

## **SE11. FOLLOWING THE PUBLIC POUND: UPDATE**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services providing Falkirk & District Credit Union's accounts and the percentage of the Council's funding in the organisation's total funding which had been requested at the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of 14 May 2015 (ref S9 (b)). Sally Buchanan provided an overview of the report.

Members asked about the possibility of a town centre branch location for the credit union. Sally Buchanan advised that a feasibility study had been carried out, funded by Lloyds Bank, but that a decision had been taken not to proceed with a town centre location at this time. A refurbishment of the current Grangemouth premises was the preferred option although the Credit Union remained keen on having a town centre presence but that there was a big risk associated with the move.

The committee sought further information on the increased number of fixed loan accounts. Sally Buchanan advised that the product was offered to provide a more suitable option for clients than being driven to payday loan companies.

Members discussed the organisation's reserves and changes to regulations. Sally Buchanan stated that previously the bad debt provision had been kept separately but that this had been revised and was now incorporated in the total reserves level.

The committee asked for further information on quick loans. Sally Buchanan advised that it had previously been the case that a person needed to be a member for a certain period of time before they could access loan facilities but that loans could be granted more quickly now if the person was employed and met all other conditions.

Members asked how the Council had supported the drive to increase the credit union's client base. Sally Buchanan made reference to a variety of promotional activity carried out, including: the provision of a development officer two days a week; promotion on the Council's September payslips; an e-mail to all Council staff, and a promotional event held at the Council's offices.

The committee sought information on the link between the credit union and schools. Sally Buchanan stated that there had been lots of work carried out with both primary and high schools. Further to the work already carried out, the organisation was considering having a stall at school parents' evenings.

The committee discussed the role of Community Learning and Development (CLD) in promotion of the credit union and building capacity in communities. Sally Buchanan advised that the development officer had spoken with CLD staff and that more work in the area could be looked at.

Members asked if the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) signposted people to the organisation. Sally Buchanan stated that the DWP were aware of the organisation and she hoped that they were signposting people to the credit union. Andrew Wilson stated that the DWP had recently become a member of the Community Planning Partnership Leadership Board and were on the sub group on poverty so there would be enhanced communication between the Council and DWP.

## **Decision**

**The committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by the organisation in meeting Council priorities.**