

The background of the slide features the official coat of arms of the City of Vancouver. It is a shield divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant shows a sailing ship on the water. The top-right quadrant depicts a stag's head with antlers. The bottom-left quadrant shows a beaver. The bottom-right quadrant features a grizzly bear. Above the shield is a crown with four maple leaves. A banner at the bottom of the shield contains the motto "CITY OF VANCOUVER" in a stylized font.

Agenda Item

3

Minute

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (External) held in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Thursday 11 January 2018 at 9.30 a.m.

Councillors:

David Balfour
Lorna Binnie
David Grant
John McLuckie
Laura Murtagh
Malcolm Nicol
Depute Provost Ann Ritchie

Councillors in Attendance:

David Alexander, Public Protection Portfolio Holder
Robert Spears, Culture, Leisure & Tourism Portfolio Holder

Officers:

Sally Buchanan, Fairer Falkirk Manager
Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement
Jack Frawley, Committee Services Officer
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services
Linda Gilliland, Policy & Community Planning Team Leader
Mark Meechan, Community Learning & Development Manager
George Paul, Team Leader
Andrew Wilson, Policy and Community Planning Manager

Also Attending:

Eddie Ritchie, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
David Lockhart, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
Martin Rioch, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

SE14. Appointment of Convener

In the absence of the convener, nominations for the position of convener were sought with reference to Standing Order 50.5 that the Convener of the committee would be such member of the committee from the largest Opposition group as shall be appointed by the committee.

Councillor Grant nominated Councillor McLuckie. There being no other nominations Councillor McLuckie assumed the chair for the remainder of the business.

SE15. Apologies

An apology was intimated on behalf of Councillor Blackwood.

SE16. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this point.

SE17. Minute

Decision

The minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (External) held on 16 November 2017 was approved.

SE18. Performance Report – Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services presenting a local performance report of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, for the period 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017.

The committee asked if, following an increase in deliberate fire setting incidents at Polmont Prison, any intervention work had been carried out. MR stated that such interventions had been carried out with a specific individual.

Members sought further information on the auditing of licensed premises, expressing concern that fire exits were often blocked. MR advised that audit work was undertaken on a targeted basis determined by level of risk. Therefore places where people undertook overnight stays like care homes and hospitals were prioritised. Other types of premises were inspected thematically. In the Falkirk area there were 1.5 auditing officers so there was a need to prioritise their work to the areas of highest risk. However, the Service worked closely with colleagues in the Council's licensing section and would respond to any concerns raised, as they would respond to specific concerns raised by elected members. Members commented that when the Licensing Board undertook site visits to licensed premises it would be useful to have the auditing officers present.

The committee asked why there was an increase in deliberate fire setting during periods of good weather. MR stated that there is an increase in deliberate fire setting every year around April, which tied in with the school holidays. Hot weather could make the land tinder dry. Cycle patrols had been undertaken with Police Scotland. There had also been school visits in a targeted approach to try and prevent this spike in deliberate fire setting. The school based Police Officers identified at risk groups of young people.

Following a question on home safety visits, MR stated that the elderly were at higher risk and were therefore targeted. During visits people were asked questions to determine their risk level and an appropriate response was then put in place. There had been a specific initiative at sheltered housing premises to decrease the risk of accidental fires. Specsavers had worked in partnership to help promote the home safety programme to over 65s. Further, there was strong partnership with Housing and flats were regularly checked for clear means of escape and corridors were kept clutter free.

The committee asked about the increased number of false alarms and if this was due to automated systems. MR stated that as more alarm systems came online there were more calls. There was a proposal to look at staff alarms in large public buildings. This would involve caretakers involving the cause of an alarm prior to an appliance being dispatched. However, building evacuation would still take place.

Decision

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

SE19. Following the Public Pound - Poverty and Equality

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate & Housing Services presenting updates on each of the external organisations funded by Corporate & Housing Services which provide services in relation to poverty and equality which fall within the Following the Public Pound reporting and monitoring arrangements.

Annual reporting statements were provided for each of the 8 organisations. These were:-

- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Falkirk CAB
- Grangemouth & Bo'ness CAB
- Denny & Dunipace CAB
- Armed Forces Project – Denny CAB
- MacMillan Money Matters
- Action Group
- Central Scotland Regional Equality Council

Members asked why some of LGBT Youth Scotland's work related to areas which would benefit all young people but was not being offered to all. Mark Meechan stated that there were a variety of projects which supported young people more widely. However, he advised that the young people who engaged with LGBT Youth Scotland were often found to be unwilling to engage with the services offered by other groups. It was therefore important that this specific service was provided. The issues covered by LGBT Youth Scotland were raised by service users.

The committee then discussed the Central Scotland Regional Equality Council (CSREC). Members discussed that Clackmannanshire Council had removed their funding contribution but still received service provision. The view was put forward that the organisation's work should be funded by Police Scotland or the Scottish Government. Discussion also considered the difference between criminal behaviour and inappropriate behaviour but that both needed to be tackled and educated against. It was felt that the work of this organisation covered extremely important areas and that the focus should not be taken off this. A question was asked on what the £42,000 from Forth Valley Language Support was to encourage the learning of English as a second language to assist with integration. Following this discussion Fiona Campbell stated that CSREC used to be the racial council and the Council dealt with a range of other organisations serving the needs of other protected groups. Further she advised that Forth Valley Language Support was a trading company which provided translation services. The work of this company was to create an income stream for the organisation.

Decision

The committee approved the reports and acknowledged progress by the following organisations in meeting Council priorities:-

- (1) LGBT Youth Scotland**
- (2) Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureau**
- (3) Grangemouth & Bo'ness Citizens Advice Bureau**
- (4) Denny & Dunipace Citizens Advice Bureau**
- (5) Armed Forces Project – Denny Citizens Advice Bureau**
- (6) MacMillan Money Matters**
- (7) Action Group**
- (8) Central Scotland Regional Equality Council**

SE20. Following the Public Pound – Falkirk Towns Ltd and Falkirk Environment Trust

The committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services presenting updates on Falkirk Towns Ltd and Falkirk Environment Trust which fall within the Following the Public Pound reporting and monitoring arrangements.

Annual reporting statements were provided for each of the organisations.

Prior to discussion on Falkirk Towns Ltd, Councillor Nicol declared a non-financial interest as the spouse of a Grangemouth business owner, and stated that he considered that this required him to recuse himself from consideration of the item with regard to the Councillor's Code of Conduct. Councillor Nicol left the meeting at this point.

The committee asked about the provision of a handyman service to carry out small repairs. Rhona Geisler advised that the post was funded by the Falkirk Business Improvement District (BID) levy. Whereas the funding from the Council was allocated to Falkirk Towns core costs such as staffing. The handyman post responded quickly to occurrences of graffiti and similar issues. This work was a priority for BID businesses.

Members asked if there were representatives from other town centres in the district on the organisation, particularly if there was scope for more events outwith Falkirk town centre. Rhona Geisler advised that the BID company and levy payers were all drawn from Falkirk town centre by the nature of the organisation. Therefore monies raised had to be spent there. There was a joint working agreement in place for services provided in other town centres. She highlighted that there had been discussions regarding the possibility of a BID organisation being created in Bo'ness but that it would be for local businesses to take forward themselves.

The committee discussed if it was possible to condition that the funding was also used in some of the district town centres. Rhona Geisler stated that such matters had been part of previous budget discussions. Where funding was allocated without condition it was up to the company to determine how to spend. It was therefore up to Council to determine if any conditions should be attached. However, she advised that the funding was allocated for the core service delivery and to reallocate it would have an impact on the ability of the organisation to operate.

Following consideration of and decision making on the report on Falkirk Towns Ltd, Councillor Nicol re-joined the meeting.

Decision

The committee approved the reports and acknowledged progress by the following organisations in meeting Council priorities:-

- (1) Falkirk Environment Trust**
- (2) Falkirk Towns Ltd**

SE21. Following the Public Pound - Community Development

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 in relation to community development which fall within the Following the Public Pound reporting and monitoring arrangements.

Annual reporting statements were provided for each of the 6 organisations. These were:-

- Denny Community Support Project

- Dennyloanhead Community Project
- The Powerstation
- Workers Education Association
- Dobbie Hall Trust
- CVS Falkirk & District

Prior to discussion on the Dobbie Hall Trust, Councillor Murtagh declared a non-financial interest as she regularly attended the management committee meetings, and stated that she considered that this required her to recuse herself from consideration of the item with regard to the Councillor's Code of Conduct. Councillor Murtagh left the meeting at this point.

Members discussed potential refurbishment works at the Dobbie Hall and that the terms of the lease agreement were for wind and watertight. Members asked if repairs could be carried out without additional funding. Mark Meechan stated that he felt that if in 18 months no progress on the building condition had been made he worried about the sustainability of the management committee. There would then be a possibility of the building being handed back to the Council.

The committee asked about possibilities to look at alternative options such as sharing another building as members were keen to preserve local services. Mark Meechan advised that different options had been looked at, identifying where groups could meet locally in Council facilities or other community spaces such as church halls.

Members asked about working in partnership with Falkirk Community Trust on shared use of assets. Mark Meechan stated that the Service had a good relationship with the Trust. However, he noted that the Trust had carried out an options appraisal on the sustainability of their assets. Therefore co-location was being looked at wherever possible.

Decision

The committee approved the reports and acknowledged progress by the following organisations in meeting Council priorities:-

- (1) Denny Community Support Project**
- (2) Dennyloanhead Community Project**
- (3) The Powerstation**
- (4) Workers Education Association**
- (5) Dobbie Hall Trust**
- (6) CVS Falkirk & District.**