

SE13. Following the Public Pound – Poverty and Equalities

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services presenting reporting statements for organisations funded under the Following the Public Pound (FPP) arrangements for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 for the Council's priorities regarding poverty and equalities.

Six organisations had received funding from Falkirk Council to provide services which could not be readily provided by the Council. As part of the Following the Public Pound arrangements, reporting statements, prepared by the relevant monitoring officer were submitted to the Scrutiny Committee (External) for consideration. The organisations were:-

Organisation	Monitoring Service	Annual Funding
LGBT Youth Scotland	Children's Services	£30,000
Falkirk CAB	Corporate and Housing Services	£168,490
Grangemouth & Bo'ness CAB	Corporate and Housing Services	£98,360
Denny & Dunipace CAB	Corporate and Housing Services	£92,810
Armed Forces Project Denny CAB	Corporate and Housing Services	£18,000
MacMillan Money Matters	Corporate and Housing Services	£38,000

Sally Buchanan provided an overview of the services provided by the organisation and provided context in regard to the funding allocated to each organisation.

The committee considered each organisation in turn.

Members asked for further detail on the services provided by LGBT Youth Scotland, in particular the work undertaken in secondary schools. Mark Meechan explained that the organisations provided a range of CLD activities to LGBT young people in the Falkirk area for example providing youth groups, promoting volunteering and providing a community meeting place and local information point. The organisation had supported two schools, Braes High and Denny High to achieve the LGBT Charter of Rights award and aimed to support all secondary schools to gain the award. Demand of the organisation's services had increased year on year. Mr Meechan accepted, following comments from members, that young people could need support for other issues and indicated that CLD and partners sought to provide support for young people who require support. Nevertheless the work by LGBT Youth Scotland made a significant contribution to the delivery of community development support to LGBT young people. He confirmed that the funding provided by Falkirk Council supported Falkirk focused support.

The committee highlighted that the reporting statement did not set out measurable outcome targets and as such it was difficult to determine whether the organisation was contributing to the Council's goal. Mr Meechan concurred and confirmed that reporting would be outcome focussed in future. Indicators such as the number of referrals to the organisation could be quantified but other outcomes needed to be measured and then quantified.

He explained that work was ongoing in Slamannan and Limerigg to develop a more 'scientific' approach to measuring performance and that he expected the group to report by November with proposals.

The committee then considered the reports on the Citizens Advice Bureaux. In regard to questions on the services provided by the 3 CABx, Sally Buchanan stated that the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit wouldn't be felt yet in terms of the number of people seeking support. She noted however that the complexity of cases had increased since its introduction. A steering group had been established to prepare for the impact of Universal Credit.

Work is ongoing with the three CABs to look at a new partnership model of service delivery with the Council procuring services which would be measured against set milestones. She confirmed that the models for funding CABx varied across Scotland. Highland Council had moved to a single funding model from previously funding 6 separate CABx. The Council would continue to work with the 3 CABx to develop a model for service delivery which ensured the best advice was available to citizens but which also provides security to the CABx.

Following a question in regard to the services provided by the CABx, Sally Buchanan confirmed that the majority of contacts were in regard to welfare advice, in particular money advice. The Council and CABx were working to ensure that face to face interactions were as valuable as possible citing as an example an online entitlement calculator which can be used by frontline staff to do income maximisation checks, freeing up welfare benefits advisors to provide specialist support. The Council had changed the way it delivered advice services. The hub model arrangement allowed multi skilled front line advisors to offer general advice which allowed the Welfare Benefits team to offer expert advice.

Members sought assurance in regard to the services provided by each of the CABx. Sally Buchanan responded that while the performance statement provided was for the CABx as a whole, the Council received monitoring reports for each CAB individually and these are reviewed before quarterly funding is released.

In regard to a question as to whether the findings of satisfaction surveys are reported to the monitoring service, Sally Buchanan advised that she did not have these. Members suggested that it was important for the Council to determine whether the CABx were meeting their objectives.

The committee heard an example of proactive work undertaken by Community Advice Services staff to contact people who were likely to be evicted from Council housing. However members also cited examples where members of the public were reluctant to reach out for help. Sally Buchanan acknowledged both examples as correct and stated that the hub model is designed to ensure that when someone asks for advice or help they receive it then and there.

The committee then discussed the reporting statement on Veteran's Scotland, which was hosted by Denny Citizen's Advice Bureau.

In response to a question Andrew Wilson stated that a veteran was defined as anyone who had served in one of the armed forces. He concurred with a statement that isolation is a fundamental issue facing veterans, many of whom are single men. Work was ongoing to organise an event to bring various charities together to expose them to the issues facing veterans such as unemployment. He highlighted the work of several charities which focussed on routes to employment and which actively promote the employment of veterans. He cited the work of organisations, such as CABx, which support or act as signposts to other services.

In regard to Macmillan Money Matters project, the committee sought an explanation of the service provided and clarification of how this differed from other advice services offered by Macmillan centres, for example that based in Forth Valley Hospital. David George explained that the project provides income maximisation and debt advice to patients with cancer. The service is based at the Forum and offered a specialist service. Patients could be referred to the projects advisers who could give advice or refer these to specialist services.

Decision

The committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by the external organisations in meeting Council priorities.