

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Performance Panel held in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Thursday 20 October 2016 at 9.30 am.

Core Members: Stephen Bird
Cecil Meiklejohn (Convener)
Rosie Murray
Baillie Joan Paterson
Depute Provost John Patrick

Members Tom Coleman
Attending: Brian McCabe

Officers: Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology & Improvement
Alex Finlay, Business Development Manager
Jack Frawley, Committee Services Officer
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Rose Mary Glackin, Chief Governance Officer

PP14. Apologies

No apologies were intimated.

PP15. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Baillie Paterson joined the meeting during consideration of the following item.

PP16. Minute

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Performance Panel held on 29 September 2016 was approved.

PP17. Rolling Action Log

Decision

The rolling action log was noted.

PP18. Development Services Performance Update

The panel considered a report by the Director of Development Services setting out a summary of performance for the period 1 April to 30 June 2016. Rhona Geisler provided an overview of the report.

The panel sought further information on the opportunities to connect statutory and non-statutory services in relation to the work of the Community Safety Team. Rhona Geisler advised that in general the Community Safety Team undertook non-statutory services which acted as early interventions often bringing the benefit of diverting situations away from statutory services and partners. Through connectivity of statutory and non-statutory services there would be better sharing of information which could result in a decrease to the number of statutory interventions required. There were no plans to increase the size of the Community Safety Team but the Service would endeavour to use the resource in statutory teams to better effect. Resources would be deployed in a more targeted way and it was important that staff built relationships with communities.

Members asked for an update on issues relating to waste collection services. Rhona Geisler stated that there had been some issues following the introduction of the new system and that during any period of significant change there would be teething issues. The service had improved from the first week of changed provision and the Service's teams had dealt well with issues as they arose. There had been improved feedback from the public as the new service bedded in. The Service was looking into an issue where some households had been issued with collection calendars which were quite faded and difficult to read. She highlighted that this was not a universal issue and so could be specific to a particular batch of calendars; the Service would look into the matter and address it.

The panel discussed the work of the Policy Development Panel on Economic Development and the strategy which had been agreed by the Executive on 1 December 2015 (ref EX73). Rhona Geisler advised that following implementation of the strategy as part of the monitoring regime a report would be provided to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in order to consider the impact of the strategy.

Members discussed how the Service carried out public engagement and consultation and highlighted some examples. In response to one specific case Rhona Geisler advised that where engagement resulted from a planning application it was for that applicant to undertake the appropriate consultation and that the Council was not involved at that stage. Where significant work was planned such as a City Deal the Service would provide information to elected members and the public.

The panel sought further information on sickness absence. Rhona Geisler stated that the Service's approach was in line with Council policy and that

trigger points were used in relation to repeated absence. Managers used information held in the online system to interrogate patterns of absence. She highlighted that where there were cases of longer term sickness absence this increased the overall percentage, particularly within smaller teams. The Director had monthly meetings with each Head of Service to look at long term cases and ensure that appropriate support was in place for these individuals to assist their return to work. Where specific issues relating to an employee's absence were taken further this was done through the Capability Policy & Procedure. Fiona Campbell advised that the absence level across the Council had fallen in recent years and that the application of the Managing Sickness Absence Policy had been central to this.

Members discussed town centres and the challenges faced by retailers against online and out of town competition. Rhona Geisler stated that Falkirk had a strong independent retail element in all of its town centres and that the Service worked to encourage this. In Falkirk town centre the Service was analysing how best to balance an appropriate retail offering with alternative uses. Alternative uses could include an increase in residential occupation. In response to a question on the town centre working group she stated that the group had been a member led initiative.

The panel asked to what extent a City Deal was like the opportunities accessed through the Tax Incremental Financing initiative (TIF). Rhona Geisler stated that to some extent the basis of the funding for a City Deal was like TIF and that the Service needed to evaluate if the criteria could be met in Falkirk.

Members asked who were likely to be the Council's partners in a potential City Deal. Rhona Geisler advised that partners could be other local authorities who were considering a City Deal such as Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling. It was also open to create a local deal with partners from industry or other public agencies. The Service would shortly be having detailed discussions with civil servants on this matter.

In relation to the expansion and upgrade of the crematorium members asked for information on any closure of the facility. Rhona Geisler advised that the building in which services are held would be closed first and that during this period services would need to be held elsewhere but the cremator would remain operational. The cremator would have minimal downtime over two or three weekends. This information would be well publicised and communicated to local undertakers. Information regarding the improvement works including closures had been circulated to members and would be circulated again. Due to the nature of the work it was important that it was carried out well to avoid any future disruption. Further, it was highlighted that improvements had already been made to the parking and that there was now sufficient capacity. There had been an inspection of Falkirk Crematorium by HM Inspector of Crematoria which found that the crematorium is well run with no failings in procedures. There would be subsequent annual inspections looking at all aspects including facilities.

Members asked what suggestions had been received from funeral directors and celebrants which resulted in minor redesign of the crematorium. Rhona Geisler stated that there had been a full consultation process undertaken and that refinements had been made in relation to the siting of the book of remembrance, the toilets and catafalque.

The panel sought clarification on information in the report relating to the annualised working hours for brown bins as split over summer and winter, noting that there were no collections in winter. Rhona Geisler stated that the winter period referred to was longer than the November, December and January period for which there was reduced collection. Further, she advised that there was an on-demand service available throughout the winter period.

Members asked if the Service was considering the impact of the vote to leave the European Union on funding including the European Social Fund (ESF). Rhona Geisler stated that the Chancellor had given an assurance that projects in receipt of European funding would have that funding honoured for a period going forward. The Service was carefully considering the projects which were delivered with ESF support or through national agencies which acted as filters for European funding.

A question was asked on the impact on the Employment Training Unit (ETU) of a reduction of European funding. Rhona Geisler advised that ETU projects for young people who were furthest from the workforce received European funding. Further, the funding to the ETU from Skills Development Scotland and the Council was understood to be vulnerable.

The panel asked about the timescale regarding the presentation of the Main Issues Report for the Local Development Plan 2 (LDP). Rhona Geisler advised that the timetable for the LDP had been approved by members and that the intention to report to Council in December was in line with this.

In response to a question on the cost of producing supplementary guidance, Rhona Geisler advised that she would provide the information after the meeting.

The panel asked what projects would be part of the drive to reduce energy use and carbon emissions. Rhona Geisler stated that this would include the replacement of school boilers and that a full list would be provided after the meeting.

Further information was sought on the work to retrofit all suitable lighting columns with sustainable LED lamps. Rhona Geisler stated that there had been a pilot of this work previously which went well and delivered energy savings. This larger work would replace 12% of lighting columns and 16,000 street lights with LED lamps.

Members asked for further information on work related to Fleet Services working patterns. Rhona Geisler stated that there had been a service review undertaken which had identified £500,000 of capital budget and £800,000 of revenue budget savings. The review had also highlighted the merit of implementing different working patterns. The Service was carrying out work to evaluate this approach which would involve a change from traditional hours to a two shift pattern. A full cost benefit analysis would be carried out in due course.

The panel highlighted that at the Business Falkirk Update Event 94% of businesses surveyed agreed that Falkirk was a good place to do business. The panel requested a copy of the questions and results from this event. Rhona Geisler advised that this would be provided after the meeting.

Members asked why some key indicators had no targets. Rhona Geisler stated that the reasons varied. One reason was that some areas related to local government benchmarking which had not yet been developed. In other areas the Service sought to make continual improvements and therefore did not put targets in place. She highlighted that other indicators did have specific targets and that some were determined externally such as Government targets.

In relation to Co2 emissions information, which was not available for 2015/16, Rhona Geisler stated that this information was produced by the Improvement Service and had not yet been received by the Service.

Members sought an update on improvement activities to ash parks, Rhona Geisler stated that this could be provided after the meeting.

Decision

The performance panel noted the report.