FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject:	**SCRUTINY PANEL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: FALKIRK COUNCIL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY**
Meeting:	**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
Date:	**14 May 2015**
Author:	**DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel established to review the Council's participation strategy – Have Your Say. The panel was established as part of the Scrutiny Committee's annual scrutiny plan and was established following the conclusion of the review of participation on external bodies.

1.2   The scope of this Panel was to examine the implementation of the Council's Community Involvement Strategy, 'Have Your Say', and make recommendations on changes in the strategy and practice where relevant. This report provides Members with information regarding the scrutiny process. The evidence provided at each of the scheduled meetings and the resultant conclusion and recommendations are provided within the appended report.

1.3   The Panel, chaired by Councillor Black and with other members being Councillor Murray and Provost Reid, agreed the scope of this scrutiny exercise, which was defined as: *'To examine the implementation of the Council's Community Involvement Strategy and make recommendations for changes to the strategy and current practice where required'.*

2.   SCRUTINY PROCESS

2.1   The Scrutiny process comprised a series of meetings which were planned to allow Members to gather evidence through presentations and discussion with a range of stakeholders.

2.2   To plan the process, Members of the Panel met to agree a scoping document, programme of work and meetings required to allow an effective scrutiny process to be undertaken. The schedule was:

	Purpose of Meeting	Date	Meeting Format
1	**Scoping Meeting** The detailed scope of the scrutiny was established and agreed.	6 November 2014	Private

2	**Background and Context** Caroline Binnie (Communications and Participation Manager) and Jonny Pickering (Stakeholder Engagement Officer) presented an overview of the Council's Community Involvement Strategy, approaches to informing, consulting, engaging and co-producing and barriers to consultation/engagement	26 November 2014	Public
3	*Scrutiny Committee* *Report scope of the Panel to Committee*	*1 December 2014*	*Public*
4	**Service and Good Practice Overviews** i. Alan Christie (Community Engagement Co-ordinator, Housing Services) and David Love (Senior Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, Housing Services) presented on the consultation on tenant participation; ii. Ross Fenwick (Waste Strategy Officer, Development Services) presented on community engagement around changes to the household refuse collection service in Falkirk; iii. Richard Teed (Senior Forward Planning Officer, Education Planning and Resources) presented on engagement carried out around the proposed change to the schools admission policy; iv. Leni Rademacher (Training Manager, Children and Families) presented on engagement activities with looked after children to encourage participation in the Referendum on Scottish Independence.	15 January 2015	Public
5	**Presentation from Community Learning & Development/Public Session** Session A: Mark Meechan (Community Learning and Development Manager, Education Services), Kate Kane and Frank McChord (Local Community Planning Officers, Education Services) presented on Local Community Planning and CLD achievements to date. Session B: Members of the public engaged in roundtable workshops to review the Community Involvement Strategy and their experiences of consultation and engagement.	17 February 2015	Public
6	**External Good Practice** i. Jenny Kane (Team Manager, Children and Families) presented an overview of various pieces of consultation/engagement carried out with Social Work clients from different age ranges; ii. David Stokoe (Service Manager, Communities, Cultural and Community Services)presented an overview of Perth and Kinross Council's approach to community engagement; iii. Lorraine Gillies (Community Planning Manager), presented an overview of West Lothian Council's approach to community engagement via the Community Planning Partnership.	26 February 2015	Public

7	**Review meeting** The Panel considered evidence presented to date and suggested recommendations for the final report.	26 February 2015	Private
8	**Engaging Members** i. The Communications and Participation Manager and Stakeholder Engagement Officer presented an overview of the Panel process ii. Members took part in a roundtable workshop with the Panel and supporting officers, focusing on the principles and practice of the Community Involvement Strategy.	16 March 2015	Private
9	**Draft Report followed by summing up on findings** Final meeting for Members to consider and amend the draft report.	21 April 2015	Private
10	**Final Report to Scrutiny Committee**	*14 May 2015*	*Public*
11	**Report to Executive**	*TBC*	*Public*

2.3   During the initial scoping meeting, Members agreed a range of particular issues to be addressed over the course of the Panel. These were:

- Principles of community involvement;
- Approaches to informing, consulting and engaging communities;
- Methods of consulting and engaging communities;
- Provision of feedback;
- Barriers to community involvement; and
- Engaging hard-to-reach groups.

2.4   Panel Members were initially provided with an information pack containing a range of background information, including:

- Report on Your Community, Your Place (30/01/14);
- Your Community, Your Place Workshop Feedback;
- Local Community Planning Update (17/06/14);
- Summary of Customer Satisfaction Survey 2014;
- Summary of Findings from the Community Participation Strategy Consultation;
- Have Your Say: A Plan for Local Involvement;
- Citizens' Panel Questionnaire 10;
- Citizens' Panel Questionnaire 11;
- Best Value Toolkit on Community Engagement; and
- Consultation Practices with Scottish Local Authorities and Community Planning Partnerships.

3. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The process of scrutiny undertaken was in line with procedural guidelines and allowed a full and transparent analysis of the scope set by the Scrutiny Panel, which was *'To examine the implementation of the Council's Community Involvement Strategy and make recommendations for changes to the strategy and current practice where required'.*

3.2 The evidence the panel considered is summarised in appendix one along with the recommendations arising from the review. The main findings of the panel are:

3.3 The principles upon which the existing strategy is based are sound and should be used more rigorously to guide the Council's approach to engagement and participation. They provide a firm foundation which if applied appropriately and systematically would ensure that the Council's approach to participation guides effective outcomes. However, it was also identified that if there is not integrity to approaching engagement and participation and a 'tick box' approach is employed, then the outcomes of the work can be questioned. It may be that if engagement is undertake poorly i.e. without clarity of purpose or thought about the methods, outcomes etc. then more resources have to be deployed to recover community goodwill.

3.4 It is important that even when undertaking statutory consultation that the principles within the strategy are applied and that engagement with communities happens prior to a formal statutory exercise. This again might be a better and more productive use of resources.

3.5 The principles are:

- **PURPOSE**: We will be clear whether we are informing, consulting or engaging with people. We will not consult when decisions have already been taken
- **INVOLVEMENT**: We will try to identify anyone who might be interested in any consultation or engagement and encourage them to be involved.
- **METHODS**: We will use the right methods of engagement in each situation.
- **INFORMATION**: We will share the information needed for people to participate and make it available in clear, accessible language.
- **WORKING TOGETHER**: We will treat all participants with respect. We may require people and organisations that represent their communities to show us how they collected the views of their community.
- **FEEDBACK**: We will always explain how people will receive feedback before they participate. We will always try to show how people's views have influenced the outcome.
- **IMPROVEMENT**: We will monitor and evaluate our approaches to community participation so that we can improve over time.

3.6 The panel heard from a number of Services and a number of examples of good practice were highlighted. However it was clear that Services could learn from each other of the work being undertaken across the Council. While there was an acknowledgement that there was a process for co-ordinating the Council's approach to engagement, services needed to participate in this more actively.

3.7   It was also noted that a range of consultation methods should be considered by services, depending on the issue, including surveys and focus groups and face-to-face meetings with community groups. Response times for consultations should be set to give the public sufficient time to respond and should take into account special considerations such as the time of year.

3.8   In addition the work being undertaken as part of the local community planning process needed to be more integrated into the strategic community planning process and also within the work of the Council. This, linked with the need to have a greater focus on 'place shaping' while developing a response to requirements of the Community Empowerment Bill, meant a greater emphasis having a robust process for local community planning.

3.9   To achieve the above, there is a need to develop a clear action plan underpinned by relevant training and co-ordinating. This would include further work being undertaken on the Council / services use of social media and further information on other Councils approaches to the budget consultation.

3.10   Recommendations arising from the work of the panel once considered by the Scrutiny Committee will be presented to the Executive. The Panel recommends that the Council:

1.   review the role, remit and membership of the Corporate Participation Group. This group has a central role in ensuring that there is a consistent approach to participation and engagement across the Council and promoting a best practice approach within Services;

2.   develop a robust process for local community planning which sets out a defined process for the production of plans. This would include consideration of using 'place shaping' tools such as "Planning for Real" in a consistent manner;

3.   develop a defined reporting framework for local community plans to ensure that reports on them are submitted to the Scrutiny Committee and then the Executive, prior to submission to the Community Planning Leadership Board;

4.   promote **Have Your Say**, the Plan for Local Involvement, and the principles set out within it more effectively, internally to Members and officers, and externally to communities and partner organisations. This would include producing a concise summary of the plan;

5.   ensure appropriate training is put in place for officers to enable them to implement the principles set out in the plan, for example Plain English training, training in survey design etc;

6.   record all consultation activity in a corporate database of consultation activities, drawing on Service Plans, Community Planning, to avoid duplication of consultation/engagement. The effectiveness and accessibility of the current database will also be reviewed;

7. provide information to the public/specific stakeholders prior to and after they have informed, consulted or engaged with communities, including feedback. There should also be a clear process for advising Members about consultations that are taking place and feeding the results back to them;

8. provide more information on consultations, community engagement and Local Community Planning in the consultation section of the Council's website;

9. explore different digital means of engaging with local and thematic communities. This could include the potential for using a bespoke online consultation platform such as Citizen Space. It would also include a review of how the Council's use of social media platforms could be expanded to support its engagement activities;

10. provide guidance and training to Members and officers on the use of social media to ensure this is being used more actively but appropriately;

11. ensure that appropriate methods are used to effectively consult and/or engage with hard-to-reach groups and consideration will be given to specific training on consulting and/or engaging hard-to-reach groups;

12. consider the impact of the Community Empowerment Bill and the Council's response to this in August 2015;

13. consider different ways of consulting on the budget employed by other Councils by August 2015 to inform the process going forward; and

14. ask Officers to report back to the Executive on progress on the above before the end of the year.

4. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 **It is recommended that the scrutiny committee:**

4.2 **note the work and findings of the Panel, and**

4.3 **consider the panel's conclusions and recommendations and make recommendations to the Executive accordingly.**

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1.   Nil

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone Falkirk 01324 506004 and ask for Fiona Campbell.

FALKIRK COUNCIL

SCRUTINY PANEL
HAVE YOUR SAY – A PLAN FOR LOCAL INVOLEMENT

FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the evidence gathered during scrutiny of Falkirk Council's 'Have Your Say: A Plan for Local Involvement', and to present the resulting conclusions and recommendations made by the Scrutiny Panel.

1.2   The Panel established and agreed the scope of the review as: 'To examine the implementation of the Council's Plan for Local Involvement and make recommendations for changes to the strategy and current practice where required'.

1.3   The members of the Scrutiny Panel were Councillor Allyson Black (Panel Chair), Councillor Rosie Murray and Provost Pat Reid.

2.   **EVIDENCE GATHERED: 1 December 2014**

Background and Context: Overview of 'Have Your Say'

2.1   To set the background and context for the scrutiny exercise, an initial presentation was made to the Panel on the principles[1] and general approach contained within "Have Your Say" the Council's Plan for Local Involvement. The presentation set out the Council's agreed standards for carrying out engagement activities and covered the mechanics of informing, consulting and engaging communities. Members were also provided with a comprehensive information pack, including the "Have Your Say" strategy and briefing notes on recent activities by Services.

2.2   During the presentation Members had the opportunity to raise issues and ask questions. This discussion is captured fully within the minutes, however the text below summarises some of the issues raised.

2.3   The Panel asked about external ratings for Council websites. It was noted that the Council website's SocITM rating had increased from a one star to a three star rating after its recent redevelopment, one of only five redesigned sites in the UK to go up by two stars. All web content has been rewritten in plain English and the new website is mobile responsive.

2.4   They also asked about how consultation activity is evaluated by Services to ensure that any lessons are learned. It was noted that consultation reviews are part of the Plan for Local Involvement but were perhaps not carried out as systematically as they could be.

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[1] A summary of the principles of community involvement can be found in Appendix 1. alongside the National Standards of Community Engagement, National Principles of Community Engagement, Social Work's Participation and Engagement Strategy and NHS Participation Standard.

This is an improvement area that could be looked at, including scope for utilising review templates for services.

2.5   The Panel discussed the importance of language when carrying out engagement exercises and how to reach large numbers of people. Plain English is one of the principles of "Have Your Say" and a training programme has now been delivered to over 100 staff by a specialist trainer. It was noted that Plain English had been critical to the high rating of the new Council website.

2.6   The Citizens Panel was discussed. The panel was established in 2010 and is used to consult the public on a wide range of issues, from bereavement services to parks to community safety. The panel currently has approximately 1,500 members and is in the process of being refreshed with new members. Members asked if area-specific questions could be asked through the Citizens Panel. It was noted that although this is possible, there may be more effective ways of getting localised data, such as door-to-door surveys, depending on the time available to do consultation or engagement.

2.7   Members asked what work was ongoing to ensure that the Citizens Panel was as representative as possible. It was noted that stratified random sampling[2] could be used to make the Citizens Panel membership more representative of the Council area population as a whole.

2.8   The Panel discussed the role of Community Councils in consultation and highlighted the challenges where no Community Council was active as well as the potential issue for engagement to be with the same people, rather than a wider cross-section of the community. It was noted that the implementation of Participation Requests in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill would give communities the opportunity to ask to be engaged in the development of local services. Further information will be prepared for Members once the Bill has been passed.

2.9   Members highlighted that where communities had provided comments it was important to give feedback afterwards, so that they knew what had been or had not been done and why.

2.10   The Panel asked how the voices of hard-to-reach groups could be included in consultations. It was noted that research had recently been carried out looking at the best ways of informing and engaging with hard-to-reach groups in relation to Welfare Reform advice services. This had been carried out by Jump Research, a specialist consultancy, and will be used to inform future consultations.

2.11   The Panel asked about the software used to analyse qualitative data. It was noted that qualitative data analysis software is available but is relatively expensive. Qualitative data collected, e.g. via discussion groups, is usually transcribed and then coded to identify key themes. Qualitative data is usually collected with relatively smaller numbers of people through interviews or focus groups, with surveys used mainly for quantitative data. The Council would generally use surveys to consult with larger numbers and from the results targeted drilling-down could then take place via focus groups. Ideally a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods would be used but this depends on the time available and the skill-sets of staff involved.

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[2] This is a sample in which units are randomly sampled from a population that has been divided into categories, for example, age, geography, socioeconomic background and so on.

2.12   The Panel asked about the Council's use of social media and whether this could be increased to improve and support public engagement. It was noted that the Council makes extensive use of Twitter to highlight service changes, consultation events and public meetings and to signpost people to the website, and that around 12,400 people are now following the Council's corporate account on Twitter. The majority of schools are on Twitter and there are Council-run Facebook accounts on specific themes, e.g. tourism. Members discussed the benefits of engaging through social media as the views of younger people were more likely to be captured. As well as social media, the Scottish Government and other local authorities are using new online platforms such as Mynewsdesk and Citizen Space to consult with stakeholders[3] and further research will be carried out into the costs and benefits of these.

2.13   The Panel asked about the involvement of young people, particularly following the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence which has citizenship as a key theme. Fiona Campbell discussed the participation of young people in communities and Pupil Councils and Members felt that high school pupils were more engaged than ever before.

3.   EVIDENCE GATHERED- SERVICE PRESENTATIONS -15 January 2015

3.1   Four presentations were delivered by services of specific interest to the Panel: Development Services, Housing Services, Education Services and Social Work Services.

Housing services: Consultation on tenant participation – Corporate and Neighbourhood Services (Alan Christie, Community Engagement Co-ordinator, and David Love, Senior Neighbourhood Co-ordinator)

3.2   The consultation on tenant participation was carried out in 2014 by Research Resource. 1034 tenants took part in a telephone survey to find out if they were satisfied with their opportunities to participate. As a result Housing has gained an insight into tenants' preferred means of participation.

3.3   Members asked which other Councils scored above the national average for tenant satisfaction and if they were doing anything different which could be learned from. It was noted that Aberdeenshire, North Lanarkshire and West Lothian Councils were above the national average, however methods depended on local community needs. Falkirk Council officers regularly meet with officers from Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils as well as Paragon Housing Association and Link Housing (the largest Housing Associations in the Council area) to compare best practice.

3.4   The Panel asked if phone surveys were too labour intensive to carry out in-house despite their higher response rate. It was noted that phone surveys were occasionally used in-house, particularly where postal surveys achieved low response rates and follow-up work is carried out by telephone. There is, however, a need to balance resource use with results, which is why external providers had been used for the tenant participation survey.

3.5   Members asked for information on the cost of using an external supplier to carry out the telephone survey. It was noted that this was approximately £9,000 but that this included

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[3] For further information, please see: http://blogs.scotland.gov.uk/digitalengagement/2015/04/02/citizen-space-the-scottish-governments-new-consultation-platform/.

pre-survey meetings, formatting questions, carrying out the survey, analysing results, writing up a final report and delivering presentations. It was highlighted that an additional benefit of using an external supplier was that the data collection process was transparent and unbiased.

3.6 Members asked about the sampling of the survey. The sample was random and due to its size was fairly representative. Research Resource, the external contractor, had worked to ensure that responses were captured from across the geographical area and different housing types.

3.7 The Panel asked about the engagement of the private housing sector and were advised that the rent levels and service charges survey was carried out annually, but the response was not as large as the tenant participation survey.

3.8 Members asked what was done in the event of unpopular outcomes following consultations and were advised that the spirit of the Scottish Social Housing Charter was to ensure understanding, such as where rent increases were necessary to facilitate improvements. Housing Services worked to effectively communicate with communities, even where the work that was to be implemented was unpopular. It was noted that MORI IPOS research has found that the level of understanding of a service directly related to satisfaction ratings. Therefore, providing clarity about what work was being done was key. One of the principles of "Have Your Say" is that people should not be consulted about things which could not reasonably be done and the experience has been that people are much more understanding of delays, such as to housing repairs, when the issue causing the delay was explained to them.

Community Engagement around changes to the household collection service – Development Services (Ross Fenwick, Waste Strategy Officer)

3.9 This information/consultation exercise was carried out between December 2013 and May 2014. The aim was to inform and better understand communities' views of current and future refuse collection services. A combination of focus groups, letters, events and leaflets were used. The process identified effective ways of providing key messages to communities, whilst there were increases in food and general waste.

3.10 The Panel asked when door-to-door awareness raising work had been carried out. and were advised that the work was tailored so that the frequency was increased around the time that the change was to be implemented. This was done at weekends and weekdays between 5pm and 6pm, when working households were more likely to be inhabited.

3.11 Members asked if there were changes to the levels of waste during the Christmas period and increased use of the recycling centres. There was an increase, particularly as people had clear outs of old belongings, which had been replaced by new gifts. The service had run an article in *Falkirk Council News* emphasising that almost all Christmas material was recyclable.

3.12 The Panel asked about the level of interest in the service and issues around collection of nappies. Officers had visited people to increase awareness and in some extreme cases carried out more in-depth reviews.

3.13   Members asked about issues with rear-door collections. The service aims to have no missed collections. Each week a list of missed collections is compiled and officers worked with the contractor to eliminate issues.

3.14   The Panel asked if consultation had been carried out with other organisations and highlighted that Social Work staff could have helped to educate their service users about the changes. It was confirmed that the service had consulted with Housing Services on the changes.

Schools Admission Policy – Education Services (Richard Teed, Senior Forward Planning Officer)

3.15   This was a statutory consultation on a proposed change to the admissions policy of St Mungo's High School. Statutory consultees were invited by email or letter to respond in writing or by pro forma. Three public meetings were held in Denny, Bo'ness and Falkirk. These were attended by 25 parents, with 114 written responses. The consultation commenced in April 2014 with a report produced in October that year. The majority of respondents were in favour of the proposal.

3.16   The Panel discussed the statutory requirements for consultation upon Education Services. The Panel asked if mass mailing information was the best consultation method. They were advised that discussions had been held with Legal Services to identify the minimum statutory requirement. In the case of the previous change to admissions for St Mungo's High School all primary six and sevens and all high schools were deemed to be affected and therefore needed to be consulted with. This is the best way to ensure that the statutory duty was complied with.

3.17   Members asked how much notice was given for public meetings, stating that their constituents had raised concerns that not enough notice was provided for shared Head Teacher meetings. It was confirmed that at least three weeks notice was provided. Notice was given in the local press, with consultation documents sent out in the first week. In regard to shared head teacher meetings, the public meetings were not required by statute so there was no set timetable to be followed.

3.18   Members asked about the input from school pupils as consultees in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. It was confirmed that the opinions of pupils were valued as they often came from unique perspectives and created ownership where changes affected the pupils directly. Education Services does not judge responses based on who submitted them and all responses are included, however, there are lessons to be learned regarding how to best engage high school pupils and alternative methods are being considered.

3.19   Members asked how to ensure that the opinions of all in attendance were aired at public meetings. The best way is to ensure that meetings are chaired effectively to make sure that all who wanted to speak were heard and not just the most vocal few. Further, people who do not want to speak at a public meeting could submit questions with at least two days notice prior to public meetings. The minutes of public meetings are not edited and fairly reflect the opinions of all.

Engagement of looked after children in the referendum on Scottish independence – Social Work Services (Leni Rademacher, Training Manager)

3.20 This community engagement work aimed to fulfil the Council's responsibility to ensure that all eligible looked after young people and care leavers were assisted in the process of registering to vote and to provide access to relevant information. This was done in partnership between SWS and CLD. Leaflets and letters were sent to all 160 young people, with 19 subsequently attending two events (including presentations by members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, mock debates and a mock vote). 10 of those young people registered to vote.

3.21 The Panel asked if Social Work Services had expected a higher turn out for the events. More attendees had been hoped for, but this was outwith the Service's control. For example, one residential unit were on holiday during the period of the events so none of those young people were able to attend. However, it was noted that those who did attend took a lot from the events.

3.22 Members asked if an evaluation of the events had been carried out. Leni Rademacher advised that comments from the young people had been recorded on video or left on post-it notes as evaluation forms were not appropriate to the group.

3.23 The Panel discussed engagement with hard-to-reach groups and requested that Social Work Services provide further information on other consultations carried out.

4. EVIDENCE GATHERED: LOCAL COMMUNITY PLANNING -17 February 2015

4.1 This session was split into two parts; with a presentation on Local Community Planning, followed by roundtable workshops with invited members of the public.

Local Community Planning and the CLD Approach – Community Learning and Development (Mark Meechan, Community Learning and Development Manager; Kate Kane and Frank McChord, Local Community Planning Officers)

4.2 The presentation focused on the aims, means and outcomes of Local Community Planning. Community Action Plans were developed in seven areas through a mix of tools, including events, focus groups, surveys and Participatory Budgeting. Outcomes include, for example, the capacity building of 60 community groups, 10,000 young people either informed or consulted and over £800,000 attracted into the Council area for local communities.

4.3 Members asked how large Community Planning Partnership areas were and it was stated that communities could be viewed as large areas, such as Falkirk wide, or broken down to smaller neighbourhoods and thematic groups within. CLD involved communities within Local Community Planning and services were required to be flexible, due to different sets of expectations and aspirations.

4.4 The Panel asked if CLD had taken learning from the Audit Scotland report on the Falkirk Community Planning Partnership. It was confirmed that the service had taken on board learning from the report and were aware of the challenges faced going forward

4.5   Over the past year CLD had assisted the delivery of 36,000 learning opportunities and the participation of 10,000 young people in events. Members asked for more information on the events young people were participating in. Youth fairs had been run in the local high schools and youth MSPs, for example, had been invited. There had also been open space events, the work with Social Work Services to engage with looked after children in the referendum, and many night-time community events.

4.6   The Panel asked if it was better to engage young people within their local communities rather than inviting them to an event outside their locality and were advised that going to local communities is more productive and that involving the youth MSPs, for example, had been successful.

4.7   Key partners which CLD engages with include Falkirk Community Trust, the Environment Trust, SUSTRAN, Police Scotland's Community Safety Team and Council Services, depending on the issue.

4.8   The Panel asked how CLD engaged with migrant workers and were advised that there could be challenges in engaging with migrant communities with strong existing cultures. CLD engaged with Forth Valley Migrant Support Network. A community worker is involved with supporting people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

4.9   Members asked about the representation of the gypsy/traveller community at the holocaust memorial event. This had been triggered through dialogue with gypsy/travellers families and a subsequent Small Grants Scheme application.

4.10   The Panel asked about the University of the Third Age. There are over 100 local Members who came from a various socio-economic backgrounds.

5.   **PUBLIC FOCUS GROUP SESSION – 17 FEBRURY 2015**

5.1   The 18 attendees formed three discussion groups and the Elected Members, assisted by an officer, rotated around the groups to facilitate discussion on three topics.

Principles of Community Involvement

5.2   Many participants had not seen the principles prior to the session. However, they generally agreed with the content of the principles. Some people stated that community groups would be interested in some principles more than others based on the group's purpose, personal interests and mix of skills. For example, 'treat all participants with respect' and 'we will not consult when decisions have already been made' were cited and these arguably are of particular concern to equalities-themed community groups or representatives bodies, respectively.

5.3   The first principle − 'We will be clear whether we are informing, consulting or engaging with people. Well will not consult when decisions have already been taken' − was queried by participants across discussion groups as they felt that sometimes consultations took place when decisions had already been made within the Council. Some therefore questioned whether or not consultations were worthwhile. The recent budget consultation was used as an example of this in all discussion groups.

5.4   It was suggested that the revised community involvement policy could have a more concise, easy-read, perhaps more visual, version that specifically covered the principles with a link to the more substantive strategy document. It was also requested that the strategic document have an executive summary.

5.5   It was emphasised that local people should be consulted if local impacts would result from Council decisions. Similarly, service-users should be consulted or engaged on service-specific issues or proposals. The emphasis here is clearly on engaging the right people at the right time, thus linking specifically with our second and third principles.

5.6   The Council was perceived to be inconsistent at delivering feedback and specific instances were cited from housing consultations or local community planning, for example. It was argued that feedback should be delivered back within a prescribed timeframe and, where possible, delivered in person to participants.

5.7   The need for effective evaluation was highlighted in discussions. Participants felt that 'We Asked, You Said, We Did' was not necessarily evidenced and they asked how we measured 'success' in particular. It was suggested that any evaluation we do should focus on key learning points as well as outcomes. That is, collecting and analysing qualitative as well as quantitative data.

5.8   People emphasised that the end-product of community engagement should be an increased quality of life for our communities. This was articulated variably as local areas being good and safe places to live, people helping one another, family values being promoted or churches thriving.

5.9   It was asked how Local Community Planning fitted with the Council's decision making process. It was emphasised that the 'community vision' should be reflected in the Council's (and Trust's) plans.

Methods of Community Involvement

5.10   It was noted by a number of participants that the Council is generally better at involving communities than Falkirk Community Trust.

5.11   Most popular information sources on Council activities included *Falkirk Council News* in particular and also local media, social media, the website, One Stop Shops and word of mouth. Tenant Talk, the Council magazine for tenants, was also mentioned.

5.12   Several participants emphasised that meaningful participation requires adequate information to be given in advance of engagement or consultation. Also, specific information on other community groups seems to be required, so that they could work in partnership at a local level. Participants suggested that readily accessible information on local community groups would connect people to their local communities.

5.13   Several participants did not read the Falkirk Herald and thus suggested placing information in other local press, such as the Bo'ness Journal and Gazette. Falkirk Council News was again identified as a good source of information.

5.14   Participants in two discussion groups mentioned increased use of noticeboards and plasma screens in Council offices as a means of disseminating information. Whilst

noticeboards are located in many (Council, Trust and NHS) premises, they are often overcrowded with information. Some participants stated they had been actively engaged in refreshing the information displayed within Council offices, suggesting a degree of co-design by some of our services with the public. It was however noted that leaflets were not the best means of communication due to information going out of date.

5.15 It was noted that community groups had disseminated Council information to members who did not have access to or could not use a computer. That said, many participants said they used social media to get information from the Council. It was suggested in two discussion groups that either Registered Tenants Organisations or Community Councils could act effectively as a focal point for informing local communities.

5.16 Several participants had been involved in various consultations or community engagement processes. Examples included the biomass plant proposal, Zetland Park usage, changes to Kinneil Kerse landfill site, local Community Action Plans and the John Muir Way.

5.17 Encouraging civic pride or place attachment was put forward in two discussion groups as a way of getting and keeping people involved. It was suggested that passion about key issues or 'problems' that required a solution were also motivations for participation.

Barriers to Community Involvement

5.18 A reasonable length of time for responses to be submitted is necessary for consultation or community engagement to be meaningful. For example, the budget consultation was mentioned as taking place over too brief a period of time, particularly given the time of year.

5.19 It was emphasised in all discussion groups that many members of the public find it difficult to attend events during the day due to work commitments. (Two people who wished to attend had given their apologies to the Scrutiny Panel for this very reason.)

5.20 It was suggested that some sections of the public in Falkirk have a relative lack of voice. Young people were cited as being not as well engaged as other, older age groups. Following on from that it was argued that young people do take part in community-life, just not necessarily with adults or older people.

5.21 Reaching out beyond the same people to a wider section of the public was seen to be difficult. Conflicting opinions within communities, apathy or a lack of encouragement were also suggested as barriers.

5.22 Social isolation was discussed, particularly in relation to ensuring that frail older people and people with disabilities were actively engaged within communities. It was put forward that older people have skills that can be utilised in community-led projects but there was nothing for them. This is something has been specifically targeted in recent times, with the formation of the Make It Happen Forum, University of the Third Age and a number of CLD-led local 50+ projects.

5.23 A lack of consistency in our approach to consultation, particularly with regards to the planning process, was put forward as a barrier. It was recognised though that we should

use different methods depending on the nature of the consultation. This relates to our third community involvement principle.

5.24   One participant, who was unemployed, stated that the possibility of sanctions precluded certain types of community involvement, including some volunteering opportunities. This was agreed by other members of the discussion. Transport costs were also suggested as a barrier for people on low incomes, either in work or not. In one discussion group, this was put forward as a rationale for decentralised Council premises such as One Stop Shops or community centres. For many people, these premises could be visited on foot. Knowledge of the location of Council offices was varied amongst attendees, with One Stop Shops apparently the most visible premises.

6.   **EVIDENCE GATHERED: HARD TO REACH CLIENTS AND AN EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVE - 26 February 2015**

Consulting and Engaging Social Work Clients - Social Work Services (Jenny Kane, Team Manager)

6.1   Background information on various consultation or engagement work led by or involving Social Work including, for example, Tremanna participation day, focus groups with young people who attend Children's Panels, a peer mentoring programme for women offenders, 1940s tearoom in Oakbank, engaging MECS users and Self Directed Support (SDS) information events.

6.2   Participation is a particular challenge for Social Work as they deal with hard-to-reach groups. Although the numbers engaged by Social Work are relatively low, often groups are involved who do not normally get consulted or engaged with by the Council.

6.3   Staff at Tremanna had involved residents in planning the future direction of the service. This included involving young people in discussions about what they wanted from the service, what made a good member of staff and what would make Tremanna a good place to live. Actions were agreed and a person assigned to take each forward. The young people were responsible for some of the actions and were supported to carry them out. A residents group had been established and the young people communicated with each other to raise issues which would be taken to the staff team to address.

6.4   Young people aged six and over, had been given the opportunity to provide feedback and suggest improvements based on their experience of the Children's Hearing System. There were working together meetings scheduled for June 2015 where Panel Members, staff and foster carers would review the process.

6.5   Members asked how the experience of young people was included in preparatory training for Children's Panel. Social Work Services invited members of Children's Panels to residential homes, to see the Leaving Care Team and to shadow various Social Work Teams.

6.6   Participation work with children and young people with disabilities include Autism focus groups which helped to evidence need when submitting funding bids for support for children with autism. They also looked at how to best support the transition from school

and what the young people wanted to achieve. The focus groups involved the team manager, children's rights worker, children with autism and families.

6.7   Offenders were involved in decision making about the service they received and that this showed a marked shift in societal attitudes. Peer mentoring had proven successful, not least because offenders were more comfortable engaging with their peers than professionals. There were six fully trained peer mentors who had received skills-based training. This training had raised their confidence levels and employment aspirations.

6.8   It was highlighted that when working with hard-to-reach groups, progress was often slow due to initial resistance to engaging with formal authorities. Members asked what methods had been most successful in getting hard-to-reach groups to engage. Peer mentoring was a particularly good method as people were able to deal with individuals who had similar experiences to them and did not have to deal with formal professionals, which could be a barrier to engagement for people from hard to reach groups.

6.9   Viewpoint is an electronic tool which was used by looked-after-children to give their views to meetings. The system included games and allowed the user to stop and start as desired. There were two versions of the tool; one targeted at children and one for teenagers. The tool had been developed as the service recognised that looked-after-children and young people did not like formal forms. Also highlighted was the use of ipads for children without verbal communication and the use of a graffiti wall used by young people to express their views.

6.10   Members asked if the service could do better with engagement of hard-to-reach groups. Improvements had been made through focussing on evidencing engagement following the implementation of the participation and engagement strategy. The traditional view was that Social Work Services were 'done to' people but now the focus was on providing services 'with' people. The service was positive about participation and was improving the engagement of hard-to-reach groups.

       Perth and Kinross Council's Community Engagement Approach (David Stokoe, Service Manager; Communities; Cultural and Community Services)

6.11   The presentation emphasised values of enabling a genuine voice for people, giving a reason for people to get involved and helping create a sense of responsibility for communities. Communities have a role in informing the priorities of the Community Plan, whilst engagement is joint resourced by the CPP. Participatory Budgeting, participatory research is being piloted in Perth and Kinross. Qualitative data is used to compliment statistics to develop 'stories of place' – what it is really like to live in an area.

6.12   Members asked who at Perth and Kinross Council was responsible for the delivery of the place-based scrutiny pilot mentioned in the presentation. David Stokoe stated that the community planning partnership (CPP) was responsible and that the remit sat within the Council's Education and Children's Service. The work had focussed on not being tokenistic in engagement, looking beyond the deficit model of CLD and instead taking an asset-based approach[4].

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[4] Asset-based approaches refer to a form of community development that focuses on (i) place, (ii) the building up or creation of assets and (iii) the improvement of quality of life. This way of working focuses on the potential of an area and thus differs from a traditional deficit-based approach, which focuses on a particular negative issue like poverty.

6.13   Following discussion on Participatory Budgeting[5], the Panel asked where there was good practice outside of the UK in alternative engagement methods. David Stokoe stated that Brazil was a leader in Participatory Budgeting and that good work was also present in Germany. There were strong examples of good citizens' Panel type work across Scandinavia as well as work on up-skilling communities. However, he stated that other questions needed addressed if utilising those methods of engagement such as what was the role of Elected Members and how to mobilise less engaged and active communities. It was noted that the Scottish Government was part-funding Participatory Training courses for local authorities.

6.14   The Panel asked about key learning points from community engagement in Perth and Kinross. It was suggested that where engagement had been successful there had not been overlong formal processes which could dissuade local communities from participating. It is important to build on existing assets, work with people in local communities and build on relationships. There should be a clear focus on place and recognition that people do not live thematically, issues almost always cut across thematic or service definitions.

6.15   The importance of addressing staff cultures was emphasised and this can be tackled through training for staff, using existing internal expertise.

6.16   Following discussion on Local Community Plans, it was stated that it was important not to start with a blank slate as not all expectations and community desires could be achieved and it was important to make that clear from the outset. It is also important to be clear about the parameters of what could be achieved.

Community Engagement and Community Planning in West Lothian (Lorraine Gillies, Community Planning Manager)

6.17   This described how the West Lothian Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) was developed (and is delivered in part) through an extensive community engagement programme. A community engagement toolkit and Community Practitioners Engagement Network were developed to enable CPP partners to engage more effectively with communities. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill and Health and Social Care Integration were described as key opportunities for further promoting effective community engagement.

6.18   The Panel asked how the Community Engagement Practitioners Network (CEPN) in West Lothian developed the Community Engagement Strategy. Lorraine Gillies advised that the CEPN included representatives from Community Councils, the Third Sector Interface, Police Scotland, NHS and management committees of community centres. The CEPN also included representatives for older and younger people and had reinvigorated the CPP's commitment to community engagement and its willingness to achieve change. The CEPN contains 25 practitioners, with an average attendance of 18 people. The mailing list of practitioners was larger than the membership of the group so information was provided to a wider audience.

6.19   The Panel discussed the importance of effective communication. West Lothian Council had joined up its approach to community engagement and operated a calendar of consultations so that where possible surveys, for example, were timed to make best use of

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[5] There are numerous approaches to Participatory Budgeting. The common theme is that communities have a direct say in how public expenditure is allocated. For example, through identifying key local themes and then subsequently voting on applications made within those themes.

people's time. West Lothian Council have commissioned Research Resource to run their Citizens Panel, at an annual cost of £22,000. Their Citizens Panel has 3,000 members, however there was still the challenge to ensure that the resource was utilised well.

6.20   Members asked about overcoming the challenge of a lack of coordination around community engagement. Increasing coordination had been the key task of the CEPN and was part of the reason for them having regular meetings. The calendar of consultations had been drawn together in order to achieve better coordination. Community engagement means different things to different people so it is important to communicate why consultation was being carried out and what the potential outcomes were.

6.21   The Panel asked about the use of evidence to drive the use of resources and how to engage about big issues. Work using Planning for Real as an engagement tool and the place-making approach was highlighted. Place-making was used to create a master plan for an area, identifying key resources and developing the story of place. It was noted that Planning for Real had previously been carried out in Bainsford and Langlees.

6.22   Members discussed Participatory Budgeting. CPP partners were being trained in Participatory Budgeting approaches. The training was provided by Participatory Budgeting Limited (PBL) and joint-funded by Scottish Government.

7.   **EVIDENCE GATHERED: MEMBER SEMINAR - 16 March 2015**

7.1   All Councillors were invited to a presentation and discussion group held on 16th March. The purpose of this was to allow Members to put forward their views on current practice and suggest areas for improvement, including how Members could be more involved. Following the session, Councillor Black, as Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, also wrote to all Members asking them to submit any views they might have for consideration by the panel. The response from Members was limited, however the views of all Members who contributed have been taken into account in this report.

7.2   Members asked for further information on Participatory Budgeting. Participatory Budgeting involved local people allocating pockets of money within their communities using at least voting mechanism. Typically, people identified key themes and then these were voted on to determine how funding would be allocated. Where Participatory Budgeting had been implemented in the UK it had tended to be with relatively small amounts of money.

7.3   Participatory Budgeting had been used in Bo'ness, Whitecross and was being used in Carronshore as part of the Local Community Planning process. This has come about with funding made available by the Coalfield Regeneration Trust, however there are other ways to implement participatory budgeting, such as having communities decide how to allocate resources to services e.g. by devolving the Small Grants Scheme to communities.

7.4   Members discussed that following the disbandment of Area Forums more emphasis should be placed on community councils and that to increase their representativeness more young people should be encouraged to join. It was noted that a review of Community Councils has been undertaken and it had been found that generally young people were not interested in joining Community Councils as they did not discuss issues which were of interest and importance to young people. It was suggested that it would be

more effective to actively go to young people to engage with and consult them rather than rely on them coming to the Council with their views.

7.5   Members discussed the role of social media as a tool for consultation and engagement and a place where people constantly shared their views. The discussion also highlighted that social media could be a negative forum leading to confrontational discussions and personal attacks. Members discussed that the use of social media could be restricted so that comments could not be posted. This would limit the risks while maximising the publicity gained. Posts on social media could direct people to the Council e-mail or website to submit their views. Members discussed that social media could be a good signposting tool.

7.6   Social media can be used for advertising as well as forum for debate. Work had recently been carried out by Communications on behalf of the Employment Training Unit (ETU). Targeted Facebook advertising had been used alongside adverts in the Falkirk Herald to attract applicants for training schemes. Through the use of trackers the service had found that the majority of applicants were Facebook referrals. It was felt that by using Facebook people who might not have ordinarily been reached were involved at a minimal cost.

7.7   It was discussed by the Panel that young people were currently engaged through modern studies and community groups and welcomed work which would increase the level of participation from young people. It was highlighted that as young people engaged on topics that were of interest to them, citing the examples Jenny Kane and Leni Rademacher had provided previously in the review.

7.8   Members were concerned that budget constraints would increase the workload of staff and it would thus be difficult for them to find time to carry out effective consultation. It was stressed that inadequate engagement often leads to more resource demanding responses being needed in the future and it is important to give staff appropriate skills and training to deal with engagement. Members also suggested that resources could be co-ordinated better, particularly in relation the timing of consultations.

7.9   The role of elected Members in consultation and engagement was discussed and Members noted that it was important that Council Officers remembered that Councillors have a community role. Consideration should be given to what information to give elected Members and the best way to provide it.

7.10   Members highlighted the importance of being honest and realistic in discussions with communities as to what can be achieved, so that expectations were not set unduly high, as well as being clear on the purpose of the consultation or engagement exercise.

7.11   Members stressed that communication and language were very important in getting the message across clearly and consistently. A range of methods were needed in order to carry out successful engagement and consultation and there should be a local focus to engagement exercises so that people knew what the impact was for them and to make it easier to get buy-in from communities. As well as this, with particular reference to younger people, services needed to be asking about things which people were interested in.

7.12   Members discussed the role of focus groups and highlighted that they provided in-depth feedback for analysis. One of the benefits of the Citizens Panel was that it provided a

pool of people who could be used to populate focus groups and go beyond the 'usual suspects'. For example, around 150 Citizens Panel members had volunteered to take part in focus groups with Bereavement Services on the topic of cemeteries and crematoriums.

7.13   It was emphasised by Members that consultation should not just be a tick-box exercise and it was recognised that the principles within "Have Your Say" were created in order to avoid that happening. Members stated that the principles should be kept to the forefront of staff's approach and that they needed to be implemented continuously.

8.   CONCLUSIONS

Have Your Say: A Plan for Local Involvement

8.1   The Panel is very clear that community involvement should not be tokenistic and should be carried out in a meaningful, respectful and participatory way, over an appropriate period of time. Investing time and resources in meaningful and appropriate community involvement is essential for transformational change within the Council, particularly within a period of diminishing resources, and the efficient and equitable provision of services over the long term.

8.2   The Panel is comfortable with the principles of community involvement outlined in 'Have Your Say', as are Elected Members and community representatives who gave their views during the review. However, the sessions identified a general lack of awareness of those principles and a lack of consistency in how they are applied across the Council.

8.3   The Panel heard about a range of consultative and engagement work carried out by Services and other bodies as evidence during the review. Members noted good practice particularly when multiple methods of community involvement had been used. The Panel also recognised that not all Council staff currently had the skill sets or training required to partake in different forms of community involvement.

8.4   The Panel heard evidence about in how the Council informs and consults communities through the Council website and social media, including the improvements brought about by the redesign of the Council website. They identified that there is further scope for using social media such as Facebook and Twitter to engage with communities, but recognise that using these tools effectively is resource intensive in terms of officer time.

8.5   During Panel meetings the importance of engaging with hard-to-reach groups was regularly highlighted. Some practitioners, notably within Social Work, do this as a matter of course due to their service function. There is scope to go further beyond Council service users and engage with hard-to-reach groups who access partner organisations. This approach has been used locally on, for example, the recent budget consultation or Jump Research on Welfare Reform advice services.

8.6   The Panel heard of partnership working between services during several presentations. However, Members also note a degree of duplication in some previous consultations and recognise this duplication can be an inefficient use of resources and can create consultation fatigue on the part of the public.

8.7   The recommendations in this report seek to address the findings of the Scrutiny Panel, setting out practical actions that can be taken to improve current practice within the Council.

9.   RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Council:

9.1   Review the role, remit and membership of the Corporate Participation Group. This group has a central role in ensuring that there is a consistent approach to participation and engagement across the Council and promoting a best practice approach within Services.

9.2   Develop a robust process for local community planning which sets out a defined process for the production of plans. This would include consideration of using 'place shaping' tools such as "Planning for Real" in a consistent manner.

9.3   Develop a defined reporting framework for local community plans to ensure that reports on them are submitted to the Scrutiny Committee and then the Executive, prior to submission to the Community Planning Leadership Board.

9.4   Promote Have Your Say, the Plan for Local Involvement, and the principles set out within it more effectively, internally to Members and officers, and externally to communities and partner organisations. This would include producing a concise summary of the plan.

9.5   Ensure appropriate training is put in place for officers to enable them to implement the principles set out in the plan, for example Plain English training, training in survey design etc.

9.6   Record all consultation activity in a corporate database of consultation activities, drawing on Service Plans, Community Planning, to avoid duplication of consultation/engagement. The effectiveness and accessibility of the current database will also be reviewed.

9.7   Provide information to the public/specific stakeholders prior to and after they have informed, consulted or engaged with communities, including feedback. There should also be a clear process for advising Members about consultations that are taking place and feeding the results back to them.

9.8   Provide more information on consultations, community engagement and Local Community Planning in the consultation section of the Council's website.

9.9   Explore different digital means of engaging with local and thematic communities. This could include the potential for using a bespoke online consultation platform such as Citizen Space. It would also include a review of how the Council's use of social media platforms could be expanded to support its engagement activities.

9.10   Provide guidance and training to Members and officers on the use of social media to ensure this is being used more actively but appropriately.

9.11   Ensure that appropriate methods are used to effectively consult and/or engage with hard-to-reach groups and consideration will be given to specific training on consulting and/or engaging hard-to-reach groups.

9.12   Consider the impact of the Community Empowerment Bill and the Councils response to this in August 2015.

9.13   Consider different ways of consulting on the budget employed by other Councils by August 2015 to inform the process going forward; and

9.14   In order to ensure that the above is achieved that Officers prepare an update on the issues noted above by the end of the year.

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CHAIR OF SCRUTINY PANEL: Cllr. Allyson Black

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Scrutiny Panel Background Paper
- Have Your Say: A Plan For Local Involvement
- Briefing Note 1:Working Together in Bo'ness
- Briefing Note 2:Working Together in Bo'ness
- Briefing Note 3:Working Together in Bo'ness
- Presentation by Caroline Binnie, Communications and Participation Manager, and Jonny Pickering, Stakeholder Engagement Officer
- Presentation by Alan Christie, Community Engagement Co-ordinator, and David Love, Senior Neighbourhood Co-ordinator
- Presentation by Ross Fenwick, Waste Strategy Officer
- Presentation by Richard Teed, Senior Forward Planning Officer
- Presentation by Leni Rademacher, Training Manager, Social Work
- Briefing Note provided by Housing Services
- Briefing Note provided by Development Services
- Briefing Note provided by Education Services
- Briefing Note provided by Social Work Services.
- Presentation by Mark Meechan, Kate Kane and Frank McChord
- Report on Public Session 17/02/15
- Briefing Note provided by Social Work Services
- Briefing Note provided by Self Directed Support Team
- Presentation by David Stokoe, Perth and Kinross Council
- Presentation by Lorraine Gillies, West Lothian Council
- Presentation by Communications and Participation Manager, and Jonny Pickering, Stakeholder Engagement Officer
- Report by Jump Research