

S27. Scrutiny and Audit of the Council and its Services

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services advising of the revised arrangements for risk assessment by external auditors and inspectors and also advised of the Council's next best value audit.

A report by Audit Scotland on the Local Area Network (LAN) audit arrangements for Councils had concluded that while there was a value to be gained by the LAN meeting and engaging with Councils on their key challenges, performance and risk, the practice was not consistently embedded across the country. New proposals had been implemented which set out a clear structure for the work of LANs which would include a strategic scrutiny group, an operational group and then local networks. A lead auditor would bring together the networks and oversee their work.

In its audit plan for 2020 Audit Scotland had indicated that Falkirk Council would be subject to audit in 2010. The audit would focus on:

- Does the council have clear strategic direction?
- How well is the council performing?
- Is the council using its resources effectively?
- Is the council working well with its partners?
- Is the council demonstrating continuous improvement?

These issues had been identified in the Local Government in Scotland – challenges and performance 2019 report published by the Accounts Commissioner which had been considered earlier in the meeting as well as in the audit reports

The Committee sought further information on the previous Best Value audit of Falkirk Council. Fiona Campbell explained that this had been in 2014. It had highlighted significant issues in regard to:-

- Medium Term Financial Planning
- Scrutiny arrangements
- Performance reporting
- Transformation of services

The Council had responded with rigour to address the key points in the action plan. Audit Scotland had followed up its initial review with two 6 monthly follow up audits of progress in implementing the action plan.

Prior to the audit, officers would brief elected members on the Council's response to the most recent review and on Council performance. She stressed that while all relevant background will be made available to elected members as part of the briefing, answers would not be provided. How members responded was a matter for themselves.

Decision

The Scrutiny Committee noted:-

- (1) the changing role of the local area network;**
- (2) that the Council will be subject to a Best Value Audit in 2020;**
- (3) Members are briefed on the audit process once timescales etc. are known.**