provided an overview of the report.

Members acknowledged the good work being undertaken by the support officer.

### **Decision**

**The committee approved the report and acknowledged the progress made by the Falkirk Armed Services Advice Project in meeting Council priorities.**

In accordance with her declaration of interest, Councillor Black left the meeting at this point.

#### Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureaux

Lesley MacArthur provided an overview of the work of the 3 independent Citizens Advice Bureaux (Denny and Dunipace, Falkirk and Grangemouth and Bo'ness).

Discussion took place on the recording mechanisms used for the various figures contained in the report. Lesley advised that each Bureau dealt with specialised areas and this could account for the variation in figures. It was also noted that some of the figures shown for Denny and Dunipace and Falkirk represented the performance for a quarter and not for a full year as was shown with the Grangemouth and Bo'ness figures.

### **Decision**

**The committee approved the report and acknowledged the progress made by the Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureaux in meeting Council priorities.**