

Draft

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (External) held in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Thursday 16 November 2017 at 9.30 a.m.**

**Councillors:**

David Balfour  
Lorna Binnie  
Jim Blackwood  
David Grant  
John McLuckie  
Laura Murtagh  
Depute Provost Ann Ritchie

**Councillors in Attendance:**

Paul Garner, Portfolio Holder for Environment  
Adanna McCue, Portfolio Holder for Education

**Officers:**

Nick Balchain, Principal Educational Psychologist  
Nick Burgess, Service Manager, Children's Services  
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement  
Matthew Davies, Service Manager, Children's Services  
David McKay, Head of Education  
Martin O'Neill, Corporate Policy Officer  
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager  
Vivien Thomson, Service Manager, Children's Services

**Also Attending:**

Neil Brown, General Manager, Falkirk Community Trust  
Jane Clark, Business Development Manager, Falkirk Community Trust

**SE8. Apologies**

An apology was intimated on behalf of Councillor Nicol.

**SE9. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **SE10. Minute**

### **Decision**

**The minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (External) held on 14 September 2017 was approved.**

## **SE11. Following the Public Pound – Services to Children and Young People – 2016/17 Annual Reporting Statements**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services presenting updates on each of the external organisations funded by Children's Services which provide services to children, young people, families and adults which fall within the following Public Pound reporting and monitoring arrangements.

Annual reporting statements were provided for each of the 16 organisations. These were:-

- Aberlour Early Years Outreach Service;
- Aberlour Family Support Centre – Langlees;
- Barnardo's Axis Service;
- Barnardo's Cluaran Service;
- Barnardo's Education and Family Support Resources Service;
- Barnardo's Education and Family Resources Service (Oxgang Primary School);
- Cyrenians Falkirk Criminal Justice Services;
- Home-Start Falkirk West;
- NHS Forth Valley CAMHS Clinical Psychologist for Looked After Children;
- NHS Forth Valley Speech & Language Therapy Service;
- One Parent Families Scotland Maddiston/Braes Family Centre;
- Quarriers Children's Rights Service;
- SACRO Youth Justice Service;
- Signpost Recovery Time 4 Us;
- Signpost Recovery Criminal Justice Link Nurse – Women Offenders; and
- "Who Cares?" Scotland Advocacy Service.

In order to assist the committee to scrutinise the performance of each of the organisations, the report set out the national and local policy context within which the organisations provide services for the Council together with details of the funding provided. Each report by the respective monitoring officer assessed performance in accordance with the guidance agreed by the committee on 14 September 2017 (ref SE7).

Following a question in regard to the service provided by Barnardo's Axis Service, Matthew Davies, a Service Manager from Children's Services, explained that the Axis Service was a specialist service which provides a harm reduction service to young people. He stated that, should funding be further reduced, the risk was mitigated by the multiagency partnership within which Axis operated.

In regard to monitoring arrangements for NHS Forth Valley CAMHS, Vivien Thomson, a Service Manager from Children's Services, explained that while there had not been a formal monitoring review in 2017/18, there had been ongoing informal monitoring through regular evaluation meetings.

The committee discussed the Speech and Language Therapy Service and asked whether the reduction in funding since 2014 and consequential reductions in staff (from 16.8 FTE to 14.2 FTE) would impact on teaching staff. The Head of Education stated that the impact of further reductions in funding (staffing was funded by Falkirk Council, 47% and NHS Forth Valley, 53%) was being reviewed as part of the budget setting process. This includes consideration of factors which would mitigate against any impact.

The committee then discussed the impact of reducing funding to the organisations, highlighting that the Council will be required to make hard decisions in regard to its budgets and consequently for each of the external organisations, alternative and innovative options should be looked at. Citing the Speech and Therapy Service for example, members questioned whether the proportion of funding from the NHS should increase. The Head of Education confirmed that officers were working with NHS to consider how best to deliver a service on reduced funding. In response, members stated that the option of alternative funding for each of the services provided should be considered. Further, members stated that where duplication of services offered by providers existed, these should be reviewed and alternatives should be considered, for example, withdrawing funding from one provider or promotion of joint working on a reduced budget.

Following a question in regard to the monitoring officers' reports, the Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement stated that the format of the reports had been revised so that a more thorough appraisal could be provided. While she acknowledged that the organisations deliver good services, in the economic climate, officers need to look at alternative options, alternative funding models and different models of delivery. These were included in the monitoring officers' reports and this information would enable members to understand the context within which services are currently provided and this in turn would better inform decision making when the Council's budget for 2018/19 is set in February 2018.

## **Decision**

**The committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by the external providers in meeting the Council's priorities**

## **SE12. Following the Public Pound – Public Protection**

The committee considered report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services providing each of the external organisations funded by Corporate and Housing Services which provide public protection outcomes which fall within the following Public Pound reporting and monitoring arrangements.

Annual reporting statements were provided for each of the 5 organisations. These were:-

- SACRO – this item was considered as part of the previous item of business;
- Forth Valley Family Support – this service is now tendered and thus its monitoring takes place as part of the contract monitoring process. The service was tendered in September 2017 with the contract ending in August 2018. The Council monitors this service along with colleagues in other Councils and with NHS Forth Valley;
- Committed to Ending Abuse (Falkirk and District Women's Aid) – as part a review of services for people who have experienced trauma, the Executive agreed to undertake a review of the services this organisation provides. This review is about to commence with a report coming back to the Executive once that review is complete;
- Central Scotland Fire and Rescue – the funding provided falls below the £10k threshold for reporting. This will therefore be dealt with through the Council's Small Grants Scheme; and
- Falkirk BID District – Taxi Marshalling – this is discussed below.

The committee considered at length the Taxi Marshalling Service. The Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement gave an overview of the service. In 2017/18, the Council's contribution was £20,000. Members acknowledged the intention and success of the service. However, discussion focused on alternative funding options should the Council reduce its contribution in 2018/19. Members highlighted that a number of partners benefit from the service – in particular Police Scotland, the Ambulance service, local businesses and taxi operators. The Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement confirmed that options and alternatives were under consideration and discussions on future funding had been held with Falkirk Towns Ltd who commission security staff on behalf of Falkirk BID. If funding was reduced, members considered that the service provision could be reprioritised if funding was not sourced from elsewhere – for example local businesses. In response to a question the Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement stated that she was unclear whether taxi operators contributed to funding. They do, she confirmed, provide a service to the Safe Base. She confirmed that, as with all organisations funded by the Council, an EQIA assessment would be carried out on savings options. Members, while acknowledging the contribution of the service, questioned Falkirk Council's role in funding the service, reiterating that those organisations which benefit most should contribute more to the overall funding package.

## **Decision**

**The Committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by the external organisation in meeting Council's priorities.**

### **SE13. Following the Public Pound – Falkirk Community Trust**

The committee considered a report by the Chief Executive providing an update on services provided by Falkirk Community Trust on behalf of the Council and which are reported under the following the Public Pound reporting and monitoring arrangements. The report covered the reporting periods April 2016 – March 2017 and April 2017 – June 2017 and provided performance information in regard to 32 performance indicators.

The Trust General Manager, Neil Brown, gave an overview of key services provided and high level performance.

Following questions in regard to proposals by the Trust to provide a professional pantomime in 2018 in Falkirk Town Hall, the General Manager confirmed that the driver for this was to increase income. He stated that the Trust would continue to support Falkirk Youth Theatre which traditionally staged a pantomime in the Town Hall at Christmas. This show would break even at best while a professional pantomime could generate over £10k in income. He set out the support provided by the Trust to organisations such as the Youth Theatre but reiterated that in order to meet its budget, the Trust had to reprioritise its sources and increase income. The period of notice would allow the Youth Theatre to secure an alternative location.

The committee discussed in detail the budget pressures faced by the Trust and the need for the Trust to balance its commitment and support for art groups with the need to generate income. The General Manager confirmed that the Trust was committed to local community organisations such as the Youth Theatre and to the Town Hall. Transformation was necessary and would be managed sensitively with alternative accommodation offered.

Following a question in regard to co-location of services the General Manager confirmed that options for co-location, for example of library provision, were being considered as part of the Strategic Property Review. He anticipated a reduction in funding from the Council in the region of £1.8m, which equated to 15% of services. The Trust's business plan for 2018/19 had been approved by the Board and had been submitted to the Council ahead of the Council meeting on 6 December. The business plan set out proposals to grow income by 40%.

The committee raised the recommendation of the Barclay Review which if accepted by the Scottish Government would see the Trust liable to rates. Members recalled that a key driver for establishing the Trust was because Trusts were not liable to pay rates, saving £1.3m annually. The General Manager confirmed this was the case and recognised that if the

recommendations were implemented, the Trust would face a significant financial burden which would have severe implications. He explained that the Scottish Trusts Association SPORTA had highlighted the implications with the Scottish Government. It was possible that the Scottish Government could slice its funding to Local Authorities and leave it to Local Authorities to decide whether or not to pass the rates bill to Trusts or dissipate the costs across their services.

In regard to performance, members highlighted that although the number of visitors to the Helix had increased, the overall trend was downward and that the number of Kelpies tour tickets sold had decreased and sought clarification. Members also asked what the Trust proposed to maximise income at events such as fireworks displays at venues such as the Helix and Callendar House.

The General Manager gave a detailed response, stating that the Trust had a focus at securing income at 6 key sites such as the Helix. He cited the relocation of the tearoom and shop at Callendar into Callendar House as an example of innovation and stated that the Trust had to be bold in its proposals. In regard to the Kelpies, he suggested that the tours were a “one-time” event and would not generate repeat business. While it was necessary to generate income, the Trust had to balance this with the key events such as the fireworks display which attract visitors. The cost of a ticket was £5.50 compared to a similar event in North Ayrshire which cost £11. The ticket was affordable and allowed significant numbers to participate. He conceded that income generation had not been maximised – for example, at the fireworks display, approximately £2000 was raised from 32,000 spectators. He reiterated that the Trust’s social aims were important and should be balanced against its income generation aims. Members agreed but reiterated that the opportunity to maximise income had not been realised.

In regard to income generation, the General Manager remarked that previously when the service had been provided by the Council, it had been difficult to increase charges or make bold decisions in regard to service provision. A benefit of the Trust model was that the Trust could be more innovative and bold. He was mindful that there was a balance between generating income and being seen to be “chasing the money”. Members agreed, reiterating that generating income did not necessarily mean raising the price of admission.

The General Manager conceded that there were opportunities to maximise income at events such as the fireworks display without being obviously aggressive. Following a question on the ownership of the Stadium car park, the Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement stated that she would confirm this following the meeting.

In regard to visits to attractions, the committee noted that the Helix was 200,000 below target. In regard to a question whether this was down to factors such as weather, the General Manager stated that while the weather could be a factor, there was a need to increase the number of programmed events at the Helix to maintain footfall rather than rely on big events. He stated that car parking could be a problem but did not consider that Park and Ride facilities could be a solution, noting that there would be costs involved in providing such a service.

### **Decision**

**The Committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by the Trust in meeting Council's priorities.**