

## **S7. National and Local Audit/Scrutiny Reports**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services highlighting reports which had recently been published by Audit Scotland together with an overview of the local scrutiny plan which had been published in March 2017.

Audit Scotland had published the following reports:-

- National Scrutiny Plan – A summary of local government strategic scrutiny activity 2017/18;
- Falkirk Council – Local Scrutiny Plan 2017/18;
- Principles for a Digital Future;
- Local Government in Scotland – Performance and Challenge 2017.

A summary was provided of each report, with particular reference to how these relate to Falkirk Council.

The Local Area Network (LAN), which comprised representatives of all scrutiny bodies who engage with Falkirk Council, had published its Local Scrutiny Plan for 2017/18. Following a risk based assessment, the LAN had determined that no new risks had been identified that require specific work in 2017/18. The LAN would however monitor progress made by the Council in addressing the actions arising from the Best Value Audit follow up undertaken by Audit Scotland in 2016. Additionally an inspection of Educational Psychological Services would be undertaken in October 2017.

The committee discussed the digital future project MyFalkirk. In particular members sought information in the channel shift from telephone call to online contact with the Council. The Communications and Participation Manager confirmed that officers held and analysed information on online contact and on telephone contact. As the Council shifted to greater use of online information, it was vital that interface with the public was fit for purpose. For example, there was a drive to make sure the electronic processes supported customer interaction. There was a need to move away from providing forms in PDF format move to electronic forms in which data could be input and accessed by staff directly. This would greatly enhance the customer experience and improve bureaucracy. The Improvement Manager highlighted work on the MyFalkirk project process as an example where it was vital that customers were able to easily contact the Council. There was a significant amount of work to digitise and improve the processes ongoing within the Council but the focus would be on the point of contact with the customer and their experience of this contact.

The committee discussed the culture change shift to the use of online services by the public and sought detail on how the current projects support the public. The Improvement Manager stated that in addition to improving the customer interface there were workstreams aiming to improve processes within the Council. He stated, for example, a move to a single telephone (mobile and fixed line) contract with BT. This would allow better interaction between mobile phones and desktop based information such as an Outlook diary and would allow officers not only to access information more effectively

but to provide the public with more reliable information and to connect with Council services more effectively.. Members asked if the Council held information on the purported 5% of the population who do not have broadband coverage, for example, if they were known and if processes were in place to support them. The Improvement Manager indicated that he would provide a response in regard to them.

### **Decision**

**The Committee noted the published national and local audit/scrutiny plans.**