

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on THURSDAY 14 AUGUST 2014 at 9.30 A.M.

COUNCILLORS: Allyson Black
Charles MacDonald
John McLuckie
Baillie Joan Paterson
Provost Pat Reid

OFFICERS: Margaret Anderson, Director of Social Work Services
Jack Frawley, Committee Services Officer
Carole Jones, Service Manager
Liz McGhee, Service Manager
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer
Margaret Petherbridge, Project Development Manager
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager

S18. APOLOGIES

An apology was intimated on behalf of Baillie William Buchanan.

S19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Black declared a non-financial interest in item S21 (e) as company secretary of an organisation, Grangemouth Carers, some of whose clients avail themselves of the services provided by Forth Valley Self Directed Support and considered that this required her to recuse herself from consideration of the item having regard to the objective test in the Code of Conduct.

S20. MINUTES

Decision

- (a) The minute of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 12 June 2014 was approved; and
- (b) The minute of the meeting of the Performance Panel held on 29 May 2014 was noted.

S21. FOLLOWING THE PUBLIC POUND UPDATE: HEALTH & OLDER PEOPLE

The committee considered a report by the Director of Social Work Services which provided an update on the work of external organisations in receipt of funding which provided services relating to health and older people, and which fall within the 'Following the Public Pound' (FPP) reporting and monitoring arrangements.

The report provided: (a) an overview of the main challenges arising as a result of future demographic change and major health issues; (b) information on the strategic context behind the provision of health and older peoples services; (c) an overview of the funded organisations providing health and older peoples' services; and (d) an assessment of each individual organisations performance.

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

Margaret Anderson provided an overview of the report and noted the importance of effective partnership working in order to meet the needs of service users as demand increases.

The committee discussed some of the major challenges in relation to health and older people making reference to the availability of acute hospital beds and delayed discharge as well as the level of mental health provision in the local area. Margaret Anderson advised that in caring for older people there were often multiple issues present and made reference to the impact of dementia.

Following discussion from the committee regarding the counselling service available to Council employees, Margaret Anderson noted that the service was provided by registered counsellors which enabled employees to talk in confidence about anxiety and stress. However, the committee was also advised that this counselling should not be considered to be a mental health service. Margaret Anderson noted that as well as the benefit to staff provided by the counselling service there was a benefit to managers who were reassured that any staff under pressure had access to support.

The committee discussed the local provision of care homes as a destination for people ready for hospital discharge, Margaret Anderson stated that the social work service always sought to provide people with the best placement for their needs at the right time however the committee was also advised of the situation regarding care home vacancies locally which did not always allow for first choice placement. In response to a question about the opportunity families have to select their preferred care home, Margaret Anderson noted that three options are selected by families but that in accordance with recent national policy one choice must be a care home with a vacancy at that time. The committee discussed the impact of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 on service delivery to older people.

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

(a) The Princess Royal Trust Carers Centre (Falkirk & Clackmannanshire)

Margaret Anderson provided an overview of the report, advising that the organisation provided information and training to people from the Falkirk area; and group and individual support. The committee made reference to the particular importance of the support provided regularly to 129 young carers and the awareness raising work carried out in schools.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged the progress made by The Princess Royal Trust Carers Centre (Falkirk & Clackmannanshire) in meeting Council priorities.

(b) Meals on Wheels

Liz McGhee advised the committee that in delivering the Meals on Wheels service Falkirk Council provided meals through use of school kitchens and employed vehicle drivers while the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) provided volunteers to deliver the meals. It was noted that a joint agreement stated that a minimum of 50 volunteers would be provided by RVS for the delivery of this service and that the funding provided to the organisation facilitated the recruitment, PVG checks and training of volunteers.

Discussion took place on the demand for the service in the face of competition from other providers, Liz McGhee advised that 469 meals were provided on average each week and that the menu provided choice, met nutritional needs and went through cycles to keep choices fresh and up to date with tastes.

In response to a discussion on recruitment methods, Liz McGhee advised that posters, newspaper adverts and afternoon teas were just some of the ways that the RVS recruited volunteers and that the organisation had a long history of successful volunteer recruitment.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged the progress made by Meals on Wheels in meeting Council priorities.

(c) Alzheimer Scotland

Carole Jones provided an overview of the report and noted that Alzheimer Scotland deals with all forms of dementia. Particular reference was made to the provision of post diagnostic support for up to one year as this was a key period in the lives of many dementia patients, it was also noted that the incidences of dementia in Forth Valley and Falkirk had risen.

The committee discussed the post diagnosis referral process; Carole Jones advised that a GP would make the referral with the permission of their patient. In response to a question on what could be done when the person diagnosed is in denial or refuses help, Carole Jones noted that staff are trained and experienced in dealing with such issues and that support is also given to carers. The importance of trained, highly skilled staff was highlighted in reference to giving advice on sensitive topics such as power of attorney.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged the progress made by Alzheimer Scotland in meeting Council priorities.

(d) Falkirk and District Association for Mental Health (FDAMH)

Carole Jones provided an overview of the report including a summary of the organisations key achievements and noted that FDAMH continued to have a large number of referrals.

The committee discussed the importance of the service provided by FDAHM and the expected increase in demand on the service as a result of welfare changes. It was also noted that the stability of three year funding allowed the organisation to plan for the future and focus on service delivery.

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

(e) Forth Valley Self Directed Support (previously Direct Payments Support Service)

Margaret Petherbridge provided an overview of the report and noted that the reach of direct payments had been extended by the Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013. The implementation of the Act required local authorities to offer people four choices on how they receive their social care: direct payment; the person directing the available support; the local authority arranging the support; and a mix of the other options. Margaret Petherbridge also advised that the Scottish Government desired that support be provided independently of the authority, which led to Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils recommitting funding to Forth Valley Self Directed Support.

Discussion took place on the amount of people supported per year, Margaret Petherbridge noted that while, as stated in the report, 60 individuals were provided with support to explore direct payments, the organisation dealt with many more people than that. It was noted that the new legislation had placed an increased demand on the service.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged the progress made by the Forth Valley Self Directed Support in meeting Council priorities.

Councillor Black re-entered the meeting at conclusion of the previous item of business.

S22. ISSUES CONSIDERED AT PERFORMANCE PANEL

The committee considered a report by the Chief Governance Officer highlighting a number of issues discussed at the Performance Panel since 28 November 2013, as potential subjects for the next Scrutiny Plan. The report highlighted areas where there had been: in-depth discussion; discussion on more than one occasion; or where the issue raised followed on from a recent policy development or initiative. The committee was invited to call for a report on any of these issues, or any other issue identified by the committee, which merited further discussion to determine suitability for inclusion to the Scrutiny Panel work plan for 2015.

The committee considered each issue in turn and made the following decisions:

1. The impact of welfare reform and the effectiveness of the arrangement put in place by the Council to mitigate its effects. The committee considered that it was still early in the implementation of the welfare reform and **did not request a report.**
2. The physical quality of housing allocated to tenants and the impact of the impetus to reduce the length of void periods. The committee heard that this issue was currently under evaluation through the use of a Housing Questionnaire and **did not request a report.**
3. The effectiveness of the business gateway service following its transfer in-house. Following discussion the committee **requested that a report with further information be submitted to an early meeting.**
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. Following discussion the committee sought clarity in relation to officers' time spent dealing with requests and the sources of requests. The committee **requested that a report with further information be submitted to an early meeting.**
5. Head Teacher recruitment, the secondment of head teachers from schools and the use of acting position in schools and Education Service management posts. Following discussion the committee sought clarity in relation to having former Falkirk Council teachers commencing supply work immediately after terminating employment with the Council and the process of Elected Member selection on school interview panels. The committee **requested that a report with further information be submitted to an early meeting**
6. The educational attainment of looked after children and other vulnerable groups. Following discussion the committee **requested that a report with further information be submitted to an early meeting.**
7. The effectiveness of the systems in place to assess community care needs, in particular, the prioritisation of assessments. Following discussion highlighting that this area would soon be under the control of the new Health and Social Care Partnership the committee **did not request a report.**

8. The provision of residential and nursing home places and the impact of delayed discharge from hospital. Following discussion highlighting that this area would soon be under the control of the new Health and Social Care Partnership the committee **did not request a report.**
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. Following discussion the committee **requested that a report with further information be submitted to an early meeting.**

Decision

The committee agreed that reports containing further information be submitted to the meeting of the committee on 11 September 2014 on issues 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9 as set out in section 2.2 of the report.