

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Subject: ISSUES CONSIDERED AT PERFORMANCE PANEL**  
**Meeting: SCRUTINY**  
**Date: 14 AUGUST 2014**  
**Author: CHIEF GOVERNANCE OFFICER**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its last meeting, the committee asked that a report be presented to this meeting summarising key issues identified and discussed at the Performance Panel. This was with a view to the committee considering whether the issues identified required further consideration as potential subjects for the next Scrutiny Plan.

**2. ISSUES DISCUSSED AT THE PERFORMANCE PANEL**

- 2.1 The minutes of the following meetings are appended:-

28<sup>th</sup> November 2013;  
 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014;  
 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014; and  
 29<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

These have been considered in an attempt to identify areas where there has been in-depth discussion or discussion on more than one occasion or where the issue raised followed on from a recent policy development or initiative which would make the issue apt for consideration by a Scrutiny Panel. The issues identified below are not intended to be an exhaustive list and it may well be that there will be others identified by members of the committee.

- 2.2 The following issues have been identified:-

(1)	The impact of welfare reform and the effectiveness of the arrangements put in place by the Council to mitigate its effects.
(2)	The physical quality of housing allocated to tenants and the impact of the impetus to reduce the length of void periods.
(3)	The effectiveness of the business gateway service following its transfer in-house.
(4)	The impact of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act and, in particular, the volume of requests to the Council and the cost arising therefrom in addition to the Council's effectiveness in dealing with requests.
(5)	Head Teacher recruitment, the secondment of head teachers from schools and the use of acting position in schools and Education Service management posts.
(6)	The educational attainment of looked after children and other vulnerable groups.
(7)	The effectiveness of the systems in place to assess community care needs, in particular, the prioritisation of assessments.
(8)	The provision of residential and nursing home places and the impact of delayed discharge from hospital.
(9)	The operation of the complaint system within the Council, in particular, the extent to which complaint outcomes are considered and lessons learned for the future.

- 2.3 It is open for the committee to call for a report on any of these issues (or any other issue identified by the committee) to allow it to consider whether this is a suitable subject for a Scrutiny Panel.

### **3. RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 **The committee is invited to consider the issues identified from earlier meetings of the Performance Panel.**

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Depute Chief Governance Officer

Date: 6 August 2014

Contact Officer: Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer ext. 6097

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**MINUTE of MEETING of the PERFORMANCE PANEL held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2013 at 9.30 AM.**

**CORE MEMBERS:** Allyson Black  
Baillie Joan Paterson  
Depute Provost Patrick

**MEMBERS**  
**ATTENDING:** David Alexander  
Stephen Bird  
Tom Coleman  
Gerry Goldie  
Craig Martin  
John McLuckie  
John McNally  
Cecil Meiklejohn  
Malcolm Nicol  
Alan Nimmo  
Provost Pat Reid  
Ann Ritchie  
Sandy Turner

**OFFICERS:** Margaret Anderson, Director of Social Work Services  
Alex Black, Quality Improvement Manager  
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement  
Paul Ferguson, Revenue Manager  
John Flannigan, Depute Chief Finance Officer  
Arlene Fraser, Committee Services Officer  
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services  
Rose Mary Glackin, Chief Governance Officer  
Jennifer Litts, Head of Housing  
Robert McMaster, Head of Roads and Design  
Kenny McNeil, Educational Resources Manager  
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer  
Philip Morgan Klein, Service Manager  
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager  
Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive

**ALSO ATTENDING:** Lisa Duthie, Audit Scotland

**PP1. APPOINTMENT OF CONVENER**

The Chief Executive welcomed members to the first meeting of the Performance Panel which had been set up by the Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise services' performance. The panel consisted of a core decision making membership of 5 elected members with all members of Council able to attend and participate. It was envisaged that the distinction between the 'core' members and participating members would not arise often as the Panel was not a decision making body.

The Chief Executive sought nominations from the core membership for the position of convener. Prior to discussion Councillors Meiklejohn and Bird, confirmed that, having previously been nominated as the Opposition representatives on the core group of members, they now wished to withdraw their nominations.

### **Decision**

**The panel appointed Depute Provost Patrick as convener.**

## **PP2. PERFORMANCE PANEL MEETING ARRANGEMENTS**

The panel considered a report by the Chief Governance Officer setting out the panel's timetable of meetings and reporting schedule.

Members discussed the role of the panel and, in particular, sought clarification on whether the panel could request best value reviews of services. These had previously been reported to the (former) Best Value Forum. The Chief Executive advised that although the remit of the panel was to scrutinise service performance it was not the successor to the Best Value Forum. The convener added that this was the first meeting of the panel and he anticipated that its role in terms of scrutinising service performance would develop. Issues raised would be recorded in the minute which would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee as the parent body.

Following further discussion on the reporting structure, the Chief Executive advised that reports on the Corporate Plan and on Community Planning would be submitted to Council. Council could then refer these to the panel should it so wish.

**The panel noted the report.**

## **PP3. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION 2012/13 AND 2013/14 TO DATE**

The panel considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting individual service performance statements for the financial year 2012/13 and for the year 2013/14 to date.

The role of the Performance Panel was to scrutinise the performance of the Council's five services. Performance statements for the Chief Executive Office (Finance and Governance), Corporate and Neighbourhood Services, Development Services, Education Services and Social Work Services were presented. Each statement set out individual service's performance indicators together with the targets and performance for the year 2012/13 and 2013/14 to date.

Members then considered each statement in turn. A summary of the key discussion points and the outcome of the scrutiny is given below (key indicators are shown in bold):-

(i) **Chief Executive Office – Finance**

Paul Ferguson and John Flannigan gave an overview of the performance statement.

In regard to the indicator, **benefits administration – speed of processing new claims**, an explanation was sought on the rationale for increasing the target from 25 days in 2012/13 to 40 days in 2013/14 and whether such an increase was in the interest of claimants. Members also questioned whether the target was achievable in light of the figures provided for the year to date of 51.96 days. Mr Ferguson explained that the target had been revised in light of the impact of welfare reform on the service and on the introduction of new processes. It was anticipated that the target of 40 days was achievable and would be met by 31 March 2014.

Members considered performance in regard to **benefits administration – speed of processing change events** and sought assurance that the target of 20 days (for 2013/14) would be met. Again Mr Ferguson confirmed that performance would be in line with the target by the year end. Mr Ferguson also confirmed that, in regard to the indicator percentage of council house tenants owing more than £250 and 13 weeks rent, that early intervention had resulted in an improvement in performance.

The panel then scrutinised performance in regard to the indicator **percentage of incoming telephones answered promptly**. In particular members sought clarification of the definition of ‘promptly’ and whether there was a measure of whether calls were answered satisfactorily. The Council does undertake customer surveys but they did not include the measurement in regard to telephone calls.

Members noted an improved performance in 2013/14 in the **percentage of complaints responded to within 7 days** and asked what had caused this improvement. Mr Ferguson stated that as a key indicator dedicated resources had been put in place to manage complaints on a day to day basis.

**The panel requested a report on the indicator benefits administration speed of processing new claims, including the factors impacting on performance and the appropriateness of increasing the performance target from 25 to 40 days.**

The meeting then adjourned for 5 minutes and reconvened at 10.55 a.m. with all members present as per the sederunt with the exception of Baillie Paterson.

(ii) **Chief Executive Office – Governance**

Rose Mary Glackin gave an overview of the performance statement.

Questions focused on the indicator **percentage of members’ enquiries in accordance with agreed protocol**. Ms Glackin noted that the information provided was for the Governance section and did not represent the overall corporate performance. Members discussed the corporate response to members’ enquiries more generally and questioned the validity of the information provided.

In regard to the indicator **percentage of freedom of information requests responded to within 20 working days** members highlighted the benefit in providing, in addition to individual service performance information, the aggregate corporate response. The Chief Executive confirmed that information on corporate indicators such as response to members’ enquiries, response to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and absence statistics would be provided on a corporate level.

**The panel noted the performance statement.**

### (iii) Corporate and Neighbourhood Services

Jennifer Litts gave an overview of the performance statement.

Members sought further contextual information detail in regard to the indicator; **number of apprentices and skillseekers recruited within the service**. The panel sought clarification in the rationale for a performance target of is in light of the performance of 65 in 2012/13 and the year to date performance of 33. Members enquired about the number of skillseekers and modern apprentices that are retained in employment by the Council. Members indicated that it would be useful for future reports to provide information on positive destinations for modern apprentices and skillseekers.

Members then questioned the performance in regard to the **percentage of customers who rate our services average or above**, in particular in reference to the condition of the property when let and sought the reasons as to why the target was not 100%. Ms Litts explained that the standard of the property would not always meet the tenant's expectations. The service was currently reviewing its standards for void properties and the cost implications of improving current standards.

The panel discussed the indicator **percentage of rent loss due to voids** and sought detail on the process for inspecting and approving void properties for let. Members explored whether there was a tension between the Council's desire to reduce the length of time a property is void and the need to ensure the property was let in a suitable condition. Members heard that the Council had committed funding within the capital programme to improving the condition of housing stock.

The panel discussed the process for assessing mental health enquiries as part of the assessment of applicants for housing needs. Ms Litts confirmed that an assessment of mental health needs was not carried out as part of the functional needs assessments and explained the context in which a person's mental health needs would be assessed.

**The panel noted the performance statement.**

### (iv) Development Services

Rhona Geisler gave an overview of the performance statement.

In response to questions in regard to the **percentage of public buildings that are suitable and accessible to disabled people** and in particular as to why the target was not 100%; Mrs Geisler confirmed that the target of 78% was a national target and explained the Council's legal obligations in regard to disabled access. Members also sought confirmation of the **percentage of the schools estate which complied with legislative requirements** for disabled access.

As a general point the conveners requested that services identify whether targets are local or national.

Members sought clarification on whether the target **average time of 48 hours to attend domestic noise nuisance complaints** would be met by the year end and sought clarification on the distinction in approach between domestic and antisocial noise complaints.

Members then discussed the **recycling performance targets** and noted the work being undertaken to meet the targets. Mrs Geisler confirmed that the targets were set nationally and outlined initiatives being undertaken to meet the Council's targets. In response to a question Mrs Geisler stated that an increase of population did not necessarily contribute to a proportioned increase in tonnage of waste sent to landfill.

Members sought background information to the **number of businesses supported by the Business Gateway**, looking in particular at their size, employee profile and success rate.

In regard to questions on the percentage of non-householder planning applications dealt with within 2 months, Mrs Geisler confirmed that the number of applications was increasing and it was anticipated that this would continue with the availability of Tax incremental Funding (TiF).

The panel then discussed the **percentage of primary school children travelling actively to school i.e. walking or cycling** and sought confirmation that the Council had bid for funding to use the former Falkirk Denny railway line as a cycle/walking route. Mrs Geisler confirmed that a bid had been made and that the Council would continue to bid for external funding when it was available for such projects.

Mrs Geisler confirmed that there were excellent off road routes available within the area and that the service took a multi strand approach, with education a key strand.

In regard to the **percentage of operational buildings which were suitable for their current use** Mrs Geisler confirmed that the Municipal Buildings fell within this category and explained the criteria used to measure the performance indicator.

**The panel noted the performance statement.**

**The panel agreed to continue consideration of the Education and Social Work Services performance statements to the next meeting on 23 January 2014.**

#### **PP4. SERVICE PERFORMANCE PANEL REPORTING**

The panel considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting a standard reporting format for approval.

The role of the panel was to scrutinise services performance. A draft report format had been developed to ensure a consistency in reporting across services. The report sets out:-

- progress on the Service Plan;
- service performance;
- service achievement;
- service improvement; and
- information on any impending major audit or inspection activity.

Members discussed the draft reporting format and its relationship with the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. In response to a statement that the corporate plan should be a 'live' document, the Chief Executive confirmed that it was regularly reviewed and reported upon.

**The panel agreed to adopt the draft performance reporting format as set out in the appendix to the report.**

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**MINUTE of MEETING of the PERFORMANCE PANEL held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on THURSDAY 23 JANUARY 2014 at 9.30 AM.**

**CORE MEMBERS:** Allyson Black  
Baillie Joan Paterson  
Depute Provost John Patrick

**MEMBERS**  
**ATTENDING:** David Alexander  
Jim Blackwood  
Steven Carleschi  
Colin Chalmers  
Dennis Goldie  
Linda Gow  
Brian McCabe  
John McLuckie  
John McNally  
Cecil Meiklejohn  
Malcolm Nicol  
Alan Nimmo  
Provost Pat Reid  
Ann Ritchie  
Sandy Turner

**OFFICERS:** Margaret Anderson, Director of Social Work Services  
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement  
Nigel Fletcher, Joint Acting Director of Education  
Rose Mary Glackin, Chief Governance Officer  
Gary Greenhorn, Joint Acting Director of Education  
Susan Mathers, Depute Chief Finance Officer  
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer  
Mark Meechan, Community Learning and Development  
Manager  
Philip Morgan Klein, Service Manager, Social Work Services  
Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive  
Brian Smail, Chief Finance Officer  
Antonia Sobieraj, Committee Services Officer

**PP5. MINUTE**

**Decision**

**The minute of the meeting of the Performance Panel held on 28 November 2013 was approved.**



## **PP6. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION 2012/13 AND 2013/14 TO DATE**

At its meeting on 28 November 2013, the panel considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting individual service performance statements for the financial year 2012/13 and for the year 2013/14 to date and had agreed to continue consideration of the performance statements for Education and Social Work Services to this meeting. The Convener advised that the continued items would be considered along with the Scrutiny Reports for each service which appeared later on the agenda.

## **PP7. EDUCATION SERVICES SCRUTINY REPORT**

The panel considered a report by the Joint Acting Directors of Education setting out performance for the service for the period April to December 2013.

Gary Greenhorn, Nigel Fletcher and Mark Meechan gave an overview of the report.

Members, whilst welcoming the comprehensive information presented, questioned the need for the high number of indicators to be reported to the panel. In response, Mr Fletcher indicated that Education was the most closely monitored local authority Service and performance was reported both at a national and local level. In recognition of the need to closely monitor and access the information presented to the panel, Members thereafter requested a review of the number of agenda items and panel meetings as the full scrutiny and analysis of the information presented was essential.

Members raised concern at what they considered to be a cumbersome public complaints procedure currently operating within the Service. In response, Mr Fletcher indicated that the Service was currently reviewing the procedure and was producing a complaints protocol in accordance with national guidance. Complaints were, in the first instance, investigated at a school level and only as a last resort did Education centrally become involved. Members then stressed the value of the work undertaken by Community Learning and Development (CLD) and requested that future reports separate the CLD work from that of Education as a whole. This would acknowledge the importance of the CLD work, particularly in the light of the Welfare Reform agenda and the implications for vulnerable people within the local community.

Concern was expressed on the instances of violence by pupils on staff and the significant increase in incidents reported from the 2007/8 baseline. Further information was sought on the types of reported cases and the investigation measures undertaken by the Service.

The Chief Executive, in general clarification, indicated that the increase in instances recorded was partly due to an increase in reporting levels. Mr Greenhorn and Mr Fletcher explained that instances reported ranged from verbal attacks to physical violence, although the physical attacks were few in number. The majority of reported instances were investigated at the school level and appropriate sanctions were put in place. Mr Fletcher undertook to provide members with a breakdown of the various types of cases reported.

Questions were asked in connection with the current teacher numbers within schools, how vacancies were filled and the process for retaining probationers. In response, Mr Greenhorn advised that primary teacher numbers were growing in line with demographic trends and that those within secondary schools had remained static. There was a national shortfall in certain secondary teacher subject disciplines and a shortage of supply teachers. The Service was currently looking at ways to attract teachers to the area. The standard of probationers was high and there was a good success rate in retaining them within Falkirk schools. The issue of headteacher recruitment was discussed. Some concern was expressed that there were difficulties in attracting a sufficient number of candidates to be headteachers. Mr Fletcher acknowledged that there were difficulties in attracting candidates for some schools. This reflected national trends. It was suggested that some difficulty may arise where headteachers are seconded to Education Services HQ. Mr Fletcher advised that there were no such secondments to HQ. There were moves between schools particularly in the primary sector. This created valuable development opportunities for staff.

Members sought clarification on the effect staffing reductions in the centre had on the service provision. In response, Mr Greenhorn intimated that the Service aimed to prevent a reduction in frontline services as far as possible. To this end, and to increase efficiency, the Service was currently involved in a business transformation process. Its purpose was to 'join up' services by increasing opportunities and interaction between different sections of the service or with other Services where possible thereby creating a 'one door' service. A recent project linked up Finance benefits payments with Education school clothing grants.

An explanation was sought on the measures in place to address the disparity between the Council charges and those of the Falkirk Community Trust, the high charging levels generally and the need for a single point of contact for the hire of open spaces and halls. Mr Greenhorn indicated that the Service was currently looking at a 'one door' letting arrangement for schools and all community halls. This would harmonise charges and provide increased efficiency. A pilot would commence within the following two weeks with a report being submitted to members in the near future. Members' questions then related to the proposals for the future use of the Victoria Buildings in Falkirk, formerly used by Library Services, Community Learning and Development (CLD) and Falkirk Community Trust. In response, the Chief Executive advised that a report on options for the use of Victoria Buildings would be submitted to members for consideration in due course.

Members raised the importance of attainment for Looked after Children. Information was sought on the difference between the average tariff scores for Looked after Children and the school population as a whole as well as the comparison between the young people who were looked after away from home and those looked after at home. Reference was made to the higher level of attainment in the Council's Residential Units. Ms Anderson confirmed that high attainment within the Units had been achieved through sustained effort and stability within the Unit. There was recognition that young people under supervision at home often faced significant adversities and would often have a home life which was less stable than those in a sustained residential or foster placement. Education and Social Work Services worked in collaboration to provide as much support as possible for this group.

Members highlighted the importance of joint and partnership working between Services and other agencies including appropriate information sharing to ensure interventions necessary for the child's education and wellbeing. In response, Mr Fletcher confirmed the value of working on a multi agency basis and intimated that the Service was building on the good practice in this area. Ms Anderson referred to the information sharing agreements now in place between Social Work and Education Service's. These agreements facilitated joint working in instances where more intensive support was required. The speed of the intervention depended on the nature of the case. In child protection cases, the intervention was immediate.

**The panel noted the service's performance.**

## **PP8. SOCIAL WORK SERVICES SCRUTINY REPORT**

The panel considered a report by the Director of Social Work Services setting out the performance for the service from April to September 2013.

Margaret Anderson gave an overview of the report.

Clarification was sought on the progress of the Health and Social Care integration and the utilisation of the Change Fund. In response, Ms Anderson confirmed that a full option appraisal on Health and Social Care integration and compliance arrangements was currently underway and a report, including proposals for the utilisation of the national integration (Change) Fund, would be submitted to members for consideration. The Bill had very recently been subject to significant amendments and the implications of these needed to be considered.

Members sought clarification on the arrangements for the implementation of Self Directed Support (SDS) Bill including the engagement with the voluntary and external sectors. In response, Ms Anderson confirmed the establishment of a project board including representatives from Finance and other appropriate Council Services to progress the implementation work. The engagement activities included consultation events with service users and Home Care providers. Ms Anderson then undertook to provide members with an update on developments underway on SDS in the Information Bulletin.

Members raised concern in relation to Occupational Therapist (OT) Assessments and the decline in performance in relation to the number of pending assessments. Ms Anderson confirmed that all posts were currently filled and the earlier backlog of assessments had been completed. There continued to be a significant and increasing pressure on Social Work Services generally. It was therefore necessary that all work was prioritised. In terms of OT Assessments, the priority one cases were being responded to.

The issue of delay between OT home adaptation assessments and the completion of adaptation work within homes was also raised. Ms Anderson clarified the process undertaken following the initial assessment.

In response to questions about the safety of older people with dementia living at home, Ms Anderson referred to the wide ranging post diagnostic support provided to sufferers and their families in line with the national dementia strategy. This included working with Alzheimer's Scotland and information sharing with NHS Forth Valley and other appropriate agencies to ensure the right package of support and monitoring. Ms Anderson undertook to seek clarification on the current practice for removing domestic equipment, for example, microwaves should a safety issue be identified. Members requested figures for the total number of Council and Private Care Homes within the Council area and the current vacancies. Further clarification was additionally sought on the new Government guidance for patients' choice in relation to care homes. Ms Anderson agreed to provide

members with information on the number of care homes and advised that the recent guidance at the end of 2013 required families to choose a total of three care homes with one of these having a current vacancy. This new guidance was a significant departure from the previous policy. Members also noted that private care homes had the discretion on whether to accept an individual and may make that choice based on whether the individual was self funding or not.

**The panel noted the service's performance.**

## **PP9. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE SCRUTINY REPORT**

### **(1) Finance**

Bryan Smail and Susan Mathers gave an overview of the report.

In relation to the members' inquiries on behalf of local residents, members requested that should a local Member be involved in a query through Finance, that its resolution be advised to the local member as a matter of course. Mr Smail agreed that this would be reasonable.

In relation to customer service and the objective, **percentage of incoming calls answered promptly**, members questioned the value of this measure and suggested an alternative measure on the number of unanswered calls. Ms Mathers agreed that there could be some advantage in measuring the number of unanswered calls instead and this would be considered.

Members then sought clarification on the ethical investments within the Pension Fund and sought reassurance that effective monitoring was taking place. The Convener confirmed that regular monitoring arrangements were undertaken by the Pensions Committee with Fund Managers.

In relation to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), the issue of the amount of the budget which remained unspent and the decision to take Disability Living Allowance (DLA) into account when assessing eligibility for a payment. Ms Mathers explained the rationale for taking DLA into account and advised that this was consistent with DWP guidance. In relation to uptake, she advised that targeted efforts were underway to maximise uptake. It was anticipated that expenditure would be close to budget by the close of the financial year.

**The panel noted the Finance Division's performance.**

### **(2) Governance**

Rose Mary Glackin gave an overview of the report.

Clarification was requested on the cost and security implications of document scanning for the Council. Ms Glackin, in response, indicated that the Council's document scanning was undertaken in accordance with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 and security was paramount in line with the Act's provisions. The filing of traditional paper files was becoming unsustainable and the scanning process was proving to be cost efficient and was being implemented for all Council Services with full access and document retrieval.

Information was sought on whether elected members could participate in the Customer First System. Ms Glackin indicated that the system had been designed with elected members being to the fore of the process. The Business and Members Services Manager would, in due course, provide an update for members on the programme for members' access and training. In response to further questions on the upgrading of IT equipment for members, Ms Campbell provided an update on the timeframe involved for the tendering and purchase of upgraded in-house equipment and securely encrypted mobile devices.

A request was made for details of the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received within the Council including the number of refusals. The Chief Governance Officer undertook to provide this information.

Clarification on the basis for different timescale performance measures between offers to lease commercial premises and to buy back former Council houses was sought. Ms Glackin advised that the offers were different in nature with significantly different amounts of work required before the offer could be issued.

Members sought clarification on the role of the printworks, the client base and the business generated. Ms Glackin indicated that the Council was the principal client of the printworks but external business was also sought. The printworks had proved to be cost effective and competitive.

**The panel noted the Governance Division's performance.**

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**MINUTE of MEETING of the PERFORMANCE PANEL held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on THURSDAY 20 MARCH 2014 at 9.30 AM.**

**CORE MEMBERS:** Allyson Black  
Baillie Joan Paterson  
Depute Provost John Patrick

**MEMBERS**  
**ATTENDING:** Stephen Bird  
Jim Blackwood  
Colin Chalmers  
Tom Coleman  
Gerry Goldie  
John McLuckie  
Cecil Meiklejohn  
Provost Pat Reid

**OFFICERS:** Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement  
Alex Finlay, Business Development Manager  
Arlene Fraser, Committee Services Officer  
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services  
Jennifer Litts, Head of Housing  
David McGhee, Head of Resources and Procurement  
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer  
John Paterson, Head of Operational Services

**PP10. MINUTE**

**Decision**

The minute of the meeting of the Performance Panel held on 23 January 2014 was approved.

**PP11. CORPORATE & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY REPORT**

The panel considered a report by the Director of Corporate & Neighbourhood Services setting out the performance for the service from April to December 2013.

Fiona Campbell gave an overview of the report and the new reporting format.

Members praised both the Council's Procurement Team and the Building Maintenance Division on their success in receiving awards at recent ceremonies.

Members sought information on the buy back initiative and in particular whether the criteria would be relaxed to include the purchase of 3 bedroom properties. Jennifer Litts advised that there was not such a demand on 3 bedroom properties and the Council already had difficulty in letting 3 bedroom flatted properties. The service would look at options and cost implications to address the high number of voids of this type and size of

properties within specific areas. In relation to void figures, properties can be excluded if major works are being undertaken.

Clarification was also sought on the criteria followed by the Council when purchasing properties on the open market. Ms Litts confirmed that the Council did not exceed the District Valuer's valuation when acquiring properties. She further advised that a progress report on the buy back initiative would be considered at a future meeting of the Executive.

Members questioned how the **Estate Management** outcomes were monitored. Ms Litts advised that there is an ongoing programme of works with feedback coming from various sources, including tenants' forums, customer surveys and officers undertaking "walkrounds".

In relation to **% of new tenancies sustained for 12 months**, members questioned why there is an "unknown" category for tenancy terminations. Ms Litts advised that this category was required due to no recorded reason being given for terminating the property, or due to property abandonment which equated to approximately 6 properties per month. Reference was made to the Council's resources which are available to support vulnerable tenants sustain their tenancy.

Members sought an update on the progress in relation to **Older Persons Housing**. Ms Litts advised that 4 properties at Tygetshaugh, Denny had been let through housing with care needs, with 2 other properties let via social work.

Members asked whether it was possible to have more specific areas included within the indicator, **customer complaints/enquiries**. Fiona Campbell advised that a review of the performance indicators which all services report was currently ongoing and perhaps this was an area which could be included.

Clarification was sought on how the audit of the Falkirk Community Planning Partnership (FCPP) by Audit Scotland had been reported. Fiona Campbell advised that the audit would be reported to FCPP in the first instance. She confirmed that she would seek advice on whether this item would be considered by the Executive or by Falkirk Council.

The panel discussed the improvement of the **% of repairs completed within target times**, particularly in relation to the external contractors' target. David McGhee referred to the quality management approach which had helped develop supplier relations and improved external supplier performance.

Information was provided in relation to the definition between an enquiry and a complaint and how staff absence levels had impacted on the performance in dealing with these within the specified timescales. Information was also provided on the new customer complaints system and the new timescales for resolving public sector complaints.

In relation to performance indicators, Fiona Campbell advised that it was not appropriate to set targets for certain PIs e.g. drug deaths which could not be compared and that for new PIs, as yet there was no measure of target and in addition some PIs are reported annually and will be included in the next report.

Members were advised that there is an ongoing review of call handling to ensure that realistic targets are met.

Clarification was given on the method of sharing customer survey data with members and the different ways of measuring surveys, in particular the reporting of **user satisfaction: street cleansing**. Information was also provided on the range of methods used to assess the **cleanliness in public places**.

The panel discussed the housing allocations system and in particular the supply and demand for certain property types/sizes; the special letting invitations for home movers when applying for new build tenancies and the record checks undertaken on prospective applicants. Reference was made to problems arising when other parties moved in with tenants' after the tenancy was established.

Fiona Campbell advised that an update on the equal pay claim would be provided to members.

### **Decision**

**The panel noted the performance statement.**

Councillor Goldie left the meeting after consideration of the foregoing item of business.

## **PP12. DEVELOPMENT SERVICES SCRUTINY REPORT**

The panel considered a report by the Director of Development Services setting out the performance for the service from April to December 2013.

Rhona Geisler gave an overview of the report.

Members praised staff within Development Services on their success in receiving awards at recent ceremonies.

In response to a question in regard to how Development Services collects data on energy consumption, Rhona Geisler advised that data was collected in a number of ways with work being undertaken to develop the CRC template which would enhance the data quality. She confirmed that with regard to council buildings, only energy consumption is measured and not energy efficiency.

Members sought clarification on the **Community Benefits in Procurement (CBiP)**. Mrs Geisler advised that the initiative had been developed jointly by Development Services and Corporate & Neighbourhood Services. The programme was seen as an exemplar and had generated training and employment opportunities for youngsters through various diverse projects and contracts.

Clarification was also sought on how Falkirk reached the target figure for the **number of graduates placed with Falkirk Council**. Mrs Geisler confirmed that the target figures had been developed based on our own knowledge and the Council strived to make a commitment to place graduates.

In response to a question in regard to apprentice opportunities offered by the NHS and the Child Support Agency, Mrs Geisler advised that certain posts e.g. cleaning and catering were delivered by SECRO and not in-house.

The expression of interest relating to **Bo'ness Town Centre – progress regeneration potential** was welcomed and it was hoped that the developer would take this forward.

Members sought clarification on the **overall % of road network that should be considered for maintenance treatment**. Mrs Geisler advised that overall roads are improving, however, if there was any specific road which members considered required maintenance, she would have this investigated.



Members discussed the number of road networks and bridges which are currently undergoing major reconstruction and maintenance work, and the impact and delays that this is having on commuters and businesses.

In response to a question in regard to the **public access: % of Council buildings that are suitable and accessible to disabled people**, Mrs Geisler advised that those which are not accessible are Council buildings which are older and unable to be adapted for various reasons.

Clarification was sought on the lengthy planning process and how it affects business. Mrs Geisler advised that all applicants should be encouraged to make early contact with Development Services staff who can assist at pre-application stage and help streamline the application process.

The Panel then discussed the outcome **our open spaces will be attractive, accessible and safe** and, in particular, to the development of the open spaces in Hallglen/Lionthorn area which has had economic benefits and assisted business developments. Mrs Geisler advised that partnership working with communities had ensured the successful delivery of projects. She further advised that the Council had recently been invited to bid for funding for community link projects by the Sustrans cycling charity. Members enquired about the possibility of providing additional provisions to encourage children and adults to use cycle paths e.g. outside libraries, cycle racks for all schools. The issue of lack of signage within some areas of the pathways network to the Helix was also highlighted, particularly in relation to villages within the Braes area.

In response to a question in regard to the outcome **our Citizens will be protected**, Members were advised that the Council develops the Major Accident Hazard Plan which is shared with all multi-agency blue light services. Since the change over to Police Scotland, changes and new enhanced arrangements had been applied and tested during the recent flooding risk in Grangemouth.

Clarification was sought on the lack of tourism signage, particularly in relation to the “Kelpies” and the launch of “Home” in April. Mrs Geisler advised that the Council were currently working with Transport Scotland in relation to motorway signs and that our Tourism Signage Strategy was now being implemented. The promotion of “Home” was underway with various marketing channels and events being utilised to ensure national and international awareness.

Provost Reid and Councillor Blackwood left the meeting at this point.

In relation to performance indicators that showed a N/A value, Mrs Geisler explained that the majority of these PIs are reported annually and would be included within the next reporting period. She further explained that the 100% target set for **customer complaints/enquires Stage 1 responded to within target time** is a corporate target and it is hoped that the target will be achieved with the introduction of the new CRM system which will better categorise what is a complaint/enquiry. The new system is far more sophisticated and designed to inform customers of what will happen next, when to expect this, and not just acknowledge a complaint/enquiry. Standard letters are currently being developed and it was suggested that it may be useful to include additional response information for the customer to ensure they are in agreement with the process to be followed.

## **Decision**

**The panel noted the performance statement.**

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**MINUTE of MEETING of the PERFORMANCE PANEL held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on THURSDAY 29 MAY 2014 at 2.00 PM.**

**CORE MEMBERS:** Depute Provost Patrick  
Baillie Paterson  
Rosie Murray

**MEMBERS**  
**ATTENDING:** David Alexander  
Stephen Bird  
Jim Blackwood  
Steven Carleschi  
Colin Chalmers  
Linda Gow  
Craig Martin  
Cecil Meiklejohn  
Provost Pat Reid

**OFFICERS:** Shona Barton, Committee Services Officer  
Margaret Anderson, Director of Social Work Services  
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement  
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer  
Philip Morgan-Klein, Service Manager, Social Work Services  
Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive  
Marion Reddie, Head of Community Care

**PP1. MINUTE**

**Decision**

The minute of the meeting of the Performance Panel held on 20 March 2014 was approved.

**PP2. SOCIAL WORK SERVICE SCRUTINY REPORT**

The panel considered a report by the Director of Social Work Services setting out the performance for the service from April to December 2013.

Margaret Anderson gave an overview of the report.

Members praised staff in Social Work Services who had been shortlisted in the final of the Care Accolades. They also commended the staff at the Tremana unit who have been awarded the Reaching High Award.

Baillie Paterson entered the meeting at this point.

Members sought information on the improvement actions in relation to sickness absence with particular reference to absence related to skin conditions and musculo-skeletal problems. Ms Anderson advised that there was a dedicated training input in relation to moving and handling training and that there were tight procedures and regulations in place in terms of infection control. Good use was also made of the Council physiotherapy service. She noted, however, that there were a number of long serving employees who have persistent musculo-skeletal problems which have been caused by doing this type of work over a long term period.

Councillors Martin and Meiklejohn entered the meeting at this point.

Clarification was sought on those absences which are being attributed to mental well-being and whether these were work related. Ms Anderson advised that the figures for Occupational Health referrals showed a 50/50 split between work related and non work related. She noted that some posts were emotionally demanding and that staff were involved in psychologically demanding situations.

Members asked what measures are being taken to mitigate the stress to staff. Ms Anderson advised that there are well developed HR policies in place with regard to stress and mental well being. Any absence in this area would trigger a referral to Occupational Health and a stress risk assessment would be undertaken which would result in a management plan being put in place. She also noted that there were good pointers as to what people can do individually to manage stress.

Members asked if a breakdown could be provided relating to musculo-skeletal absence and how many of the absences are due to a long term condition and how many are due to new problems. Ms Anderson advised that she would look at providing this information.

Clarification was sought on the shortage of equipment being experienced in the Occupational Therapy sector. Ms Anderson advised that although there were some issues in this area it was not seen as being critical.

Members sought information on the triage system for Occupational Therapy referrals, and if personal care services were used pending the installation of an adaptation could this compromise the client's independence. Ms Anderson advised if a client's independence is compromised that they would be a priority 1 referral and would therefore receive appropriate adaptations.

Members asked for information on the procedures for notifying clients who are assessed as priority 2 or 3 of their expected waiting times, and also how changes in circumstances are notified which may affect the level of priority. Ms Anderson advised that case workers are asked to keep clients updated and that they should be alerted to any changes in a client's circumstances. She also advised that managers take any changes to circumstance into account and deploy resources according to the level of risk.

A question was asked relating to the joint loan equipment store and the difficulties with people waiting for extended periods to receive equipment or for it to be picked up; with in some cases clients being asked to leave equipment outside if they no longer require it and have no room for storage. Ms Anderson advised that delivery of equipment was always prioritised over picking up, but she was unaware of clients being asked to leave equipment outside. She also noted that issues with cross contamination can result in delays with delivery and pickup of equipment.

Councillor Carleschi entered the meeting at this point.

Members sought information on the ongoing work at the walled garden in Dollar Park and the reasons for the work being on hold at the moment. Ms Anderson advised that she would look into this and report back to members.

A question was asked relating to the development of an Autism Strategy. Ms Anderson advised that following on from the publication of the National Autism Strategy, work was carried out locally to develop a strategy in partnership with NHS Forth Valley. The Strategy focussed on early intervention and early diagnosis as evidence had shown that some problems can be prevented in later years with early intervention with families.

Members sought clarification on whether patients are being placed in hospital in Sauchie, and the difficulties faced by families in terms of visiting their relatives. Ms Pitcaithly advised that NHS Forth Valley is responsible for making these decisions and that if beds become available in for example Sauchie or Stirling then they can move patients to these hospitals without consultation with the Council or with the family.

Members asked for information on the reasons for there still being a significant problem with delayed discharge. Ms Pitcaithly advised that people in care homes are now living for longer, meaning that the number of places which become available at any one time has decreased. She also noted that care homes can prioritise those patients who are self-funding as this can provide greater income than those who are being Council funded.

A question was asked in relation to the timescales for community care assessments taking place and whether these could be initiated before patients are discharged. Ms Pitcaithly advised that this was something which the service was aware was a problem and there was a need for hospital staff to alert Social Work earlier when patients were ready for discharge.

Members asked if further information could be provided on the length of time it takes for community care assessments to be undertaken for all category of clients, with a summary of those who were category 3 and became category 2 after they were assessed.

Members asked for information on the efforts being made to keep applicants informed in relation to community care assessments, with particular reference to the information that goes out to the client or their family. Ms Anderson advised that team managers do their best to work in challenging circumstances. She also advised that she accepted the points being raised and the ideal of a preventative and early intervention approach to service delivery.

Further concern was expressed over the triage process, noting that elderly people tend to wait till the last minute to seek help. It was noted that often initial screening was done via a telephone interview without meeting the client in person.

Provost Reid left the meeting at this point.

A question was asked in relation to the ability for prisoners to retain their band 1 homeseeker status while they are in prison, meaning that they have priority over other applicants when they are released from prison. Ms Anderson advised that she would look into this and report back to members.

Members asked about the success of the Tygetshaugh Unit in Denny and how this has helped in making sure people can get back to their homes. Ms Pitcaithly advised that this unit has proved successful and that more of this type of provision would help with bed blocking.

A question was asked about the balance of Social Work Teams and the ability for staff to carry out Occupational Therapy Assessments. Ms Anderson advised that each team does have a qualified Occupational Therapist and if all were unavailable this would be flagged up and managers would deal with this.

Clarification was sought on whether leaflets were handed out to patients who were subject to delayed discharge. Ms Reddie advised that it was her understanding that this was in place.

Councillor Martin left the meeting at this point.

Concern was raised in relation to bathroom assessments and how there could be times where no interim arrangements were put in place. It was suggested that this could be an area for more joined-up working with NHS Forth Valley. Ms Anderson advised that the forthcoming Health and Social Care Integration could be an opportunity to do more joined-up working.

A question was asked regarding the recruitment process for Occupational Therapists, and the number of staff who are on temporary contracts. Ms Anderson advised that there are a fixed number of permanent posts on the establishment and it wouldn't be as a matter of course to fill posts on a temporary basis.

### **Decision**

**The panel noted the performance statement.**

Councillor Gow left the meeting at this point.

## **PP3. PERFORMANCE PANEL – MEETING ARRANGEMENTS UPDATE**

The panel considered a report by the Chief Governance Officer which advised of a revised reporting schedule.

At the meeting of the panel held on 23 January 2014, members requested that a review of both the number of meetings and the reporting schedule be undertaken. The core members met on 17 March 2014 to discuss the meeting arrangements and agreed a revised reporting schedule, as follows:-

Thursday 15 May at 9.30 a.m	Social Work Services
Thursday 19 June at 9.30 a.m	Service Plans
Friday 26 September at 9.30 a.m	Chief Executive Office; Education Services;
Thursday 20 November at 9.30 a.m	Corporate and Neighbourhood Services; Development Services
January 2015 at 9.30 a.m (tbc)	Social Work Services
March 2015 at 9.30 a.m (tbc)	Chief Executive Office; Education Services;

### **Decision**

**The panel noted the revised reporting schedule to March 2015.**