

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the City of Vancouver's coat of arms. The crest is a shield divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant shows a sailing ship on wavy lines representing water. The top-right quadrant shows a stag's head with large antlers. The bottom-left quadrant shows a beaver. The bottom-right quadrant shows a grizzly bear. Above the shield is a crown with four maple leaves. A banner at the bottom of the shield contains the motto "A NE FOR A".

Agenda Item 3

Minute

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (External) held in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Thursday 16 January 2020 at 9.30 a.m.

Councillors: David Balfour
Allyson Black
Jim Blackwood (Convener)
Niall Coleman
David Grant

Councillors in Attendance: Laura Murtagh, Public Protection Portfolio Holder

Officers: Stuart Irwin, Democratic Services Graduate
Jacquie McArthur, Economic Development Officer,
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager
Pete Reid, Manager (Growth & Investment), Development Services
Joanna Stewart, Housing Support Coordinator
Ali Walls, Service Manager, Children's Services

SE24. Apologies

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Depute Provost Ritchie and Councillors Aitchison and Patrick.

SE25. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Black declared a non-financial interest in appendix 3 of agenda item SE27 (Following the Public Pound – Public Protection, namely Falkirk BID – Taxi Marshalling). As a Street Pastor and Safe Base volunteer Councillor Black considered that her relationship in this capacity with the Taxi Marshalling project could be viewed as affecting her impartially and as such indicated that she would not take part in the consideration and scrutiny of this item of business.

SE26. Minute

Decision

The minute of meeting held on 10 October 2019 was approved.

SE27. Following the Public Pound – Public Protection

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided information under the Following the Public Pound arrangements for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 for the Council's Public Protection outcome including alcohol, drugs and community justice.

Organisation	Monitoring Service	Annual Funding
SACRO – Youth Justice	Children's Services	£73,368
Committed to Ending Abuse (Falkirk & District Women's Aid)	Corporate and Housing Services	£175,802
Falkirk BID - Taxi Marshalling	Corporate and Housing Services	£20,000
Cyrenians	Children's Services	£172,252

The monitoring officers for each organisation gave an overview of the services provided by each organisation and their performance since last reported.

Committed to Ending Abuse (CEA)

Committed to Ending Abuse, formerly Falkirk and District Women's Aid, provided services to women who experienced domestic abuse. The key aim of the organisation was to maintain the safety of those directly affected by abuse and to reduce risk and harm both to themselves and their families. Falkirk Council provided £175,802 to the organisation. This had decreased by 28% since 2015. Ms Stewart highlighted that a review of domestic abuse arrangements in the Falkirk area had begun in 2019. It was anticipated that an outcome of the review, which was now being overseen by the Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership, would confirm that this service would be commissioned rather than delivered by means of a service level agreement between CEA and the Council.

Ms Stewart added, following a question, that she could not provide an up to date position in regard to the review timetable. In the meantime funding would be provided by the council for 2020/21. Following a question Ms Stewart undertook to provide further detail on the organisation's funding sources, which included the Big Lottery.

The committee then sought background to the rise in referrals and the ability of CEA to meet its outcomes with the funding provided. Ms Stewart explained that Falkirk had high levels of Domestic Abuse but considered that the rise in the number of referrals could be attributed to an increased awareness of the organisation and also that people were more likely now to seek help. Additionally the relationship with partner organisations had also raised awareness of CEA's services and consequently there had been an increase in referrals from partners. The increase plus the decrease in funding had meant that CEA had struggled to cope with demand. She anticipated that the review would provide clarity on the extent of the domestic abuse levels in the area. Following a question in regard to the partner organisations Ms Stewart stated that these included Cyrenians, Police Scotland, Social Work Services the NHS and Housing Services. Funding was provided by the Scottish Government, the big lottery. The Scottish Government funding was ring fenced for children's services. Funding was also provided for work based in Polmont Prison, and this again was ring fenced.

Councillor Murtagh, as public protection portfolio holder, praised the work of CEA and provided context in regard to domestic abuse.

Ms Stewart concurred with a statement that the recent performance report by Police Scotland had indicated a decrease in domestic abuse from which it could be summarised that this was due to an increase in referrals to CEA. She also stated, following a question, that the services provided were not limited to women although the numbers involved for men was low.

The committee discussed the organisation's financial health. Ms Stewart stated that while there were no financial issues in terms of its viability, it continuously sought additional sources of funding. She wouldn't recommend a further reduction in the Council's funding levels. If it was reduced there would be an impact on the services delivered and as monitoring officer she worked closely with CEA to identify and secure additional funding.

In accordance with her declaration of an interest in the following item Councillor Black left the meeting.

Falkirk Delivers BID – Taxi Marshalling and Safe Base

Mr Reid began by highlighting that responsibility for Taxi Marshalling and Safe Base had transferred from Corporate & Housing Services to Development Services in mid-December 2019. This change made sense as Development Services were already fulfilling the FTTP requirements for Falkirk Towns Ltd on behalf of the Falkirk Delivers BID. He acknowledged that his team were in the process of gaining a full understanding of the service and how it would look in the future. The key aims of the Taxi Marshalling and Safe Base Initiative were to reduce the potential for alcohol related disorder, ensure people were able to get home safely after a night out and, in doing so, enhance the image of Falkirk town centre. Falkirk Council provided £20,000 for Taxi Marshalling and £10,000 for the Safe

Base. Mr Reid highlighted the positive feedback from both users (approx.2400 people use the service each weekend) and stakeholders, including local businesses, Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service. The service ran 52 weeks a year on Friday and Saturday nights, with 123,888 service users recorded in 2018/19.

The committee asked if Police Scotland helped fund the service. Ms McArthur confirmed that they did not provide financial support but are part of the partnership that delivered on the ground. She agreed that evidence showed that the service took pressure off the Police and other emergency services. As such, the committee asked for further information on whether Police Scotland had been asked to contribute financially to running the scheme; and if not, can this action be pursued?

Mr Reid added, following a question, that his team were reviewing Falkirk Delivers (the last review reported in 2018), which would be completed by March 2020. As part of the review, they would be looking at all aspects of the Taxi Marshalling and Safe Base services. For example, how accurate was the data on the number of users? Could efficiency savings be made; was it necessary to run the service every weekend, or should it be operational during peak times of year?

The committee discussed the merits of extending the service to provide support during the day to tackle growing complaints of anti-social behaviour in the town centre. Ms McArthur felt the partnership approach was proving its worth at night and could work equally well during the day, with a mix of trained volunteers and emergency services working together to tackle anti social behaviour. The committee discussed the work of the Safe Base initiative. Ms McArthur explained that the service was operational only at key times of the year – the facility, located in Park Street, provided support to those people who have been on a night out and have possibly had too much to drink or were in a vulnerable state.

Mr Reid explained that this service also played an important role in the Council's efforts to increase and grow economic development. He argued that event organisers and promoters looked at locations such as Falkirk because of the measures in place to keep people safe; as such, he was confident that there would be more concerts to follow such as this year's the Killers and Little Mix gigs. The night-time economy was an area where there was potential for growth. CACI had been commissioned to produce an overview of Falkirk's retail in April 2016, which showed Falkirk ranked 19th in Scotland. It was argued that Falkirk had a huge spent potential and when doing the next CACI review, they would examine the night time economy.

Following a question, Ms McArthur undertook to provide further detail on what other towns and cities provide this service, or a similar scheme.

SACRO

Following a short interval, the committee reconvened to consider the report on SACRO's Youth Justice Service, which provided support to young people (aged 8–18 years) who have either been charged with an offence or have been identified as being involved in anti social behaviour in the community. The Council gave this organisation £73,368 in 2018/19, a reduction of £10k from the previous year. Ms Walls – the monitoring officer for Cyrenians (see below) introduced the report on behalf of her colleague who could not attend – highlighted that SACRO's Youth Justice Services had worked with 57 cases (52 individuals) in 2018/19. She explained that SACRO provided intervention and support to children and young people at an early stage with the aim of diverting them away from anti social behaviour and offending in the community. SACRO has introduced the Outcomes Star assessment tool that encourages service users to focus their aims and aspirations in six areas of their lives: 1) Making a difference; (2) Hopes and dreams; (3) Wellbeing; (4) Education and work; (5) Communicating; and (6) Choices and behaviour.

The committee noted its disappointment that the monitoring officer who authored the report was not able to attend; whilst allowing for extenuating circumstances, this should be avoided. There was concern about the gap in reviewing arrangements due to staffing changes, and the committee were keen to ensure the next planned review (scheduled for January 2020) should be completed. The committee also asked whether there was merit in having a representative from the organisation attend to answer any questions that the monitoring officer was unable to address.

Ms Walls added, following a question, that referrals for the service came from a range of partner organisations who work with young people, including schools, Police Scotland and social workers. The committee sought more information on how the service was delivered across different geographic areas in the Falkirk Council Area, and whether there was specific input into particular locations? Additionally, how the service user figures for 2018/19 compared with previous years was requested. The committee acknowledged the important work being undertaken by the service, but were keen to receive examples of the difference these services made to users, and what was the reoffending rate for those who had used the service? Ms Walls undertook to ensure these questions were followed up by the respective monitoring officer.

The committee discussed SACRO's financial health, noting that Falkirk Council's funding contributed to 1% of the organisation's overall budget, in addition to over £3.5m in uncommitted reserves. This raised the question of whether the Council needs to be funding this service given the seemingly ample funds available. Ms Walls explained that the Council was paying SACRO to provide this service in the Council area. If they did not fund it, there would not be a Youth Justice Service in the Council area.

Cyrenians

Cyrenians provided a range of opportunities to promote inclusion, improve skills and build the self-worth of people (aged 16+) with convictions. These included:- an Employability Service; Peer Mentoring; community payback and volunteering in Dollar Park Walled Garden; Benefit and debt advice; Men and Women's Group Work Support; and a Lighthouse Project. Ms Walls explained that Cyrenians were very experienced in the area and had always engaged well with the Council. Moreover, it had always worked with her team to make efficiencies over the years (dependent on the level of funding available to Justice Services) to ensure it could deliver a service in the Falkirk area.

The committee discussed the financing of Cyrenians. In 2018/19 Falkirk Justice Services had received £172,252, which had come directly from the Scottish Government. This funding was a year-on-year ring-fenced direct grant to support the assessment and supervision of offenders as set out in Section 27 to the Social Work Scotland Act 1968. The committee questioned whether it was necessary for this organisation/service to report to this body given it was not strictly funded by the Council.

The committee heard that Cyrenians delivered SVQ units, which were SQA accredited qualifications, with plans to develop a Horticulture SVQ. Ms Walls explained that such initiatives – which were part of a wider Employability Service – aimed to give users structure in their life and a route into employment or further education, therefore discouraging reoffending. She acknowledged that it was difficult to measure overall success, but there were many examples of users going into employment; however, this depended on where that user was on their journey.

Ms Walls also highlighted the Lighthouse Project Pilot, which had been set up in 2018/19 with a one-off payment of £34,000 from the Scottish Government ring-fenced direct grant. This project aimed to provide support to individuals who were exiting Justice Services. This continuity of support was an important development in the service. The committee asked whether this pilot project was continued, and Ms Walls explained that in 2019/20 funding was secured from the Employment and Training Unit for the Lighthouse Project to continue operating.

The committee requested that in future the 'Assessment of Performance' section in the reporting statement should address how well the organisation had met the aims that it had set out to achieve; the Committed to Ending Abuse report, which was presented earlier in the agenda, was held up as an example of good practice. Ms Walls welcomed this constructive guidance and assured the committee that this would be taken on board.

The committee discussed the Dollar Park Walled Garden. Cyrenians were funded to provide a worker to manage and maintain the garden. The Walled Garden and Floral Clock were renovated by people on Community Payback Orders and had been a great success. Ms Walls cited examples of people

continuing to volunteer after they had completed their required hours. Cyrenians also partnered with the Council to refurbish the historic Arnotdale House, which was opened in January 2019 as a social enterprise which offered a café, events/meeting/function spaces and office accommodation. Ms Walls, in response to a question, confirmed that her team were always looking for new volunteering opportunities. She requested that any suggestions should be emailed to cjs.communityservice@falkirk.gov.uk.

Decision

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

- (1) Committed to Ending Abuse – Domestic Abuse Services**
- (2) Falkirk BID – Taxi Marshalling and Safe Base**
- (3) SACRO – Youth Justice**
- (4) Cyrenians**

SE28. Scrutiny Committee (External) Workplan 2020

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which presented a draft workplan for the Scrutiny Committee (External) for 2020.

The committee discussed the draft workplan. Members of the committee were in support of the proposal that Falkirk Community Trust, Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership, Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service report once a year on their performance against their annual plans. Members queried the schedule of Following the Public Pound reports but after discussion were satisfied with the proposed programme.

Decision

The Committee agreed its workplan for 2020 as set out in the report.