



Agenda Item 3

Minute

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of meeting of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (EXTERNAL) held in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Thursday 6 October 2016 at 9.30 a.m.

COUNCILLORS: David Balfour
Gordon Hughes
Steven Jackson (Convener)
Charles MacDonald
Brian McCabe
John McLuckie
Depute Provost John Patrick

OFFICERS: Nick Balchin, Principal Educational Psychologist
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement
Jack Frawley, Committee Services Officer
Iain Henderson, Legal Services Manager

ALSO ATTENDING: Neil Brown, General Manager, Falkirk Community Trust
Jane Clark, Business Development Manager, Falkirk Community Trust
Gary Laing, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Martin Rioch, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Eddie Ritchie, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

SE11. Apologies

An apology was intimated on behalf of Councillor Murray.

SE12. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

SE13. Minute

Decision

The minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (External) held on 18 August 2016 was approved.

SE14. Performance Report: Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided an update on the local performance of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016. Fiona Campbell provided an overview of the report.

The committee discussed the youth engagement activities which the service was involved in including football events at Bowhouse and asked if these would continue. Eddie Ritchie stated that there had been an average of 40 to 60 young people attending the football events which were being taken forward into another ward area.

Members sought an update on the level of incidents requiring a response and approaches to tackling this. Gary Laing advised that there was often a spike in incidents during quarter one due to the combination of lighter nights and the school holidays. This trend was seen nationally. A Community Safety Hub had been established at Falkirk Fire Station which included ICT provision which could be used by community planning partners. There was focussed partnership working with Police Scotland to target deliberate fire setting which was often tied with anti social behaviour. Collaboratively effective interventions were developed. Martin Rioch informed the committee that at present the maximum number of retained fire officers had been recruited.

The committee discussed the Biker Down Initiative. Eddie Ritchie stated that most motorbikes were now away for winter. From around the middle of February the service would offer information to riders which included basic life saving skills which were appropriate for group riders. More information on this would be included in the next report to committee.

Gary Laing advised that the development of the local plan would be put back until December 2017. Members endorsed this approach noting that with the Local Government elections in May 2017 this approach would allow the new Council time to settle in.

Decision

The committee noted the performance report.

SE15. Following the Public Pound: Falkirk Community Trust

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided an update on the performance of Falkirk Community Trust (the Trust), in line with Following the Public Pound and Council procedures. The report covered the performance of the Trust for the periods 01 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and 01 April 2016 to 30 June 2016. Fiona Campbell provided an overview of the report.

The committee asked about the approach to determining which indicators were included in the report, highlighting that information relating to Polmont ski slope was not included. Neil Brown advised that the report presented the key income generation or participation indicators. Not all sites were included as a matter of scale and proportionality.

Members discussed the role of the Trust in lifelong learning. Neil Brown stated that this was not just about education and that the Trust took a holistic view of a person's development. Activities included active schools, libraries, museums, local heritage work, and physical and mental wellbeing. The Trust's ten year strategy in this area was 'Inspiring Active Lives'.

The committee asked about the links between the Trust and Community Learning & Development (CLD). Neil Brown stated that when the Trust was established the Council took the decision not to include CLD. Both parties worked closely together but did not duplicate the work of the other. The Trust carried out activities like art clubs while CLD focussed more on local community facilities.

Members sought an update on the use of Denny Football Centre. Neil Brown stated that the facility had been in a poor state of repair two years ago. However, after storm damage to the facility the Trust replaced the old wooden floor with an indoor artificial surface which had resulted in an increase to the performance statistics. Following a question regarding future security of facilities, it was stated that the long term position in relation to any facility could not be confirmed at this time as the business plan would be submitted to the Council as part of its budget setting process.

There was discussion on the Hallglen sports centre which had seen an increase in lets. Neil Brown stated that the usage trend at Hallglen was upwards and that the previous intention for withdrawal was due to the overall condition of the asset where significant upgrades were required. This included an ongoing issue with the heating of the building.

The committee sought an update on the work undertaken by the Trust in relation to health and fitness clubs. Neil Brown stated that the Trust had invested in health and fitness centres as a method of income generation. In 2012 the Mariner centre had had its gym extended while a further £1m had been invested in the Stenhousemuir gym. In its first year the Stenhousemuir facility had gained 800 members. The intention was to continue to refresh facilities, equipment and staff skills. This was however a competitive area with a number of independent sector providers operating locally. Therefore the Trust had looked at what its unique selling points were and these were highlighted in advertising media.

Members then discussed car parking provision at the Helix. Neil Brown stated that the Trust sought to resolve the issues with problem parking and highlighted that there was an overflow car park available at Inchyra which could be better utilised. The Helix car park had been designed for a smaller number of visitors than the levels which had been realised since opening.

There had been meetings with Police Scotland and elected members to find a solution to the issue of indiscriminate parking. Falkirk Football Stadium's car park was also used by visitors to the Helix when there were no events on at the stadium. There was close liaison with Falkirk Football Stadium management to avoid clashes of events with the football club and Helix but sometimes this could not be avoided where matches are rescheduled at short notice.

The committee asked about the downward trend in relation to library usage. Neil Brown stated that this trend was seen nationally but that there was concern with the decrease in memberships. New mothers were automatically enrolled to get a library card to help children make a positive start. The Trust arranged games in the libraries and librarians conducted readings of childrens' books to encourage attendance. The Trust's Library Development Plan had been approved at the September meeting of the Executive. There had been upgrades to the wi-fi provision at libraries which gave the public the option to use their own devices onsite. The Trust also provided support to HMYO Polmont through a four day a week library service.

Decision

The committee noted the progress made by Falkirk Community Trust in meeting Council priorities.

SE16. Following the Public Pound: Early Intervention Services to Children & Young People – 2015/16

The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the work of external organisations in receipt of funding in whole or in part, who provide early intervention services to children and young people, and who fall within the Following the Public Pound (FPP) reporting and monitoring arrangements. Nick Balchin provided an overview of the report.

The committee discussed the commissioning of services and how organisations would adjust if they faced reductions in funding. Fiona Campbell advised that Children's Services were reviewing all services for any instances of duplication or other issues. It was highlighted that there was an outstanding remit to report to committee on the entirety of the family support service work. The Council had agreed to undertake a review of external funding as part of its budget process and this review was being progressed to identify if money was being well spent on commissioning external organisations.

(a) Aberlour Childcare Trust – Early Years Outreach

Nick Balchin provided an overview of the report, advising that Aberlour Childcare Trust – Early Years Outreach received a direct grant of £276,384 in the reporting period.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by Aberlour Childcare Trust – Early Years Outreach.

Councillor McCabe left the meeting during consideration of the previous item and re-joined the meeting during consideration of the following item.

(b) Aberlour Childcare Trust – Family Support Service - Langlees

Nick Balchin provided an overview of the report, advising that Aberlour Childcare Trust – Family Support Service - Langlees received a direct grant of £199,695 in the reporting period.

Members asked if some of the families helped by this service would also have received assistance from the early years outreach service. Nick Balchin stated that some families would have been supported by both services and that the family support service worked to support parents to have a key role in the education of their children.

Following a question on the use of peer assisted interviews, Nick Balchin stated that this was a way of helping children articulate their feelings when they did not have the language skills to do so. A computer was used and support was provided by a staff member alongside the child's parent.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by Aberlour Childcare Trust – Family Support Service - Langlees.

(c) Barnados – Education and Family Support Service

Nick Balchin provided an overview of the report considering the performance of Barnados – Education and Family Support Service. He advised that a direct grant of £279,208 was received by the organisation in the reporting period.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by Barnados – Education and Family Support Service.

(d) Barnado's – New Beginnings

Nick Balchin provided an overview of the report considering the performance of Barnados – New Beginnings. He advised that a direct grant of £182,724 was received by the organisation in the reporting period.

The committee highlighted that the number of families assisted had halved from the previous year but funding had remained at the same level. A question was raised as to whether this could be said to reflect good value. Nick Balchin stated that the level of demand for the year was unusually low and demand was expected to increase to previous levels. Members asked if the same need did still exist and when the service was provided to 25 families did they all need support. It was stated that the benefit should be maximised.

The members also stated that more information was required on the level of support provided and what support was available for young people of high school age. Nick Balchin stated that some young people moved onto the Mariners Service if they needed continuing support. If there was a need for intensive agency support then this could be provided by Cluaran. It was stated that some young people did enter mainstream education at the end of their time at Oxfams and did not need continued support or the level of support was reduced.

The committee discussed that more information was required across all following the public pound reports to show what service was provided across the Council area. Information should also show if people's issues were being dealt with and what was the minimum level of funding required before there would be a significant detrimental impact to service provision.

Decision

The committee:-

- (i) approved the report and acknowledged progress by Barnados – Education and Family Support Service, and**
- (ii) requested that a report was submitted to a future meeting of the committee to provide more detail on the entirety of the service provided in relation to early intervention services to children and young people.**

(e) Home Start

Nick Balchin provided an overview of the report considering the performance of Home Start. He advised that a direct grant of £29,488 was received by the organisation in the reporting period.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by Home Start.

(f) NHS Forth Valley – Speech & Language Therapy

Nick Balchin provided an overview of the report considering the performance of NHS Forth Valley – Speech & Language Therapy. He advised that a direct grant of £465,040 was received by the organisation in the reporting period.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by NHS Forth Valley – Speech & Language Therapy.

(g) One Parent Families Scotland – Braes Children & Family Centre

Nick Balchin provided an overview of the report considering the performance of One Parent Families Scotland – Braes Children & Family Centre. He advised that a direct grant of £120,755 was received by the organisation in the reporting period.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by One Parent Families Scotland – Braes Children & Family Centre.